

people | MOUNT BENSON SA

The house contains stone from the property's own paddocks, and salvaged timber and corrugated iron. FACING PAGE Cape Jaffa winemaking couple Derek and Anna Hooper.

# CAPE CRUSADERS

ON A WINDSWEPT LIMESTONE COAST HEADLAND, ANNA AND DEREK HOOPER WEAVE BIODYNAMIC WINEMAKING INTO THE OUTDOOR-FOCUSED LIFE OF THEIR FAMILY.

WORDS GRETEL SNEATH PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN LAURIE





**THE WINDOWS ARE BARE** at winemaking duo Derek and Anna Hooper's house, simply because the view beyond is so breathtaking. Magical sunsets illuminate the evening, and come sunrise, they wake to pounding surf, sweeping farmland and a marvellous sense of seclusion.

Former Adelaide girl Anna has taken to country living; her ability to blend her passion for the environment with her winemaker role saw her named South Australia's 2013 Rural Woman of the Year. She remembers the day Derek took her to his favourite spot at Cape Jaffa in the Mount Benson wine region of South Australia's Limestone Coast, just down the road from the vineyard established by his parents in the early 1990s.

"We drove through this really barren, windswept landscape over a series of hills that form part of the Woakwine Range, and it wasn't until we got to the last rise that I realised there was a view," she says.

Or that it would be so stunning. Before them, the Southern Ocean stretched all the way to Antarctica. Back on the land, the earth was blanketed with pine forests and paddocks. "We sat drinking wine and dreaming about living there," Anna says.

Eventually the couple built a wind- and solar-powered home that capitalised on the site's dramatic setting. They used stone collected from nearby paddocks, and salvaged timber and corrugated iron, all of which helped create a sense of harmony with the landscape. The building, completed in 2006, is designed around a sheltering atrium that allows outdoor living throughout most of the year despite sometimes hostile weather conditions. "It's extreme and exciting — we're talking of winds up to 200 kilometres an hour, which is just out of control!" Derek says. "You go outside and you can lean into the wind — I just love that."

Cape Jaffa Wines has been operating under biodynamic principles since the late 1990s. "It's not only good for the environment, but a clever system that allows us to achieve exceptional soil health and produce terroir-driven and regionally distinctive wines," Derek explains.

Anna is the winemaker while Derek focuses on sales and marketing. Certain seasons, such as the autumn

vintage, are simply frantic, but the rest of the time, this couple seems to have the work-life balance well in hand. They have secured some attractive international markets, and when they head overseas they make an effort to mix a busy promotional schedule with family activities, like checking out the local surf spots.

"We make the effort to have some good times together, but realistically, we work incredibly hard as we're a small business without a massive crew of people, and there's a lot going on," Anna says.

The Hoopers keep chickens, geese, ducks, pigs and sheep, some of whom are part of the gardening team. Sheep set to graze between the vine rows in summer keep the weeds down without herbicides, while the ducks are let loose on snails and leafhoppers in lieu of pesticides. Anna and Derek have also enlisted schoolchildren to plant hundreds of hard-to-find native trees and grasses on winery land and on local reserves to create a seed bank for revegetation projects. Grace, 10, and Charlie, five, along with Derek's older children — Daisy, 15, and Harry, 13 — have embraced the lifestyle.

"Our whole life is built around the outdoors," Derek says. "If we're not at work in the vineyard, we're at the beach, walking in national parks, mountain biking — it's activity after activity, and it's all outdoor-based."

The coastal towns of Robe and Kingston are only a short drive away, and Derek says they're filled with "people who love the ocean and help to create a great vibe". He and Anna visit both regularly to take the kids to school or catch up with friends, but then it's back home to the privacy of the cape.

"You can go down to the beach and have the whole lot to yourself, and on a still night, you hear all of the noises — birds, sheep, cows and the crashing of the waves," Anna says. "I think we take it for granted a lot of the time, but then you think about the isolation and what the environment presents in terms of landscape, visuals and recreation — it's almost completely untouched." \*

For more information on Cape Jaffa Wines, visit [www.capejaffawines.com.au](http://www.capejaffawines.com.au)



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT Derek and Anna with Charlie and Grace, their two youngest children; the vineyard is a short drive from the house; Cape Jaffa Wines' La Lune range, with its distinctive calico labels, is fully certified biodynamic; winemaker Anna was named SA's 2013 Rural Woman of the Year; the home's central atrium frames a view of the cape's landscape. FACING PAGE The bare headland gives way to dense pine forest.

