

# A rose by any other name would smell as sweet



Larry Lockshin

**W**ith more than 2,000 wineries now in Australia and an estimated 100,000 plus in the world, and each winery often having different brands or named wines, the marketplace is becoming a confusing place for the typical wine consumer. Naming a brand, or a wine within a brand, is a decision fraught with difficulty and numerous pitfalls. Would the same wine sell as much under a different name?

One of the key factors cited for the emergence of New World wines into the global market is the simplicity of how they are named. This usually refers to using grape varietal names, but what about brand names? There are many other reasons for the success of New World wines, which will not be discussed here.

When I spent time in France recently, it was amazing to see the array of wines at the local Carrefour, the major French hypermarket. The wine section was at least two aisles, each 20 metres long arranged by region. Since I was in the Languedoc, there were many wines from there, organised by the 14 AOCs within the Languedoc. The first difficulty I had was I did not know the differences between these sub-regions; what grapes were grown there and what styles were made. So I had to experiment; something most lower involvement consumers would not do. They would probably choose a different alcoholic beverage. Then, when I bought some wine and found a bottle or two I really liked, even knowing the appellation was not very helpful in finding the wine again among hundreds in the same appellation, most bearing similar looking labels with the names of various domains, which all sounded the same to me.

It is different in Australia and some other New World countries, where each winery creates a name for itself and some even create names for each wine. What is a good name? It depends first on where the wine will be sold. Some names work for Australia, but are difficult to pronounce or remember in other countries. Some of our long Aboriginal names may work well in Australia, but not overseas. South Africa has the same problem, where the Africans names roll off the tongues of South Africans, but merely tie the rest of our tongues into knots. This inability to pronounce the name makes remembering it nearly impossible. The name must be easy to pronounce and remember in the markets where it will be sold. Even if the wine gets bought once, poor naming reduces the likelihood of someone buying it again.

Shorter names are better than longer names. Names that are easy to spell are also easy to recognise. That is the key aspect; the name and the label must be memorable, so it can be found again on the shelf. Some wineries have done a great job of using the label and its shape (Rosemount), the name in a certain font and style (Penfolds), or logos attached to the name (the Wolf Blass eagle) in order to enhance recognition and hence, repurchase probability. Jacob's Creek is probably not a great label from a modern design point of view (nor is Penfolds Grange), but the font and the simple name are easily memorable and have added to the potential of the brand to grow around the world.

I have no empirical evidence, but two-word place names seem very popular: Jacob's Creek, Annie's Lane and Jamieson's Run; or if they incorporate some animal imagery: Yellow Tail, Koala Crossing and Little Penguin. These names are simple and easy to pronounce and remember. These types of names have little relation to the wine, except perhaps some relation to the

origin. For commercial wines, the exact origin (as compared to the country or region) doesn't matter very much. But stay away from complicated and esoteric place names, because these are difficult to remember. This is the problem Wratttonbully faces in the market. It will take time and a lot of repurchasing of wine for this new region to gain some prominence, while at the same time, names like Adelaide Hills, Mornington and Yarra are much simpler. Family names are also popular, and are fine if they meet the simple and easy to pronounce and remember criteria.

Wineries like to use names that have some meaning. Owners' names meeting the above criteria are fine, as are simple place names, but sometimes wineries make up esoteric names which have meaning to them, but are difficult to explain to the wine drinker. Again, simplicity wins out.

Torbreck and Palandri are simple, while Kilikanoon is difficult and sounds like several other wineries. A few Australian wineries have named some or all of their wines. This has little to do with the wines' success. I usually struggle to remember what the name of d'Arenberg's white Rhône blend is (Hermit Crab), remembering more the grape varieties than the name. The overall brand, including the red stripe on the label, are more important than the amusing names for each wine. Our research shows that consumers use a combination of price point, variety and region, along with the brand name, to make their repurchase decisions. Adding unique winery-based names to individual wines or even ranges of wines can hinder this process.

Along with these aspects, the name must be legally available in each country. This makes some family names and place names readily available, while others are very restricted. Stay away from using regional names as part of the brand. Even if there is some historical precedent, it is possible

that the winery may want to expand and use grapes from outside that region and may not be able to under its name. There is a huge controversy in the Napa Valley exactly about this issue. Some older brand names, such as Napa Ridge, no longer contain grapes from the Napa appellation. Even if a product using the same name is not wine, it is likely to be registered and its earlier registration will take precedence over a new brand coming into the market. A big brand, like Montana in NZ, is unable to use the name in the US and had to develop a completely different image there compared to the rest of the world.

These problems cost money for lawyer fees as well as for the development of different labels and brands. It pays to do due diligence in searching for already registered names in all the countries where you plan to export. Of course there are always exceptions. The major exceptions to these admonitions come from already strong brands, often with a long history of using a particular place, person or regional name. "A

rose by any other name does not always smell so sweet", when the new name has no associations to consumers and the trade.

On the other side, being well known for superior wine quality excuses any number of faults with naming or labelling. It is costly to change the name of a brand, because you have to overcome huge consumer inertia through promotion of the new name. I have no doubt that in this competitive marketplace a poorly named wine will have its growth inhibited compared to a better named wine of the same quality.

Luckily, many of our Australian names are relatively easy to remember and more and more new brands go through naming process. New wineries should think especially hard when naming their wine. A rose by any other name may smell as sweet, but among 1,000 other choices we may never find it.

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## NAME GAINS TRACTION

Australia has many unusual winery names, none more so than 'Ten Minutes By Tractor'.

The name came about when the three original owners had a moment of inspiration and noticed that their three vineyards were literally 10 minutes by tractor apart.

"They also had the courage and foresight to go ahead with such an unusual name," general manager Chris Hamilton said.

He said consumers loved the name and remembered it without any trouble.

"We have not had any issues with getting the name mixed up," Chris said. "Importantly, consumers always want to know the story behind it, and we believe all great brands have a story.

"Having a name that is so unusual and so memorable among the 1,899 wineries in Australia is of incalculable value for a tiny winery such as ours. If consumers have tried the wine or been to the cellar door, they remember it. If they haven't they are curious to find out more."

Chris said the only downfall was the length of the website name: [tenminutesbytractor.com.au](http://tenminutesbytractor.com.au).

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