



- 1 Around 20,000 dozen bottles of Ascella Pure Wine are produced each year
- 2 Healthy organic grapes on the vine
- 3 Budburst on the Chardonnay vines
- 4 Riverpines is the largest certified organic vineyard in the Hunter Valley

The design, comprising a female archer with arrow pointing skyward, represents the zodiac sign of Sagittarius. This ties in well with the name Ascella, a binary star in the Sagittarian Constellation that has the auspicious meaning “happiness and good fortune”.

Ascella Pure Wine is the largest certified organic vineyard in the Hunter Valley and one of the biggest family-owned organic wineries in Australia. “We have 80 acres here with 115km of vines, which is about 52,000 individual plants,” says Geoff. Ascella produces about 20,000 dozen bottles a year. That’s lot of wine by most standards.

The beautifully laid-out vineyard is divided into cellar allotments: Chardonnay, Semillon,



“With organic grapes from our secluded vineyard and a five-star-rated winemaker, we feel confident in calling ourselves the ‘pure wine company.’” — Barb Brown

Verdelho, Shiraz, Merlot and Chambourcin. Each has specific requirements and budding and fruiting regimes, which are closely monitored throughout each season. We visited the vineyard in early spring when new buds were starting to appear on the Chardonnay vines. Geoff told us that lingering frosts could still be around as well as the start of a mite attack, which would need organic management.

Ascella’s wines are laboratory tested for purity and dinner-table tested for taste and quality. “With organic grapes from our secluded vineyard and a five-star-rated winemaker, we

feel confident in calling ourselves the ‘pure wine company,’” Barb tells us. Their winemaker is Liz Jackson, who was awarded Winemaker of the Year 2011 at the prestigious Hunter Valley Legends and Wine Industry Awards. This award is judged on experience, qualifications and winemaking techniques, and Liz is the first woman to receive this honour.

Having Liz as part of the team has helped Ascella Pure Wine become an award-winning label. Several medals grace their wines but perhaps the highest accolades are the James Halliday Ratings: a point score above 90

for five of their wines. Both their 2009 and 2011 Semillon scored 94 points, no mean feat considering it was awarded in open competition as there isn’t a specific organic wine category.

“It proves that pure wines, made without potentially harmful chemicals, including those that disrupt your endocrine system, do taste better, are better for you, are healthier for the environment and are regarded as premium wines,” says Barb proudly. Ascella Pure Wine is exported to the UK, Canada, Sweden, Japan and China.

Geoff and Barb carry the sustainable and organic ethos a step further by being part of the WWOOFER (World-wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, sometimes known as Willing Workers on Organic Farms) initiative. This provides travellers the opportunity to work on organic farms, exchanging 4–6 hours of work a day for meals and accommodation, often in the host’s family home. We had the pleasure of meeting a young East German couple who had just arrived for a two-week stay at the vineyard.

The property is alive with birds, insects (“beneficials”, as Geoff calls them) and lizards as well as the much-loved 100-strong flock of Dorper sheep that graze happily, making themselves very useful by eating weeds and grass along the vine rows. Wind whispering through the casuarina trees and the gentle sounds of the Milbrodale Creek are nature’s soundtrack to the story of two people’s loving dedication to the organic lifestyle.

Barb explains over the sumptuous lunch she has provided, “We care about your health and the health of our environment and we are inspired by the growth in popularity of wines made with organic grapes.

“My husband Geoff and I are committed to offering the highest-quality and best-value organic wines available anywhere in the world. Taste inspired by passion!”

We’ll drink to that.

Geoff and Barb Brown are dedicated to supporting wine retailers and provide obligation-free promotions throughout Australia. They also have an online business, Friends of Ascella Pure Wine, which offers promotions and big savings as they believe “loyalty comes from great-tasting wines at good value”.

Web: www.ascellawines.com.au

In a few short years, Ascella Pure Wine has had an impact on the world market



Photos by Diane Norris & courtesy of Ascella Pure Wine