

YOUNG BLOOD

Richard Cornish

The next generation of Macedon Ranges winemakers are doing things differently



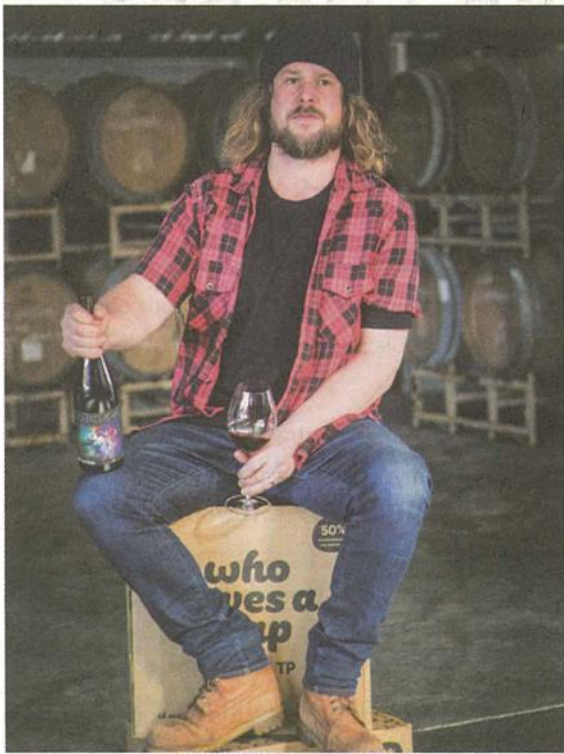
There's a whiff of spring in the air. Bees are buzzing about, seeking the few first flowers of the season. The vines are still dormant, but **Passing Clouds** winemaker and co-owner Cameron Leith, 33, looks expectantly out the window across his vineyards to the green rolling hills of Musk, just outside of Daylesford. "What defines this region," he says, looking back inside, "is high altitude and true cold climate. It snowed twice in May!" he says with a warm smile. "This is also a wine region of family-owned wineries where there is a real chance of meeting the owner when you come in and try the wines." Cameron has taken over winemaking from his father and has changed the way he manages the vineyard. "We now use regenerative soil practices in the vineyard," says Cameron. "No synthetic fertilisers. No chemical weed killers. The payoff has been in the quality of the fruit," he says. Cameron and his family also understand the intricate link between food and wine, serving simple dishes such as roasted free-range

chicken cooked over a wood fire in the winery dining room. Here there are no ovens. No hotplates. Just honest food served with elegant wines.

One of Cameron's former assistant winemakers is forging a very different path. Brendan Lane, 34, has **Musk Lane Wine**, an urban winery and wine bar hidden down a laneway in an old timber yard in the heart of Kyneton. Here Brendan makes wine from fruit he buys from small vineyards around Kyneton. "We source small parcels of fruit, around one to two tonnes," he says. "I try and do as little to the fruit as possible and use natural yeast fermentation," he says. The cellar door/wine bar is a shed-like room made from scrounged and foraged materials 'courtesy of Facebook Marketplace' jokes Brendan as he pours a glass of his 2018 Macedon Ranges gewürztraminer. Made in the Alsatian style, it is balanced with spicy citrus notes and drinks beautifully. "The new generation of wine lovers do not want to come to a cellar door and receive a lecture," he says

flipping the **Credence Clearwater Revival** LP he has on the record player. "They want to make up their own mind, and if they are interested, they will ask questions," says Brendan. He has a BYO food policy and suggests you try one of the local restaurants who deliver into the cellar door or go via **Piper St Food Co** for some charcuterie before you arrive.

A short drive out of Kyneton, in the rugged Cobaw Ranges, Josh Cooper makes wine from other people's grapes under his own name using his family's winery at **Cobaw Ridge**. Josh, 30, grew up on the beautiful family vineyard learning biodynamic farming techniques from his father Alan. Josh is known in the industry as being a hands-off winemaker. "There's a saying that the wine is made in the vineyard," says Josh. He works intensively with the owners of the vineyards based in the area, making sure the grapes reach ripeness in perfect condition. "It's our role as winemakers, to carry the wines through the winemaking process, to



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birds and insects that help keep the balance of bugs in the vineyard in check,” says Henry. They were working in Melbourne but fell in love with natural wines, influenced by close friends who owned Bar Liberty in Fitzroy. While they are working on a range of minimal intervention ‘natural wines’ under a second label, they are aware they inherited a loyal following of Zig Zag wine lovers and continue to make good fruit-driven wines for the long-time customers. “We are here to make this vineyard sustainable, make great wine and pass it on to the next generation when it’s time,” says Henry. In the meantime, their cellar door is open for tastings and sales Thursday – Monday 10am to 5pm.

let the fruit be what the drinker tastes.” Joshua Cooper Wines have been met with critical acclaim and are only available online, through retailers such as Wine and the Country in Daylesford, and served in regional restaurants such as The Surly Goat in Hepburn Springs and Midnight Starling in Kyneton.

A little further north-west, young English couple Henry, 41, and Harriet, 36, Churchill are quietly reinvigorating an old vineyard first planted in 1972. Zig Zag Winery in Malmsbury is a picturesque vineyard and cellar door. The pair have embraced biodynamic practices to improve the soil and vine health. The grass in every third row remains unmown as “this acts as corridors for

Nestled into a saddle of a granite ridge, Lyons Will Estate vineyard cellar door looks east out onto the dramatic landscape around Lancefield. Husband and wife Oliver Rapson, 36, and Renata Morello, 41, bought the vineyard six years ago, inheriting several hectares of pinot noir and chardonnay vines. Soon after they planted riesling and gamay vines into the loam clay soil. “Oliver has a French background, and we wanted to make a wine that we could drink with his family, and gamay is growing in popularity.” The cool climate and easterly aspect determine the way the grapes ripen and Renata – who makes the riesling and gamay – makes exceptionally food-friendly wines with refreshing clean acidity and pleasing mouthfeel. Oliver,

meanwhile, adheres to natural winemaking techniques using naturally occurring yeast, zero filtration and lots of lees exposure for his chardonnay and pinot noir. The cellar door is open the fourth weekend of every month to coincide with the popular and well-stocked Lancefield Farmers’ Market. “Our recommendation is to buy some cheese, olives, smallgoods and bread from the market and come up and enjoy them at our cellar door with a bottle of our wine,” says Renata. “Or buy a free range chicken or some pork, get some of our wine and cook up a taste of cool climate food and wine at home.”

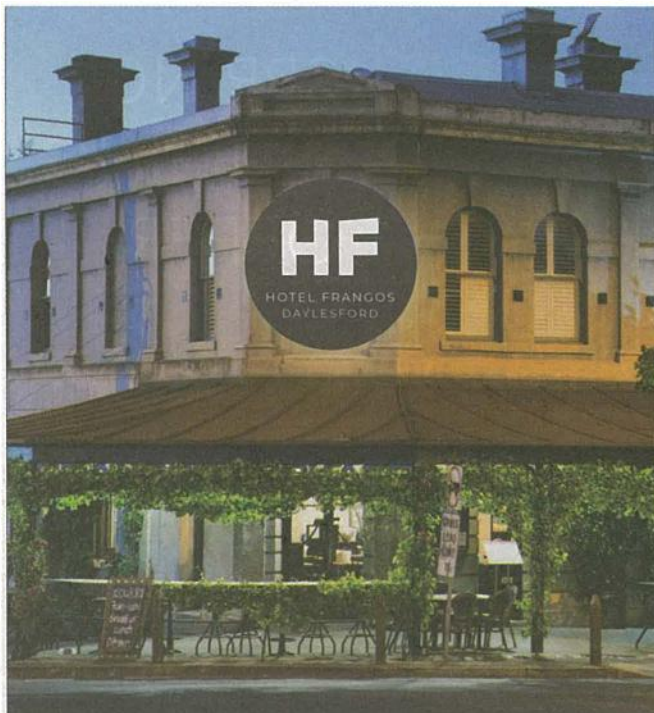
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Photography by Richard Cornish

Photos:

Opposite page: Josh Cooper, Joshua Cooper Wines
Left: Brendan Lane, Musk Lane Wine

- Passing Clouds, Musk passingclouds.com.au
- Musk Lane Wine, Kyneton musklanewine.com
- Piper St Food Co, Kyneton piperstfoodco.com
- Cobaw Ridge, East Pastoria cobawridge.com.au
- Joshua Cooper Wines joshuacooperwines.com.au
- Wine and the Country, Daylesford wineandthecountry.com.au
- The Surly Goat, Hepburn Springs thesurlygoat.com.au
- Midnight Starling, Kyneton midnightstarling.com.au
- Zig Zag Winery, Malmsbury zigzagwines.com.au
- Lancefield Farmers’ Market vfma.org.au
- Lyons Will Estate, Lancefield lyonswillestate.com.au

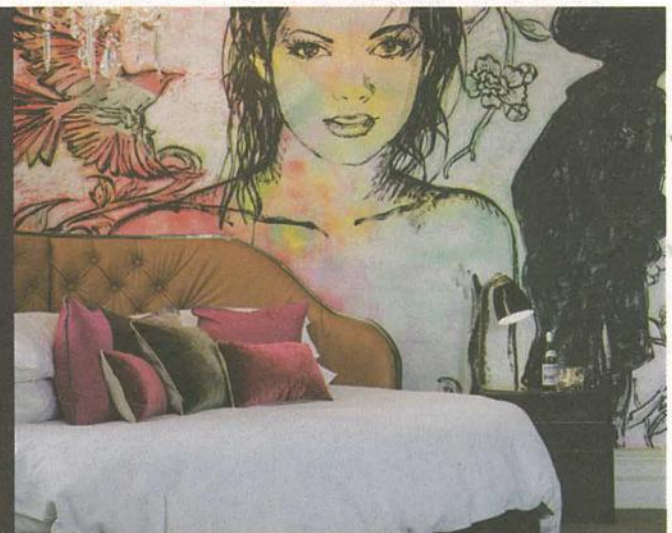


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