

## **Fire Gully Cabernet Merlot**

The Fire Gully vineyard is well hidden from the road with a long, narrow strip flowing back to the main paddocks: so it's pretty much unknown. However it is one of the region's most spectacular and attractive vineyards with views looking down from the higher blocks overlooking the dam, more vineyards and natural bushland. (See the information on the vineyard at [www.firegully.com.au](http://www.firegully.com.au) ) It was part of the Group Settlement Scheme and opened up in 1922. From 1946, it was owned and run by the Butcher family until it was purchased by Michael Peterkin in 1998. Ellis and Margaret Butcher had planted vines in 1988, 1992 and 1997 and so the property now has mature vines. Fire Gully is on Metricup Road, adjacent to Moss Wood, and a kilometre from Pierro. It is influenced by the brook system that runs through this part of Margaret River - along the Redbrook in the case of Fire Gully - to the coast four kilometres away. The sea breezes blow up the brooks to the vineyards moderating the summer temperatures.

For the first stage of the winemaking process, Mike Peterkin uses a combination of open and closed fermenters and allows the wine six days on skins post-fermentation before transferring it into oak where it undergoes the malolactic fermentation and is matured for about twelve months. To enhance the wine's primary fruit flavours, a majority of mature (rather than new) barriques are used. Blending cabernet sauvignon and merlot and Cabernet Franc gives the wine backbone and tightness of structure while emphasising its smooth, soft texture and fragrance.

Given the great run of vintages of recent years, it's not surprising that there's tremendous consistency from year to year with this red. The Fire Gully Cab Merlot is showing some restraint on the nose, gently perfumed red berry aromatics, opening onto a palate that has ripe plum and blackcurrant flavours. It is medium to full-bodied, a touch denser than the previous vintage, and so showing more weight, good structure, and gentle grip on the finish. It has the depth and power to reward short term cellaring and the velvety texture and pleasing approachability to make it difficult to resist over the next twelve months.