



Joch Bosworth in his McLaren Vale vineyard.

Picture: GRANT NOWELL

**TASTING NOTES** TONY LOVE looks at organic wines

# Partners in time

Organics is all about using the grape grower's natural advantage, **TONY LOVE** discovers.

**IT'S A RARE** moment that any winemaker looks over a vineyard and sings the praises of one of the most despised weeds in most other South Australian gardens.

Yet Joch Bosworth, the vigneron behind McLaren Vale's

certified organic Battle of Bosworth label, professes a great fondness for the soursob, that pretty flowering bulb that drives many suburbanites to despair.

The little oxalis is so important to his viticultural practice that he's put it on his wine's label.

The reason: it's one of his most important tools in managing soil health and general weed control over the whole growing cycle of his Willunga foothills vineyard.

After being convinced in the mid-1990s by an old, local vegetable grower that the soursob

could be a vital agricultural player, Bosworth began the conversion to organic viticulture, using the weed's opposing growing cycle to grape vines as an effective method of preventing other weeds taking over the ground cover.

When the soursob dries and dies in spring, it strips off surface moisture, not allowing other weeds to take hold, which would then require herbicides. The soursob's bulbs also "bust up" the soil, making it more friable.

An old-fashioned dodge plough is used to spread the dirt back under vines and cover the ground with the good weed, so that is a perfect world, says Bosworth. That's about all he has to do.

The process, conversion and continuation, is about simplifying everything, he says.

"You have to keep a good eye on things, and the soursob is our natural advantage here," Bosworth says.

"You have to work with what you've got."

Which also includes underground water used judiciously, beneficial gully winds that help keep dampness-linked problems at bay while lowering temperatures, all combined with modern viticultural knowledge.

"I think it's easier to achieve vine balance with organic

methods," Bosworth says. "Your wine is made in the vineyard."

While most of his vines are now certified or close to full conversion, he's also trialling a small section with biodynamic methods – just to see if it makes any further difference, he says.

A lot of these methods are old-fashioned farming, he adds, but new trellising techniques, pruning regimes and understanding flavour ripening compared with sugar ripening are all important in using organic practices to create great wine.

"The methods are about helping the vines become balanced and healthy, and getting the fruit to the point where it can be as good as it can be," Bosworth says.

The winemaking part of his work is fairly straightforward, and pretty good for organic auditing. Contract made, well documented, using non-GMO yeasts or wild yeasts in certain parcels of fruit, minimal sulphur, filtered water and French oak from sustainably farmed forests.

Sustainability and general good health of the vineyard are the keys to good organic wine, Bosworth says.

"I like to think that when we get the growing right, you can see it in the bottle."

## BATTLE OF BOSWORTH 2006 SHIRAZ

McLaren Vale, 14.5%, \$24, 93 points

Gorgeous and pristine Willunga foothill, purple berry aromatics, with a fine line of French oak vanillins in the background, the fruit spotlighted in the mouth with lovely spice and texture.

[www.battleofbosworth.com.au](http://www.battleofbosworth.com.au)