



New beginnings

Barossa winemaker
Natasha Mooney is back
with the family-friendly Fox
Gordon label. KERRY
SKINNER reports.

Natasha Mooney was at the top of her game when she took a self-imposed break after the birth of her second child.

At the time Mooney was winemaker/manager at Barossa Valley Estates where she had established herself as a world-class winemaker.

It was Mooney who crafted the iconic E&E Black Pepper Shiraz vintages that won acclaim as best red and best wine at the International Wine Challenge and became only the second Australian wine to earn a place in the influential *Wine Spectator* magazine's top 10 wines.

Not bad for a young winemaker who just "fell into the job".

Mooney's family had strong links to the Barossa Valley and after leaving school she took on some work at the Rockford winery.

Mooney studied winemaking at Roseworthy College and joined Southcorp as a graduate winemaker working at places like Lindemans and Penfolds alongside winemaking luminaries Neville Falkenberg, Phillip John and Andrew Fleming.

She left to join Barossa Valley Estates as manager/winemaker and it was here Mooney stamped her class as one of the world's best

winemakers.

"I didn't what to leave - but I had just had my second child and decided that was my priority," Mooney said.

"It was very sad because I had helped build a new winery in the Barossa. We were down at Angle Vale in an old dilapidated winery and I left just as we were moving."

Mooney is now well and truly back on the scene combining motherhood and winemaking in a venture called Fox Gordon Wines she operates with close friends and business partners Jane Gordon and Rachel Atkins (nee Fox).

Fox Gordon is a spin-off from Next Generation Wines, a highly successful label Mooney helped create for the UK market and which was later sold to West Australian operator Xanadu.

Mooney and her partners retained the "family-friendly" Fox Gordon label. Its newest releases Abby Viognier and By George Cabernet Tempranillo are named after Rachel Atkins' daughter and Jane Gordon's son.

The portfolio also includes Eight Uncles Shiraz, Hannah's Swing and King Louis Cabernet Sauvignon.

All are made in line with Mooney's desire to make more approachable and food-friendly

Barossa wines.

"It's been fantastic. It's hard work but we've loved every minute of it," Mooney said. "We're making about 3000 cases which is quite small but we can all handle it."

"You start with a concept like our new By George Cabernet Tempranillo and Abby Viognier, you just go all the way through with it," Mooney said.

"I was playing around with tempranillo and cabernet in the winery and it went well together and I thought I can make a good wine out of this. It's worked really well."

"Cabernet in the Barossa is so luscious and big and fruity and tempranillo gives it some more spicy tannins."

"I'm seeing a lot of Barossa wines that are big and alcoholic and to me they're good for a glass and then you can't drink much more of it."

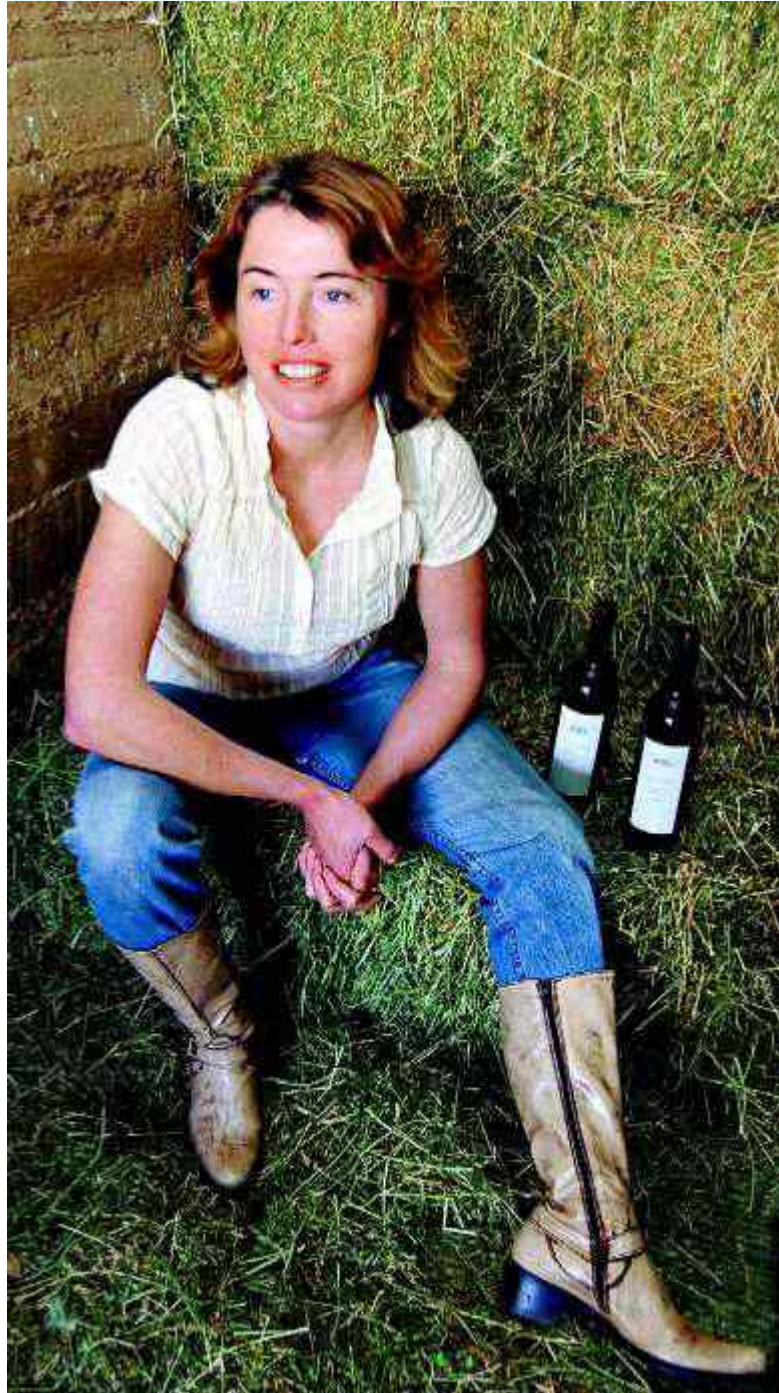
"I'm really looking to say, 'Well, the Barossa's got a lot more to offer than that,' and there's a lot of different fruit flavours and there are a lot of different wine styles that you can make that are not so alcoholic."

"They can still have lovely rich fruit and have a lot more texture and drinkability ... that's what I'm trying to do."



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Page 2 of 2



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DROP OF THE WEEK



Wirra Wirra The Angelus 2004, \$55
 Wirra Wirra named this premium cabernet sauvignon after the huge angelus bell it rescued from an old Jesuit church in the South Australian town of Norwood and which now rings to announce the start and end of each vintage. It's a cracking good red, superbly structured with aromas of blackberries and smoky oak and spices, layers of intense ripe fruit on the palate, balanced oak and a fine, silky tannins.

UNDER \$35



Hamelin Bay 2005 Five Ashes Chardonnay, \$26
 Crafted by Julian Scott this is an exquisite Margaret River chardonnay with melon and stonefruit flavours, a smooth mouthfeel, a dash of wild ferment for extra complexity and a creamy finish. Drink it with seafood, but it will get better with time in the bottle.

Cockfighter's Ghost Tasmania Pinot Noir, \$34.95
 This premium pinot is the work of Andrew Pirie, one of the giants of Tasmanian winemaking, and Patrick Auld. It's smooth and supple with upfront cherry fruit, integrated spiciness and silky tannins. Drink it with roast duck.





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UNDER \$20



**Fox Gordon By George 2004 Cabernet
Tempranillo, \$19.99**

From winery experiment to international hit. A cleverly structured, food-friendly red with lickings of ripe Barossa cabernet fruit, loads of blackberry flavours, some added mintiness, integrated spiciness and smooth tannins. Drink it with lasagne.



**Annie's Lane 2006 Semillon Sauvignon
Blanc, \$16.99**

This label honours Annie Wayman, one of the most endearing characters in Clare Valley's rich history. It's an enticing blend of Clare and Adelaide Hills fruit, youthful and vibrant with lovely fruit definition, citrus and tropical fruit flavours, balanced acidity and a crisp, clean finish. Drink it with grilled fish and salad.