



Tempranillo: an Australian Perspective

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Still considered an ‘alternative’ variety in Australia, Tempranillo is becoming increasingly popular with growers, winemakers and consumers. Not only can it make great wine, but wine in a great range of styles. It is being planted in a wide range of climates, and on very different soils, as Australian vignerons explore its potential in our conditions. But it remains work in progress.

This inaugural TempraNeo workshop explores the “why?” as much as the “what?”. It’s about inspiration: we all were inspired at some stage to take a punt on Tempranillo, and that inspiration continues to influence what we grow and make. This tasting workshop therefore features not only our current release wines, but also other wines from which we draw ongoing inspiration.

LA LINEA works with two very different Tempranillo vineyards located at each end of the beautiful Adelaide Hills. Winemaker Peter Leske had prior experience with the variety while at Nepenthe, and now makes a Rosé as well as the La Linea Tempranillo.

TAR & ROSES is based in Central Victoria and aims to create distinctly varietal, multi-regional wines with a European slant. Their Tempranillo is sourced from Heathcote and Alpine Valleys. Winemakers Narelle King and Don Lewis make wine in Spain as well as Australia.

RUNNING WITH BULLS has given Tempranillo a home in Barossa and made an exciting wine; bright in colour and rich in fruit flavour. Winemaker Louisa Rose is also involved with Wrattonbully Vineyards, and interested in the regional expression that Tempranillo conveys.

GEMTREE VINEYARDS is located in the foothills of McLaren Vale and decided to plant Tempranillo after experience with it in Spain. Eleven years later, winemaker Mike Brown has found it a variety that offers consistency of results, but is also receptive to his flair for pushing the boundaries, with biodynamic viticulture and

a hands-off winemaking approach.

MAYFORD is a tiny family enterprise where handcrafted means exactly that. Located high above the Ovens River in the foothills of the Victorian Alps, winemaker Eleana Anderson has found Tempranillo suited to the continental climate and the ‘bony’ ridge it is planted on.

MOUNT MAJURA VINEYARD is focused on expressing the character of its small Canberra District vineyard, and this depends on finding the right variety for the site. Tempranillo has become its flagship wine. Winemaker Frank van de Loo particularly appreciates the combination of flesh, perfume and grainy tannin that the variety produces, and that they remain in balance even as the magnitude may vary between vintages.

WHY TempraNeo? TempraNeo is a collective of Tempranillo makers inspired by the variety, and the potential it offers for making wines of character and interest.

The time for an educated discussion of Australian Tempranillo styles is now. Interest is growing; plantings are increasing; styles are emerging. Many of us are talking about our wines to consumers, the trade and each other, but we could all learn much more from a coordinated effort. And so we came together to learn and educate.

This is not an exclusive club. While initially we have been careful to bring diversity of region and style to the group, we have also chosen to include the wines of other regions, and from some very good mates. The aim is to further the variety in all its styles and forms.

Diversity is to be celebrated and enjoyed, and we hope that by bringing our wine, experience, philosophy and inspiration together in one room, we can stimulate ongoing interest in this fascinating variety.

Tempranillo has had a long, if muted, presence in Australia.

There is evidence of it being in the Rutherglen collection, introduced to Australia by François De Castella in 1908.

It is even possible that Tempranillo (albeit under another name) was in the original mix brought here by James Busby in 1831¹.

By all accounts the variety was not planted in any significant quantity during the first half of the twentieth century. Walpole points to plantings in the Hunter Valley, after the introduction of new selections from University of California, Davis in the late 1960s, as the most likely pioneer plantings in Australia in the modern era.

According to Antcliff², a total of 57 tonnes of Tempranillo were crushed in the 1981 vintage. More recent statistics (Table 1) indicate that expansion did not commence until at least the late 1990s.

The Walpole Vineyard in Whorouly in north-east Victoria saw Tempranillo planted in 1989 just as the Denman Estate block was being top-worked due to its poor performance in the Hunter.

From 1996 Brown Brothers were at the forefront of the variety’s emergence in Australia, making a limited release Tempranillo available from cellar door. The company then went on to develop a large planting at its new vineyard in Heathcote.

In the past decade, Australia has embraced Tempranillo with ever growing enthusiasm and there has been a corresponding increase in area under vine, and tonnes crushed (Table 1).

The 2008 edition of the Aust NZ Wine Industry Directory listed 166 Australian Tempranillo producers, while in 2010, the Vinodiversity website lists 200 producers. The twenty regions with the greatest number of Tempranillo producers is shown in Table 2.

Clearly this ‘alternative’ variety will soon be ‘mainstream’ if it is

now being produced by nearly 10% of Australian wineries.

Table 1: Tempranillo crush in Australia, tonnes (source: ABS)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
NSW	17	34	86	92	308	809	936	1036	712	1294
SA	3	11	70	214	192	554	856	1075	566	1212
VIC	9	28	32	29	39	32	294	162	178	578
MD*				44	107	141	225	361	208	260
WA		7	13	24	47		82	62	93	111
QLD				9	12	6	16	19	13	12
TAS					0	0	1	2	0	
Total	29	79	200	411	705	1543	2410	2716	1769	3467
Growth		172%	152%	105%	72%	119%	56%	13%	-35%	96%
MD*	Murray Darling - Swan Hill									

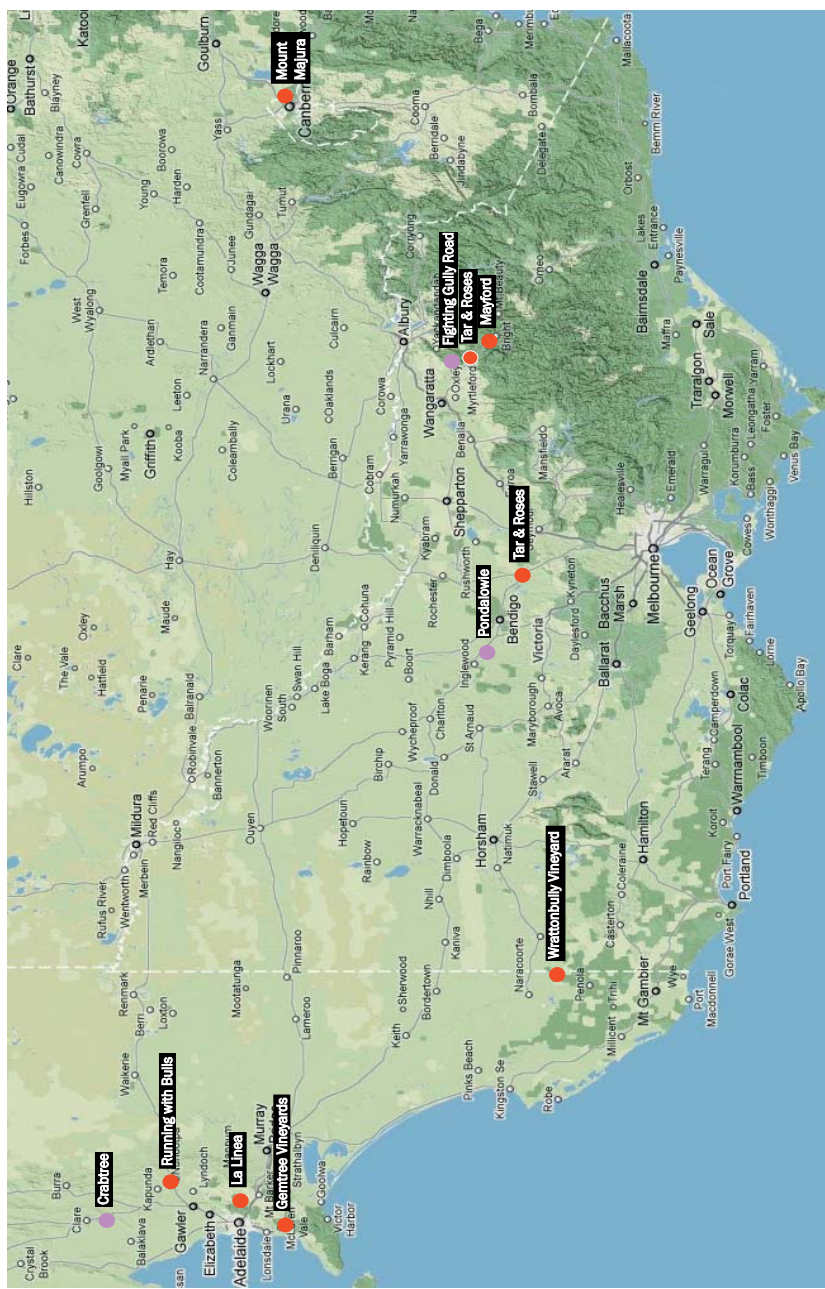
Table 2: Twenty Australian GIs with the most Tempranillo producers (source: Vinodiversity)

Region	Number	Region	Number
Barossa Valley	17	Pyrenees	6
McLaren Vale	16	Riverland	6
Hunter Valley	11	King Valley	5
Granite Belt	10	Murray Darling	4
Margaret River	10	New England	4
Adelaide Hills	9	Riverina	4
Geographe	9	Rutherglen	4
Heathcote	8	Southern Highlands	4
Clare Valley	6	Swan Valley	4
Mornington Peninsula	6	Yarra Valley	4

References:

¹ M Walpole, “The Journey of Tempranillo to Australia”, *Australian Viticulture*, September/October 2008, p.90.

² A Antcliffe, *Minor Wine Grape Varieties of Australia*, 1983,



Region (data: Wine Australia)	Latitude	Altitude	HDD ^{49'} Oct-Apr	Mean Jan Temp	Rainfall, Oct-Apr	3pm RH Oct-Apr	Relates to:
Adelaide Hills	34° 50' S	400 - 600 m	1270	19.1 °C	310 mm	67%	La Linea
Alpine Valleys	36° 30' S	150 - 320 m	1480	21.3 °C	425 mm	43%	Mayford, Tar & Roses, Fighting Gully
Barossa	34° 30' S	250 - 370 m	1710	21.4 °C	160 mm	34%	Running with Bulls
Bendigo	36° 45' S	240 - 390 m	1580	21.0 °C	267 mm	44%	Pondalowie
Canberra District	35° 0' S	500 - 850 m	1410	20.2 °C	360 mm	42%	Mount Majura Vineyard
Clare	33° 50' S	400 - 500 m	1770	21.9 °C	200 mm	37%	Crabtree
Heathcote	36° 50' S	160 - 320 m	1490	21.0 °C	280mm	44%	Tar & Roses
McLaren Vale	34° 14' S	50 - 200 m	1910	21.7 °C	180 mm	46%	Gemtree Vineyards
Wrattonbully	40° 45' S	75 - 150 m	1500	20.0 °C	220 mm	43%	Wrattonbully Vineyard
Rioja (Logroño)	42° 28' N	420 m	1386	21.3 °C	230 mm	52%	

La Linea is a relative newcomer, but given its exclusive focus on Adelaide Hills Tempranillo, that's hardly surprising. And while the variety is 'new' to Australia, we draw on the extensive local experience of Peter Leske (who persuaded his previous employers at Nepenthe to plant what is probably the first Hills block of Tempranillo in 1998, and whose hand-on making of the variety dates back to 2002), and the vast international experience of David LeMire (who has tasted and travelled across Spain at others' expense on many occasions!).

So while we have a great deal to learn, we have a clear idea of what we believe is the best expression of Tempranillo from the cool conditions of the Hills.

Since 1997 we have worked with two very different sites to produce three wines. The first was probably Australia's first Tempranillo rosé, from the Llangibby vineyard between Mt Barker and Echunga. It is a relatively cool, high vigour site, which consistently produces intense fruit—perfect for rosé—but only in warmer years with the depth and tannin structure for excellent dry red. Picked at moderate baumé, the La Linea rosé is picked and made to be rosé from the start. It is not a 'saignée' wine (i.e. the by-product of trying to make better red...): the crushed and chilled fruit spends a at least 12-18 hours macerating at low temperature in the press to extract the necessary colour and tannin for flavour-full and well-structured rosé; it is then fermented dry, with fresh acidity.

Until now we have released only one red wine: the La Linea Tempranillo. Depending on the season, this wine has been sourced from either the Llangibby block, or a lower, drier and warmer site near Kersbrook, at the northern fringe of the Hills region. This block is easterly-facing, on grey-brown loam, and has generally lower vigour than Llangibby. It can grow seriously tannic fruit, and is better suited to red wine.

The current vintage 2009 La Linea Tempranillo is a blend of these two sites, with the richer, more tannic component from Kersbrook comprising 60%. Our aim here is to make a varietally-distinctive, medium-weight, savoury yet generous dry red. Again, we are not seeking super-ripe fruit: 13 baumé is adequate. It's hand-plunged in 3-4 t fermenters, then run to mature French oak barriques for 8-10 months of maturation.

And as of now, we have released our first La Linea 'Norteño': a single vineyard, barrel selection red from the Kersbrook site, with consequential slightly bigger structure and tannin. It will be made when we see that wine from that year is sufficiently interesting and different to add to the discussion about Australian Tempranillo.

We aim to soon source fruit from at least another two vineyards, to further our experience, and the quality and style of our wines.

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LA LÍNEA

Tar & Roses is a partnership of winemakers Don Lewis and Narelle King.

In the early 1990s, Don travelled to Spain with Wayne Dutschke as part of a joint venture between Mitchelton and the Spanish winemakers Bodegas y Bebidas. In Spain they made just one white and one red to be distributed in both Australia and overseas. The red La Solana, sourced from the La Mancha region of Spain and a 100% Tempranillo, went on to win Red Wine of the Year at the International Wine Challenge in London in 1994. Given this introduction it's not surprising to now find Tempranillo planted in Don's own vineyard on the banks of the Goulburn River in Victoria. He's even taken the traditional Spanish approach so that the vines, first planted in 1998, are individually staked. Don's association and interest with Tempranillo started nearly 20 years ago and remains as keen as ever.

Narelle comes to Tempranillo from a slightly less traditional avenue. Having travelled extensively in South America, her initial fascination with Spain was more about its language and culture however, it quickly become apparent that in Spain this is closely intertwined with the Spanish appreciation of Tempranillo. Having made her first Tempranillo as a wine for her wedding in 2007 her association with the varietal carries on through the Tar & Roses brand.

Tar & Roses, with its focus on European varietals, is a perfect vehicle for both Don and Narelle to maintain their interest in Tempranillo and to hone their skills in the pursuit of its best expression. Their grapes, with a blend sourced from the Heathcote and Alpine Valleys regions of Victoria, bring good depth and complexity with a classic fruit and tannin structure, characteristics which stem from the vineyards.

The tougher conditions of the Heathcote vineyard bring to the blend chalky tannins, mulberries and the aromas of freshly dug

earth. In contrast the lush fertile conditions of the Alpine Valleys produce raspberry notes and spice like characters of cloves and aniseed. Both vineyards are extremely low yielding. These low crops are due to the tough soil conditions and the age of the vines respectively.

In the winery our aim is to preserve and highlight these characters. The attention to detail and constant monitoring during maturation reflects the winemaking approach. 2006 was the first vintage for Tar & Roses, since then there has been a variety of growing conditions each producing different expressions of Tempranillo, two of which will be tasted today.

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Running with Bulls

Traditionally a Spanish variety, we've given Tempranillo a home in the Barossa. A variety that is known traditionally to thrive in a range of climates and terroirs around the world; we have identified Tempranillo as having a particular affinity with the Barossa region where ideal climate conditions help to showcase the stylish fruit flavours of this emerging variety.

Our first look at Tempranillo in the Barossa was in 1999 when 1.2 ha was grafted onto old Chenin Blanc. This was a great source of experimental fruit for a couple of years until virus dominated the scion – but it was something to start with and to whet our appetite. At the same time two of our growers had planted Barossa Valley Tempranillo. One planted 1.78 ha in 2000 (Clones D8V12 & Tinta Roriz) and the other 2.71 ha in 2001 (Clone D8V12).

The grapes are grown with an emphasis on vineyard sustainability and health, and in the warm and dry Barossa little intervention is needed for the vines to grow and fruit. This results in a healthy and diverse population of natural microflora that piggybacks on the grapes to the winery and conduct the natural fermentation.

Open ferments reach 33C, and maturation in mature oak barrels completes the process and results in a juicy but savoury wine with subtle influence from oak, and flavours of raspberry, dark cherry, tar, liquorice and potpourri. Succulent tannins add structure and length to the wine - perfect for the Australian lifestyle and cuisine.

Wrattonbully Vineyards Tempranillo

Wrattonbully Vineyards is an Estate established by the Hill Smith family in 1994. It is sited in the recently discovered region of Wrattobulley, a near-northern neighbour of Coonawarra within South Australia's Limestone Coast. The vineyard site was chosen for its soil types (principally shallow red soils over limestone), undulating aspect and coolish, reliable climate.

We were curious about the Spanish varietal, Tempranillo, and its potential in South Australia. After several study visits to Spain by Robert Hill Smith & Louisa Rose, we decided to give it a go. We propagated Tempranillo in several vineyards across various regions of SA and have been trialling this variety for over ten years. The result is a single-estate wine, an Australian-interpretation of the native styles of Spain – Wrattobulley Vineyards Tempranillo.

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The inspiration to grow and make a Tempranillo came about after we visited Spain and tasted some very interesting and flavoursome Spanish Tempranillos. We felt that the variety would grow well in our climate and we were keen for the challenge of growing and making a wine that few people in Australia had experience with. We planted one hectare of clone D8V12 in 1998 and in 2004 grafted an acre of Verdelho to Tempranillo.

The first release of the Gemtree Vineyards Tempranillo was in 2002 and we recently bottled the 2009. We are not trying to emulate the Spanish Tempranillos, instead, we are aiming to create a style of Tempranillo uniquely Australian. Over the past eleven years we have been delighted with the quality of wine we have produced from the vineyard and it has become a very important product in the Gemtree portfolio.

The vines are on their own roots in a heavy clay Crabhole Gilgai soil that was deep ripped prior to planting. The rows run East/West and the vineyard is 179m above sea level. In 2007 we converted the tempranillo block to a biodynamic regime. We have seen remarkable results in this block since the conversion with the onset of flavour and seed ripeness occurring earlier which has suited not only the style of wine we want to produce but has also helped in the past two seasons which have been testing weather-wise.

By using Biodynamic methods of farming, we are not just looking at the vine health but the health of the soil incorporating as much diversity as possible. Using the lunar cycle to make decisions on when viticulture practices are carried out we apply compost made from recycled waste and other inputs. We are focusing on building the vineyards immune system to combat pests and disease, creating an environment for beneficial insects & organisms to flourish, removing many synthetic chemicals and incorporating the 2 biodynamic preparations, 500 and 501. Sheep are used in

the dormant months for under vine weed control helping combat broad leaf plants that were once a problem and this has the additional benefit of reducing vine vigour.

Seed and tannin ripeness are two imperative measures when considering optimum picking time for Tempranillo. We do test baume, pH and TA during the ripening period, however vineyard assessment and constant flavour tasting of the grapes provides us with our primary picking parameters. The fruit is handpicked, then destemmed and crushed into open fermenters.

We realised when making this variety that over acidification could be an issue. In 2007 we removed all acid additions from the process and allowed natural ferment to occur. Remarkably, we have had no stuck or sluggish ferments. Malolactic fermentation (MLF) is not inoculated and occurs naturally in barrel. Since 2005 we have been trialling larger oak format with excellent results and from the 2007 vintage the wine has been aged in puncheons (500L). Natural tannin acts as the preserving agent for bacteria as the pH is generally around 3.9. The wine is rarely racked, so left on its gross lees and will be actively stirred if the lees are healthy.

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Mayford Wines can be found tucked away in a hidden valley near Porepunkah in the foothills of the Victorian Alps. It is a first generation family business managed and owned by winemaker Eleana Anderson and her husband Bryan Nicholson.

Bryan established the vineyard with a modest planting of Shiraz in 1995, which was enlarged in 1998. Tempranillo and Chardonnay then followed in 2002. In-house winemaking commenced shortly after he selected his seasoned winemaker bride that same year, and the first Mayford wines were released in 2007.

It is a tiny operation by all accounts, producing less than 500 dozen across the three varieties. Bryan continues to work full time as a forester, tending to the vineyard after hours, and Eleana cares for the wines in between mothering two little'ns.

Whilst it is early days for Mayford, the small quantities of handcrafted wines have developed a serious following of wine enthusiasts and have drawn a number of memorable accolades. Their success has been all the more surprising given that they come from a hitherto largely uncelebrated wine region.

When the pair met, the vineyard's varietal mix was a *fait accompli*. Wishing to expand the vineyard, Bryan had settled upon Tempranillo after consultation with Mark Walpole, one of its most passionate Australian pioneers. Initially Eleana was unenthusiastic about its potential, but since making the first vintage of Mayford Tempranillo in 2006, has been thoroughly enamoured with the fragrance, spice and fine tannins that are evident from the onset of fermentation.

Tempranillo is at home in the mountainous surrounds of the dryland Mayford vineyard and is a natural fit with its late bud burst and early maturity. The shaly hillside plantings on hungry soils keep the variety's inherent vigour in check, giving rise to low yields and restricting leaf and berry size.

The hard site means that the vines are largely self-regulating, but some shoot thinning, leaf removal and trimming is required on the row ends to ensure that ripening uniformity is achieved. The strong diurnal contrast permitted by warm days and the cold air drainage from the mountains at night, helps to preserve acidity and aroma, which is helpful in the notoriously low acid Tempranillo.

The vines are netted, and the fruit handpicked before being treated to a gentle winemaking process that seeks to introduce complexity wherever possible and preserve the variety's inherent suppleness and perfume. In the winery Eleana spurns the use of additives such as enzymes, yeasts, tannins and copper reflecting her training over numerous vintages in Germany. She has little interest in making squeaky clean, commercial wines and likes to see earthy, gamey, leesy influences alongside Tempranillo's dark berry fruits, savoury flavours and alluring floral characters.

The couple believe that with sensitive vineyard management and naturalistic winemaking practices, their unique site will be given clear expression in their wines producing a textural, ageworthy and scented Tempranillo, with fine tannin astringency.

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Mount Majura Vineyard is a small vineyard and winery in the Canberra District, and is one of very few actually located in the ACT.

The site for Mount Majura Vineyard was selected from a geology map, for its limestone-containing soil, east-facing slope and supposed climate similarity to Burgundy. The 1988 planting of one hectare has been expanded to 9.3 hectares, but the focus has remained on producing single-vineyard wines that express their site.

Current winemaker Frank van de Loo took over management of the vineyard in 1998 and quickly developed the familiar 'pinot problem'. Frank grew out of this a few years later after several key experiences. While learning winemaking in leased space at another winery, it became clear that even when made similarly to other local fruit, Mount Majura Vineyard reds tended to be tannic. In droughty vintages (2001, 2003) the Pinot in particular was tough, hard, and lacking in charm. Working a couple of vintages in Burgundy (2002, 2004) confirmed how dissimilar the two climates are, but also deepened Frank's interest in terroir.

Tempranillo was planted in 2000, with the encouragement of Peter Read (Symphonia), mainly to develop a point of difference. The focus subsequently swung to the much greater climate similarity between Canberra and some Spanish regions. Moreover, if Pinot was not going to be the variety best suited to expressing our terroir, then could it be Tempranillo? Making wines only from the one site, terroir for us doesn't involve making distinctive wines from different sites, but rather the belief that the right site-variety combination will make wine with greater character and personality. Only the right varieties will be able to give expression to our terroir, and thus be distinctive and original.

The relatively high altitude (between 660 and 700m) and inland location results in high continentality, with significant diurnal

temperature range. The warm dry summers also suit the vigorous Tempranillo, and applying some water stress after set is seen as a key to restricting berry size and thus increasing concentration. The relatively late budburst of Tempranillo is also helpful in a region that is prone to Spring frosts.

Rather than fighting against (as with Pinot) the tannin our site produces, Tempranillo allows us to embrace it. With appropriate management (including open canopies and modest yields) we get plenty of stuffing to coat the tannin, and we don't need to press off early, preferring instead the tannin development we get from post-ferment maceration.

Since 2008, Mount Majura Vineyard has also produced TSG – Tempranillo Shiraz Graciano – in which the aim is to blend our best-performing red varieties, and thus make a vineyard wine rather than a varietal wine.

Nevertheless, the Tempranillo has taken the role of flagship, and we are proud to show it in TempraNeo.

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MOUNT  MAJURA
VINEYARD

BRACKET ONE

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