



production means you can't reduce manufacturing costs through bulk, nor scale up to increase margins. But for Mij and Liv, this is the world that reflects their brand ethos and the benefits are often qualitative rather than quantitative.

'It is very important that people who buy a bottle of South by South West know about our story or how that particular wine was made,' says Mij. 'We feel passing on those bits of information with the wine is just as important as the wine itself. The more boutique restaurants, wine bars and specialist bottle shops do the same thing through hand sales, where they have an opportunity to tell their customer a bit about us.'

In some ways, Australia's lack of pedigree in comparison to France, say, gives it a competitive advantage. Winemakers are free to plant an Italian grape and age it in a Scottish whisky barrel, if they like, without getting told off. 'We're free, in that regard – Australian winemakers can be more experimental with their wines,' says Mij.

In 2020, the duo produced around 30,000 bottles, doubling their output from the previous year (although some of their wines are limited, often produced in runs as small as 300 bottles). This was done thanks to the move from their own small winemaking facility to the large shared space, meaning production could scale up without the crushing cost.

Most of their wines go to boutique hotels, restaurants and bars around Margaret River, Perth and the west coast. Mij and Liv have nearly always built relationships with their suppliers themselves, which Mij highlights as the biggest challenge: getting a tasting, pitching the brand and convincing the client. With growing interest from the east coast, they've now set up a distributor there. And there are prospects in Singapore. They've also leased their own vineyard and can grow their own grapes. 'We'd love to get our hands on some more vines. Maybe we'd plant more

While the couple works with a variety of grapes, Liv says that chenin and chardonnay are her favourites. 'They're really the two varieties that as a winemaker you have to show off with.'

Margaret River has more than 220 vineyards: a big number for such a small area of land. It's also a prominent supplier of other high-quality Australian produce, such as olive oil, venison and honey.

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As all business owners will recognise, you often need to make sacrifices, especially in the early days, to get things moving in the right direction. For Mij and Liv, that meant they didn't pay themselves a salary when they launched South by South West Wines – for the whole of the first year, in fact. And deciding how much to pay yourself comes with an important set of decisions, too. In **Get in Shape** on **page 260**, we lay out some of the main things to keep in mind.

