

'Standout' vintages give WA wines a lift

GEORGIA LONEY, The West Australian October 13, 2009, 9:53 am



WA News/Astrid Volzke ©

WA wine producers are casting economic pessimism aside with some charging nearly \$500 a bottle as the latest release wines start to hit shop shelves.

Industry experts say the WA 2009 sauvignon blancs, 2008 chardonnays and 2007 reds now being released are standouts, while domestic demand for super premium wine remains strong.

But it's a French wine, albeit made by a WA vigneron and released under a WA label, which is commanding top dollar this season.

Howard Park will release its 2007 Clos de Beze burgundy, under its Marchand & Burch label, within weeks and is set to charge just over \$475 a bottle.

Owner Jeff Burch said the pinot noir, which had "layers of complexity like a peacock's tail," had already nearly sold out, with only 25 cases available.

"It is true that it is an expensive wine, but in Burgundy only 2 per cent of the pinot noir, is classified as grand cru, that's the top level," he said.

Mr Burch made the wine in Burgundy with French wine maker Pascal Marchand as a joint venture of Australian and French winemaking. He is also feeling optimistic about the quality of local vintages.

Howard Park's Denmark senior winemaker Andrew Milbourne said the 2009 sauvignon blanc "looked fantastic", thanks to the season's cool start, which favoured complex flavours.

Margaret River producers had enjoyed five outstanding vintages in the past six years, he said. "You only need to talk to other producers from other States or around the world about how hard they're finding things to realise just how lucky we are," he said.