

THE FRUIT

The merlot grapes were harvested at optimum ripeness from our Hillcot Vineyard at about 13.5° Baumé. I have blended approximately 13 per cent cabernet sauvignon with the merlot to give this wine **added complexity** and body.

THE WINEMAKING

The fruit was crushed and the juice fermented on skins, initially at quite warm temperatures, for six-to-seven days to extract **ample colour and flavour**. The fermenting juice was then transferred at about 3° Baumé to American oak puncheons (about 40 per cent new, the remainder one-year-old) to finish fermentation. Barrel fermentation gives softness and complexity to this very fleshy wine.

(2000 Hillcot MERLOT)

*The Grant Burge 2000 Hillcot Merlot shows excellent purple colour and an **abundance of raspberry-like fruit** aromas with attractive oak in the background. The soft fleshiness of the palate makes it an extremely attractive wine on release, but the inclusion of the small proportion of cabernet sauvignon has given the wine a **good tannin balance** to ensure the longevity I expect of all my red wines. With careful cellaring it should continue to build complexity for at least a decade.*

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

"When I planted the initial six acres of merlot on my Hillcot vineyard in 1980, it was the first commercial planting of this premium red variety in the Barossa. Like many Australian vignerons I initially regarded merlot as a blending variety to soften more austere red styles, especially those made from cabernet sauvignon, but the fruit produced from these plantings so impressed me that I decided to use it for a varietal wine in its own right."

