



GIANT STEPS

Yarra Valley, Victoria



Phil Sexton

"For the third year in a row, Phil Sexton's Yarra Valley winery has made the Top 100 (Wineries) list by putting out wines with clarity and balance."
Joshua Greene, Wine & Spirits (October 2015)

OWNER: The Sexton Family

FOUNDED: 1998 by Phil Sexton

WINEMAKER: Phil Sexton

SIZE: Sexton Vineyard - 75 acres

HARVEST: Early March to early May

CLIMATE: Cool climate, substantial meso-climatic variation between sites

SOILS: Brown sandy loam and rocky gravel over clay

VARIETIES PLANTED: Chardonnay (29 acres), Pinot Noir (21 acres), Merlot (14 acres), Cabernet Sauvignon (7.5 acres), Shiraz (1.5 acres), Petit Verdot (1 acre), Cabernet Franc (0.5 acres).

WEBSITE: www.giant-steps.com.au



The lush, rolling vineyards of Yarra Valley.
(Picture courtesy of Wine Australia)



PROFILE: Giant Steps is independently owned by Phil Sexton and his family and takes its name from the eponymous jazz album by John Coltrane, cut in 1960, as Coltrane consolidated his solo career after leaving Miles Davis and his band. A veteran of the Australian wine industry, winemaker (and equally successful brewmaster) Phil Sexton has a keen intuition for the business that continues to earn him the respect of his peers, including being appointed Chairman of the Royal Melbourne Wine Show in 2012. Sexton moved across Australia in 1997 after selling Devil's Lair Vineyard in Margaret River, to establish a new vineyard in the Yarra Valley; a decision driven by his admiration for the long aging and fine boned wines produced by the new generation of wine growers reestablishing this historic wine region. Giant Steps focuses primarily on the distinctive expression of single vineyard sites in the Yarra Valley. Grapes are drawn from estate and leased vineyards as well as fruit from long-term grower contracts, supported by strong relationships and meticulous supervision throughout the year.

VITICULTURE: Sexton and Giant Steps' grower partners are all committed to organic and biodynamic farming principles with the express purpose of further distinguishing each vineyard site while improving grape and wine quality. A particular objective is to enhance the natural microflora for the facilitation of indigenous fermentations in the winery.

Sexton's 75-acre estate vineyard is on a beautiful north facing hillside site located in the foothills of the Warramate ranges, rising from 425 to nearly 700 feet above the valley floor. A relatively cool site, management of Sexton vineyard is intensive with all tasks carefully done by hand. All vines are grafted to devigorating rootstocks and planted closely on carefully selected sites, namely the high slopes of the Valley's ranges away from the fertile soils of the valley floor. Shoots are vertically positioned to enhance ventilation and maximize sunlight capture on the coolest sites. The first vintage of Giant Steps was drawn from the Sexton Vineyard in 2001.



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THE WINES

The *Yarra Valley range* is made from hand-picked fruit from the estate vineyards. The wines are produced using indigenous yeasts, gravity-flow winemaking, and minimal fining and filtration. This approach produces highly expressive wines, true to the climate, soil and topography of the Yarra Valley. The Giant Steps *Single Vineyard range* is produced from the most site-expressive fruit off the best vineyards in great years. Production of these wines is very limited with some vineyards producing as little as 200 cases. Each single-vineyard wine, tells a story about the vineyard, vintage and variety.

Yarra Valley Chardonnay: Hand picked, sorted and whole bunch pressed with minimal sulfur. Barrel fermented and aged on lees for 12 months. Minimal malolactic fermentation. Gravity racked and gently filtered prior to bottling. White peach and citrus with cashew notes. Complex, textured palate, with minerally lemon zest.

Yarra Valley Pinot Noir: Hand picked, sorted and crushed to small open vessels. Cold soaked then hand plunged through fermentation. Extended maceration prior to 12 months barrel aging. Minimal handling, no pumps, sulfur or filtration. Floral, earthy spice, cherries. Textural, medium weight, ripe fruit balanced over dusty tannins.

Tarraford Vineyard Chardonnay: Tarraford has a distinctly cooler microclimate than its neighbors and it certainly translates into the wine. Light to medium-bodied as well as and tight-knit and delicate in the mouth. It has well-balanced acid and the creamy, textured finish is punctuated by lasting citrus, tropical and orchard fruit notes.

Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir: The distinctive dark-red volcanic loam soil is a distinguishing vineyard feature. The fruit was hand-picked, cold soaked, and partially whole bunch fermented with minimal cap work followed by 10 months of French oak (some new) barrel aging. Medium bodied, with bountiful plum and cherry notes plus a suggestion of green peppercorns supported by crisp acid and grainy, savory tannins.

Tarraford Vineyard Syrah: Single clone Syrah from Tarraford Vineyard. The palate is medium-bodied, but surprisingly muscular and subtle at the same time, taking time to relax and reveal the layers of flavor and texture that are a joy to tease out.

WINEMAKING: Creating wines of structure, finesse and longevity is no mean feat. Sexton is steadfast in his "winemaking without compromise" ethos. From the ground up, Phil has created an artisanal winery designed for hand-crafting small batches of wine. Built around gravity flow principles, the winery is an exercise in function over form. The building consists of a naturally insulated concrete shell offering a cool, stable temperature. Winemaking techniques are adapted to variety, clone and site - a cold soak may precede fermentation, whole bunches and stems are included where appropriate, yeasts are indigenous originating from each vineyard, additions are minimized and cap plunging and battonage, when required, are carried out by hand. Ultimately, the variety and the vagaries of vintage dictate the methodology, producing wines reflective of time and place rather than the maker.

GIANT STEPS VIGNERONS



The scenic view of Giant Steps vineyards in the Yarra Valley



Phil Sexton: Winemaker and Proprietor, Giant Steps Vignerons



Phil's son, Harry, in the barrel cellar