

deconstruct

Bottling a Best-Seller? It's What's Outside that Counts

Since 2002, B.C.'s Blasted Church Vineyards' sales have jumped 1,000%. The grapes didn't change. Instead, the catalyst was the wine's new name and series of new labels, courtesy of Brandever Strategy — a Vancouver marketing outfit on the forefront of a trend that's changing the way wine is marketed the world over. **By Kerry Banks**

A new family of Okanagan wines appeared on B.C. liquor shelves in 2002 called Blasted Church. The winery's labels featured whimsical cartoon caricatures, vivid colours and playful typography. The name was inspired by a 1929 event in which a church was loosened from its moorings by dynamite and then moved to Okanagan Falls, near the present-day winery. The story is told in series form on the labels. "Some people loved it, but others were appalled," says owner Evelyn Campbell.

The creative mind responsible for Blasted Church belongs to Vancouver marketing guru Bernie Hadley-Beauregard. Under Blasted Church's previous name, Prpich Hills, the winery struggled to sell 1,000 cases a year at \$8.50 a bottle. Today, the vineyard is selling 10,000 cases a year at \$16 to \$26 a bottle. Hadley-Beauregard's firm, Brandever Strategy, has also engineered the launch of Therapy, Dirty Laundry, Laughing Stock and Lotusland for other local wineries — all of which have attracted followings among non-connoisseurs who are attracted by their labels' irreverence and creativity.

Real stories or circumstances are often the inspiration for Brandever's designs. Laughing Stock, which is owned by two investment consultants,

was named as a riposte to colleagues who chided them about their second career in wine. Dirty Laundry recalls a Chinese laundry in Summerland, B.C., from the early 1900s that was a front for a bordello. Upon close inspection, the label reveals a tangle of naked bodies. "I love creating a design that causes a commotion at the dinner table," says Hadley-Beauregard.

Winemakers in Australia were the first to diverge from the classical European model of labelling, by naming brands after animals. The trend was sparked by the smashing success of Yellow Tail and its distinctive kangaroo label. Launched by a small, family-run operation in 2001, Yellow Tail now sells eight million cases annually. Today, wine consumers quaff Fat Bastard (France), Mad Dogs and Englishmen (Spain) and Goats Do Roam (South Africa).

Brandever's designs netted an unprecedented seven of the eight Double Gold awards for wine-label designs at last year's San Francisco International Wine Competition. Meanwhile, Blasted Church has become a favourite at Vancouver's trendy restaurants and hotels. As wine writer John Schreiner noted: "No Okanagan winery ever got as much of a lift from a label change as Blasted Church."

