

aftertaste

ELISABETH KING

PRIORITY CHANNELS - VIVINO AND GREENSKIN WINE OFFER WINE BRANDS AND RETAILERS MORE REACH



HUMAN beings have an infinite capacity to absorb new media and technology. Wine lovers around the world have added apps, streaming services, Internet reviews and more to the way they soak up knowledge about wine, spirits and beer. We all still love the opinions of experts, as delivered by respected sources such as Winestate, because they judge wines with experienced palates and are not biased by price or snobbery.

But just as many of us don't buy anything these days from washing machines to doona covers without checking the opinions of verified buyers, I have become a big fan of Vivino. Founded in Denmark in 2010 by wine neophytes, Heini Zachariassen and Theis Sondergaard, it is now the world's largest online wine marketplace and most downloaded wine app. The numbers are staggering - 60 million users worldwide and one million in Australia. The 5-star Vivino Rating is the most widely used consumer wine rating in the world, covering consumer reviews, prices, regions, taste profiles and food pairings.

Investors have rushed to grab a slice of the action and Vivino's \$221 million funding efforts to date have attracted key players such as Janus Friis, the co-founder of Skype, Sprints Capital and GP Bullhound. Officially launched in Australia in April 2021, there has also been a big payoff for Australian wine producers and retailers and the app has become a de facto new export channel, allowing them to fuel sales and marketing initiatives worldwide.

From the get-go, Vivino on-boarded 50 Australian wineries and 30 retailers, importers and distributors. According to James Fildes, General Manager of Vivino in Australia, we wanted to champion Australian producers of all sizes and be that channel to the world for their wines. To fast-track the goal, the company offered all Australian wineries a 50 per cent reduction in marketplace commissions for the entirety of 2021.

There was plenty to build on. Vivino debuted its marketplace service in Australia in June 2019, encouraging local producers to list their wines. Operated out of Hong Kong prior to the set-up of the Australian office two years later, the company

had also cemented partnerships with well-known retailers and distributors.

Trade issues, notably with China, also saw Australian wineries looking for new markets. Austrade supported and provided Vivino with information on leading Australian wine organisations and state and territory agencies. Fildes acknowledges that it was a crucial time for Vivino to fuel its expansion in Australia, connecting Aussie wine brands and companies to a global distribution network of more than 20 countries, including the US, Canada, the UK, leading European markets, Hong, Kong, Japan and Singapore.

Vivino helps wineries to tell their story through its Strategic Brand Partnerships offering. When a Vivino user scans a bottle of wine, they receive an email outlining the producer's story to boost brand loyalty and drive sales. Vivino also supplies personal data, so wineries can track brand awareness and sales at a global level.

Early adopters utilising Vivino's global reach included smaller wineries such as SA's Eight at the Gate to wine titan, Accolade Wines, who have leading brands such as Hardys, Grant Burge, St Hallett and Mud House on the app. Speaking to Austrade, Andrew Walsh, Accolade Wines Global Director, Customer and Commercial, said that we're only just getting started but results are very encouraging. "The Vivino team is motivated and professional and in an exciting growth phase so a perfect alignment for our business".

One of the most appealing aspects of Vivino is that the app is not in the business of discounting its way to success. We advise producers on an appropriate price for the market, but they make the final decision on price, says Fildes. "They will always be in control of the pricing on our platform".

This year, Vivino has plans to corral Australian wines into a central fulfilment centre. A hub mode it pioneered in Europe.

Another company helping premium winemakers to reach a new market looking for sustainability is Greenskin Wine. Launched in 2021 by Mike Davies and Kim McKee, the company recently won two major awards - the PACKWINE Best


Alternative/Sustainable Package award and The People's Choice award.

Davies, originally a winemaker whose resume includes Katnook Estate, Tyrrell's and Chapel Hill, was the founder of Portavin, which quickly scaled to become Australia's largest independent wine packaging business in mobile and static operations. Partner McKee is a respected wine marketing consultant and both are keen boaties. A peripatetic passion that prompted them to re-visit one of Australia's major contributions to the global wine industry - the bag-in-a-box.

Last year was a major one for soft packaging in the wine industry. As I reported in an earlier column, UK-based eco-packaging leader, Packamama, partnered with Accolade Wines and Taylors Wines to launch a wine bottle made from Australian-sourced 100% recycled and recyclable PET plastic. Greenskin Wine has pioneered the first 100 per cent recyclable, resealable, glassless way to enjoy quality wine.

The 750ml soft pouches, which come in six-packs, are a godsend for picnickers, campers and anyone who is on the move. Davies and McKee have sourced high-quality small parcels of wine from leading producers and all details of the winery and the vintage are available from Greenskin's website or can be accessed by QR code on the label of each pouch.

Apart from enjoying premium wines, you can significantly reduce your carbon footprint further. For starters, each 750 ml pouch takes 80 per cent less energy to produce than a glass bottle and their low weight reduces emissions during transportation. Greenskin also offers a wine industry-first closed-loop, mail back recycling system. Every six-pack comes with a pre-paid mailer bag to return the empty pouches to Greenskin's recycling partner, where 100 per cent of the pouch and the mailer bags are fully recycled.

The latest releases are 2021 Sauvignon Blanc Semillon and Chardonnay and a Rosé. Whether you are at home or away, the pouches are unbreakable, quick to chill and the empties weight just 17 grams. That's four grams lighter than the supposed weight of the human soul. 

next issue:

As we farewell 2022, we intrepidly enter 2023! What will this year bring? One thing's for sure, this issue will offer a great way to kick-off the year with tastings of Chardonnay & Blends; Italian, Spanish & Portuguese Varietals and also exploring the regions of Western Australia; the Barossa & Eden Valley; and McLaren Vale and the greater Fleurieu Peninsula and of course the latest New Releases.