

Barossa growers find ways to move forward

In uncertain times when selling uncontracted grapes is becoming more difficult, growers are trying to find different ways to find a home for their unsold fruit.

And Barossa Valley grapegrowers Anthony and Jodie Scholz, of the newly-branded Scholz Estate believe they have hit on the right formula.

With 41 hectares of shiraz vines at Ebenezer, the couple will have an extra 50 tonnes to 60t of fruit which will come online next vintage from their youngest block.

They plan to seek buyers for this fruit using similar methods that worked successfully last season: creating information packs to target wineries in the hope of developing long-term relationships.

The information packs include details about their vineyard, such as soil type, yielding history, irrigation methods and the volume of fruit for sale, and information about some of the wines that have been created using Scholz Estate fruit.

Anthony said the 2009 vintage was the first time that fruit was picked from the vineyard's youngest block, and while the rest of the shiraz was contracted, the extra fruit from the young vines did not have a home.

So the Scholzs sent their



By RENEE DE CICCO

information packs to 35 wineries.

"Out of those, we found two that were interested, and we managed to sell our fruit," Anthony said.

"The idea of the info pack is to develop new homes for these grapes.

"Three years ago, the wineries were chasing us, and now we are chasing them. The centre of gravity has changed."

While the couple actively promotes their fruit to potential buyers, they say it has not been an easy process.

"You get a lot of knock-backs but you just have to keep going," Jodie said.

"We have found a targeted approach works best with timely follow-up. We offer a friendly but not intrusive approach and endeavour to make ourselves easy to work with."

The pair is also in the process of arranging a tasting of wines from the 2009 vintage, inviting all the wineries to which they have sold their fruit.

Anthony says it will allow these

wineries to taste the range of Scholz wines and also act as a 'thank you' to these wineries for their grape purchases.

The wineries will provide samples and tasting notes about how the wine was made, while the Scholzs will give details about how the grapes were grown, including soil type and pruning methods.

The pair say the tasting will allow wineries to explore other ways to use the family's fruit.

A wine made solely from Scholz Estates grapes recently achieved 96 points in James Halliday's Wine Companion, so the couple are quietly confident about the quality of their fruit and the special qualities of the Ebenezer sub-region.

Anthony is also active in improving his vineyard practices. He has conducted mulching trials to improve water efficiency, put a cover on his dam to reduce evaporation and is completing a tafeSA Diploma of Viticulture and Vineyard Management, which has allowed him to learn about vineyard processes and exchange ideas with other growers.

"It's very important in today's climate – you have got to make



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yourself stand out, find reasons why your fruit is better than parcels over the fence," he said.

"Today's climate is not going to be here forever, and we still have got to be moving forward."

For the Scholz family, progression

and adapting to change is a priority.

"We believe in what we are producing and we just want our fruit to go to homes that we can deal easily and communicate with," Jodie said.

Details: Scholz Estate 0417 640 309

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Torrens Valley Mechanical (TVM) began ten years ago and has grown to become a leading service provider in the Adelaide Hills and Barossa and Clare Valleys.

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Future in quality, not cheap mediocrity

AUSTRALIAN Vintners Group's push into the black, given a brief mention in the finance pages last month, deserves a little more attention.

And while the genie has not left the bottle, the company's pathway to profit should be put in perspective.

Formerly McGuigan Simeon Wines, AVG generated positive cashflow of \$29 million in the six months to the end of June, compared with a negative of \$1.1m in the same period the previous year.

Chief executive officer Dane Hudson reported that sales were up 9 per cent "significantly ahead of the industry in volume and value".

The news convinced investors that AVG had made a lot of progress and for those who had the vision – picking up shares for 18 cents to see them hit 49c

Claret & Glass with PETER BRADY

a few days later – there could have been a good return.

Hovering around 42c, the stock still represents good buying.

But it's the strategy that should interest the wider industry: cost-cutting, streamlining and a focus on exports – especially higher-branded labels.

Interestingly, the AVG turnaround came on the back of Tasmania Unbottled 2009's stunning success.

The eastern states roadshow – Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane – wowed the punters and stamped a formula for the future in their collective minds: top quality, for a reasonable price.

At the same time, Blaxland Vineyards Ltd director Ron Collins came out in defence of established and profitable managed investment schemes.

He made the point that all sectors had their share of "charlatans and vagrants" and that successful models should not be discarded or legislated against for the sins of a few.

But as the wine industry landscape rationalises nationally and the parameters for success change dramatically, his comments about oversupply and leadership resonate.

Australia, he says, will have to reverse its "cheap and cheerful" reputation on international markets and more successfully market quality brands at sustainable price points.

The take-home message is abundantly clear: pick up your game or stop playing.

New! Commercially Robust Secateurs

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Powered Secateurs have been available for a number of years but priced at over \$3000 a set they've been out of reach for many people. A new, commercially robust, model has now been released that sells for only \$285.00, putting it in reach of all users. This is a sturdy unit, made from heavy duty poly material and powered by a 18 volt nicad battery that fits comfortably in a belt pack. The working capacity is 25 mm, less than the expensive models but gets the job done just the same. It has a two stage safety switch and the secateurs reopen when the trigger is released. **It takes under 3 seconds to complete the cutting cycle.** The cuts are clean and sharp. Provided the tool is kept sharp, it will give many hours of effortless pruning. The NiCad battery has a 1700 Mah capacity and is recharged in five hours with a simple **240 volt wall charger, supplied with the unit.** The cutting edges are long lasting and easily resharpened and honed with a diamond file. Overall these units are great value and will do the job required.

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