

Under a corrugated iron roof

Nathan Gogoll

The 2010 Dutschke Wines shed party started under the verandah of the Barossa winery, included a bus trip and a vineyard tour and featured a menu tailored to highlight the wines. This was no ordinary shed party, it was a gourmet affair that featured stunning wines and I was lucky enough to be invited along to the party that doubled as a wine launch and vintage celebration.

The popularity of the wines and winemaker Wayne Dutschke was obvious and the whole event did wonders for building up brand ambassadors and sending them off to brag about their experience. There were impressive new release wines on show, including single vineyard examples and a wine made with a carbonic maceration process.

It was obvious that Wayne Dutschke is one of the wine industry's great blokes; the wines on the table proved the Dutschke team does a great job with parcels of Barossa fruit; and the event showed a well-executed approach to direct marketing.

Wayne said the 'dinner in the shed' was only the second event of its kind and explained the whole thing came together

after a simple idea to get people at the site where the work happens and to show them what really goes on.

"We just try to give people the experience of what we do, a feel for how we work," Wayne said. "That's one of the great things about doing something here rather than in a restaurant somewhere. Building that relationship with people who like what we do helps to build direct sales. It's about us spending time with the people who buy our wines."

The people who walked through the vineyards, listened to the vintage tales and sat in the winery shed also took away a signed bottle of wine and plenty of stories to share. Although this was only the second event in the shed, the message had already spread far and wide.

"We were overwhelmed to have received visitors from all corners of Australia. Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland were all well represented," Wayne said. "It was wonderful that friendly folk would give up a weekend at home to be together with us in the shed, but I guess it really was a great excuse to for us all to have time together."

Positive feedback has inspired Wayne and Brenda to keep planning for the next shed dinner and there are already some ideas being developed. There are also people keen to book tickets as soon as they become available—it is clear the 50 tickets are highly prized.

The shed setting also recently became a temporary cellar door with a great slab of timber set on upright barrels as the tasting table. When people arrived Wayne and his off-sider Nathan would simply stop what they were doing at one end of the working winery and open bottles for their visitors.

"People told us they never expected to sit down with the winemaker or walk in to where the work takes place," Wayne said. "Days were too busy. Everyone came from referrals from other wineries or from the places they were staying. It was great, really good, and we'll do it on a regular basis for a short period of the year."

Wayne said he's been thrilled with the results of opening the winery up for the dinner—as well as the temporary cellar door outlet—but he said other producers would need to adapt what they offer to suit what they do. He pointed out that Rockford Wines engages customers with intimate dinners, and further up the road Torbreck has formed great links with famous chef Tetsuya Wakuda.

Dutschke wines are made from a handful of vineyards that are mostly within a few hundred metres of the winery and by getting customers in the shed means they are right in the thick of the whole scene. It is clear that wine is more than a business for Wayne, it's a lifestyle, and the people who work with him and supply fruit are all his mates. He wins even more mates with his shed dinners and tasting sessions.

