

innocent bystander

Innocent Bystander, Yarra Valley Syrah 2015

PRODUCER

This winery changed hands in May 2016, with one family company, Brown Brothers, taking it off the hands of another, its founder, Phil Sexton. So associated is Innocent Bystander with the Yarra Valley that the new owners have made the intelligent decision to build a new winery in Healesville, just across the parking lot from Giant Steps. And they are quickly signing contracts with all the grape growers that Phil has used for Innocent Bystander so that the style of the wines remains unchanged. That style - wines that are regional and varietal, reflecting the soil, climate and topography of the cool climate in the Yarra Valley - has been the base upon which the reputation of Innocent Bystander has been built.

VINEYARDS

Fruit was selected from the Sexton and Tarraford vineyards in the Central Yarra, with a smaller contribution from the Lone Star Creek vineyard on the Upper Yarra basalt soils, which adds a hint of pepper. Vineyard management is intensive, with tasks such as shoot thinning, crop thinning and harvesting all carefully carried out by hand. The vineyards are adapting to biodynamic practices with the express purpose of further distinguishing each site and improving grape and wine quality. The Yarra Valley climate is cool - slightly cooler than Bordeaux and slightly warmer than Burgundy - and, although alpine, gets some maritime influence due to being on the southern (seaward) side of the Great Dividing Range. This results in slow and steady ripening.

VINTAGE

Good winter rains and optimum spring weather started off the season with an even fruit set. Ideal summer growing conditions followed, with an average January temperature of 27.5°C. Welcome rain in mid-February brought a little relief, and the grapes were in near perfect condition when they came into the winery. The 2015 vintage may be Innocent Bystander's best vintage yet. It is rare to see a year where good yields were matched in harmony with such pristine fruit quality.

VINIFICATION

Whole bunches were used in batches at varying percentages based on fruit structure and source. The overall blend incorporates 40% whole bunches. A cold soak was followed by fermentation with mainly indigenous yeast strains. Variations of hand plunging, pigeage and 'drain and return' were applied to the ferments, the frequency varying from parcel to parcel. Fermentation peaked at 32°C. Maceration lasted three days. The wine was then matured for 12 months in French oak barriques and puncheons. Separate batches of wine completed natural malolactic fermentation before blending and bottling.

TASTING NOTES

Exotic pink pepper, fresh cherries, dried orange peel, dark cocoa and a hint of star anise on the nose. Earthy and luscious flavours, with black olives, cardamom spice and a hint of earthy smoky char to finish.



VINTAGE INFORMATION

Vintage	2015
Region	Victoria
Grape Varieties	100% Syrah/Shiraz
Winemaker	Steve Flamsteed & Tim Shand
Closure	Stelvin
ABV	13.8%
Wine pH	3.6
Bottle Sizes	75cl