



The cover of the December issue of the *Grapegrower & Winemaker* features Wendy and Natasha Killeen, of Stanton & Killeen Wines in Rutherglen, with their dog Juliette.  
Image: Georgie James Photography.



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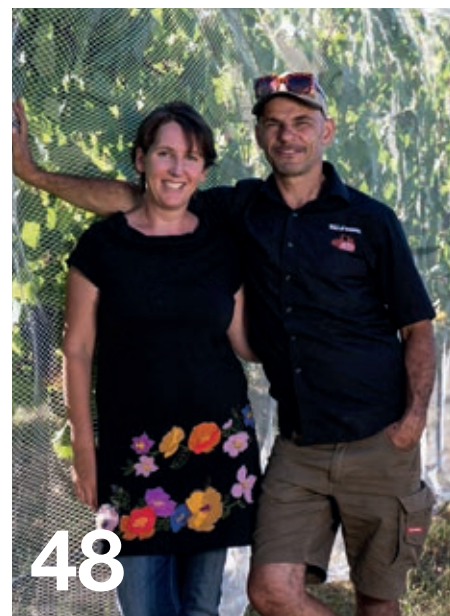
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Hans Mick Editor

As 2020 comes to a close at the month's end, it's been a year that's passed by in a blur. In fact, so much has happened over these past 12 months that the events of this first year of the decade are likely to linger in our collective memory for some time. Of course, there remain some very real, potentially existential challenges to the wine sector that are still to play out as 2021 rolls around. Chief among them are the potential actions of China when it comes to imports of Australian wine. At the time of writing, there are still no clear indications of what, or even if, measures will be meted out by Chinese officials. That hasn't stopped speculation and hearsay within the industry veering wildly across scenarios, both benign and malevolent. We can only hope that 2021 will ultimately be more optimistic than this year for our grape and wine producers, but time will tell.

When it comes to the implications for industry of China's investigation into Aussie wine imports, we hear from two experts in international wine business, Dr Nathan Grey and Prof Roberta Crouch, who jointly examine what the likely fallout may be (page 18).

Our theme for this issue is Vintage Preparation and we specifically address the aftermath of another of 2020's challenges – COVID-19. The pandemic and resultant lockdowns and border closures are causing a real problem for some producers trying to secure seasonal workers. Journalist Samuel Squire spoke to producers in various regions for

their perspectives (page 24). Staying on the topic of vintage employment, writer Cindie Smart focuses on the steps needed to keep workers safe this vintage (page 28).

While the reality of having electric tractors operating down vine rows may still be some way off, AWRI senior engineer Dr Simon Nordestgaard looks at the technology behind these and their potential in the vineyard (page 32). We also shed light on the obscure, long-lost Italian winegrape variety Schioppettino in our regular Uncorked column (page 48).

For winemakers, we learn from Greg Howell about the available options for testing sulfur dioxide (page 57), and are introduced to the Jameson Cell by Ian Jeffery, who believes the technology could prove beneficial in the winery (page 60).

This month's Young Gun is Clare Dry, a winemaker working for Wolf Blass, who reveals how she went against the grain of a family of teachers and lawyers after becoming infatuated with wine (page 64). Associate editor Sonya Logan then takes a dive into Flametree SRS Chardonnay by speaking to winemaker Cliff Royle for Behind the Top Drops (page 70).

During a challenging year for exporters, Australian bulk wine has held its own on the international market, and we take a snapshot of where this important export category currently stands (page 80).

Enjoy the read, and have a great holiday season ahead!