

SE Focus
HD **Australian winemaker's vintage simply dynastic**
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AUSTRALIAN family **wine** dynasties are, arguably, agriculture's great anomaly. Where succession and longevity are becoming rare on farms, **wine** bucks the trend. Century-old names such as Yalumba, Brown Brothers, McWilliams and Angove continue to grow despite competition from commercial, industrial makers and a plethora of smaller wineries.

Victoria Angove, a director of the 130-year-old Angove Family Winemakers alongside brother Richard and father and managing director John, said they "regularly" received takeover offers.

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"You just say no," said Victoria, the sixth generation to run the medium-sized family **business**, started by her great, great grandfather in 1886.

"You should probably never say never, but for us, there's a real love of what we do. We have one, three, five and 20-year plans, we have a real vision of what we want the **brand** to be about.

"That is premium — alongside affordable and accessible — wines from South Australia's premium winegrowing regions." Angove owns three properties: 10ha at McLaren Vale, which includes their cellar door; 480ha (280ha under vine) at Paringa on the Murray River on the South Australian-Victorian border; while production is at their nearby Renmark winery. Half their grapes are sourced from external growers throughout South Australia, including McLaren Vale, the Barossa Valley, Coonawarra and the Adelaide Plains north of Adelaide, to bring total annual yield to 20,000 tonnes.

Annual production tips a **million** cases each year, with a range of brands representing varied styles and winegrowing regions and aimed at different markets. About 70 per cent is **sold** domestically, while overseas the US, UK, Germany and **China** are their most important export markets.

Victoria said the **business** model had continued to succeed where others had failed not only because of family dedication, but because of attention to detail in each aspect of winemaking.

Angove grapes come from conventional, organic and biodynamic vines with a "strong core" of growers certified organic and their production process also certified organic.

Victoria said organic vines tended to perform better in tough growing seasons and recovered from stress more quickly.

"We find using organic and biodynamic principles the vines have naturally stronger immune systems and greater tolerance to pests and disease pressure," she said.

"Even with conventionally farmed vines, we use as minimum inputs as we can." With varied grape sources, and varied wines and markets, all grapes are handled in separate parcels in the winemaking process. A microwinery sits within the winery, allowing small parcels of grapes — about half a tonne — to be crafted, outside the larger commercial process, up to 20 tonnes.

Angove has about 50 styles, with shiraz, chardonnay and cabernet the most popular.

Experimental varieties include carignan, a red found around the globe but with most plantings coming from France, as well as vermentino, a white grape largely found in Italy.

“Consumer tastes change. In the last two years there’s been big demand for pinot grigio and moscato. It takes at least three years to deliver a commercial level of fruit so we’re always looking into the crystal ball,” Victoria said.

Their most recognised bottle — “for its sheer number of medals” — is the Nine Vines Rose, released in 2004.

While Angove grapes are sourced from a variety of regions, in marketing terms the emphasis is on McLaren Vale, purely for its cache.

Victoria said marketing was crucial to any **wine brand**.

“What makes a **brand** fantastic is really an inexact science and often it’s not so much about the **wine** as the packaging styles,” she said.

“Every element helps, the colour of the cap, the style of font, the detail on the label, what kind of paper stock is used, what kind of bottle you choose, how tall or short it is.” With this in mind, Angove Family Winemakers has diverse wines on offer. The starting point is the \$10 Long Row, which has 12 different varieties and which makes up the largest volume.

Family Crest hovers around \$22, while the Warboys, priced about \$35, is a single vineyard range, sourced from the family’s Warboys Vineyard in McLaren Vale.

Their premium **wine** is The Medhyk, a McLaren Vale shiraz made only in the best years, with 2012 to be released soon.

“We have a complete portfolio, a number of brands across different price points and regions and styles. We are always mindful of our audience,” she said.

Victoria, who has two children with husband Heath Amber, said she had worked in every aspect of the **business**, down to cleaning bottles on the production line at 15. “I was nine when my grandfather asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up and I said to him, ‘I want to run your **business** for you grandpa’.”

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