



## A Panorama of Australian Tempranillo

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In our introduction to the inaugural TempraNeo workshops in 2010, we noted that Tempranillo 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.”

In our second workshop series, we further explore the evolution of this fascinating variety by focussing on samples of Tempranillo from around the country that we variously respect, are intrigued by, or have simply appreciated as excellent expressions of the variety. They have been chosen from as wide a range of regions, climates and soils as we can find, to illustrate the regional expression of Tempranillo around Australia.

All are relatively young wines, chosen because we believe that we will learn from them; we expect them to add to the conversation about Tempranillo. Through tasting and discussing them with you, we hope both to further our own individual efforts; and importantly, to add to our collective understanding of what can be achieved with this grape in future.

**LA LINEA** is proudly based in the beautiful Adelaide Hills, sourcing fruit from up to four diverse sites. We aim to tease the best out of each of the vineyards; then either blend to achieve something greater than the sum of its parts, or bottle separately to showcase a particular single-vineyard expression.

**TAR & ROSES** is based in Central Victoria and aims to create distinctly varietal wines expressing the terroir of each vineyard. 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 more recently in Wrattontully. Winemaker Louisa Rose continues to look to new vineyards and explore 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. Twelve 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** in the Canberra District lies on a minor fault where 430 million year old volcanics are mixed with even older limestone, creating a small patch of special dirt. Minor obsessions with terroir and alternative varieties have led winemaker Frank van de Loo to focus on Tempranillo as the variety that gives voice to the unique character of this place.

**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.

Our coordinated efforts have stimulated a great deal of interest and discussion of the variety, and our social and professional interaction has taught us all even more! We aimed to learn and educate – and we have achieved much – but it’s still early days.

We remain not an exclusive club. In selecting our topic, and the wines to illustrate it, we have again been careful to highlight diversity of region and style - and therefore have specifically chosen wines from other regions. We want to explore Tempranillo in all its diverse styles and forms.

Tempranillo plantings in Australia (partial data in Table 1) have expanded from 209 Ha in 2004 to 542 Ha in 2010, an average growth of 55 Ha/year, but the average rate over the two years 2008-2010 increased to 85 Ha/year (no data are available for 2009). Note also that ABS data that are not subdivided by region indicate higher overall areas planted: 618 Ha total in 2010 in place of 542 Ha shown here.

The quantity of Tempranillo harvested has of course increased with the increasing area, but with significant fluctuations in yield, being highest in 2008 (10.7 tonnes per bearing hectare) but low in 2007 (5.9 T/Ha) and 2010 (6.2 T/Ha).

The only state to show a decline in Tempranillo plantings was Queensland, where 14 Ha in 2005 have dwindled back to 3 Ha in 2010. Tasmania has made a late debut, with the first recorded plantings and harvest in 2010.

Recent growth in Tempranillo planting and production has been strongest in NSW, overtaking SA as the most important state in 2010. Particularly large NSW increases are shown for Murray Darling-NSW and Southern Highlands, but Southern Highlands wineries contacted did not believe the figures to be plausible.

Of the total planted area of 542 Ha in 2010, 29% (156 Ha) were in the inland irrigated regions of southeastern Australia on the Murray-Darling river system, but these areas accounted for 51% (1498 T) of the total tonnage harvested.

The number of Tempranillo producers in Australia continues to grow, with 286 companies listed in the 2011 Wine Industry Directory, from a total of 2477.

WFA data indicate continued growth of the Tempranillo harvest in 2011, though the tonnage cannot be related directly to the ABS data.

Table 1. Tempranillo by Region (min. 10 tonnes). Source: ABS.

Region	2010		Region	2010	
	Ha	T		Ha	T
Riverina	57	623	King Valley	30	158
Murray Darling - NSW	51	278	Murray Darling - VIC	10	156
Southern Highlands	27	199	Swan Hill (VIC)	13	115
Hunter	17	37	Heathcote	22	75
Hilltops	8	14	Goulburn Valley	10	44
Tumbarumba	4	14	Yarra Valley	3	13
Orange	5	11	<b>VIC Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>597</b>
<b>NSW Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>1 197</b>	Geographe	12	46
Riverland	26	326	Margaret River	9	42
Barossa Valley	54	150	Perth Hills	2	35
McLaren Vale	33	125	Great Southern	9	29
Adelaide Hills	30	92	<b>WA Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>169</b>
Wrattonbully	8	86	QLD	3	7
Clare Valley	19	76	ACT	1	4
Southern Fleurieu	5	47	TAS	1	3
<b>SA Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>2 932</b>

The TempraNeo 2010 event led to a greater understanding of the variety for all participants. Our discussions were used to develop the following notes on styles and descriptors.

Tempranillo makes a range of styles, depending on viticultural factors such as climate, soil and clone, as well as ripeness at harvest and the style intention of the winemaker.

In most regions of Australia Tempranillo is still a relatively newly planted variety, but already some common themes are emerging.

More fertile soils produce relatively large berries, suited to fragrant and fresh rosé or lighter-bodied red wines. Typical descriptors include red fruits such as red currant, pomegranate and raspberries.

In less fertile situations, berry size is restricted and the wine is medium-bodied, with a more fleshy, generous mouthfeel and more assertive tannin. The aroma and flavour descriptors vary with climate and ripeness at harvest.

Cooler climates produce wines in more of the red fruit spectrum with perfume and spice and other descriptors such as savoury and red liquorice. These wines often have great clarity of flavour, the red fruits and fleshy texture combining with fine, firm, linear tannin structure to make complete and very composed wines.

Warmer climates tend to produce more black fruit characters such as black cherry, cola and chocolate. These wines often have more richness and range from very juicy ‘slurpy’ drink-now styles, to powerful and concentrated wines suited to ageing.

Increasing vine age, lower yields and smaller berry sizes are all associated with wines with elevated concentration, tannin intensity and perfumed flavour length.

Flavours and Aromas			
Fruit	Perfumed	Spice	Other
Red currant	Fragrant	Sage	Red liquorice
Pomegranate	Musk	Thyme	Currant leaf
Raspberry	Violets	White pepper	New leather
Lemon peel	Rose petal	Pepper	Peaty
Blood orange	Turkish de-	Curry leaf	Balsamic
Tomato vine	light	Coriander	Soy
Quince	Pretty	Clove	Savoury
Tobacco leaf	Exotic	Star anise	Pie and sauce
Plum	Incense	Five spice	Sarsaparilla
Beetroot			Cola
Mulberry			Liquorice
Olive			Beef stock
Black cherry			Fresh earth
Dried banana			Game
			Chocolate
Age	Textural		Tannins
Toffee	Delicate va-	Succulent	Chalky
Potpourri	riety	Opulent	Linear
Earthy	Often only	Generous	Fine
Meaty	medium bod-	Linear	Rustic
Roast cherry	ied	Fleshy	Drying but
tomato	Naturally high		not bitter
Smoky	pH		Gritty
Malty	Plush		Svelte
Old leather	Glossy		Grainy
	Supple		Whole of
	Mouth-water-		mouth tannins
	ing		
	Juicy		
	Zesty		

We were curious about the variety Tempranillo, and its potential in South Australia and after several study visits to Spain by both Robert Hill Smith and Louisa Rose, we decided to give it a go. We propagated Tempranillo in several vineyards across different regions of SA and have now worked with this variety for over ten years.

Known traditionally to thrive in a range of climates and terroirs around the world; we first 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 vines. 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).

Encouraged with the success of Tempranillo in the Barossa, the Hill-Smith family planted it on their Wrattenbully vineyard in 2002, a recently discovered wine region which is 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 reliable climate.

In both the Barossa and Wrattenbully, the grapes are grown with an emphasis on vineyard sustainability and health, and in the warm and dry conditions 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 can reach up to 33°C, and maturation in mature oak barrels and 30hL wooden vats completes the process and results in juicy but savoury wines, full of fruit flavour and a subtle influence from oak. The Barossa terroir imparts flavours of dark chocolate, black cherry and tomato leaf, with gravelly ironstone like tannins. In contrast, the Wrattenbully site results in a wine with flavours of raspberry, sour cherry, liquorice and potpourri, and succulent tannins which add structure and length to the wine.

We believe that Tempranillo is perfect for the Australian lifestyle and cuisine.

Running with Bulls

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Gemtree Vineyards is a first generation wine making business drawing on the expertise of three generations of grapegrowing. In a genuine family run operation, Mike Brown's winemaking philosophy is straightforward—working in tandem with his viticulturist wife, Melissa, is paramount to the final quality of the wine. Mike believes in minimal intervention across all stages of the winemaking process which results in wines which are powerful, concentrated and express the true characteristics of each variety and the region.

The inspiration to grow and make a Tempranillo came about after the couple visited Spain in the late 1990s and tasted some interesting and flavoursome Spanish Tempranillos. They had an inkling that the variety would grow well in the Mediterranean climate of McLaren Vale and were keen for the challenge of growing and making a wine that few people in Australia had experience with.

One hectare of Tempranillo was planted in 1999 and in 2004 an acre of Verdelho was grafted to Tempranillo. The first release of Gemtree Vineyard's Tempranillo was in 2002. The aim is not to emulate the Spanish Tempranillos, but instead to create a style of Tempranillo uniquely Australian. It has become a very important product in the Gemtree range.

The vines are on their own roots in a heavy clay Crabhole Gilgai soil that has a devigorating effect on the vines, so that no bunch thinning is required and only minimal shoot thinning. The rows have an east/west orientation and the vineyard is 179 metres above sea level. In 2007 the block was converted to a biodynamic method of farming and this has had an obvious effect with the onset of flavour and seed ripeness occurring earlier. This outcome has suited not only the style of wine produced but also assisted in seasons of testing weather conditions.

Seed and tannin ripeness are two imperative measures when

considering optimum picking time for Tempranillo, and the determining factor in harvest is vineyard assessment and constant flavour tasting of the grapes. The Tempranillo block is always picked on a fruit day according to the biodynamic calendar.

When making Tempranillo wines, over-acidification can be an issue. In 2007, all acid additions were removed from the process and natural ferment allowed to occur. Remarkably, there have been no stuck or sluggish ferments since then. Malolactic fermentation (MLF) is not inoculated and occurs naturally in barrel. Since the 2007 vintage the wine has been aged in puncheons (500L). The wine is rarely raked, so left on its gross lees and will be actively stirred if the lees are healthy.

The 2010 growing season commenced with good winter and spring rainfall. This was followed up by warm days and cool nights leading up to a harvest that provided near perfect conditions. The 2010 Gemtree Luna Roja Tempranillo is a fleshy and savoury wine with velvety tannins.

Testament to the success of this variety, Gemtree is grafting a further 2 hectares of its vineyard to Tempranillo in 2011 to meet consumer demand.

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Mount Majura Vineyard is a small vineyard and winery in the Canberra District. The site was selected from a geology map, for its limestone-containing soil and east-facing slope. Through faulting, the limestone has been mixed with the slightly younger overlying volcanics; both are of Silurian age (approximately 430 million years).

Fine wine in Australia is generally considered to include multi-regional blends as well as wines of a defined origin, but our interest lies solely in the latter. A wine of origin gives a deep and rich experience of a landscape, it integrates its history, geology and ecosystem as well as the weather of that season. The experience of a wine that expresses its site is quite unlike simply seeing the vineyard, but much more like spending a long time living there, knowing it in all its reactions to the seasons.

Now isn't that all dandy? Just because we make a wine from only one site, does it give us this experience of 'shaking hands with the mountain'? Obviously there is more to it, and the principal components are having a site with the capacity to be special—something mysterious that we can only learn from experience, though having some slope and rock involved is a good start—and growing a variety that is well matched to the climate of the site, able to speak its language and thus create poetry from it.

In the Canberra District, having the right variety involves choosing one that likes continentality and diurnal variation. Riesling and Shiraz are the two early leaders. These are both important varieties at Mount Majura Vineyard and we adore what they give us. However, we also like to experiment, and wanted to test whether there might be other varieties even more suited. Tempranillo was a revelation from the first vintage in 2003.

Our 9.3 Ha vineyard rises from 660m to 700m in altitude, and varies somewhat across the site in the depth and percentage of rock. Our first Tempranillo planting in 2000 was of the D8V12

clone, in the 'Rock block'. We grafted over a patch of Pinot in the same block in 2006 and are in the midst of replacing all our Merlot, so that by 2012 a number of clones of Tempranillo will cover a larger area of our vineyard than any other variety.

Our Tempranillo typically falls at the riper end of the cool-climate styles, combining some of the bright red character with some blacker, jubier stuffing. The wine is aromatic and vibrant but includes elements of game, spice and new leather. It is quite structured, and tannin is our main viticultural and winemaking focus. Good canopy management and exposure are essential for such a large-leafed and tough-skinned variety. In the winery we use pre- and post-ferment maceration to extract and develop tannin, and careful pH adjustment is used in preference to fining.

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

Nevertheless, Tempranillo is our most eloquent poet, and we are proud to let it speak.

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**MOUNT  MAJURA**  
**VINEYARD**

Small, off the beaten track and largely unheralded, Mayford Wines in Victoria's mountainous North East, has found itself caught up in the Tempranillo revolution currently engulfing Australia.

In a hidden valley near Porepunkah in the foothills of the Victorian Alps, forester Bryan Nicholson and his winemaker wife Eleana Anderson have been quietly going about the business of making small volumes of handcrafted wines since 2005.

Bryan established the vineyard with a modest planting of Shiraz in 1995, expanding it in 2002 to include small blocks of Tempranillo and Chardonnay. After luring his winemaker wife up to the valley that same year, in-house winemaking soon followed. With the first vintage of Tempranillo in 2006, the pair became aware that the variety had the potential to make something special off their little patch of dirt in the hills.

Dry grown and largely self-regulating, the Mayford Tempranillo vineyard requires little coaxing to reliably produce aromatic and textural wines. The variety is a natural fit to the region's sub alpine climate with its late bud burst and early maturity. The strong diurnal contrast which comes with high continentality, helps to preserve acidity and aroma, which is helpful given Tempranillo's predisposition to shed acid during ripening. The shaly hillside plantings on hungry soils keep its inherent vigour in check, giving rise to low yields and reduced berry size.

The combination of a cool climate with a hard site provides this resolute variety with an opportunity to demonstrate both power and elegance.

Although distinctive in its combining of savoury and fruit characters and broad tannin structure, Tempranillo is a variety that articulates its cultural and geographic origins more clearly than many. Since that first vintage, Eleana and Bryan have been

charmed by its brooding dark character and earthy perfume. Whilst their relationship with Tempranillo is still in its infancy, they hope that with sensitive vineyard management and thoughtful winemaking they can achieve an ever more strident expression of their unique site. It promises to be a lifelong love affair.

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Tempranillo specialist *marque* La Linea is a partnership between David LeMire MW; Peter Leske (who has the right to put several letters after his name, but generally forgets to); and He Who Must Not Be Named—an experienced wine bod whose employer thinks that he is too intelligent, valuable and important to be mentioned in association with other projects. We know better...

Our interest in Tempranillo dates back over many years of consumption and appreciation, but a passion for making the wine was born in 2001, when Peter first started making wine from three of the first blocks planted in the Adelaide Hills. Each site is very different to the other, and it was clear from the outset that their individual characters would produce very different wines.

The coolest and most vigorous site now used by La Linea is the 'Llangibby' vineyard, located on a triangle of relatively rich soil between Mt Barker and Echunga. It produces unusually intensely fragrant fruit year in, year out—but only in warmer years with the depth and tannin structure for excellent dry red. It has therefore been the exclusive source of the La Linea rosé since 1997, and in those warmer and drier seasons, has also been a very important contributor to the La Linea dry red 'Temp'.

Since 2007, the tannic heart of the latter has been the Amadio Kersbrook Vineyard ('AKV'), located at the extreme northern end of the Hills. Easterly-facing, on grey-brown loam, this site has generally lower vigour, ripens earlier, and provides the savoury structure (the best word is, yes, 'grunt') which is essential to the style.

We now also work with two other vineyards. While our 'originals' produce terrific fruit, we have seen the impact of the highly variable seasons that nature has thrown at us in only five years: the extreme heat of 2008 caused problems at AKV, while the wet and very cool 2011 vintage challenged the cooler, vigorous sites. We are therefore now also sourcing fruit from a site between

Birdwood and Gumeracha, and another not far from Llangibby, to ensure that we always have access to fruit of a character and style suitable for our label.

As in 2009, the 2010 La Linea Tempranillo is a blend of our original two sites. In keeping with our aim of making a varietally-distinctive, medium-weight, savoury yet generous dry red, we have taken the fragrance of Llangibby and supplemented it with the generosity, weight and tannic structure of AKV (30%, *if you have a mind for detail*). Each component was picked when ripe (i.e. just on 13 baumé; nearly 4 weeks elapsed between the two blocks being picked), hand-plunged in small open fermenters, and matured in French oak barriques of at least 3 years age for 8 months. We chose to bottle earlier than usual (November 2010) to maximise that fragrance, and avoid the more rapid development observed in barrel over the warm summer months.

(And again, we bottled a small portion of the AKV wine as the single vineyard, barrel selection 'Norteño'. But that's another story.)

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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.

The exceptionally low yields in 2010 from both Tempranillo vineyards has produced a wine of deep concentration and powerful varietal character showing rich ripe raspberries with classic chalky tannin.

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**BRACKET ONE**

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**BRACKET TWO**

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# LA LÍNEA

MOUNT  MAJURA  
VINEYARD