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BY Angus Hughson  
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Jacques Lurton combines the traditions of Bordeaux with the experimentation of the new world to create a uniquely elegant style of **wine**

It is difficult to find two more dissimilar places than the rural landscape of Kangaroo **Island** off the coast of South Australia and Bordeaux, France's historic epicentre of fine **wine**. One is a small, wealthy city, with picturesque buildings and esplanades, many created thanks to the humble grapevine. The other is an idyllic agricultural oasis where animals graze with **million**-dollar views overlooking the Southern Ocean. Yet the two are linked by the regular presence of Jacques Lurton.

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The Lurton name is **wine** royalty in Bordeaux. The family roots stretch back more than 300 years with various well-regarded chateaus having passed through their hands. Growing up in the Lurton family gives an aspiring winemaker connections that money can't **buy** and a ticket to work in every **wine** region around the world.

Straight out of university in 1985, Jacques Lurton headed to Australia, craving experience and a breath of fresh air away from the family home, and ended up at Yenda near Griffith in the Riverina working for Doug McWilliam. At the time Yenda was a one-street, working-class town with a mixing pot of cultures - far removed from the life he had just left behind.

But it was exciting and here Lurton met a team of winemakers who gave him a different perspective on winemaking, many of whom have since been widely influential in shaping Australia's vinous future - Brian Croser, Con Moschos, Andrew Hardy, Martin Shaw and Tony Jordan, to name a few. It was a great time for Australian **wine**; experimentation and innovation were part of the daily routine - in contrast to Bordeaux, where the winemaking rules and styles had been set in stone decades before.

The young Jacques Lurton fell in love with making **wine** in the new world. Yet while Australia was the first stop, it most certainly was not the last. He and his brother Francois had projects at one time or another in Argentina, Italy, Uruguay, **China**, Spain, Portugal, Moldova, California and Chile as well as in their hometown of Bordeaux. Life was frenetic and exciting. Yet unlike his brother, Jacques Lurton gave up the globetrotting lifestyle to concentrate on maximising the potential of a few select vineyards. Since that first visit to Australia in 1985, Lurton has returned annually and in 2000 he and his wife bought a large plot on Kangaroo **Island** and The Islander **Estate** Vineyards were born.

Kangaroo **Island** was and remains a relatively undeveloped vineyard region with grazing and tourism the major industries. Yet Lurton saw potential as the **island's** maritime climate was similar to his Bordeaux home with high humidity and cooling winds drawn up from Antarctica sparing it the worst of summer's heat; it can be a full 7C cooler than in nearby Adelaide. In turn, Lurton hoped it would show potential with two unfashionable grapes that he had fallen in love with - semillon and cabernet Franc. In Pessac, south of Bordeaux, oak-fermented and matured semillon can create one of the world's great white wines, while to its east in St Emilion and Pomerol cabernet Franc is a key ingredient.

While the winemaking at The Islander **Estate** has a traditional French edge - and is all the better for it - Lurton's desire for experimentation remains strong and is showcased in the vineyard. While cabernet Franc and semillon are the focus, there are also additional parcels of malbec, sangiovese, shiraz, grenache and viognier to provide a range of blending options. The combination of French personality with a sweeter Australian fruit profile creates a unique style. There is detail to the fruit flavours and elegance, which comes both from the cool, exposed **site** on which the fruit has been grown and the winemaking techniques. Barrel fermentation and lees handling in the top whites, along with extended maceration in the reds, give the wines rare textural and aromatic nuance - small touches yet enough to give the wines real interest and a touch of French flair.

#### The Islander Old Rowley Shiraz Grenache Viognier 2008

This **wine** is showing the generosity of a hot vintage with powerful dark cherry, earth and spice aromatics. Full bodied, it shows an attractive tannin backbone complemented by developed meaty and cedar complexity, making it close to peak drinking.

#### The Investigator 2006

Lurton likes to release his wines with some bottle age and this **wine**, crafted from cabernet Franc with a touch of malbec, certainly shows why with its savoury yet restrained cedary, blackcurrant and leafy aromatics supported by French oak. Dry in the mouth with a **firm** line of beautifully integrated tannins, it is excellent now but will last another 10 years.

#### The Islander Wally White 2011

Modelled on the white wines of Bordeaux, this gently oaked semillon is showing a little development with nutty, lemon, hay and white peach fruit. Dry and round, it is an elegant style with complex lees and oak flavours finishing crisp and long.

**RE** austr : Australia | fra : France | aquit : Aquitaine | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania | eecz : European Union Countries | eurz : Europe | medz : Mediterranean | weurz : Western Europe

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