

INTERVIEW WITH WINEMAKER SCOTT ZRNA -

*Fox Creek Wines*



It all began when a group of medicos decided to realise a lifelong passion of creating a wine from bare earth and sunshine in McLaren Vale, one of South Australia's premier wine regions. Fox Creek Wines was born when Jim and Helen Watts bought the 32 hectare Fox Creek Vineyard property in 1984.

For me, the Fox Creek range of wines rate high on my cellar list and I can only commend the effort and high quality of the wines produced. In an effort to better understand the success of Fox Creek wines I put some questions to Scott as chief winemaker.

**GB:** Scott, tell me about your current vintage Shiraz?

**Scott:** Our Reserve Shiraz is a blend of 6 different vineyards, each situated in a different climactic sub region of McLaren Vale, and on different soil types. The reason we source from multiple vineyards is that each site has its characteristic style, flavour profile and structure. When blended together the resulting wine is more balanced and better structured, with a multilayered flavour and tannin profile that makes the wine quite interesting to taste as it opens up in the glass. We have also matched a number of

oak forest and cooper combinations to each vineyard which gives another layer of interest and variation to the wines. Individual barrels that show potential during maturation are highlighted for potential inclusion in the Reserve blend, but still each barrel must positively contribute to the final blend to actually be used/part used.

**GB:** How old are the vines and tell more little bit more about the soil, aspect etc. of the vineyard for this wine?

**Scott:** The vines vary from 16 to 101 years old and the soil/aspect varies from elevated vineyards of loam over limestone with a northerly aspect, loam over ironstone with a westerly aspect to vineyards on the flats with Black Biscay cracking clay, dry alluvial loam and gravel and silty clay creek flood plains

**GB:** I just love the texture and complexity of your Merlot so tell me more

about the philosophy in making what is at times a difficult variety to grow?

**Scott:** Merlot can be disappointing at times so why merlot from McLaren Vale? Most merlot in Australia is a single clone D3V14 which performs (or is managed) poorly in a lot of regions and sites across Australia and this has led to the negative view of the variety amongst Australian wine

consumers. Newer clones introduced to Australia that have done a lot better in this region are the 8R6R and Q45-14 clones. We source fruit from both clones from 2 growers on loamy free draining soils. I was blown away during the 2008 vintage when we sourced this fruit for the first time, during ferment the colour, aromas and tannins being expressed in the wine was like nothing I had ever seen. As the wine matured in some older French oak the perfume, depth of flavour and fine tannin structure continued to amaze and excite us as we just hadn't seen merlot like that in Australia. In subsequent years we have even put some into some one year old oak as it has the power and structure to be able to handle it. McLaren Vale is a very consistently performing region, the maritime climate allowing the wines to achieve good levels of flavour and tannin ripeness most years. Even so we don't make our Reserve Merlot every year as it has to meet a stringent quality standard, and also I can be a pedantic fussy bastard.

**GB:** If you had to compare the wine would you say it was aiming to resemble an overseas Merlot?

**Scott:** We are not really trying to resemble what people overseas are doing but really just trying to do my best to express the variety and vineyard in its best light. Contrary to general consumer belief merlot is fine, elegant, perfumed and balanced, with some beautiful tannin texture and length. People are often (pleasantly) surprised tasting our Merlot as they are expecting simple, soft and fruity but get richness, complexity, elegance and persistence.



**Fox Creek Vineyard**  
Malpas Road, McLaren Vale SA  
[www.foxcreekwines.com](http://www.foxcreekwines.com)

*Greg Bondar*  
Food and Wine Editor



# PILU AT FRESHWATER

*buon appetito!*



It has taken a very special birthday celebration to see me dining at Pilu at Freshwater and so my sincere thanks to the lovely lady Ros for organising the lunch at Pilu - why did I wait so long?

Situated on the shores of beautiful Freshwater Beach with spectacular views of the ocean, the restaurant was established in 2004 by owners Giovanni Pilu and Marilyn Anecchini. Not only is Pilu an award winning restaurant but the ambience is both relaxed and sophisticated delivering exceptional service and a memorable experience.

Interestingly, Sardinian etymology tells me that 'pilu' comes from the Latin 'pilus' meaning hair. For the linguist, etymology explains the origin or derivation of a word and is the branch of linguistics concerned with the history of the forms and meanings of words. So, Giovanni Pilu was born in Sardinia and arrived in Australia in 1992, aged 20 with a passion for the unique flavours of his homeland which has led to Giovanni and a group of like-minded Sydney Italian restaurateurs having established the Council of Italian Restaurants in Australia (CIRA) to safeguard Italian culinary culture.

Our lunch on the day consisted of the Menu Sardo (essentially a degustation affair) offering the best of Sardinian cuisine using the best of local, seasonal ingredients and the highest quality products imported from Italy. Sardinian cooking is steeped in history and influenced by many nations and civilizations including the Arabs, Phoenicians, Romans and Spaniards. Meat, cheese and pasta are the staples of Sardinian cooking although seafood is also very popular. As a guide, our 'feast' consisted of seven courses with matching wines.

We started with Pesce spada affumicato, cachi e condimento al balsamico bianco (Swordfish, cured and smoked with persimmon and white balsamic) with the 2010 Santadi 'Le Torri' - Carignano del Sulcis DOC followed by the Gnocchetti di patate, polpa di granchio, guanciale croccante e pane carasau (Potato gnocchetti with Queensland Spanner Crab, guanciale and crispy Sardinian bread) with the 2010 Sella e Mosca 'Terre Bianche' - Alghero DOC.

As we approached the main courses the Porcetto arrosto (oven roasted suckling pig, served on the bone with condiments) with the 2009 Sedilesu 'Mamuthone' - Cannonau di Sardegna DOC was outstanding. To finish the Seadas ripiena di ricotta con miele di corbezzolo (Sardinian fried pastry filled with fresh ricotta and sultanas, served with warm corbezzolo honey) with the 2009 Dolianova - Moscato di Cagliari DOC was superb -tasteful with the ideal portion control. To finish the 'Mezzo' Mirto - Lucrezio is an experience and one that you need to place on your Bucket List of wines.

The Pilu wine list was selected to take you on an 'adventure in wine', and is designed to complement Sardinian cuisine. The DOC and DOCG acronyms stand for Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) which refer to zones where the grapes specifically defined with the main difference between that a DOCG wine must pass a blind taste test for quality in addition to conforming to the strict legal requirements to be designated as a wine from the area in question. It's easy to see why Sardinia earned the moniker of 'insula vini' (wine island) in the 16th century. Lunch is Tuesday to Sunday from 12 noon with Dinner Tuesday to Saturday from 6.00pm.

Our special thanks go to Tim (our waiter for the day) who must be congratulated on both his professionalism and his operatic ambitions - what a voice!

**Pilu at Freshwater**  
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