

Cellartalk Huon Hooke

To Hell and back

An incorrect label has cost brothers Rhys and Garth Eather, of Meerea Park, three trophies at this year's Hunter Valley Wine Show. On August 18 the brothers were presented with trophies for the best red of show, best 100 per cent Hunter Valley red and best currently available red wine, all for the '03 Terracotta shiraz. But general manager Garth later discovered the wrong show sample labels had been affixed to the bottles and the wine that won the trophies was a new wine, 2003 Meerea Park Hell Hole Shiraz. It was an honest mistake but the committee had to cancel the awards. It then made the difficult decision not to award the trophies this year. The Hell Hole, however, retains its gold medal. "It's cost us dearly," says Garth, "but in the end, we would prefer to be known as honest winemakers than have people saying we were given a trophy we shouldn't have got." The Hell Hole is likely to be released in late September at \$55.

Bright white

The 1998 semillon vintage turned out to be a big winner at the Hunter wine show. With its 1998 Vat 1 Semillon, Tyrrell's won three trophies: best dry white of show, best premium vintage dry white and best currently available dry white. McWilliam's Mount Pleasant won two trophies for best named vineyard wine and best 100 per cent Hunter Valley dry white wine with its '98 Lovedale Semillon. The 2004 Mistletoe Chardonnay, which won best wine

of show at the '05 Boutique Wines of Australia Awards a few weeks ago, carried off another trophy, for best chardonnay of show. Warrarong won the trophy for best current vintage (2005) semillon, a hotly contested class with no fewer than six gold medals out of 61 entries, while the much-decorated Reg Drayton 1994 Lambkin Semillon won best museum dry white.

Into the Ark

The storage company Wine Ark has new private wine vaults at its Alexandria site. The manager, Tom Stockell, says it is the largest of its kind in the southern hemisphere, with 4000 square metres of floor space. The temperature- and humidity-controlled bunker can hold 1000 private wine vaults, ranging from 10 to 10,000-case capacities. More than 100 of the vaults have been let and Wine Ark is offering up to three months' free storage to the first 50 clients who can move in before the end of September. The cost? Most will pay between \$2 and \$3 a case a month. Inquiries: 1800 111 275.

Doubly delicious

Port Phillip Estate has been making great pinot noir in recent years and the current release 2003 last week topped the annual Australian Gourmet Pages Australian Pinot Challenge. The competition is a sidelight of Franz Scheurer's food and wine e-newsletter of that name. Scheurer selects a dozen pinots to put to a panel of 10 (including yours truly)



at Claude's restaurant, where the wines are blind tasted twice – first without food, then with food. The intense, black-cherryed Port Phillip (great value at \$35) was such a stand-out that it won both times by a clear margin. Joint runner-up in both tastings was Tomboy Hill Ballarat Goldfields 2002. The other runners-up were Ashton Hills '03 (without food) and Panorama '03 (with food). Go to www.australiangourmetpages.com.

Diary date

September 3 Vintage Cellars' annual tasting of the 20 best Australian cabernet-based reds at Mezzaluna, Potts Point, 2-4pm. Guests can score and compare their perceptions with those of an expert panel. Tickets: \$50, bookings on 9362 9360.

Garth, right, and Rhys Eather ... "We would prefer to be known as honest winemakers."

Photo: Liam Driver