

# YALUMBA

## WINESTATE

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND WINE BUYING GUIDE

## AUSTRALIAN WINE COMPANY OF THE YEAR 2007

### “TRADITION, LOYALTY AND THE SPIRIT OF PROGRESS”

Joy Walfterfang, *Winestate Magazine* 2007

**The Yalumba Wine Company really scooped the pool this year and at the same time created a record of being the only establishment to win both Winestate’s major Australian awards: for winery of the year and Winemaker of the year – senior red winemaker Kevin Glastonbury**

Yalumba started making wine in 1849, when Australia’s population was less than half a million. One hundred and fifty eight years down the track, and with 20 million more people filling the nation’s cities and towns, Yalumba is still out there making wine. This makes it Australia’s oldest family-owned winery, and proprietor Robert Hill Smith is from the fifth generation of his family to have his hand on the company’s tiller.

But the winery of the Year accolade isn’t about the age of the company but about its ability to consistently produce well-made wines at all price levels. (...) for the past three years the company has been one of the top 10 Australian wine exporters. Yalumba is possibly the only winery in the southern hemisphere to have its own on-site cooperage. By making its own barrels the company maintains full control over the quality of oak, which is sourced from the best American and French forests.

It isn’t just this Barossa-based company that has clocked up the years; so has its staff. Yalumba’s record staff loyalty must be unprecedented in any business, anywhere. A few months ago, Yalumba’s research winemaker and guardian and maker of all the company’s fortifieds, David Zimmerman, was joined by 11 of his direct colleagues to celebrate his 40 years with the company. Just for fun someone got out the calculator and worked out that the average years of service of those 11 guests was 30 – plus. In fact, one in every five Yalumba employees can claim 20 or more years of service. It’s like one big family and the combined knowledge of this loyal staff has given the company a huge competitive edge. On the other hand, while the average age of the staff has remained steady at 34 for many years, there is plenty of new blood to freshen up the aged material.

Winestate asked Robert Hill Smith what he thought made people want to stay with him. *“We give them good chairs to sit on”,* he quipped. *“No seriously, I think it just goes with the territory – being a family company.”*

A workforce that can claim so many years of collective service could give the impression that it’s sedate and pedestrian, but this company has been ahead of the pack for years, with many ‘firsts’ under its belt.

Yalumba was the first to bottle Riesling under screwcaps, back in 1970, 37 years ago! It was planting and producing the now popular French white variety Viognier long before the rest of us had learnt to pronounce it; later, the company was also the first to co-ferment the variety with shiraz.

Also, the company employed a full-time environmental manager long before this became ‘fashionable’. Dr Cecil Camilleri, who is *“committed to minimising environmental impact for a sustainable future”*, has been guiding the company down the green track for years, which resulted in Yalumba being honoured in Washington DC with the 2007 Climate Protection Award. Yalumba has officially recorded a decrease of 9.5 per cent in greenhouse emissions for every litre of wine produced at Angaston. Yalumba is the first wine company to receive this international award, which recognises companies and individuals who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, dedication and achievements in protecting the environment. At the awards ceremony, Kathleen Hogan, director of the EPA Climate-protection Partnerships Division, said *“Thanks to The Yalumba Wine Company, wine lovers everywhere can enjoy the fruit of the earth and help the earth at the same time.”*

*“We have set ourselves a challenge to be carbon-neutral by 2020,”* said Robert Hill Smith, *“which is pretty challenging when you have to take into consideration all the neutral gases being given off the tanks of fermenting wines!”*

So where to from here? Robert sums it up like this: *“We are about evolution, not revolution; maintaining our traditions while quietly encouraging innovation – blending the old with the new.”*