

# TASTINGS BEN EDWARDS

If pinot noir could replace blood, Neil Prentice of Moondarra Family Wines would have it running through his veins. He is obsessed with the stuff, so it is no surprise that in his quest to make great pinot noir in Gippsland, he is enjoying real success.

Prentice and his parents, Ivan and Wilma, own a 97-hectare property near Walhalla, and in the early Nineties planted two hectares of 11 clones of pinot noir vines. The property is also home to 140 head of Wagyu cattle and herds of wild deer.

Prentice produces two wines from his family owned vineyard, "Conception" (his eldest son was conceived on the vineyard site) and "Samba Side" (a reference to the Samba deer that graze on the hill-

side), and two other pinot noir varieties made from fruit bought from the Whitlands, near the King Valley, and Moorabool, near Geelong.

Called "Holly's Garden", these wines are good value and have very different personalities.

Prentice is on a winner with the styles of wine he is producing. They are full of personality, are rare and reward the persistent wine collector. This much thought and application should be savoured and enjoyed.

The bright ruby 2002 Holly's Garden Moorabool pinot noir has bright fruit aromas of morello cherries, undergrowth and flinty mineral character. The wine displays lovely texture and is quite firm in character, with chewy tannins and fleshy

fruit. It needs about six months to fully integrate but the structure of this wine suggests that it will age well for the next five to eight years.

The mid-gamet 2001 Samba Side pinot noir is seductive in its complexity. The aromas are full of roasted meats, confiture plums, gamey undergrowth and Asian spices. The palate is incredibly textured and velvety, with plenty of oak, fruit and spice supported by the firm mineral finish. A joy to drink now (as it should be for the price), this beautifully balanced wine should last for up to 10 years of stellar drinking.

Ben Edwards is president of the Australian Sommeliers Association (Victoria), runs a B&B and distributes French wines.

**VARIETIES** Holly's Garden Moorabool pinot noir 2002 (\$33), Moondarra Samba Side pinot noir 2001 (\$120)

**AVAILABILITY** Selected restaurants and wine stores or by mail order

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