

# NEWS

COMPILED BY JUDY SARRIS

*American dreams fulfilled – Wine storage solutions – Good Mornington pinot – Labels as art.*



## HIGH ROLLIN' HARVEST HANDS

In the pre-dawn hours on a summer day in California, a bunch of well-heeled men and women wearing miners' headlamps and flourishing steel knives move in on the orderly rows of vines on a 32ha estate. They're not neo-prohibitionists intent on destroying the source of the demon drink, but members of an exclusive wine-producing club known as Napa Valley Reserve. They have forked out US\$140,000 each plus \$80 in monthly dues for the privilege of personally making up to 900 bottles of wine a year at a cost to them of \$600 a case. It's like a country club except that its sole purpose is to provide members with everything they need – apart from the backbreaking labour – to make fine wine without ownership of the resources, including viticultural and winemaking counselling from gurus such as Robert Mondavi and Michel Rolland. Members are not allowed to sell their wine, but they can personalise their vintages and decide how long barrels are to be toasted to impart their desired levels of oak or spice. They can also bone up on wine history in a library housed in the custom-designed



clubhouse. Do-it-yourself wine-producing clubs are not uncommon in America, but few offer these kinds of amenities.

Napa Valley Reserve is the brainchild of William Harlan, whose cult-status Harlan Estate wines retail for up to \$500 a bottle. He has invested \$40 million in buying the Reserve's Napa-based vineyard, constructing a winery that can handle 20,000 cases of wine a year and excavating a hillside to house a 3400 square-metre bottle-ageing and storage plant – all to satisfy the winemaking ambitions of the maximum club membership of 375 affluent oenophiles.

They always say that if you want to make a small fortune from winemaking you need to start with a large fortune.  
ANTHONY MANIFOLD

**Rack 'Em Up** *It's not exactly a steal, but Rosendahl's aluminium floor rack (left, A\$1500) most certainly provides an edgy way to store wine. From Top 3 by Design, (02) 9388 9699, [www.top3.com.au](http://www.top3.com.au).*

## PINOTS RULE ON THE PENINSULA

Victoria's Mornington Peninsula has proved to be a top pinot-growing patch, with its rolling valleys, coastal plains and surrounding sea providing a variety of microclimates in which vines can flourish and a range of pinots can excel.

Early autumn is traditionally when the region holds its Pinot Week (4-13 March), during which wine commentators and top winemakers participate in a grand program designed to showcase the best of the wines. This year's events include a winemakers' dinner with a vertical tasting of pinots at Paringa Estate, duck and pinot pairings at T'Gallant and Montalto, petanque pinot picnics at Seaforth, a regional feast at Red Hill Estate, cooking classes at Stonier, and masterclasses at Moorooduc Estate.

Masterclasses and tastings will also be held at city venues such as the The Prince Wine Store, Bacash and Armadale Cellars in Melbourne, and more than 20 winemakers will gather for the Mornington Peninsula Piers and Pinots event at Flinders Yacht Club. For further information, phone Cheryl Lee on (03) 5989 2377 or check the full program brochure on the MPVA website, [www.mpva.com.au](http://www.mpva.com.au).

