

GEELONG & WINE

175 YEARS

“If there is a unifying feature in all of the Geelong wines, it is their strength and depth of colour, bouquet and flavour.” (*James Halliday, Wine Atlas of Australia and New Zealand*)

The Geelong wine industry started with Mr David Pettavel. He was born in Boudry, Switzerland, and emigrated to Australia aboard the barque Platina. Upon landing at Port Phillip, Pettavel continued directly to the Barrabool Hills behind Geelong and planted the regions first vineyard. (Eugene von Guerard’s masterpiece *View of Geelong*, to be viewed on the Saturday pre-dinner tour of Geelong Gallery, provides a glimpse of these early days.) In 1857 he planted a second Geelong vineyard called Prince Albert, which received a visit from the Duke of Edinburgh in 1867.

James Dardel, another Swiss emigrant, arrived in Australia in 1842. Initially he established a vineyard at Yering Station in the Yarra Valley and a second one in Brighton. Then, in 1848, he planted the Paradise Vineyards in Batesford, just west of Geelong. Soon the Moorabool Valley was full of vineyards, just in time to cater for the thirst of the gold diggers. In less than two decades Geelong became the state’s premier (and largest) wine-growing region. Over 400 ha of vineyards extended along each side of the Barwon, Moorabool and Leigh Rivers; and on the slopes and plains around Waurin Ponds and Ceres. Geelong wine was shown in exhibitions in Vienna, Paris and Bordeaux, as well as the Royal Melbourne and Royal Sydney Shows. No bottles are known to exist from that time - but who knows? The Barrabool Hills are dotted with old sandstone houses, many of which have cellars and still contain some old wine making equipment.

The dreaded phylloxera louse was discovered at Batesford, just outside Geelong, in 1875. A government ordered compulsory uprooting of all vine stocks spelt the end and local production largely ceased by 1887. (A couple of Geelong vineyards survived into the early 20th but faded away with the popularity of fortified wines.)

In 1966 Daryl Sefton (appropriately of Swiss descent), together with his wife Nini re-introduced wine growing to Geelong. Daryl was the longest serving member of the Wine and Food Society of Geelong until his sad passing in 2016. He concentrated on producing cabernet, shiraz and gewürztraminer and quickly won acclaim. He

and Nini developed a remarkable European export market. Other vineyards soon followed, often on the site of the original vineyards. The re-opening of the Prince Albert winery in 1975 was dependent on royal consent to again use the name.



New areas were also developed. Today there are about 80 wineries, using more than 35 grape varieties. The vast majority are family owned and there are over 60 cellar doors open. There are three defined subregions in Geelong:

Moorabool Valley - soils are mainly volcanic, particularly basalt, with some limestone; continental climate, warmer and drier, with generally lower yields than the other regions; wines are more savoury, less fruity and the reds have a more pronounced tannin structure

Bellarine Peninsula - basalt soils over limestone; has a more moderate maritime climate; wines are softer, more forward and more fruit-driven

Surf Coast / Otways - primarily sandy loam; the climate is tempered by the nearby water; again wines have more up front fruit.

For those joining the preconvention tours, we will focus on each of these subregions, combined with tasting of local produce. Convention delegates who attend the optional wine tasting on Saturday 21st April will sample many of the local wines and have the opportunity to discuss them directly with the winemakers.