



Merlot 2003

Smith & Hooper wines are sourced entirely from two adjacent vineyard blocks in Wrattenbully, previously owned by the Smith and Hooper families.

These are premium red wines from exceptional vineyard sites where the winemaking philosophy is to let the terroir speak for itself - and it does. The maritime climate provides ideal ripening conditions, while rich 'terra rossa' soil over limestone forces the vines to struggle for survival, ultimately producing wines of intensity and distinction.



WINEMAKING / VITICULTURE

Rainfall and temperatures during the 2002-03 growing season at Wrattenbully were above average enabling our vines to set healthy canopies. During February and March prior to harvest, the rainfall was still well above average but the diligence of our vineyard managers ensured no mildew developed and our fruit remained disease free. Temperatures through to harvest were mild, allowing the grapes to retain excellent balance of flavour and sugar.

Merlot is a grape we have learnt a lot about growing in Wrattenbully. The canes have a tendency to roll over so we now trellis them with a catching wire giving us a vine structure we call "a lazy Nettelbeck", named after our Viticulture Manager who developed it. In the Merlot winemaking process it is essential to avoid over extraction of the fruit. We make our wines in static fermenters and constantly taste the developing wine before pressing the skins when we have structure and weight without hardness. The wine is then matured in predominantly French barriques for around 17 months before blending.

TASTING NOTE

Smith & Hooper Merlot 2003 is a deep garnet colour. The initial bouquet is of berries and fragrant violets with further exploration revealing cedar, spice box and a warm earthiness. The palate is generous with luscious fleshy red fruits balanced by soft velvety tannins which add length and weight.

Intended for enjoyment during the first years following its release, cellaring the wine for up to five years will see the development of the more complex secondary characters of leather and spice which bottle maturation brings.

VINTAGE INFORMATION

Vintage	2003
Region	Wrattenbully
Winemaker	Peter Gambetta
Harvested	April 2003
Oak Treatment	Matured for 17 months in new French oak barriques & hogsheads (33%), one year old French barriques (27%) & the balance in older French hogsheads.
Alc/Vol	13.5%
Total Acid	5.9 g/L
pH	3.34
Cellaring	now through 5 years

