



Lucy Maddox & Chris Derez

MADREZ WINE SERVICES

These are the names behind some of the best wines coming out of Orange, Hilltops and Central Ranges via their discreet winemaking company – worthy finalists indeed.

Madrez Wine Services is the brainchild of Lucy Maddox and Chris Derez, the self-described “ghost writers” for some of the Central Ranges best-known (and trophy-winning) wines – think Colmar Estate, Cooks Lot, Twisted River, Burnbrae (Mudgee), Trandari and Ballinacash (both in the Hilltops). Madrez Wine Services makes wine for many other well-known brands, but discretion is Maddox and Derez’s mantra. As Maddox says, “We are the two halves of a whole winemaker. I love the lab, do the accounting and tolerate cleaning tanks, while Chris does the creative stuff.” They both agree that winemaking is the “fun part”; growing grapes and selling wine is a much tougher gig.

The story of how these two flying winemakers came to roost in Orange begins when Chris Derez was about 10, in his family village Brochon (near Gevrey-Chambertin) helping his grandfather pump out barrels. His five-year-old sister dunked a piece of bread into the splashing wine and ate it with gusto. Derez thought wine “must be good” as both his sister and grandfather enjoyed it. He decided to be a winemaker but, as a teenager, quickly realised that the fixed ways of the Burgundians were not for him. In 1994, after his national service, Derez headed as far away from France as practical, ending up at Rosemount in the Hunter Valley. Winemaking in Spain, Italy, Switzerland and South Africa saw Derez’s flying winemaker career rocket,

often in a start-up or trouble-shooting role. After years of bouncing from hemisphere to hemisphere, Derez claims more vintages than his age.

Lucy Maddox hails from Western Australia and was on track for a mining career when an honours project required her to work with oozing buckets of fermenting wine at Sandalford. The allure of fermenting saw Lucy head east to study winemaking at Adelaide University. In 1998, while working at Brown Brothers, she crossed paths with Derez for the first time. Derez was working at Miranda Wines and they met at the legendary King River Café.

They went in different directions. California for Maddox, more flying wine-making for Derez. In 2001 destiny played its card when they both worked at the Chittering Hills winery near Perth. An adventure in Tunisia followed, then wine-making in Switzerland and a honeymoon in Sicily before (finally) settling in Orange in February 2002. They arrived with two backpacks and a baby on the way. Derez set up a winery at vineyard guru Justin Jarrett’s Annangrove Park while Maddox worked at the Cabonne winery. Lila was born in October that year.

A mobile bottling plant that led to beautiful wine in tank being turned into an ugly (bottled) duckling was the catalyst for their first commercial venture. A second-hand bottling plant allowed them to make wine and bottle it under one roof

in 2005. Madrez Wine Services moved to its own property on Old Canobolas Road in 2013. It’s been a hard slog with no real capital, just sheer determination and the support of their clients. Some clients know exactly what style they want, others leave it to them. Maddox and Derez believe their job is to nurture the grapes from the vineyard to the bottle without leaving an identifiable thumbprint.

There’s no ‘Madrez Wine Services’ sign on the gate, but their equipment is spot on and, although they have some vintage help, it’s ultimately still a two-person show. Independence and discretion are important to these two quietly dedicated winemakers. Maddox was the ‘back of house’ person behind the Orange Wine Show for more than a decade – she reckons she’s better at ‘doing’ rather than talking. Maddox and Derez just keep their heads down and make exceptional wine.

PETER BOURNE



Facts & Figures

Region: Orange, Hilltops & Central Ranges
Years in industry: Chris Derez, 32; Lucy Maddox, 24
Annual Crush: 150 tonnes
Stand-out Wine: 2016 Colmar Estate Block 6 Riesling

TEAM WORK
Lucy Maddox and
Chris Derez.

“Lucy and Chris work tirelessly behind the scenes making pure and expressive wines of a quality which, without doubt, have raised the profile of the Orange wine region.” TOMI PATERSON MW