



Ochota Barrels

WINEMAKER TARAS & AMBER OCHOTA

Elbows and knees. It's a phrase Taras Ochota uses a lot to describe the wines he likes to drink and make. This time we really are in the mosh pit: Taras once played in a punk band called Kranktus. You can tell. The natural acidity, the whole-bunch ferments, the extended skin contact in his winemaking all combine to give his wines an edginess, an angularity: a plectrum scraped along bottom E.

Taras draws a musical analogy for his low-fi, analogue approach in the cellar: mainstream wines are like heavily manipulated digital recordings, overdubbed, tweaked, compressed, auto-tuned; natural wines are like someone going into a live gig with a tape recorder and simply pressing record — it may not be quite as polished or perfect but it can better capture the soul of the performance.

Based in a winery shed on four hectares of land on the edge of a steep forest in Basket Range near Adelaide, Taras and his wife Amber source fruit from a few different vineyards in the Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale and the Barossa to make lots of tiny batches of wine, each with a vivid personality and a memorable, musically inspired name.

Taras also has a vivid turn of phrase. He unforgettably described an Arneis he made a couple of years ago — named *Strange Little Girl*, after the song by The Stranglers — as a grown-up's wine, with the lifted bouquet of lemon, bergamot and pears and the texture of a polecat's tongue. Yum.

His *Weird Berries In The Woods* Gewürztraminer has the pop and crackle on the tongue of a needle hitting the groove on an old, much loved record; *The Fugazi* Vineyard Grenache has the fat warm thump of a Fender Precision bass at the heart of a riotous cacophony of spice; *I Am The Owl* Syrah is stalks and stems and sap, like crunching across leaf litter in the dark.

In 2013, music and wine collided again: through a series of fortuitous contacts, American progressive metal singer (and owner of his own vineyard in Arizona) Maynard James Keenan visited Ochota Barrels to make a Grenache with Taras. The result, a slinky, voluptuous fluid held together by chewy aniseed tannin, was called *A Sense Of Compression* — referring, says Taras, to the wine's textural mass as it flows across the tongue.