

Decanter Club

April 2003

Coming Events:

Paul Wright: Mt Riley Wines Thursday 16th April *cost: \$10.00*

Mt Riley is one of the relative newcomers to the local market, however they have been around for several years now, with production mainly going offshore. These are really good, typical Marlborough wines with numerous gold medals won from their extensive range, culminating with the Trophy for the 'Best Chardonnay' at this years Easter Show.

Chris and Peter: Imported wines Thursday 24th April *cost: \$20.00*

We haven't decided what we will try at this tasting yet, because new stock is still rolling in. But since the majority of wines being tasted this month are from Australia or New Zealand, we thought we would give a bit of a push for the Old World with the majority of wines coming from Europe.

Alistair Picton-Warner: Burleigh wines Wednesday 30th April *cost: \$15.00*

Burleigh represents an impressive range of wineries from Australia and New Zealand. Wines to be tasted will be a potpourri from their portfolio including wines from Fiddlers Green and Kemblefield from NZ, Ashwood Grove, Kingston, Sandalford and Hamilton from Australia, finishing with a Dow's Port.

Claire Gifford: Orlando Wyndham Wednesday 7th May *cost: \$15.00*

Just what's needed to start the winter tastings...a big Aussi red evening (with some top rated whites). Orlando Wyndham are a large Australian company with wines such as Richmond Grove, Montrose in their portfolio.

NEW RELEASES

This is the time of the year that sets the industry buzzing with new releases from the local and international market. Below are a few of the wines that have excited us so far this year, however there are too many new releases to mention here. Phone us or call in to check out what else is available on the shelves.

Cape Mentelle Shiraz 2001 30.55

Just released and one of our favourites. Anything from this fantastic Western Australian vineyard is just supreme, it's just a shame that we get so little of the wines to hold in stock for more than a few weeks. This has the best of Old and New World styles with concentrated plum liquorice and spice with very fine tannins reminiscent of great Rhone reds. Very limited supply of this wine. A wine that you just can't go wrong with.

Claddagh Pinot Noir 2001 32.35

Just arrived at a pretty reasonable price (for pinot noir!), and with a gold medal at the Air NZ show. A fine example of Martinborough pinot from a very small producer. It impresses with its fragrance and finesse rather than sheer size. Fresh and vibrant, strong cherry plum and spice flavours and excellent complexity. This is great value.

Collards Hawkes Bay Chardonnay 2000 17.05

Outstanding value for this sumptuous chardonnay. You could be forgiven for thinking that this would carry a \$25 price tag. Fermented and matured in French oak, this is a full-bodied wine with peach and grapefruit flavours, nicely integrated with subtle use of oak. Tremendous stuff!!

Collards Summerfields 2002 8.95

A blend of chardonnay, chenin and sauvignon, this unlikely blend is full of tropical passionfruit flavours. Great value drinking from a top winery.

Collards Queen Charlotte Pinot Noir 16.15

The last of this very good value pinot. I bought a case, what else is there to say.

Goodtimes Pinot Gris 2002 13.45

This is a little cracker from Canterbury House at a great price. Full of pear, spice and lychee flavours. This is absolutely delicious.

Jamieson's Run Cabernet Sauvignon '01 17.95

Gold medal in Sydney, Australia's toughest wine show. Classic Coonawarra wine, with strong savoury/earthy blackcurrant, cabernet fruit flavours and a long and complex finish. Very good value from this region.

Lindeman's South Australia Res Shiraz '01 16.15

From one of the bigger wine companies in Australia, this shiraz is extremely impressive at this price. Grapes are sourced from various sites in South Australia, producing a wine of great style and elegance. Deep purple in colour with spicy berry flavours and a touch of American oak.

Logan Weemala Merlot 2001 15.25

In New Zealand, our market has changed somewhat over the last 5 years, away from sauvignon and chards to riesling and pinot gris. Equally, the Australian market is moving by introducing some better priced reds as a result of the price hike in shiraz which has come about by the International market seeking big Aussie shiraz's. The result of this shift is an introduction of merlot as a single grape varietal, so expect to see more merlots at good prices from Australia. This is one of the best value ones I've tried. Chock full of plum flavours and a layer of seductive vanillin oak.

Millton Vineyard Gisborne Chard '02 17.95

This Gisborne chardonnay makes a welcome return. Made in a very easy to drink style, showing plenty of ripe tropical fruit flavours with the merest hint of oak, and a touch of sweetness on the finish. Being

organic adds to the appeal.

Murdoch James Cabernet Franc 2001 28.75

In 2001 extremely small yields and a long cool ripening season resulted in small quantities of fruit however they have intense flavours, deep colour and natural acid balance. Boysenberries, cassis, mixed spice, leather and liquorice abound on both the nose and palate of this soft yet intensely flavoured wine. Aged in French oak barriques the wine has a firm structure and a wealth of savoury flavours that will unfold with time. Cellaring potential for this wine is up to 8 years.

Murdoch James Syrah 2001 38.65

Truly a unique Martinborough Syrah, a satisfyingly robust style with deep colour and strong white pepper aromas. A complex, vibrantly fruity wine with raspberry/spice and rhubarb leaf flavours. Matured in 100% fine-grained French oak this wine is well balanced with hints of cigar smoke. A complement to game dishes, casseroles, and red meats. Enjoy this wine now, or cellar over the next eight years.

Packspur Riesling 2001 17.95

New vintage from this small Central Otago winery. This just gets better with each vintage, with good quality lime and citrus flavours, and the typical Central stonefruit finish.

Peter Lehmann Cabernet Sauvignon '00 24.25

Very typical of the Barossa style. Full of ripe, sweet cabernet fruit, nicely balanced with a good helping of vanilla oak and soft tannins lurking in the background.

Peter Lehmann Shiraz 2001 19.75

It wasn't long ago that this wine was being sold in the supermarkets for under \$12, and once it had gained its place in the market, they hoisted the price up to more than double within about 3 years. All that did was successfully kill its sales, which was a shame because it was and remains a very good wine. At \$19 this wine is very good value. It's a classic Barossa shiraz, with everything you would expect. It is spicy, warm and cuddly with explosive fruit bomb flavours. It's time to go back to Lehmann.

Rockford Basket Press Shiraz 1999 67.45

One of the most individually spectacularly flavoured wines from Australia. I remember trying this for first time in the Barossa Valley in the mid-eighties and being totally blown away by the depth of flavour, fruit and its sheer difference. At that time, the wine was made in tiny quantities and was only available from the cellar-door. Now, thank God, you don't have to travel the miles to purchase this very special wine. It's made from very old, low yielding vines. The palate is spectacular with an explosion of black spice and fruit flavours. Still a good price for a classic wine.

Saltram Cabernet 2001 and Saltram Shiraz 2001 13.45

Two of our old favourite everyday drinking wines and ones that Lyn would have picked as her wines of the month no doubt. These have been one of our best sellers in the past, are now back in stock and at an even better price which makes them excellent value. Will be fantastic with either a stuffed leg of lamb

or with pasta etc.

Salena Shiraz 2000 14.35

Another wee beauty from South Australia. Gold medal in the Top 100 show. Full of ripe berry fruit. Great value to go with a steak or bbq.

Sevenhill STM 1999 18.85

This is also a vineyard that we haven't seen much of lately, but is held fondly in our minds. Sevenhill is owned by the Jesuit Society and a national icon. Do you remember the Sevenhill Dry Red that we used to sell heaps of a few years ago? Well here it is again, no change in the wine, except that it is now labelled with the varietals that make up the blend i.e. shiraz, touriga and malbec. It's made from old vines, and is a powerful well structured wine packed with flavour.

Shingle Peak Pinot Gris 2002 18.85

Shingle Peak (Matua Valley) were one of the first big companies to release a better than average pinot gris in sufficient quantity that it was readily available to the market, and I believe this wine helped set the scene for pinot gris in New Zealand. We tried a 1995 Pinot Gris from Shingle Peak in January, and unfortunately it had started to fade (but still holding up), however considering it was the first vintage I think they did extraordinarily well to last that long. This wine is made in a medium dry style, very fresh and vigorous with excellent depth of peachy, vanilla flavours and a long persistent finish.

Shingle Peak Pinot Noir 2002 18.85

Finally the wine industry is listening to the customers and coming up with some reasonably priced pinot noirs. This is the best pinot yet from this label. Full in colour, fresh, and mouthfilling and supple with excellent depth of raspberry, plum and a touch of cracked pepper, with subtle oak adding complexity. Will unfold well over the next 2 years.

Spy Valley Riesling 2002 14.35

A very exciting winery from Marlborough, and one which I believe is setting the benchmark for it's Riesling and Gris, because the quality is so good for the price. I love the freshness and pure fruit of this wine. It's packed with stonefruit flavours and a touch of passionfruit. Great with Asian food now, but cellar with confidence for 2-5 years.

Te Mata Woodthorpe Chardonnay '02 20.65

This is the 2nd label of the magnificent Elston and in most wineries the fruit would definitely be good enough for their top label. The style is restrained and elegant with ripe peach flavours and a tad of lemons. A really gorgeous wine.

Weeping Sands Waiheke Cab Merlot '00 27.85

We rarely see wines from Waiheke Island down south with the local Auckland market being as parochial as we are with our Central Otago wines. Here then is an opportunity to try one of the northern wines that is not at a horrendous price, (which is synonymous of Waiheke wines). Very good value, the 2nd label of Obsidian. Lots of flavour, and delicious now.

Wines of the Month

Alastair's choice:

Villa Maria Cellar Selection Cabernet Merlot 2001 21.55

Selected as Michael Coopers "Best Buy of the Year" for the 2000 vintage, this is a pretty good follow-up. The fruit is sourced from the Gimblett gravel area in Hawkes Bay, and has produced a very elegant wine indeed. Blackcurrant cassis and plum flavours abound with a touch of spice. Drinking now but will cellar nicely for 2– 3 years.

Peter's choice:

Vasse

When was the last time you tried a Vasse? This vineyard has been around and producing such fantastic quality wines for at least the last three decades, that I'm surprised that we don't hear much about them ... I guess it's the same old story... the US market is gobbling the majority of the wine produced by them. Well breathe a sigh of relief that we have at least the Shiraz here. This wine has consistently achieved 5 stars by the likes of James Halliday etc, that it surprises me that the price has been kept at such a reasonable level (compared to wines like E and E which are now at the \$100 mark!). This is a stunner from the Margaret River. Full of lovely berry/cherry fruit with a touch of forest floor. Very complex, and will develop well. A wine for the cellar that I think should last for 10–15 years. Halliday tried a line up of the Shiraz a few years ago and was impressed at their longevity.

Mutterings from Mark... alias political correspondent in disguise. Who put the Fold in Penfolds?

Just two years ago, Southcorp paid the extraordinary sum of A\$1.5 billion in cash and shares to secure the very successful Rosemount Estate brand, in what was not so much an outright purchase, but more of a merger; and in the process created the largest wine producer/distributor in Australia. As part of the deal, the Rosemount management team effectively took over the running of Southcorp, with Keith Lambert becoming Chief Executive, and other Rosemount executives securing seats on the board. Since that time, "rationalisation" has seen staff numbers cut, with a number of very senior Southcorp winemakers and executives being either let go or eased out, with seemingly, a greater Rosemount influence being the outcome.

The sales philosophy has changed, with a major push into larger and larger retailers, backed by heavy discounting to drive sales, which appears to be eroding the cachet of labels like Penfolds, and "dumbing down" the product range generally. In the U.K, the BOGOF (buy one, get one free) promotional activity, appears to have not only been costly financially, but to have created a climate where the products are unsaleable at normal prices, and are now just discount fodder. Locally, release dates for Penfolds and Wynns wines have been brought forward in order to reduce inventory holdings, with some pundits here suggesting that this will see the wines made in a more "user-friendly" style so they are approachable on release? Personally, I feel that most consumers no longer have any respect for wines within the Southcorp portfolio, and no sense of "allegiance" to what were once proud brands. The "desirability" has gone. All this has been happening amidst a downturn in the wine industry, with Southcorp seeing a fall in profits, and a major reduction in their share price. The news media here seem to be constantly running some story or other about the "difficulties" being faced by Southcorp, with

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much talk that they are now ripe for take-over. Finally last month, came the very public resignation of their CEO Keith Lambert.

Against this turbulent background, comes the release of the 2000 vintage Penfolds Bin series wines, with the release of the Super Premiums (including the eagerly awaited '98 Grange) about another three months away. After more than a decade of fabulous "even" vintage years; '86, '88, '90, '94, '96, and '98 comes a difficult year in South Australia, with Penfolds choosing not to release a Bin 707 Cabernet out of this vintage. Volumes are markedly lower this vintage, due to a combination of reduced yields, and the difficulties of fruit selection for these wines. So, what are they like? To my palate, the Bin 28, and Bin 128 Shirazes show the cooler year. They are pretty, easy drinking reds, that lack the fruit intensity and the tannin structure that we are used to in these wines. The Bin 407 Cabernet is a noticeable step up in perfume and fruit, showing more of the Coonawarrish leaf and mint profile commensurate with a cooler year, and will make attractive early drinking. The Bin 389 Cab Shiraz is the star of the releases, with the Cabernet fruit that was destined for the 707 making a statement in this wine. Yet once again, this is not a deep, inky, tannic 389 in the old mould. It is well rounded and showing lovely fruit depth, but is not a wine for long term cellaring. Overall, they are wines to drink young while you wait for your '96s and '98s to continue their slumber in the cellar.

My only concern would be as to pricing. Last year, Southcorp NZ signalled their intention to raise prices of the Penfolds Bin range significantly. With stocks of the '99s still in the market (and in the case of the 389, still some '98s) I fear this will be ill advised. In Melbourne, prices for the 28 and 128 have remained stable from last vintage, with the 407 and 389 showing small increases. I will look with interest across the Tasman to see what transpires. As always, drink well, drink heartily, and start stocking up on reds for the longer nights ahead.

Remember we have carparks at the rear of the shop that are available for you while you shop at Munslow's. Alternatively, we will deliver free of charge in Dunedin/Mosgiel, and we have managed to negotiate very reasonable prices for courier services elsewhere.

Cheers, Peter, Alistair, Chris and the team from Munslow's (Including our foreign correspondent).