



Fortify and conquer

New owners and a new range of fortified wines are restoring Seppeltsfield to its former glory.

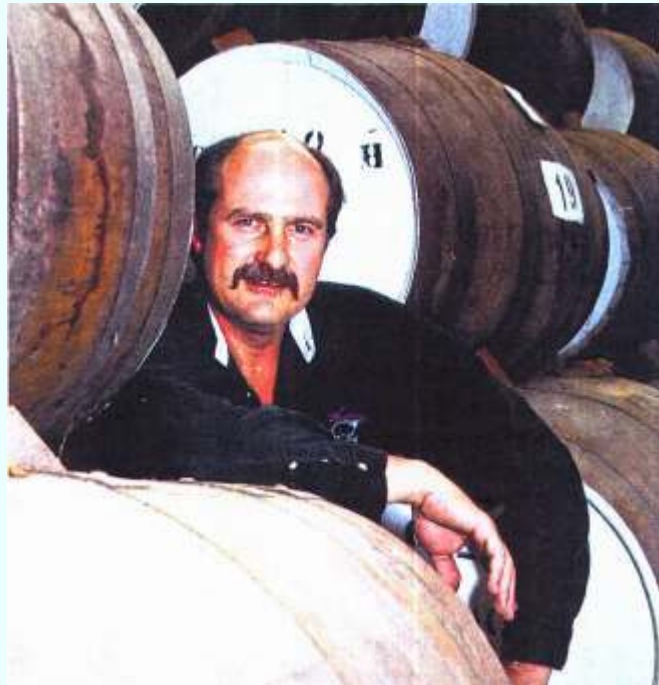
Deep within the cellars of Seppeltsfield in South Australia's Barossa Valley is a store of Australian fortified wines dating back to the 19th century. It is the most important collection of Australian wine in existence.

On the tasting table before me was an assemblage of new releases, works in progress and preview samples drawn from this rich source of wine history and part of a living collection of wines that are breathing new life into Seppeltsfield and Australian fortified wine.

It started a couple of years ago when a group of investors who include Australian cellist Nathan Waks and Perth businesswoman Janet Holmes a Court bought Seppeltsfield, which was being offloaded by Foster's. Waks and his team are committed to restoring and revitalising Seppeltsfield to its former glory.

They are also committed to reigniting interest in Australian fortified wines — including sherry styles, liqueur tokays, muscats and ports — through clever branding, bottle design and repositioning.

Waks has been fortunate in retaining long-time Seppeltsfield winemaker James Godfrey as part of the deal with Foster's. Godfrey is recognised as one of the world's great fortified winemakers. In addition to working with the extraordinary collection of old fortified blending wines, Godfrey is also creating



Wine guru: James Godfrey, winemaker at Seppeltsfield

a range of modern fortified wine aimed at the generation or two of wine drinkers who let the fortified experience pass them by.

Once again this year, Seppeltsfield is releasing a 100-year-old wine from its unique collection of barrels. The 1909 Para costs \$1000 for a 375ml bottle of living history. A vertical tasting of 98, 88, 78, 68, 48, 28 and an astonishingly fresh and delicious 08 — that's 1908 — showed how much life these wines still have.

In addition, it has just introduced a new Paramount Para (\$350 a 500ml bottle) which is a blend of wine from each of the old Paras so far released from 1878 through to the current 09, thus preserving the bloodline of this historic wine.