

**When is Reserve not a reserve?** when it's a Sub Regional Series. After 15 vintages making wine in Margaret River you get a feel for the sub regions that are best suited to specific grape varieties. Rather than go down the traditional Reserve or Single Vineyard path we decided to pursue something a little different, hence the sub regional theme. Although there are no officially defined subregions in Margaret River, producers have adopted the John Gladstone proposal. In 1999 viticultural scientist Dr John Gladstone presented a paper suggesting there should be six sub regions based on climate and soil differences.

The aim with the Flametree Sub Regional Series is to showcase distinctive wine styles from vineyards renowned for growing ultra premium fruit. We've chosen to lead with Margaret River's strongest varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. The Sub Regional Series represents the very best varietal wines under the Flametree label, these wines will only be made in the best vintages, volumes will be small and availability very limited.

# FLAMETREE S.R.S. WALLCLIFFE CHARDONNAY 2015

## Season

The 2015 season was a warm one. Hot days followed by unseasonal warm nights and low yields meant picking times had to be planned with care. November storms played a huge part in the small crops as flowering was inconsistent; as a result fruit set was patchy. As has now become a part of the Flametree Chardonnay philosophy, we were keen to get in early and pick before the flavours were overblown. We picked a couple of weeks earlier than the previous year, starting the first week of February. We never leaf pluck Chardonnay and don't ever want the grapes in direct contact with the harsh afternoon sun. Shaded fruit was a very important factor in 2015 for Flametree Chardonnay, as the region saw many producers with exposed vineyards that had high levels of sunburn, resulting in high phenolic, low acids and tropical flavoured wines.

## Fruit / Vineyards

Fruit for the 2015 Flametree SRS Chardonnay was once again sourced from a single block on Rosa Glen Road. This area is in the southern part of the Wallcliffe sub-region situated south of the Margaret River town site. Our clone of choice was the Gin Gin (or Mendoza) clone, used in many of the best examples of Margaret River Chardonnay. This fruit comes from old, low yielding vines grown from cuttings off the famous block 20 at Leeuwin Estate. Yields were moderate at around 6 tonnes per hectare. The vineyard is situated on a cooler south-west facing site; the soil is classic Margaret River gravel loam and clay. The fruit was handpicked in the first week of February at 12.5 beaume.

## Winemaking

After overnight cold storage the fruit was whole bunch pressed and sent straight to French oak puncheons. We rotated the press more than usual in order to get higher turbidity (up around 800-1000 NTU), the juices were then left to ferment with wild yeasts. The key to successful wild fermentation is the use of high turbidity juices, minimal sulphur dioxide, low alcohols and juices with good nutrient content. MLF was again blocked. I'm a big believer that Margaret River Chardonnay generally has enough texture from fruit and lees; MLF often thickens the wines and interferes with fruit purity and overall minerality in the finished wine. The 2015 SRS Chardonnay was barrel fermented in French puncheons, 40% new, the remainder being second and third year seasoned wood. After fermentation the finished wine was left on lees however, due to the warm vintage and fruit flavours, the lees were not stirred.

## Tasting Notes

Last year I made the comment that the 2014 SRS Chardonnay was the best white wine made at the winery, Although I still believe this to be the case, the 2015 is certainly up there with the best. If anything, the 2015 has a little more fruit flavour and texture. The nose shows all the tight citrus, and dried pear, sulphide notes and slight French oak aromas that last year's wine did. The 2015 SRS Chardonnay also has some complex, high-note sulphides in the struck match/popcorn spectrum; this is a result of a wild ferment with high solids. These sulphides contribute a lovely savoury oyster shell or saline character, this gives the wine greater complexity and complements modern food flavours. After 12 months in the finest French oak the wine was fined with milk, filtered and bottled in January 2016. Release date July 2016.

**Analysis:** Alc: 13% v/v pH: 3.28 Acidity: 7.5g/l

**Winemaker:** Cliff Royle



**Flametree**  
MARGARET RIVER