



Paul Bridgeman, winemaker, Levantine Hill

Over three decades, Bridgeman has accumulated vast knowledge from leading wineries and winemakers all around the world. He worked in France, at Domaine Jean-Louis Chave in the Rhône Valley, where he studied traditional winemaking techniques, later working vintages in the Hunter Valley, McLaren Vale and King Valley, as well as in the US.

After five years as head winemaker at Yarra Yering, he joined Levantine Hill in the Yarra Valley.

What or who inspired you to become a winemaker?

Rock 'n' roll. Failure at this first option left winemaking as a fairly reasonable and attractive fall-back option.

What's your favourite part of the job?

The hands-on making, blending of multiple elements and travel. These are also the hardest parts of the job.

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

I'm a big fan of classic English ales, and find none finer than Timothy Taylor Landlord pale ale from

Yorkshire. However, at the end of a long vintage day, nothing washes the cares away and soothes a furrowed brow quite like an ice-cold Trumer Pilsner.

What advice would you give your younger self?

Don't fret on numbers. Use them as a guide, not a directive. Taste, balance and personality should have the upper hand over 'correct' analyses.

What has been your greatest winemaking mistake?

I have had an incident or two where a decimal point was in the wrong place...

Which wine-related achievement are you most proud of and why?

Cool-climate Shiraz is my favourite red wine style, so for us to win back-to-back major international awards for successive vintages of our Levantine Hill Estate Syrah is extremely gratifying because, collectively, we have all taken a reasonable leap of faith to be here together as a wine producer.

Who is your inspiration in the wine world today?

Anyone who is having a crack, forging their own path, sticking to their guns, knowing their strengths, looking to present their vineyards faithfully with the barest of

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Master medals

> 2015 Levantine Hill Melissa's Paddock Syrah (Syrah Masters 2018)

interference, seeking to minimise their impact on the land and not being swayed by this year's fad and fancy of what all of the cool kids are drinking.

Where would your fantasy vineyard be?

Right here in the Yarra Valley but with a decent chunk of Tuscan Chianti Classico hill country extracted and plonked on the valley floor, with a north view

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

I struggle with the wholesale come-from-nowhere eruption and seemingly blind unquestioning nodding acceptance, uptake and me-too-ism without defined parameters of the natural wine movement. It sounds wonderful, warm and fuzzy

as a notion but the harsh general qualitative reality leaves me fairly cold. There, I've said it.

How has your taste in wine changed over your career?

I'm reaching the point where I'm comfortably developing grumpy-old-man syndrome. I've mellowed to be less concerned with high-impact, in-your-face, brash and showy wines. Structure, thoughtfulness, restraint and balance are the keys to my vinous heart.

Which type of wine do you drink most regularly?

Cool-climate Syrah/Shiraz. I'm also quite partial to a cheerful and uncomplicated Langhe Nebbiolo.

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

If I could revisit a magnum of 1996 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne, I'd consider sharing it.

