

The name Thorn-Clarke represents the union between two families with deep roots in the Barossa Valley and six generations of grape growing. Cheryl Clarke's (née Thorn) family were some of the earliest settlers in the region and have been growing grapes since the 1870s. The Thorn family property 'Clifton' is home to one of the oldest Shiraz vineyards in Australia, and perhaps the world, with earliest records for plantings dating back to 1854. It is still owned and operated by Cheryl's brother.

Sam, Cheryl, David and Nicole Clarke

David Clarke's family was also a pioneer in the Barossa Valley but more famously for mining gold. An ancestor, James Goddard, was responsible for opening the Lady Alice gold mine in the Barossa goldfields, the largest gold mine in South Australia at the time. A geologist by training and wine lover at heart, David set about testing soils to identify prime plots of land to acquire and plant vines. David and Cheryl's first vineyard in 1987 was Kabininge, outside Tanunda (the name means "watering hole" in aborigine). They later acquired more land in Barossa and in The Eden Valley. This took a lot of Australian pluck at that time. During the late 1980s the South Australian government was sponsoring growers to remove vines, not plant them, to manage oversupply.

Following success as grape growers supplying other Barossa wineries with fruit, David and Cheryl founded Thorn-Clarke winery in 2001 with daughter, Nicole, and son, Sam. Thorn-Clarke has a total of 675 acres of grapes over 5 vineyards. In Barossa Valley, there are 3 vineyards: Kabininge, St. Kitts and Truro. In the Eden Valley, there are 2 vineyards: Mount Crawford and Milton Park.

Mt Crawford Vineyard

Winemaker Peter Kelly, strongly believes that to make wines with complexity and elegance, the first step is getting the vineyards right. There is a long-term approach to serve as a custodian for the Barossa's reputation and their families' commitment to making great wines. The vineyard team focuses first on nurturing quality grapes from prime land without cutting corners. Once grapes are harvested and into the winery it's about balance. The Thorn-Clarke family has a strong belief in the age-old saying "you can't make good wine from bad grapes."

In 2021 Thorn-Clarke's winery and vineyards were certified by Sustainable Winegrowing Australia.

Here is a summary of the 'sustainable' practices across the vineyard and winery:

Vineyard

- biosecurity measures such as foot baths and wash down of equipment to stop the spread of pest and diseases into the vineyards
- fungicide programmes which are backed up by calibration records, with a preference to use biological or organic fungicides rather than synthetic ones
- Minimal soil disturbance practices such as permanent midrow swards to improve biodiversity and to avoid soil erosion and degradation
- Recycling of vineyard inputs such as used posts through sale or donation to other agricultural businesses
- Minimise Diesel usage through programmes such as running livestock in the vineyard to control weeds without needing to revert to slashing passes
- Automatic soil moisture monitoring probes used for all irrigation rounds with the aim of reducing water usage
- Native vegetation remediation to lessen erosion risk and improve native predator numbers for vineyard pests such as light brown apple moths
- Petiole analysis to ensure fertigation programmes are targeted and minimise any soil leaching

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Winery

Removal of all biological waste, with irrigation after treatment onto



Founded
1998
Location
Australia
Wine Production Area
Australia - South Australia - Barossa Valley, Eden Valley
Owners
David, Cheryl, Sam & Nicole Clarke
Winemaker
Peter Kelly
Grape Varietals
Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cab Franc, Petit Verdor, Merlot, Malbec, Graciano, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Gris
Agricultural Methods
Sustainable
Annual Production
130,000 (9-liter cases)
Website
www.thornclarkewines.com.au