



less water into wine

ROB INGRAM TOASTS A VINEYARD THAT'S CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE BY PUTTING ITS GRAPES IN THE SHADE AND PIONEERING NEW METHODS OF IRRIGATION.

THOSE WITH AN environmental conscience may just be about to discover that it resides very close to your 15 million olfactory receptors.

How else to explain the sensory overload on offer from the 2006 Reserve Shiraz from McLaren Vale producer Dowie Doole?

Dowie Doole is the thinking man's shiraz. It's made for and by people with an awareness of environmental change — and a commitment to do something about it. People who have seen the light... or is that Light? Dowie Doole's winemaker, Brian Light, believes global warming and climate change is an immediate challenge for wine producers.

"Just look at the past three years in McLaren Vale," he says. "The 2006 vintage was one of the earliest and shortest on record. The 2007 vintage came amid one of the worst droughts ever experienced in South Australia. And earlier this year we had a record-breaking hot spell.

"You'd be remiss — socially and commercially — to ignore the importance of the changes, and to fail to take action to counteract them."

Brian and the Dowie Doole team are pioneering sustainability measures in McLaren Vale.

"Securing a reliable water supply has been of key importance and we've been very active in that area," he says.

"One of Dowie Doole's principals, Norm Doole, was a key player in setting up the Willunga Basin Water Company, which takes treated

water from the Christies Beach wastewater plant and delivers it to over 80 grape growers. The scheme has gone a long way towards drought-proofing viticulture in the district and has become a nationwide model for water recycling on an industrial scale."

Norm Doole has also masterminded a new watering regime. Instead of employing trickle irrigation over prolonged periods, shorter spells of more intense watering have been implemented. As a result, the vines are developing deeper, stronger root systems that are far more drought resistant.

Climate change has also prompted the viticulture team at Dowie Doole to rethink vine canopy management and to discard its old trellising systems designed to maximise exposure of the berries to sunlight.

"As temperatures increase, this exposure and the associated higher berry temperatures tend to build undesirable harsh phenolics in white grapes and also interfere with anthocyanin development in reds," Brian says. (Phenolic white wines taste coarse because of an excess of skin tannin, and anthocyanin development is important for producing desirable colour in red wines.)

Dowie Doole is now using a trellis system that allows in dappled light but protects grapes from overexposure to heat and direct light. The developments are part of a broader ecologically-friendly strategy that



includes improving soil structure and creating biodiversity in the vineyard. But can the changes be tasted?

Brian is adamant that the changes have enhanced the label's latest three wines — a 2006 Reserve Shiraz, a 2006 Shiraz and a 2007 Merlot.

"While they're not shrinking violets in the alcohol stakes, they're not supercharged either... and the vibrant fruit flavours are in excellent balance," he says.

"We've aimed for wines that are savoury rather than overtly sweet in their fruitiness — wines that are natural partners to food — and I think we've achieved that." *

2006 Dowie Doole Reserve Shiraz, about \$50

It works! Here's a shiraz that is friendly in disposition towards environment and consumer. Herb, spice and earthy aromas on the nose are savoury and appealing, and the silky palate is intense, long and elegant with truffled flavours and deft balance. And at 15 per cent alcohol, what warms the earth has been harnessed to warm the drinker. Better still, at \$50 it's closer to the \$90 shirazes than the \$30 shirazes.