

tip of the tongue

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

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WHEN you encounter a wine brand with quirkiness it is worth being loved.

And that's exactly what I feel about Bent Road, a wonderful business being developed by Glen Robert, Robert Richter and colleagues, coincidentally on Bents Road at the south-western tip of the granite country.

"We decided to drop the 's' from the business name for continually spelling it for customers who often mistook us as Benz Road Winery," Glen said.

"With Bent Road, it suited our peculiar and sometimes eccentric behaviour and philosophy."

If there is a small team of makers grasping modern wine trends, yet chasing a drinkability banner, then Bent Road is it. New varieties, old varieties, new ways of quirky thinking, some natural winemaking and amphora making. Glen, first generation of Dutch-Indonesian parentage, Ipswich-born, biochemist graduate, medical researcher for 12 years before retraining in winemaking, graduated from Charles Sturt University in 2005.

Before arriving at Bent Road, he and partner Robert were in the hospitality business, owning and running various restaurants and cafes in Brisbane. Although not really a lifestyle choice, as a real business they are lucky enough to divide time between a winery home and Brisbane, enjoying the best of both worlds, serenity at the vineyard teamed with the hustle and bustle of Spring Hill.

"The most enjoyable wine to make is from perfect grapes. I'm ultimately a lazy person and if all the seasonal conditions are good, it's best, as a winemaker to just let the grapes do their thing and let them

represent a true expression of the year in a bottle," Glen, a glad non-interventionist, said. The 3-hectare vineyard planted in 2000 grows shiraz, merlot, tempranillo, marsanne, semillon, sauvignon blanc and verdelho and supplies wines to three labels.

These guys are absolutely spot on with their philosophy fitting the modernist yet greening approach. Let your site do the talking through the wine; don't try to modify or manipulate, express the variety, and where innovation exists, the wine will knock your palate out. Try some like I did. Assistant winemaker Andrew Scott, 33 years old, Adelaide-born and bred of English parentage, hopes to continue making wine in the Granite Belt. "It's a burgeoning region with untapped potential: an advantage really of not being too set with ways like more traditional regions," he says. Innovation in your wines is special. Many brands lack it, so Bent Road is a treasure, and wines under the Le Petit Mort skeleton label are regular darlings for sommeliers. Miles Browne, sommelier from NuNu's in Palm Cove, is a great supporter.

Check out the La Petite Mort (small death) wines. This set of wines set has received some well-directed yet private recognition; no loud noises, just silent consumption. I enjoyed the shiraz made in amphora.

When asked which Australian identity he admired, Glen pointed to Drew Noon in McLaren Vale, South Australia – a Master of Wine who makes exquisite wines; a humble



man who seems to be an all-around good guy. He wants to grow up to be like him, loving his wine and the philosophy behind them.

And on the future for their industry.

There are some world-class wineries in both the Granite Belt and the South Burnett. Glen has worked in both areas to gain a unique insight into the business. He enjoys being an ambassador of Queensland regional products.

bentroadwine.com.au

ABOVE: Bent Road winemaker Glen Robert.

THREE BEST WINES



■ 2BC Marsanne Roussanne 2014 (90) 13%; \$30 Granite Belt; green-straw, lovely, expressive, nice wax and honeycomb of the two varieties (sisters); gives the tongue space to appreciate subtlety and flavour

presence; sweetens up from the fruit on breathing and warming; it's a texture thing to enjoy. Still has restraint. Drink now-2017

■ La Petite Mort Amphora Shiraz Viognier 2013 (90) 12.5%; \$35; deep purple, very brooding colour so must be serious or better still the winemaking captured the glorious colour (and co-fermented) in the white plus red process; has earthiness (no oak), cherry, honey,

characters which exude when a barrel is not around; unoaked red with gorgeous piles of chunky tannin. Not your usual soft style Granite Belt shiraz; unfiltered just like the Romans made 21 centuries ago. Drink 2016-2020.



■ Bent Road Shiraz 2012 (93) 13.6%; \$28; very good colour; good on the eye encourages the first sip; more traditional Bent Road using American oak in the winery;

sweet mocha fruits, lolly and luscious, tons of silk and softness for the traditionalist; easily consumed with soft or hard cheese. Drink now-2017.