

Ben Cane
Winemaker
Twomey Cellars

After earning a B.S. in Organic Chemistry and Psychology from the University of Adelaide, Ben Cane was pondering his next move when a close family friend asked him three questions: Do you enjoy travel? Do you like eccentric people? Do you like to drink wine? The answer to all three questions was a resounding “yes.” The friend’s advice: “Then become a winemaker.”



One look at Ben’s resume reveals that he has definitely followed his dream. That pivotal conversation led him back to the University of Adelaide where he received his post-graduate diploma in oenology in 1998. During his time there, he worked a number of jobs that exposed him to many aspects of the wine industry, including vineyard and cellar work and managing a bottle shop. With diploma in hand, Ben set out first for the Hunter Valley, where he worked a harvest at Simon Gilbert Wine Services, and then to Santa Barbara County in California, where he was assistant winemaker for Arcadian Wines.

His wanderlust then led him on an around-the-globe trip to South America, Africa, Asia and Europe, and after working another harvest at Arcadian, he landed back in Australia as a vineyard manager in the Barossa Valley. For the next five years, Ben bounced back and forth between Australia and Europe, with cellar and winemaking jobs in the Languedoc, New South Wales, at Domaine Dujac in Morey-St.-Denis, De Bortoli Wines in Yarra Valley, Poderi Colla in Piedmont and Yalumba Wines in the Barossa. Moving again to the United States in 2006, Ben became a contract winemaker at Freestone Vineyards. In 2007, he accepted the position of assistant winemaker for the Pinot Noir program at Twomey Cellars and in 2008 also assumed responsibility for the Sauvignon Blanc production and was named as Winemaker for these two varietals.

Even before his career began, Ben has been drawn to Pinot Noir. In University he had the opportunity to drink a rare Australian Pinot Noir from Mt. Mary, but it was at Arcadian in Santa Barbara that his real love affair with the grape began. “The owner had a credo that if we were going to make great wine, we had to drink great wine,” says Ben. “And we did.” It’s a credo Ben holds to this day.

Overseeing the Pinot program at Twomey Cellars is a dream job for Ben. The sister winery of Silver Oak Cellars, Twomey has produced a Pinot from its Russian River WestPin Vineyard for several years, but Ben has expanded the program to include other regional and vineyard-focused wines from Anderson Valley, Santa Maria Valley (Bien Nacido Vineyard) and the Sonoma Coast. He’s also using the knowledge he gained in Burgundy and elsewhere to experiment with winemaking techniques, clones, coopers, picking times and native yeasts. With the support of the Duncan family, owners of Silver Oak and Twomey, and with the sage input of Daniel Baron, who directs the winemaking at both wineries, Ben feels like a kid in a candy store. “I have a strong vision for Twomey in terms of vineyard sourcing, wine style and quality, and I’ve been given a lot of leeway and tools to realize it,” says Ben.

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