



Casella family – winemaking since 1820

Casella has a family history of wine-making in Sicily dating back to 1820.

Filippo Casella's parents were Guiseppe Casella (1881-1972) and Rosa Lofaro (1886-1981). He was educated until 15 years old and then worked tending vineyards for 4 years.

He married his childhood sweetheart, Maria Patanè (b 21/01/1927 Sicily) in 1947 and they immigrated to Australia in 1957. They moved to Yenda, a small village on the outskirts of the town of Griffith in 1962 with their family. Rosa (the eldest) and Joe (the eldest boy) were born in Sicily. John and Marcello were born in Australia.

BEGINNING A NEW LIFE

In 1965, Filippo purchased 45 acres of horticultural farmland from a Mrs. Violet Shaw at Yenda where she grew peaches, prunes, apricots and grapes.

He built a winery (tin shed) in 1969 following a chronic grape shortage. The concrete floor was poured by Filippo, John and Marcello. Filippo then constructed an open 4 tonne concrete fermenter to process his wines. The fermenter still remains in the old winery along with the original crusher.

In the beginning, wine was stored in large oval casks and concrete tanks which were distributed for over 20 years to larger local wineries.

A fibro shop, which was a general store in east Griffith, was transported to the Yenda property to serve as a cellar door, storage and some refrigeration in the

early winery days of the mid-seventies. It remains today alongside the original farm cottage in the old winery area opposite the barrel stores, having been shifted on several occasions.

Filippo was a heavy smoker and a heart bypass in the early 1990's forced him into semi-retirement and in 1993, his son John Casella took the reins of the family business.

John Casella studied oenology (wine-making) at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga until 1982. He started as winemaker/manager at Riverina Estate in 1983. Casella at the time could not support a full-time winemaker, however John balanced his role at Riverina Estate to also oversee Casella's first official vintage in 1994 with a crush of 2000 tonnes. In mid-1995, he resigned from Riverina Estate to be Chief Winemaker at Casella Wines. Joe Casella's son Phillip, graduated from Charles Sturt in Wine Science (oenology) and began work at Casella in 1997.

In 1998 a bottling line was in operation and Casella employed 15 people. By 1999 Casella had appointed Deutsch as importer and launched Carramar Estate which was received in the U.S. with only mild interest. But John Casella's vision for Casella had always planned the winery for production on a grand scale.

What John wanted for his export label was something that encompassed the meaning of Australia. Research had shown that the kangaroo was recognised all over the world as a symbol of

Australia.

Barbara Harkness was a South Australian designer who had established a graphic design business called Just Add Wine which was intended to assist small Australian wineries with 'off the shelf' labels. She had a label called [yellow tail]®, which was based on a yellow-tailed or yellow-footed rock wallaby which was on the endangered species list.

John Casella purchased the [yellow tail]® label in 2000 and unique Point of Sale material was designed such as the [yellow tail]® image on distinctive colour coordinated cartons that can be used to form part of an overall promotional package in a bottle shop.

The design of [yellow tail]® is distinctly Australian, with strong use of primary colours, initially black and yellow. The [yellow tail]® label was launched officially in the USA and UK in June 2001.

The first export bottling of the [yellow tail]® label was done on Christmas Eve 2000 and first bottles exported for tastings early 2001. Initial USA forecast for 2001 was 25,000 cases; actual sales were 230,000 (500,000 cases in first year). The Americans loved the quirky design and quickly adopted [yellow tail]® as their wine of choice. Long established distributor W.J. Deutsch (1981) proved to be an outstanding partner and the conspicuous success of [yellow tail]® in the U.S. created interest from other markets.

Continued on page 66





Casella Wines history

Continued from page 65

Such was the demand that Casella had to buy back wine they'd sold in bulk at a premium price to ensure continuity of supply. Sales in the USA rose to 2.2 million cases in 2002. By 2003, sales had reached 5 million cases.

Casella launched the [yellow tail]® Reserve range into the U.S. in 2003 with a Chardonnay and Shiraz. This extension to the standard [yellow tail]® range sold 250,000 cases suggesting room for further growth.

Casella Management vineyards will be fully operational in 2013 and will have the capacity to produce over 12,000 tonnes each vintage. Total acreage in 2010 is 2,617 (787 acres external. 490 acres of vines outside of the Griffith area but still in the Riverina).

In 2010, the working winery covers an area in excess of 80 acres. Two grape intake areas exist. The first at the original site east of the winery has two crushers and took grapes for the first time in 1994. There is an original small crusher from 1994 and the other is a large 90 tonne unit. This area starts and finishes vintage and accepts grapes from premium cool climate and other renowned Australian wine regions. It has been upgraded with state-of-the-art processing equipment.

Four large crushers have been installed at the rear of the winery each of 90 tonne capacity. They handle the large volumes of popular varieties as vintage gets into full swing. The facility took grapes for the first time in 2004 when three crushers were in operation. In 2009, Casella processed 180,000 tonne which was almost 11% of the national total.

A barrel room designed to hold 5,000

American and French oak casks was constructed in 2006. Award winning wines are matured here each year. The winery has over 730 stainless steel fermentation and storage vessels at the Yenda winery which are all constructed locally. Capacities range from a massive 1.1ML (there are 100) to 1094 litres, allowing every popular wine style in both quality and quantity to be produced.

Casella has four bottling lines. Two small lines adjacent to Warehouse 1, which are used primarily for small runs and premium wines such as [yellow tail] Reserve, Black Stump, Yendah and Casella Family Reserve. Bottling Line 3 and 4 are the high volume lines which are rated at 24,000 and 36,000 bottles (750ml) per hour. Line 4 is currently the fastest wine bottling line in the world.

The processing area during vintage is a hive of activity and is the largest in the southern hemisphere. It consists of six screw presses with inclined drainers, 12 bag presses on the western side, six large and four small rotary drum vacuum filters and 13 centrifuges on the east. All water on site is recycled through an ultra-modern Sequencing Batch Reactor (SBR) situated four kms to the north of the winery.

Since [yellow tail]® began in June 2001, Casella has become an industry leader in technological advances and innovative technology, with its phenomenal processing and bottling capacity keeping pace with demand. It is Australia's largest family owned winery, Australia's largest single wine processing facility and one of the biggest wineries in the world.