

# WINEMAKER PROFILE

*Judy Gifford*

**Judy Gifford's journey toward wine is an interesting one. She's proved a dab hand at many things, but the elusive mix of science and romance overcame - all roads lead to wine.**

Wine steamrolled into Judy's life at thirty. She'd just left her post in Jordan where she was a watersports instructor for the Royal family. Travelling through Europe she was entranced by wine and thought winemaking sounded like a great job which combined many things she loved.

A country girl, she was born into a farming community in Toowoomba, Queensland. Judy was already a biochemist who'd worked on dengue fever, and a love of food had led her to undertake an apprenticeship as a chef.

Judy applied and was accepted to study at the University of Burgundy in Dijon, France where she graduated in 1995. She then worked vintages in New Zealand, Burgundy and Bordeaux, and in Tasmania at Piper's Brook with Andrew Pirie, as well as making Burgundian styles in 1997 in China under the direction of Australian flying winemaker Gary Baldwin.

Returning to Australia a confirmed "Burgundy Girl" Judy headed south to Victoria; she was drawn to the Peninsula by its ideal climate for Pinot noir, its rural feel and its proximity to Melbourne - and after being 800km from the sea in Dijon for four years she was glad to be near the coast once again.

In 1998 Judy took up the position as winemaker at Dromana Estate with Garry Crittenden and remained until 2002 when she left to care for her two new Ethiopian-born daughters Egi and Rediet. The new family travelled half way across the world from Addis Ababa to McCrae together and have been inseparable since.



The girls are now twelve and seven and have fun creating mischief in the vineyard at Darling Park where mum Judy has been the winemaker and general manager for the past two years.

**Darling Park is a magical place and has provided just the right sort of challenge for the energetic Judy. The wines are elegant with layers of complexity and it is the goal of Judy and owners, the Liberman and Coe families, to produce wines amongst the best on the Peninsula.**

Attention to detail is everything. The small three and a half acre home vineyard is in its second year of management by organic principles. The past two years have seen much work tweaking the site with some vines being pulled out and replaced. Additional high quality fruit is sourced from one other local vineyard.

Darling Park's cellar door is a warm and welcoming place with whimsical labels featuring Australian artworks from the Liberman family's collection.

On the bench you'll find wines to fall in love with. The 2004 Reserve Chardonnay is a ripper, among the best locally. Two sparkling styles are available as well as a pepper and earth Syrah (shiraz). Viognier and "cane cut" Pinot Gris are made in minute quantities but are worth seeking out.

Guests are encouraged to relax and enjoy the wines with a Peninsula Grazing Platter. Judy and mosaic sculptor Robyn Eastgate have designed a children's garden with a sandpit, in view of the tasting bench and verandah. For families with small children it is a delightful find. - Emily Davenport

autumn.winter . beetroot . celeriac . pinot noir  
harvest markets . fennel . mushrooms . open fires

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