

tip of the tongue

# CABERNET COUP FOR KINGAROY COUPLE

WORDS PETER SCUDAMORE-SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY RODNEY GREEN AND SARAH COULTON

BERNIE, 60, and Judy Cooper haven't looked back after making a scenic change 10 years ago – heading inland from the big smoke of Brisbane to take over the well-known Crane label at Kingaroy.

Crane is a hallmark brand in the South Burnett town that is known for agriculture-baked beans, great cattle and of course peanuts.

Wine growing, making and selling has matured as a sophisticated business under Bernie's tutelage.

Established by the loveable John Crane, and his wife Sue in the 1990s, the winery began when John planted grapes on the red soil hillside at Haydens Road, Booie, in 1992, with his cellar door opening in September 1996, to be first in the South Burnett to do so.

I remember well the ceremonial event as a local polliie cut the ribbon.

As Bernie points out, John Crane is a respected pioneer of the Kingaroy wine industry with the vineyard today only running at one-third of what it was under the original ownership.

"Since late 2010 and 2011 the stimulus for reduction was a lot of vine death as a result of the drought and some of the trellising was badly in need of replacing," Bernie said.

"With the weather patterns since, we decided not to replant especially in view of the economic challenges we have faced."

The vineyard supports two hectares of vines with the chambourcin planted in 2000 and the vermentino and savagnin – planted under the belief it was albarino – in 2010. Bernie buys grapes locally from growers in the pattern set since the winery was established.

Entering into his role after various management positions within the sales and marketing discipline specialising in medical pathology and biotechnology, Bernie's wine training is entirely on the job, initially within the sale contract with mentoring by John Crane.

"Commitment at Crane Wines is total from the time of arrival here – we live and work on the property with our whole livelihood from the winery business, without outside support or separate jobs," Bernie said.

With a family business, he is heavily involved in all aspects – winemaking, viticulture, maintaining the property to an attractive standard and running the cellar door seven days a week.

The region is lucky to have a good mayor, Wayne Kratzmann, who sees tourism as an important and growing part of the regional economy – which means initiatives to bring more visitors.

"The future of Crane Wines – at least as long as I own it – is pretty well tied up with wine tourism so I engage in activities that are designed to increase our profile with the public," Bernie said.

"In this way I expect my business to flourish. The challenge for businesses like mine is to find ways of delivering a more memorable experience."

In terms of inspiration, Bernie finds Granite Belt maker Mark Ravenscroft someone to emulate.

"I find I like the wines he produces and he seems to me the sort of person who knuckles down and concentrates on doing it right."

"The wine I enjoy making most is cabernet sauvignon. When I first started drinking wine at the age of 19, as a university student, cabernet sauvignon was my favourite wine," Bernie said.

"I liked the depth of flavour and the heavier body of this wine style from warm areas and this has transferred to my winemaking as well and I really like to try and produce cabernet with plenty of flavour and body given the right grapes."

"Lovingly plunging the caps of cabernet each day seems more rewarding for me."

Visit [www.cranewines.com.au](http://www.cranewines.com.au)



## TOP DROPS



Crane Verdelho 2012, dry (88) 14%, \$18: The go to white variety around Kingaroy. This reflects the sophistication of verdelho in the region where wines smelling "day old" – and obtusely fruity – have been replaced. Now it is wines of expression and texture, better dryness and perfect poise for drinking alongside the produce of the region – olives, Mediterranean vegetables. Drink now.



Crane Unwooded Chardonnay 2012 (89) 13.2%, \$18: South Burnett chardonnay ripens very easily to this laid-back, full-frontal style that expresses ripe peach and nuttiness captured from extended heat and sunlight during the season. It is sunny wine, sunny flavour, lovely roundness and importantly it has tight acidity which freshens the foods we eat. Drink 2015-16.



Crane Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 (90) 14.8%, \$23: South Burnett cabernet in its richest form – chunky, sweet flavoured fruit, honey-smoke oak attractiveness from American oak barrel use. Maker Bernie expressed his love for this grape and winemaker passion is in it from every direction. A good excuse to visit this property. Drink 2015-20.

  
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