

My next appointment was another winery I knew nothing about but the tip off came from a well respected source in the business who has never given me a bum steer. [Schubert Estate](#) is owned by Steve and Cecilia Schubert, their property is across the road from Torbreck, and up the road from Greenock Creek; with a pedigree location like that, they had to be worth investigating.

..... **Schubert Goose Pie in winter, anyone?**



Cecilia gave me specific instructions on where to find the house but they were obviously not specific enough. Like a goose, I drove right around the property and wound up coming in through the backdoor from the wrong direction. As it was a hot

day, they invited me into the kitchen; we sat around the table having a good chin wag whilst we got to know each other. Both Steve and Cecilia are very personable people and a pleasure to talk with, so it was an easy visit.

Steve bought the property in the 1980s. At that time, you couldn't give grapes away. Steve consulted some well known and respected winemakers, including Peter Shultz and one of the head Penfold's winemakers, who all gave him the same advice. So, in 1986, along with a lot of other "brain surgeons" who thought it was a good idea at the time, he applied for, and was granted the vine pull subsidy and subsequently pulled out acres full of old Shiraz vines. He's still kicking himself for doing it.

Around 1992, replanting commenced and they now have thirty-seven acres under vine, three of which are Semillon. All (except two or three tonnes of the grapes which are used for their own wine,) are sold off to Torbreck with the majority of them ending up in The Struie and The Factor. The block where they get their own Shiraz from, was originally planted by Dave Powell in 1995 and the vineyard is basically managed to Torbreck specifications.

The grapes for the Schubert Estate wine are hand-picked, from the same block every year, and a small basket press is used in the winemaking process. French oak is now used exclusively and only a minimal amount of it is new. Two hundred cases of wine are produced. All Australian sales are a direct and the wines are not sold through bottle shops, US sales are through retail channels.



**Schubert 2003 Shiraz** sells by mail order. Tight, with lifted floral characters, black fruit, spice plum, coffee, chocolate and earthy; the bouquet certainly was attractive. The wine has some stand out features; the first is excellent balance and the second is mouth feel, but the fruit was best of all. Supremely focused quality grapes produced plum, blackcurrant, coffee and dark chocolate flavours that finish with excellent persistence. The wine needs time in the bottle to gain complexity and fill out the mid-palate hole. Ample-weight, the consistency is firm but supple and

the structure tight and shows some elegance. This is a terrific, indeed classy wine that is rated as **Excellent with \*\*\*\*** for value that is worth buying and should hit its peak around 2010.

Naturally enough, when talking to a grape grower, at times like these when things are really tough, the subject of grape prices invariably comes up. During our conversation, we discussed the ins and outs of the topic including cropping level, quality and every other imaginable influencing factor. In relation to quality grapes, Steve summed it up succinctly when he said, “If you want to get chaff; the stuff that has been through the cow once comes a bit cheaper than the fresh stuff.” Oh how true!

**Paddy**, their English Springer Spaniel is quite a character but apparently doesn't hang around when



the glass is empty. It was delightful to meet both Steve and Cecilia. Cecilia has a very sharp wit. After tasting one mouthful of their wine, I ask Cecilia if I could use the bathroom. As quick as a flash, with a dead straight face, she came back and said “Don't tell me our wine makes you sick!”

This wine is worth seeking out and it is a winery that I will watch with keen interest.