

AUSTINS HALL OF FAME 2022. GAIL THOMAS

Tonight's inductee into the Hall of Fame began in 1982 as a small vineyard as a one acre plot of Riesling with plantings of chardonnay cabernet sauvignon following soon after. Over the years the business has expanded to become one of the major players in the region today with their wines being awarded many trophies, awards and accolades.

We recognize these impressive achievements and support to the Geelong Wine Industry, and induct them into our Geelong Wine Show Hall of Fame.

Inspired by the knowledge of our region's wine-growing history and the Swiss vigneron in the 1800's, along a desire to make wine, it all began in 1982 on a five-acre block in Waurn Ponds for tonight's Hall of Fame inductees Richard and Pam Austin, the Founders of Austins Wines.

After putting their toe in the water and planting an acre of riesling, chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon plantings followed, with the first vintage in 1987. From those early days and modest beginnings, and the knowledge that soils near Bannockburn were producing good pinots, the business relocated to a 490ha property at Sutherlands Creek in the Moorabool Valley in 1989 and today Austins have around 63ha under vine in the limestone soils.

The family started planting vines not long after purchasing the run down sheep property with Richard later retiring from his clothing importing and wholesaling business to concentrate his energy and passion into the wine industry.

Along with shiraz, chardonnay and riesling, 65-70% of the vineyard is planted to pinot noir across five different clones and on different parts of the farm. The vines have been scattered on different slopes and aspects to provide the opportunity to make them separately and blend them together. MV6 is the staple backbone of the wine with other clones adding interest. In the last decade pinot gris has been planted along with some more chardonnay and four additional clones of pinot noir, part done by grafting and part new plantings. This sees Austins having one of the biggest pinot noir plantings in Australia.

For the first 12-15 years John Ellis at Hanging Rock made the wines. When the Sutherlands Creek facility was established the winemaking was done in conjunction with Scott Ireland who was contract winemaker for over fourteen years before Austins employed their own winemaker.

During the 1990's Pam continued to market the wine and her efforts in having Geelong wines poured at premium restaurants along the Eastern seaboard was an integral part in establishing and promoting our region's winemaking profile nationally.

With a bumper crop in 1990, Richard called on son Scott to help sell the wines which he did internationally and domestically. The mid-tier 6FT6 range of wines was launched in 2003 when the current vineyard came into full production.

Scott became managing director in 2004 when the 400 tonne capacity winery was built and in 2008 officially transacted to buy the business, taking 100 percent ownership and leasing the vineyards, resulting in Scott and Belinda as second generation owners. Now, with their four

children, the future for the next generation being involved in the business certainly looks promising.

In 2022 after 7 years in the making, together with State Government and public funding Austin's Cellar Door opened in the renovated shearing shed and has become a unique and popular destination.

Over the years many trophies, awards and accolades have been bestowed upon the Austins Wines including a trophy for Best White Table Wine at the 1992 Ballarat Wine Show for their riesling.

At the 2002 Geelong Wine Show their Barrabool Wines 2000 cabernet sauvignon took out the Best Wine of the Show along with the trophy for Best Red Wine of the Show.

This honour was repeated at the 2014 Geelong Wine Show with Austins 2013 'Ellyse' chardonnay, taking out the Best Wine of the Show along with the trophy for the Show's best chardonnay.

Other trophies include Le Concours de Vins du Victoria and the Australian Cool Climate Wine Show.

So in recognition for their achievements and contribution in putting the Geelong region on the winemaking map, it is with great pleasure this evening that we induct Richard and Pam Austin into the Geelong Wine Hall of Fame.
