

PHOTOGRAPHY TONY TERVOERT

LARRIKINS AND LEGENDS

Grapegrowing it seems is an addiction that's been impossible to kick for the Kalleskes of Nuriootpa. "My great, great, great grandparents originally farmed at Greenock," says sixth generation grower, 33-year-old Andy Kalleske. "My father John and mum Barb purchased land near Atze's Corner in Nuriootpa and have been developing vineyards since."

While you won't find it on any map, locals have referred to the unassuming block of land on the town's outskirts as Atze's Corner for as long as anyone can remember.

"It's our oldest Shiraz vineyard and was established by the Atzes in 1912," Andy says. It was also the obvious inspiration for the Kalleske's artisan brand, Atze's Corner Wines, unassumingly established in 2005 when Andy fermented a batch of Shiraz juice in a grape bin in the car shed.

"I'd always wanted to have a go at winemaking, but I needed to get my head around the vineyard first," he says. "In 2006 we plugged into the talents of a young local winemaker to produce the first wine under the Atze's Corner label."

“My great uncle, Eddie Staehr, and co-worker Eddie Liebich helped plant the 1912 vineyard for the Atzes,” Andy says. “It’s said that they each set out with a crow bar to dig the planting holes because the ground was so dry and hard that year. Our Eddies Old Vine Shiraz pays homage to the two blokes.”

Four vintages on and the range of five reds is made with minimal intervention – open, small-batch fermentation, hand plunging and pumping, oak maturation and minimal filtering and fining are the trademarks of the unobtrusive approach.

And while winemaking might be a new addition to the family chronicle, the importance of heritage isn’t lost on Andy – honoured through the range of Atze’s Corner wines are the larrikins, legends and larger-than-life characters of the Barossa.

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“We named our Petit Sirah “The Giant” after prominent local Irish settler David Shannon. At well over six and a half foot, Shannon was described as a genial giant. Legend has it that on one warm summer’s day, as he was entering a bank in the nearby town of Kapunda, two men who had just held up the tellers were making an exit. With his huge hands Shannon grabbed one robber in each and pushed them together, knocking the would-be thieves to the ground.”

Then there’s the tale of Bert Kleinig who owned and worked land in the areas of Koonunga and Ebenezer for 83 years. Bert died a bachelor after suffering a fatal heart attack while feeding his sheep. Knowing the land’s potential to grow premium wine grapes, Bert’s property was developed by the Kalleskes with the fruit it now bears bottled under the aptly named “The Bachelor”.



“The story goes that the tractor and trailer he was using to feed the sheep continued around the paddock until passers-by were alerted to Bert’s fate when they saw it trying to get up an embankment,” Andy says.

Adding wine production into the business mix is about evolution, not revolution for this family of traditional growers – a way to help secure their grapegrowing future.

“The vines are our lifeblood, our number one priority,” Andy says. “Creating the Atze’s Corner label has been an exciting challenge and as well as a value-adding measure, is another tool we have when we talk to wineries. What better way to show what you can do in the vineyard by pouring the results into a glass? Ultimately, we can appreciate what winemakers need from us – and vice versa. That can only be a good thing.” **bl**

Atze’s Corner wines are available in limited retail release across South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Purchases can be made on-line at atzescornerwines.com.au.