



CRITTENDEN®

CRITTENDEN FAMILY WINEMAKERS LEADERS IN SUSTAINABILITY

There is no dispute that as a society we are becoming far more attuned to the unsustainable damage that we have inflicted upon our environment. Sustainability is now regarded as an essential element of any business, no matter the industry. We didn't set out to become leaders in our field when it comes to the health of our land, but in our constant pursuit for better soil, fruit and wine, it would seem that is what has occurred. Due to constant requests from consumers and colleagues we have decided to document what we are doing here on the property. We don't want to hide it – we are adamant that this is the future of viticulture and the sooner we can start spreading the word and others are able to follow suit, the better. These are just some of the things that we have focussed our attentions on over the last ten or so years.

— THE CRITTENDEN FAMILY

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Crittenden Estate was named as the overall “platinum” winner of the 2020 BRIT/FIVS International Sustainable Winegrowing Competition, chosen in first place amongst a high calibre field of sustainability-minded wine producers from around the world. The BRIT/FIVS International Sustainable Winegrowing Competition is jointly run by the Botanical Research Institute of Texas and FIVS, a Paris-based international federation of sustainability-minded wine organisations. The competition recognises wine producers taking a leading role in developing and implementing sustainable practices, while building strong connections with their communities and sharing their learnings across the wider wine sector. Entries are submitted annually from many wine producing countries in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres.





SOIL HEALTH & REGENERATION

Over recent years, we have abandoned the use of artificial fertilizers and returned to the agricultural ways of our forefathers. In order to encourage vine health and disease resistance we follow a year round process leading up to harvest. It starts with compost. Our compost heap typically measures around 500 cubic metres. The scientific understanding of how compost works has blossomed in the past decade and we now know that once spread over the vineyard, the bacteria and fungi in the compost forms a partnership with the vine root system (the place of nutrient uptake) to assist in growing healthy vines. The microbial population forms a biomass not dissimilar to the micro-biome in a healthy human gut brought about by eating the right foods. Our compost heap consists of the grape residue (skins and stalks) from vintage, hay, fine wood chips and horse manure. Finally, after approximately 12 months, we spread it over the vineyard floor before the vines go into their dormant winter period.

At this time we also sow inter-row crops which usually consist of oats to create bulk and broad beans for nitrogen. Once the crops reach maturity we roll them flat to form a dense mat that slowly decomposes into the soil to provide the essential nutrients our vines need. Additionally the mat creates mulch, useful for moisture retention.

The benefits to the vines, grapes and wine from our biological farming practices have exceeded our expectations. Increasingly favourable reviews of our estate wines by independent commentators around the world help demonstrate that we are well and truly on the right track.

SOLAR POWER

In 2017 we converted the Estate, including our cellar door, office and operational winery, to solar. Already we are seeing substantial savings in our conventionally generated electricity bills and in summer months are in a position to be sending our own power, generated by the solar panels that adorn all of our buildings, back to the grid. As time goes by we expect to be able to quantify what this means in relation to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions we are generating.

RECYCLED WATER USAGE

Our established vines need less water than one might imagine, however, there are definitely periods over the summer months where some irrigation is essential. In 2013 we installed a system that enables us to tap into a nearby recycled water outfall and irrigate our vineyards with class A recycled water. We are also able to use this water to sparingly irrigate our landscaped lawns and gardens that our customers are able to take so much pleasure in. Extra care of our soil across the property has the added benefit of the vines needing less water, and this combined with their age means irrigation in general is kept to a minimum. It's heartening to know, however, that the water we do use has already been in use somewhere else!

ONSITE WATER TREATMENT

One of the major problems of running a winery in the country is how to deal with waste water which, due to the mix of high acid grape juice liberated during vintage, poses its own set of effluent disposal problems. Prior to vintage 2018 we invested \$50,000 to install a waste water treatment plant which allows us to discharge the treated winery effluent into the town sewerage system in full compliance with EPA standards. In a round about way we will ultimately see this water return to the property (once treated) for irrigation use.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We feel strongly about the community and engage with and support local and national charity organisations. Some of the groups we sponsor are: Frankston Arts Centre, the Starlight Foundation, Silver Leaf Art Box, Peninsula Chamber Musicians and Wallara (Disability services & support organisation), along with local schools and kindergartens in the area. We are also involved in local and industry organisations: Women in Business Mornington Peninsula, Mornington Peninsula Group and the Mornington Peninsula Regional Tourism Board. Rollo has been the president of Mornington Peninsula Wine for 3 years and is on the board of Australian Grape & Wine (five plus years).

As a family business we are mindful of our future generations. We anticipate that the actions we take today will in turn create a more sustainable platform for our vines to continue to provide us with the quality grapes that we, and perhaps our children, can turn into exemplary wine for years to come.