

“ON TARGET”

## GOURMET TRAVELLER WINE MAGAZINE

The wines look good now, but it has been a mean fight to get to this point. James McLaurin planted his vineyard near the Golden Ball bridge on the road between Wangaratta and Beechworth in north-east Victoria in 1996 – on the cusp of one of the harshest droughts recorded. The upshot? Years of hand-watering to keep them alive, and even then, a large number eventually gave up the ghost.

At least now, after eight years' toil for little return, McLaurin finally has a couple of wines to sell – the 2002 Golden Ball Shiraz and the 2002 Golden Ball Gallice Cabernet Merlot Malbec. Both are very good. The shiraz is a touch disjointed despite its beautiful mix of smooth-flavoured malt, plum and mint (all it needs is a rest for 12 months, however). But the cabernet blend is a classic in its style: rich, fruit-sweet, dusty and persistent. It's an excellent example of that rare wine beast: the fully ripe and the coolly elegant, swirled into one.

For the record, Golden Ball also has Grenache and merlot planted. If you know the area, the vineyard is located about halfway between Savaterre and Battely, on a warm, prime-for-viticulture block. Its wine future is looking gilt-edged.

*Campbell Mattinson*

**As seen on page 37 of Gourmet Traveller WINE's Autumn 2005 issue**

