



Virginia Willcock, chief winemaker, Vasse Felix

Inspired by her father and his friends' small shared vineyard outside Perth, Australia, Virginia Willcock studied winemaking and worked vintages in New Zealand, Albania, Italy and Sicily, learning how wine could reflect the land where the grapes were grown, and discovering a curiosity for the role microbiology plays in making more environmentally expressive wines.

She joined Vasse Felix in Margaret River as chief winemaker in October 2006, and her revolutionary development in winemaking style has seen her become one of Australia's most awarded women winemakers, including being named 'Winemaker of the Year' in the Australian Society of Viticulture and Oenology Award for Excellence 2016.

What or who inspired you to become a winemaker?

My parents and all their friends, and seeing how happy wine made them.

What's your favourite part of the job?

Creating something new and beautiful every year that represents a moment in time and the specific place that fruit came from.



One to watch

> Australia's Vasse Felix has won Silver or Gold medals for every wine it has entered in the recent Global Masters series, and we suspect that it's only a matter of time before their Chardonnays and Cabernet Sauvignons gain the ultimate accolade.

What's the hardest part?

Trying to decide the perfect time for harvest for each individual block of fruit in the vineyard can be one of the hardest parts.

What's your go-to drink at the end of a long day?

During vintage I crave older wines. But after blending young wines, I just want a punk IPA.

What advice would you give your younger self?

It took me a long time to get comfortable with doing less in the winery. I would tell myself to stop thinking you need to do more to the wines.

What was your greatest winemaking mistake?

Thinking that bigger was better.

Which wine-related achievement are you most proud of?

I am the most proud of being able to understand the power and complexity of Margaret River Chardonnay.

Who is your inspiration in the wine world today?

My organic, low-intervention winemaking mates who push the boundaries of the industry.

Where would your fantasy vineyard be?

Finding the perfect piece of land within walking distance of the coast would be my ideal vineyard.

If you weren't a winemaker, what would you be doing and why?

Producing charcuterie on a small organic farm.

Which wine (grape/style) do you find it impossible to get along with?

Nebbiolo - I love it so much but just can't get the results here in Margaret River.

How has your taste in wine changed over your career?

My wine style has become way more low-intervention. I am much more creative now with what is possible, and understand how to stretch the boundaries of a beautiful-bodied wine to enhance its elegance and power.

Which type of wine do you drink most regularly?

Nebbiolo, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Riesling and any wild alternative.

Which wine would you most like to drink, and who would you share it with?

The 1972 Cabernet Malbec, with Dr Tom Cullity.

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