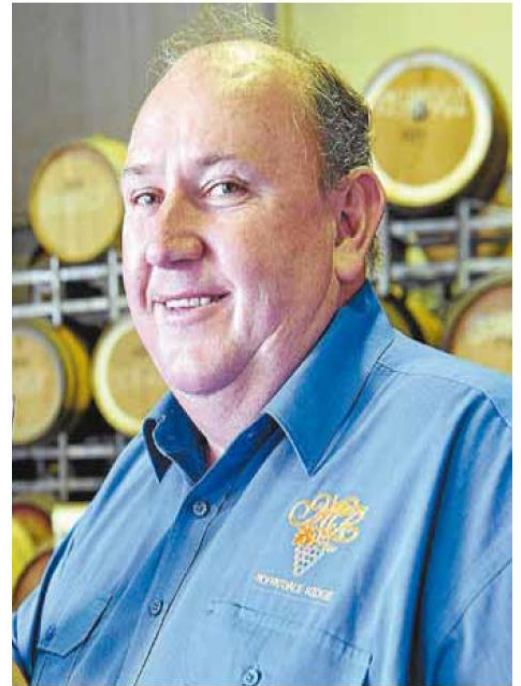


# MOFFATDALE'S MAESTRO

WORDS PETER SCUDAMORE-SMITH PICTURES RODNEY GREEN

A LEADING wine entrepreneur of the South Burnett is Jason Kinsella of Moffatdale Ridge. He is a commanding fellow, measured and gently spoken who always reminds me that he makes wine his customers' enjoy. So a visit to his brightly-painted, colonial-style cellar door built near Barambah Creek on a 145-hectare beef property is beckoning. The imposing Moffatdale Ridge insignia pitched against the roof suggests a proud family business. Drive past four hectares of vines – equal areas of verdelho, semillon, merlot and cabernet sauvignon. Soon to be added are two Mediterranean varieties. Few Australian wine region pioneers arrive at this type of business without wine growing pedigree, or what we call savvy. Jason, 44, was born in the district, a former Murgon cheesemaker (until the cheddar market collapsed) moved to beef after, meanwhile planting grapes on 681 Barambah Road via Murgon in 1995. "This business started in 1996," Jason says, "our motivation being for my wife Susan and I to work together, and with luck continue through generations allowing our children, if they wish to join in time, keep us active into later years and importantly keep the family unit.

Jason, of Irish origin, underwrites Italian-themed events at the Moffatdale cellar door. To continue the theme he is pondering planting the heat-resistant hero red grape of Sicily, the Nero d'Avola. The wines from this grape on that island are very amiable. "We have had to change constantly over the years because when you start with very little knowledge of what you are doing you need to be very open to new ideas." Moffatdale Ridge, from my observation has grown quite progressively. Verdelho, says Jason, is the region's signature variety and "what I believe best expresses what a Queensland origin wine should be". Other nearby growers also sell their verdelhos robustly. But Moffatdale Ridge's most popular product, Late Harvest Red (6000 bottles a year) is what satisfies many, and flies below the radar of the review scribes. Jason says he's been inspired by many people in the industry but Peter Lehmann's "thorny faith in his region and his region's people, which ultimately saved the Barossa, is number one". Wines are not only found at his cellar. Also try Blackbutt, Goomeri, Kilkivan, Kingaroy and the Mary Valley. It's a sign of a successful business with diversity. Visit [www.moffatdaleridge.com.au](http://www.moffatdaleridge.com.au).



Jason Kinsella, Moffatdale Ridge, says his wines express the heart of Queensland.



Moffatdale Ridge Late Harvest Red NV 86 (12pc) South Burnett (\$14). More than a quarter of wine drinkers enjoy off-dry, fruity wine. Here is one from the sunny side of Moffatdale Ridge, with a quaffable wine the colour of rose but a little more serious in taste. Dominantly verdelho but tinged purple-red by adding estate shiraz at lower alcohol, what a great complement for hot, spicy dishes.

Moffatdale Ridge Verdelho 2014 90 (12.4 per cent), South Burnett (\$17). Kinsella tells us this is his "killer" white in his marketplace – freshly made and bottled, pale, unwooded, a total whiff of verdelho melon greets the nose, flavoursome, in fact a "bomb" of flavour but moderate alcohol. Sip in the sun or before a BBQ. Iced is better.



Moffatdale Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon 2011 89 (13.2pc), South Burnett (\$18). A thoroughly warm-area style on nose, filling the air with choc mint and red berries (use a wide mouth glass). Quite full bodied for cabernet with lots of ripe fruits, mocha and that lovely sweet juicy fruit that cabernet develops. I find this wine remarkable, for this piece of land stood up to the wet vintage of 2011.