

OLD PLAINS AND LONGHOP

Old Plains is a partnership between Tim Freeland & Domenic Torzi who have located small parcels of old vine grenache, shiraz and cabernet sauvignon in the Adelaide Plains region of South Australia.

The wines are made with minimal intervention. Open fermented and basket pressed. No fining or filtration is used prior to bottling.

The Old Plains Wine Co. produces consistently high-quality wines, sold under the Old Plains and Longhop labels.

OUR STORY

Its hard to believe, as you gaze across the 30 acre paddock brimming with a bumper crop of carrots, that once in place of market garden cash crops stood 30 acres of dry grown shiraz vines.

Such was the reality during the late 1980s. Dryland, aged shiraz was steadily uprooted and grubbed out, unprofitable in what was a dire time for the Australian wine industry, vine pull was in full swing.

Ironically, most of the people uprooting the vines were the very people who planted them 20 plus years prior.

This scene unfolded on the rich red soils of the Adelaide Plains, a short stroll from the township of Angle Vale, it's also where the Old Plains and Longhop wine story begins.

The Adelaide Plains has a rich Italian history, with migrant families flooding onto the 'Plains during the 50s and 60s post war era from Italian regions such as Abruzzi, Apulia and Calabria. Establishing market gardens, vineyards, olive groves in what was little Italy, prosperous and flourishing for those prepared for hard work.

Vineyards and winemaking were part of the patchwork, heady days saw the planting of close to 500 plus acres of vines, the establishment of the Angle Vale winery which has coloured the hands of Australian wine making greats, Rob O'Callaghan, Charlie Melton and Doug Lehmann to name a few.



But as the wine industry ground down, local growers were forced to choose, they had agricultural land returning nothing from grapes, in many cases the vines lost, replaced out of necessity by cash crops.

Not all were destroyed, growers knew the quality of the grapes and nearly always kept an acre or two of the original plantings, tucked away in corners, hidden amongst olive groves, nearby the now profitable vegetable crops, these remaining vines went unkept for years, some were merely harvested to make enough juice for the family wine.

This is where Old Plains wines comes into being, it was two former Gawler high school mates, Tim Freeland and Domenic Torzi that saw the need to reinvigorate, not only the remnant vineyard plantings but also the growers who planted the original vineyards.

The Adelaide Plains was their stomping ground during school, Freeland pursued publishing interests after an apprenticeship at the local Gawler newspaper, whilst Torzi

went head long into the family market garden business.

They came together in the olive oil business, Freeland establishing a grove adjacent the Torzi family block in Kudla, south of Gawler. Freeland became part of the landscape, learning the ways of olive growing and backyard wine making, along the way teaching the elderly Italian farmers a thing or two about modern olive harvesting. A fine mix indeed.

The next progression came in the year 2002, Torzi knew the plains produced great wines, he remembered as a kid the old people telling him about the power and purity of Adelaide Plains grapes and how they could make it into the best wines the country had to offer. They conceived the plan to save as many of the old vines as they could.

They scoured the 'Plains for these remnant vineyard plantings, family connections helped, then convinced the growers, most of them now aged in their 70s to prune their old vines, bring them back to life, in doing so they have slowly gained the confidence of their post war, Italian settler growers and since the 2003 vintage have produced a range of shiraz, grenache and cabernet that oozes dark fruit flavour.

Growers with names like Noto, Trombetta, Gagliardi, now work hand in hand with Freeland and Torzi producing wines that don't scrimp on flavour and richness.

Its important for the families too, these vines represent the roots of what they've put down, Joe Noto knows it like no other. Arriving from Reggio Calabria in 1955, he hand planted his 30 acres of shiraz at Angle Vale in 1960. It was Joe and son Mario that were left with no choice but to tear out the vines in the 80s.

What remains is two rows of gnarly shiraz, defiant, somewhat pampered, they receive visitors who gaze from the two rows onto the adjacent 30 acres, they represent history, boom and bust, near 50 years of change. Old Plains tells their story, Old Plains wants these vines to see another 50 years and more.

