



## Name of the game

A Barossa winery keeps a family tradition alive.

**T**he trouble with being a whippersnapper in the wine game is that you sometimes lack the historical perspective of your elders. Take Hamilton's Ewell, for example. Now as far as people my age (30-something) are concerned, this is a relatively new Barossa wine company, perhaps confusingly similar to the other Hamilton wineries already out there (Hamilton Wines and Hugh Hamilton Fine Wines, for example, both based in McLaren Vale).

To anyone a generation or two older, though, the name resonates as strongly as Penfolds, Orlando or Lindemans. You see, not only was Hamilton's Ewell one of South Australia's first vineyards (established in Adelaide, near Glenelg, by Richard Hamilton in 1838), but during the middle of the 20th century it was one of the state's largest producers and exporters, not only of high volume popular wines such as Hamilton's Ewell Moselle (that name may bring a tear to the eyes of some older readers), but also liqueurs and spirits such as whisky and gin.

After the company's vineyards were sold to Mildara in 1979, though, the brand died and it was left to other descendants of the original Richard Hamilton to keep the name alive - until the early 1990s, when Mark Hamilton, an Adelaide lawyer who had been a board member when Hamilton's Ewell was sold to Mildara, slowly began rebuilding the name by buying vineyards in the Barossa Valley - including the century-old Stonegarden winery and vineyard in the Eden Valley which his father Robert had run since buying it back off Mildara in the early 1980s.

The 75-year-old Robert Hamilton is an excellent ambassador for the company and an active participant in the winemaking. He worked for the original Hamilton's Ewell company from the late 1940s until its sale, and remembers his early years in Melbourne, selling

sherry to legendary wine trade figures such as Samuel Wynn and the Seabrook family.

He also remembers how technologically advanced the original Ewell winery was: "We had temperature control thanks to a very large refrigeration unit put in in 1936," he says. "This helped us make good white wine at a time when most Australian white you wouldn't want to touch."

And he brings a great sense of historical perspective: "When Mark started buying the vineyards in 1992, the industry was struggling. Remember this is only ten years ago. And it was only a few years before that we had the vine pull scheme in the Barossa - people were being paid \$50 an acre to pull vines out."

This is well worth bearing in mind when you taste the three best wines that Hamilton's Ewell make - all of which rely on very ripe, rich grapes from mature, low-yielding Barossa vineyards for their quality. The 1999 Stonegarden Grenache Shiraz (about \$20) is a black, licoricey, spicy version of this increasingly popular combination of grapes; the 1999 Railway Shiraz (about \$25) is meaty, sweet-brambly and rich; the 1999 Fuller's Barn Single Vineyard Shiraz (about \$35) is similarly meaty and rich, but darker, more aromatic and longer-tasting - it could develop better with a few years' cellaring, too. Both shirazes have a (welcome) touch more finesse and restraint than the widely acclaimed but rather enormous 1998 versions released last year - but they're still satisfying and generous wines.

The Hamilton's Ewell cellar door is at Siegersdorf Vineyard, Barossa Valley Way, Nuriootpa (a vineyard once owned by Yalumba's Wyndham Hill Smith, who had plans to put a racecourse there). Call (08) 8562 4600 or log on to [www.hamiltonewell.com.au](http://www.hamiltonewell.com.au). The wines are distributed nationally by T3 Fine Wines: e-mail [t3fw.syd@t3finewines.com.au](mailto:t3fw.syd@t3finewines.com.au) or call (02) 9666 0066 for stockists. ☉

### THE FULL BOTTLE

## 2000 Liebich The Darkie Barossa Shiraz \$35

This curiously-named wine will not appeal to everybody. It is about as full-blown and over the top as shiraz can get: pitch black, hugely alcoholic (close to 16 per cent) and packed to the gunwales with sweet chocolate and port-soaked prune flavours. If blockbuster reds are your bag, though, you'll love it. Contact Liebich Wines on [liebichwein@iprimus.com.au](mailto:liebichwein@iprimus.com.au) or telephone (08) 8524 4543.

