

The grape doesn't fall far from the vine

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By Melissa Walsh Photos Yanni

When Garry Crittenden talks about his grandson, Oscar, the sense of pride is palpable. As a legend of the wine industry, Garry has always been an innovator, from planting the first Crittenden vines in 1982 to pioneering the establishment of new grape varieties in Victoria. In 1995, when he could see the grape variety Arneis was becoming endangered, he planted and then nurtured the capricious Piemontese variety until this year which saw its final vintage.

As it turns out, the grape doesn't fall far from the vine and eight year old Oscar is also a young man on a mission, culminating in a project between the two generations of Crittendens.

He might only be in year 2 at school but Oscar Crittenden wants to save endangered ocean wildlife from non-reusable plastic, in particular straws. It was a video he watched with his 'grumpy', grandfather Garry, which introduced the then six year old Oscar to the plight of these ocean creatures.

"Grumpy and I watched a documentary of Molly Steer's called 'Straw No More' and that's when I decided to help the sea turtles and ocean wildlife," said Oscar. "I made him a picture of a turtle at school which I gave to him at Christmas last year and now he has put it as the label for his wine bottles."

The bottles Oscar is referring to is the latest Crittenden family release Arneis called Endangered.

"I thought it was very fitting to use Oscar's picture as the label as he is on a mission to stop reliance on single use plastics being used and this is the last Arneis vintage we will make so in a sense it is also endangered," said Garry of the wine that explains the meaning on the back of the label.

Oscar has written to McDonalds to try to stop them from using plastic straws and become very knowledgeable in statistics and other possible alternatives to plastic.

"Straws never break down. The first straw you ever used is still on the planet," said Oscar. "Over 500 million straws are used around the world every single day. If you put these straws end to end they would wrap around the world four times, and that is every single day."

And as Oscar tells us, that is just straws. There are plenty of other plastic things floating around in the ocean killing or injuring the animals.

"There are also plastic bags, balloons, and everything made of plastic and a huge amount of it ends up in the ocean. Turtles and fish can't tell the difference between plastic and food so they eat it and often die," said Oscar.

To help out with Oscar's cause, Garry is donating \$20 from every dozen bottles of Endangered wine sold at the cellar door.

"We decided to donate the proceeds to the Turtle Rehabilitation Centre, just off the coast of Cairns that treats injured and sick marine turtles brought in from the Great Barrier Reef and Cape York Peninsula," said Garry.

Marine biologist Gareth Phillips has said straws were one of the biggest threats to ocean life partly because of their small size.

Oscar explains that straws in particular are easily ingested by turtles and other

ocean animals.



"The turtles and sea life have been found with plastic straws up their noses or wrapped around their throats. Seals and other animals get strangled to death by them. They are not needed," said Oscar. "We can use other things instead of plastic like paper straws that break down."

While there may be close to seventy years between grandfather Garry and young Oscar, their ideology is the same. "For Oscar and myself, it is about raising money for the rehabilitation as well as drawing attention to the plastic problem in our oceans. We encourage everybody to google Molly Steer and look at the video she made when she was nine to draw attention to plastic straws. That is where you will find the bigger picture," said Garry.

To purchase the delicious Endangered wine, go to Crittenden Estate Wine Centre, 25 Harrison's Rd, Dromana.

www.crittendenwines.com.au

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