

DELATITE WINERY EMPLOYS ITS SECOND WINE MAKER IN ITS TWENTY-FIVE YEAR HISTORY.

It is with great pleasure that Delatite Winery presents the first wines made by their new winemaker Jane Donat. Jane is only the second winemaker to have been appointed by the Ritchie family since they started 25 years ago.

“This is an exciting turning point in our history and we’re really pleased that Jane’s first vintage has proven her to be just the right person to take us in to our next era,” said general manager, David Ritchie

Jane replaces Ros Ritchie, the daughter of owners Robert and Vivienne Ritchie, who had been winemaker since 1982. On her retirement in November 2005, the search was on for someone who could replace her.

Jane, as it turned out, had been looking for just such an opportunity, too. Trained at Charles Sturt University, NSW, she had been working in the Hunter, and won Wine Society’s People’s Choice Young Winemaker of the Year 2005. By early 2006 she realized she wanted to come back to Victoria and to work with cool climate fruit.

But with a history of great continuity in its winemaking, David and Jane were both aware of the implications of change.

For Jane there was the worry that she was stepping in to some pretty big shoes and for David, there was the responsibility of Delatite’s established reputation.

Therefore, at the end of the 2006 vintage the Ritchie family decided to ask their original consultant, Tony Jordan, chief executive of Cape Mentelle, Cloudy Bay, Domaine Chandon for his impartial view.

“Fortunately we have remained very good friends with Tony and I know my parents also think very highly of his opinion,” said David.

“So I rang him and said ‘look I like the wines she’s made, but maybe I’m just biased because I know the fruit and she’s a nice person’”.

But Jordan, who had been trying to persuade Delatite to rethink some of its key lines, was impressed. He recommended Jane to Delatite for her fresh approach and her knowledge of new winemaking methods, as well as her obvious passion and dedication.

But Jane admits that she came at winemaking slowly.

“My parents had a farm on the Mornington Peninsula and they used to drag us around the wineries there on the weekend and we were so bored because there was never anything for the kids to do.”

“And then when I left school I had absolutely no idea what I was going to do, so I sort of drifted into hospitality at TAFE and discovered that I really loved wine.”

“I had ordinary maths and the only science I had was biology, but winemaking is so consuming: it takes up your whole life. My sisters say ‘all she ever does is work’, but I can’t switch off.

“I’m very passionate about it and I really want it to be right.”

Ironically she says working at Delatite has made her less technical and more instinctive.

“I really think it is the fruit, especially the Gewurz. It’s totally the opposite of the Hunter where we had to coax the wines. Here it’s just so simple.”

She says her challenges in the years ahead will be making Delatite’s red wines *more* complex, experimenting with some of the Winery’s more obvious German-style whites (both a Kabinett style Riesling and a sparkling Gewurtz were made in 2006) and consolidating Delatite’s reputation.

“People always say ‘I love Delatite’s wine but I haven’t seen it for years’. I want to see it have a following for this generation.”