

WINE JAMES HALLIDAY



Garry Hounsell was a partner of a leading accountancy firm before he became a board member of various companies, Qantas and Treasury Wine Estates among them.

He also wanted to become more than just a consumer of seriously fine wine. His first foray in Everton Hills Vineyard (ex Brown Brothers) didn't work, so in 1995 he and wife Julie purchased a Yarra Valley property at Dixons Creek adjacent to the Toolangi State Forest, hence the name of the 12.5ha vineyard they planted.

Chardonnay and pinot noir account for all but 2.7ha, which are planted to shiraz and a little viognier. Thoroughly conventional, yet from the outset they have (unconventionally) had a number of different winemakers involved with each year's production.

Hounsell had become friends with Rick Kinzbrunner when he (Kinzbrunner) was a winemaker at Brown Brothers. So it was preordained that Kinzbrunner should become Toolangi's first contract winemaker. As the structure became more complex, with more production, the jigsaw of makers and varieties of today all came about organically, thanks to Hounsell's peerless networking ability.

Each vintage, the four Toolangi Pinot Noirs will be variously made at Hoddles Creek Estate by Franco d'Anna, at Oakridge Estate by David Bicknell, and Yering Station by Willy Lunn. With chardonnay, Kinzbrunner makes the top wine; the other two are made by Oakridge and Yering Station. Shiraz was originally made by Trevor Mast at Mount Langi Ghiran, more recently by Ben Portet at Dominique Portet and Andrew Fleming at Coldstream Hills. All carefully chosen horses for courses, all winners.

Hounsell visits each winery four times a year to taste and discuss the wines, and is involved in the final blend decisions. It's a win-win scenario for all concerned, and there is a waiting list of would-be winemakers.

2013 Toolangi Vineyards Estate Yarra Valley Chardonnay

Estate-grown, made at Oakridge Estate, matured in French oak for 11 months; fine and elegant; has the length and finesse from the vineyard and David Bicknell's thumbprint in the complex bouquet. 13.5% alc; screwcap **96 points; drink to 2028; \$38**

2013 Toolangi Vineyards Pauls Lane Yarra Valley Pinot Noir

Estate-grown, hand-picked, made at Hoddles Creek Estate; matured in French oak barriques for 10 months. Exemplary colour; a fragrant, lightly spiced bouquet leads into a palate that has what the French call nervosity, an

almost three-dimensional combination of tactile and flavour characters that are woven together to provide exceptional energy and length. 13.5% alc; screwcap **97 points; drink to 2028; \$42**

Toolangi Vineyards Pauls Lane Yarra Valley Shiraz

Estate-grown; made at Coldstream Hills and Hoddles Creek Estate, blended and bottled after 18 months maturation in French oak; deep, clear colour; complex palate; savoury red and black cherry fruits and supporting tannins provide a mouth-watering finish and aftertaste. Will be very long-lived. 13.8% alc; screwcap **95 points; drink to 2038; \$38**

