

Paper scores winemaker a gong

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PRIZE WINNER: On the back of winning best research paper at the 2012 Annual Conference of the European Association of Wine Economists Prof Tim Coelli with Prof Boris Bravo-Ureta from Chile inspect the wine cellar at Casa de Santar in Dao, Portugal.

Contributed: Stanthorpe Border Post

details as he flew home from Portugal.

"We are thrilled for Tim, it is great recognition of his ability to combine his understanding of economics with his work and hands-on experience in the wine industry," Mrs Coelli said.

"It is the first paper he has written on the wine sector so yes we are proud of him. However, that doesn't mean we will be doing him any favours at home."

She explained good-humouredly that theirs was a very hands-on, intensive operation so "sadly we won't be able to allow Tim to sit back and bask in his win".

"I am actually waiting for him to get back home before I start on the pruning," Mrs Coelli laughed.

The couple bought their vineyard, Twisted Gum, back in 2007 and shifted their family from Brisbane to Ballandean.

Together with their children Kate, Emily, Rob and Lauren they have built the aging set-up into a viable operation using sustainable agricultural practices.

"Buying the vineyard wasn't a complete change of scene for Tim and me," Mrs Coelli explained.

"I grew up on a dairy farm at Taree and Tim was from a sheep and cattle property at Wagga Wagga so we were familiar with the land."

However, mastering the skills of wine growing proved a steep curve.

"We were determined to develop an operation that revolved around rainfall and wasn't reliant on irrigation," she said.

They had a challenging start thanks to an ongoing drought, but both believed the most resilient of their vines would survive regardless of the season.

"We rely heavily on mulch and that has improved our soil significantly and allows our vine to retain moisture during dry periods," she said.

"Because our vineyard is not irrigated we also feel the flavour of our grapes is a very honest reflection of the season.

"At times we have had low yields, but that is very much offset by the quality of flavour of our grapes."

It's a factor reflected in the accolades Twisted Gum wines have received at major Queensland and New South Wales wine shows.

"We are fortunate in the sense we have had some excellent results with our wine," she said.

"But we are always looking for ways to improve what we do."

So while she might be waiting to hand over the secateurs when her husband arrives home she agrees there will be some celebrating.

Most likely they'll toast his international success with their favourite tipple, their Twisted Gum 2009 Shiraz.

GRANITE Belt wine grower Tim Coelli has won a major international award, but when he arrives back in Ballandean this week it will be case of secateurs as usual.

The local grower took out the award for best research paper at the 2012 European Wine Economics Conference in Portugal.

His paper was titled 'The Technical Efficiency of Wine Grape Growers in the Murray-Darling Basin in Australia' and was a joint research project with Orion Sanders from the Australian Bureau and Agricultural and Resource Economics.

The study was motivated by a desire to look at how irrigated wine grape producers could improve performance in the face of the growing pressure from reduced grape prices and increased water prices.

It was an ideal topic for the Southern Downs grower, who with his wife Michelle has spent the past five years developing a dry-land grape growing enterprise.

The win also means his research work will now be included in the book, Wine Economics due to be published later this year.

The former full-time economics professor from the University of Queensland described his win as "impressive".

But it was left to his wife, Michelle, an agricultural scientist, to fill in the



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