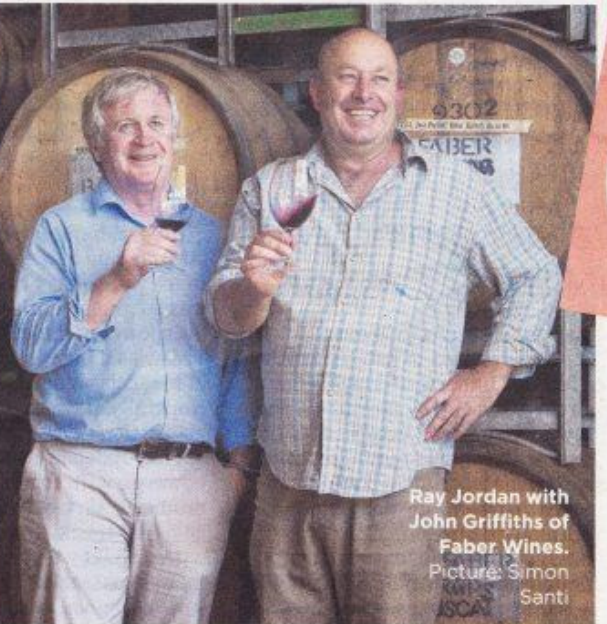


Faber Vineyard

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN FRESH • THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2012

Top drop from WA

Think wine, think Margaret River. But the Swan Valley is excelling too. RAY JORDAN reports.



Ray Jordan with John Griffiths of Faber Wines. Picture: Simon Santi

John Griffiths knows a thing or two about making good wine. He's been doing it long enough, initially with Houghton, then as a consultant for a number of smaller WA producers who he turned around with his disciplined approach to winemaking, and now with his own label, Faber.

He is quite simply one of WA's best winemakers and probably hasn't had the recognition his talents deserve. When it came to choosing my Best Small Producer award in this year's edition of the WA Wine Guide, it was a no brainer. The quality of the wines Griffiths has made from fruit sourced in the Swan Valley and other southern areas is quite outstanding.

Just to give you an idea of how good the Faber wines are, I can tell you that the lowest score I gave his five entries was 93 points. In fact Griffiths was in line for my Winemaker of the Year award but

was just pipped by Vasse Felix's Virginia Willcock.

Griffiths is, of course, a great fan of the Swan, where he is based with his small operation, but recognises other parts of WA can provide him with fruit to suit alternative styles. His Dwellingup chardonnay is a case in point.

But it is with his tremendous old vine reds out of the Swan that he really excels and these wines should make anyone sit up and take notice. Just as Griffiths himself hasn't always been recognised for his achievements, so too the Swan Valley.

We are all probably guilty of looking further south towards the Great Southern and Margaret River, but when you taste wines such as the Faber Riche shiraz or Faber Reserve shiraz, you are reminded in no uncertain terms what the Swan Valley can deliver.

For wine drinkers in WA, the good news is that good-quality wine

is being produced from big and small wineries. The standard of winemaking has never been better throughout the state.

Of the 900 wines I tasted, I hardly had a bad one, and such is the quality of the recent vintages, the standard of viticulture and the disciplined approach to winemaking. You will find top-quality drinking in every corner of WA's wine regions.

Another feature is that you don't have to spend a lot to get a good drink. Once again the WA Wine Guide features my best-value wines. The pick of the lot was the fabulous Moondah Brook cabernet sauvignon 2011 which I wrote up earlier this year in my Great Red Wine Special.

But there are many others and I have featured some of the best value reds and whites this week to give you an idea of what you can find. Some of these are only available at the cellar door or online. ■

