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## John Cassegrain overturns conventional thinking on Australian gewürztraminer

- Cassegrain 2010 Edition Noir Gewürztraminer (\$25)
- Cassegrain 2005 Limited Release Gewürztraminer (\$35)

For John Cassegrain, the Kirkby family's Toppers Mountain vineyard, on volcanic basalt at Tingha, just south of Inverell in New England, provides the perfect terroir for producing great gewürztraminer.

“The site our fruit comes from is on the western side of the Great Dividing Range at about 850 metres elevation, which is about the same as Orange, another area that grows the variety well,” he said.

“But New England is generally a bit more temperate, with higher rainfall and higher humidity, which means the environment is a bit gentler for what is really quite a delicate grape variety.”

And John Cassegrain has no doubts about gewürztraminer being capable of producing great, long-living wine, as long as it's grown in the right area and treated with compassion in the winery.

“The variety's reputation in Australia suffered quite a bit during the 1970s and 1980s when it was grown in decidedly warm climates and blended with riesling to produce sweetish, fairly ordinary, entry-level wines,” he said.

“What we're looking at here, though, are wines that will sit comfortably alongside the great gewürztraminers of Alsace.

“They're fragrant, and quite seamless on the palate without any of the coarseness or oiliness that have sometimes dogged the variety in Australia.

“In the winery we drain off the skins quickly and take virtually just the free-run juice, because gewürztraminer is quite a phenolic variety.”

John sees these wines as having quite a diverse food compatibility.

“Right now, the younger wine works beautifully with quite spicy, but not too hot, Thai dishes, such as grilled fish with a lemongrass-based sauce and fresh coriander,” he said.

“The older wine has developed some lovely depth and complexity of flavour and can take more substantial dishes, perhaps even a laksa or Szechuan-style chilli mudcrab. It also goes beautifully with oysters grilled with roquefort cheese.”

Regarding the cellaring potential of gewürztraminer, John believes that the 2005 vintage obviously puts the lie to the belief that the variety is only good for immediate consumption.

“When gewürztraminer is harvested in the right area and made in the right way it can cellar very well,” he said.

“Our 2005 Limited Release clearly shows that, and I’m confident that the 2010 Edition Noir is also good for at least the next five or six years.”

For further information, please phone John Cassegrain on 02 6582 8377 or visit [www.cassegrainwines.com.au](http://www.cassegrainwines.com.au).

High-resolution images of product and John Cassegrain can be downloaded from WineMedia’s website ([www.winemedia.com.au](http://www.winemedia.com.au)).

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