

Sarah Kate Dineen

When I arrived for my appointment with Sarah-Kate Dineen. I was told Sarah had sent her apologies, she had to attend to an emergency and would be 10 – 15 minutes late. Whilst I was waiting, I took the opportunity to admire the amazing new Tempus Two winery and Cellar door and my mind was wondering what could have gone so drastically wrong.

So close to vintage, could it be a staffing issue, maybe mechanical problems, inspecting hail damage or a delivery gone astray. None of the above, when she arrived with her lovely engaging smile, she told me she needed to race home to climb up in the highest branches of a tree to rescue her new kitten, Rex, who was too scared to make it's way down. Life's never boring as an enthusiastic, young acclaimed winemaker. And I thought a situation quite typical of Sarah-Kate's approach to the task ahead. Let's get in and do it and do it the best way we can and achieve the best result. For the unacquainted, following is a small synopsis of her short but very impressive resume.

Sarah-Kate is one of the 'new generation' winemakers that is setting the world on fire. She holds a degree in Oenology from the University of Lincoln (Christchurch, New Zealand) and during this time helped establish her parent's vineyard and label (Mt. Maude) in Central Otago in New Zealand. She made her way to the Hunter in 1996 and worked the first few vintages at Brokenwood wines working with Ian Riggs and Dan Dineen, before joining McGuigan Wines working with Peter Hall and Rodney Kempe, then joining Wandin Valley Estate as Chief winemaker, before being offered her current position as head winemaker for Tempus Two and Roche Wines.

As you can see Sarah-Kate is a sought after, talented and innovative winemaker who possesses an all consuming passion for making each wine the best it can be, given the fruit she can use.



"I am aware it can all come across a bit cliché, but I have been given opportunities other winemakers would love to have. I also gained hands-on experience by working in the Rhone district in France. I learned so much and was aching find a place where I could put my newfound knowledge into practise. Where better than the Hunter and nowhere better than to start at Brokenwood, which has been like a nursery for sending many of us budding wine makers into the scary big wide world of wine. But with a grounding that has proven invaluable to me. Here you work hard, have lots of fun at the same time, but are also taught to nurture and protect the wines, in a work environment where each individual team member is always encouraged to give their best. And here you can always rely on the expertise

of 'Riggsy' to give you good advice. I loved my time here, but wanted to experience what it would be like to be part of a big team in a commercial winery and at McGuigan wines I learned the values of making consistently good mass produced wines that have a broad appeal to the general public. Working with Peter and Rodney was great, since they are both great teachers and taught me how to pick which fruit to use for the big range of wines at different price points and learned a lot about the logistics of working in a big winery. McGuigan have about 15,000 acres of fruit, so to have access to so much fruit is fantastic.

I did miss the intimacy of working with a small and dedicated team and like being involved in the diversity of the winemaking process, so, when the opportunity presented itself to become head winemaker at Wandin Valley Estate it appealed to me, since it would give me the chance again to have some involvement in vineyard management, winemaking techniques, purchasing barrels & equipment and to some point even became involved in the sales and marketing of my own wines. I also worked for wonderful people, Phillipa and Jim Davern are great achievers and time here gave me some understanding of how competitive the wine industry has become over the past 5 years. When Lisa McGuigan approached me to come and join her team to open up the brand new \$12 million Tempus Two wine complex, I just couldn't refuse. Like any new venture, initially I was a bit nervous, since you are never quite sure if it is going to work. But now, 2 years on, I can only say that I sometimes still have to pinch myself that



this is all happening. The synergy between Lisa, myself and my assistant winemaker Liz Jackson has just been incredible and I am still on this roller coaster going up.

Tempus Two has allowed me as a winemaker to be innovative, experiment and the back up and support in marketing and the company's forward thinking approach has been great. And on top of it I get to work in the newest winery in the Hunter.

I love working with the new and up and coming varieties like Viognier, Pinot Gris, Tempranillo, Sangiovese and 2 vintages ago we introduced a new blend called 'Melange' which is like a 'Rhone Valley' wine blend of Marsanne and Viognier.

However, I still have the opportunity to also make classic Hunter Valley wines like Semillon and Shiraz and love making Chardonnay. These wines are made under the Tallawanta range for the Roche family. A relatively new label in the Hunter but one that has the resourcefulness of some of the best-established vineyards in the Hunter, namely the Tallawanta & Stevens vineyards. It is an honour as a winemaker to be entrusted with the fruit from these highly acclaimed and historic vineyards.

What both wine labels have in common though is: Always strive to be the best.

So, What does the future hold Sarah-Kate?

"I am proud of the wines I have made at Tempus Two winery and it is lovely to receive confirmation of the wine's quality through wine writers and wine shows (we were awarded 4 trophies in 2004) however I know there is always room for improvement.

You only get one go at it every year, so, each new vintage is exciting. I would love to make a crackerjack Viognier and a blockbuster Zinfandel and live in hope of one day making the ultimate Pinot Noir in Australia, but that might be some time off yet, since good fruit is so hard to find."

Look forward to Sarah-Kate's future wines, she is a woman in a hurry with a delightful personality, reflected in her beautiful wines. If you would bottle her, you would end up with a great bottle of 'Billecart Champagne'.