



**Ray Jordan**  
drink it

# Larry's way

Larry Cherubino, once a young 'up and comer' in the wine industry, has turned his back on big brand winemaking with extraordinary results.

**M**y first impression of Larry Cherubino on meeting him about 10 years ago as the newly appointed chief winemaker of Houghton, was of a young man with plenty of confidence — a little cocky perhaps. His subsequent successes at the helm of WA's biggest wine company suggested he had every right to be.

During his time at the helm, Houghton and Hardy's other major WA brand at the time, Brookland Valley, achieved phenomenal show success.

Then with the world at his feet he surprised everyone by walking away from it. As he said at the time: "There are things I wanted to do but I just wasn't getting the time to do them ... it was time to move on." After a brief stay with Forest Hill he started out on his own with a clear aim to do those things he wanted to do and make wines without compromise.

The wines he made at Houghton were real show success crowd-pleasers. In fact they contributed to Houghton being the jewel in the crown for the Hardy Wine Group as it was then. The reds were especially good but if there was a criticism it was that they smacked of the hands of big-company winemaking — great for tasting and obviously appealing to the show system but structured in a way that often masked their breeding.

Cherubino realised that these were not the wines he wanted to make. In fact he admits now the wines he is making today under the three distinct ranges he has created are a complete reversal to what he was doing back then, both in style and in the making.

As he says, "I'm basically leaving things alone a lot more", meaning once he gets his hands on the best fruit from vineyards across the State, he treats it in the winery in the most sympathetic manner, allowing the vineyard and regional characters to express themselves.

"I want these wines to tell the stories of place and not people," he said.

Cherubino's three ranges all tell a story. For instance, the Ad Hoc range consists of five wines sourced from the State's best regions but made according to Cherubino's interpretation of the varieties ... with a little tongue-in-cheek branding.

The Ad Hoc Straw Man sauvignon blanc semillon 2007 (\$17) is a delicate smoky wine showing nice citrus and lime and mineral characters.

The Ad Hoc Hen and Chicken chardonnay 2007 (\$20) is a fine and delicate wine sourced from Pemberton, while the Ad Hoc Wallflower riesling 2007 (\$17) shows that, like its name, it can be a little shy and reserved. I also liked

the Ad Hoc Middle of Everywhere shiraz 2005 (\$20), sourced from the somewhat remote Frankland region and showing the distinctive soft supple palate of this area.

The Yard is a range designed to be sourced from family vineyards in the best regions. The Yard riesling 2007 (\$25) from Mt Barker's Whispering Hill vineyard is fine and mineral with a zippy fine acidity and the Pedestal semillon sauvignon blanc 2007 (\$27) from Margaret River is a white Bordeaux style using a little French oak while retaining its pristine purity and fine texture.

The Yard Acacia Vineyard shiraz 2006 (\$32) is a supple and gentle Frankland-sourced wine with some nice savoury blueberry characters lifted with a little tart cherry to a lovely full finish.

The third range is simply called Cherubino. The current releases include a brilliant Pemberton sauvignon blanc 2007 (\$36), which was fermented in 100 per cent new French oak to add complexity and texture while the typical lemon zest and minerality of the region are evident.

The Cherubino shiraz 2006 (\$70) is all Frankland River, though it's a tighter and leaner expression still showing the supple succulent sweet fruit.

If you're familiar with the old Cherubino style then these wines will be quite a surprise. What won't be a surprise is that they are very good. And the good thing is that the little bit of youthful cockiness I saw nearly 10 years ago is still there.



**Left – right:**

- Cherubino sauvignon blanc 2007;
- Cherubino shiraz 2006;
- The Ad Hoc Middle Of Everywhere shiraz 2005;
- The Yard Acacia Vineyard shiraz 2006;
- The Yard riesling 2007