

Decanter Club

August/September 2001

Coming Events:

Jane Ferrari: Yalumba Wines Wednesday 22nd August *cost: \$20.00*

We visited Yalumba wines in the Barossa a decade ago and were overwhelmed with the hospitality that we were shown. Their hospitality was equal to the quality of the wines made then and that quality has continued since. Jane is a winemaker turned public relations officer so as well as presenting Yalumba's wines well, she is also very knowledgeable. Our good friend Kingsley Wood says Jane is one of the most dynamic speakers on the wine tasting circuit.

Tim Preston Mills Reef Wednesday 29th August *cost: \$5.00*

(Due to a mix up we have arranged two tastings this week and so therefore have reduced the cost of both of these tastings). The Preston family with Tim being the winemaker started in the wine industry making in Hawkes Bay the famous Kiwifruit wine. Since entering the grape wine-making arena, Mills Reef has achieved some very good results with gold and trophies awarded for their Chardonnay in particular. Also in their range of wines are Sauvignon, Riesling (very good), Pinot Noir and a sparkling wine (also excellent).

Russell Hooper Highfield Estate Thursday 30th August *cost: \$5.00*

Highfield have been producing fine wines in Marlborough since 1990 under both their Elstree and there ordinary label. Russell is the marketing manager for Highfield and was with Groove Mill for years prior to that. The portfolio is large, consisting of Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Pinot, Merlot etc.

Paul Williams: St. Hallett Thursday 6th September *cost: \$20.00*

Ex-Dunedinite Paul Williams is the Fine Wine Advisor for Montana wines and Montana is lucky enough to have St. Halletts in their portfolio. One of my favourite South Australian wineries, mostly because of the share power and succulent wines. The Old Block has been on the 'collectors' list (for auction purposes) for some time now and is well worth it, as is the Faith and Blackwell reds. Paul has a few surprises in the form of frog for us to try as well.

Jane Hunter OBE: Hunter Wines Tuesday 11th September *cost: \$15.00*

Hunters put Marlborough and Sauvignon Blanc on the world scene when they won the trophy for best wine at the London International Wine Challenge in 1987 (or there abouts). We owe a lot to Jane in NZ for her passion and foresight. Hunters also produce other very good wines including Chardonnay, Sparkling, Riesling etc.

Darryl Wooley: Selaks Estate Thursday 20th September *cost: \$10.00*

Selaks Drylands have been winning awards hand over fist for the last couple of years, and certainly we at Munslow's have been supportive of this label. Very good quality grapes making distinctive wines is how I would describe them. Darryl Wooley is the winemaker for Selaks in Marlborough and responsible for these wines.

Tony Hooper: Orlando Wyndam Tuesday 25th September *cost: \$15.00*

One of the big conglomerates of Australian wine industry. These guys represent the lovely Montrose and Orlando range along with the Bin 555, 444 etc range. At this stage we are not sure what will be shown on the evening, but we will let you know (by email and phone to others who want to know) prior to the tasting.

Wines Recently Tasted:

Alan Scott Sauvignon Blanc 2001 about **\$19.95**

Fresh and zingy this is classic NZ sauvignon with grassy and gooseberry notes. Definitely one of those long summer evenings.

Carrick Chardonnay 2000 **\$26.95**

A new label from Bannockburn, and these guys were originally one of the Mt. Difficulty partners. Their first release this year, and the Chardonnay is more in a Chablis style. Steely, minerally, and with good acid. It should pair well with creamy sauces, to cut through that richness.

E E Black Pepper Shiraz 1998 **\$92.95**

In poetic terms, a big, big bugger! From the 'ab fab' 1998 vintage. Packed with currants and spice with huge sweet gobs of fruit. Drinks deceptively well now but will cellar magnificently.

Fiddlers Green Riesling 2000 **\$17.95**

This Riesling from the Waipara displays richness and complexity. It is a dry style with citrus and floral notes and a long finish. Could be worth cellaring for 2–3 years.

Forrest Estate Riesling 2000 **\$20.95**

John believes that Riesling is the regions premium varietal. He believes that the stony riverbed the grapes are grown on is expressed in the wine well with its austerity, concentrated palate and apple and mineral flavours. One for the cellar definitely.

Giesen Sauvignon Blanc 2001 **\$16.95**

If you love Sav Blanc you'll love this. Fresh off the press, this wine is packed with lime and gooseberries with a long zesty juicy finish.

Glenguin Shiraz 1999 **\$24.95**

We tried this at Steve Bennett's tasting recently and were really impressed by the quality and value of this Hunter Valley wine. Wonderful wine made from 50– year–old vines. Elegant and seamless with incredible flavour and intensity. Excellent value for quality.

Hawkdun Rise Pinot Noir 2000 **\$35.95**

Another very good Central Otago Pinot. Lots of Black Dawson cherry flavours with good tannins and classy oak. Perfect with duck.

Leasingham Bin 61 Shiraz 1998 \$24.95

Opulent and full-bodied with plum and berry fruit complemented with finely integrated oak and vanilla. Drink now or stick it away for a few years.

Main Divide Sauvignon Semillon 2000 \$16.95

I really enjoyed this wine when I tried it recently. It has a weight and middle palate not found in many straight Sauvignon Blancs. Packed with ripe, fruit flavours and a very long finish.

Montrose Black Pepper Shiraz 1998 \$19.95

This is a truly tasty wine. Big, bold and brooding with heaps of spice packed with fruit and all those things that we love about Aussie Shiraz.

Oxford Landing Chardonnay 2000 \$10.95

Rich and ripe with nice oak and peach flavours. The Aussies do this so well. Great value which you can't go past.

Oxford Landing Merlot 2000 \$10.95

Lovely wines with warm plummy flavours and plenty of fruit. Bigger than you would expect. Try it, you'll be surprised. Perfect party wine.

Peter Lehmann Shiraz 1999 \$26.95

The '98 of this wine cleaned up at the International wine challenge in London last year, and now I see that this vintage has topped an Australian Shiraz tasting in Decanter Magazine, gaining a coveted 5 star Decanter Award. While not inexpensive, the Lehmann team still manages to pack an awful lot of ingredient into this wine for the price! It gives an awful lot of \$40 plus wines a bit of a hurry up.

Twin Island Pinot Noir 2000 \$19.95

A genuinely good Pinot Noir for under \$20. A big fleshy wine which possesses good depth of warm, ripe cherryish flavours with some complexity.

Verde Brut NV \$18.95

Recently re-packaged, this reasonably priced bubbly is a blend of 75% Pinot Noir and 25% Chardonnay. It shows good depth of fresh zesty citrus balanced with a touch of biscuity yeast.

Wines of the Month

Alastair's choice:

Fraser River Pinot Noir 2000 \$29.95

Just arrived, a Central Otago Pinot Noir for under \$30!! This wine has spent 11 months in French oak and is displaying some lovely spicy cherry flavours. It is a slightly lighter in style wine compared with some of the

Pinot's coming out of the area, but is none the less extremely enjoyable.

Mark's choice:

Mt Ida Shiraz 1998 \$35.95

This is the second placed wine in the Decanter tasting, and one which we have loved since first running with it with the '96 vintage. One of our regulars (name suppressed in case his wife finds out) scoffed a whole bottle of this while watching the Bledisloe test. Certainly it combines a sheer drinkability and balance that makes you reach for a second glass, along with powerful fruit, and that touch of tarry licorice I often get in Victorian Shiraz.

Peter's choice:

Richmond Grove (Limited Release) Shiraz 1998 \$19.95

From the fabulous 1998 vintage, this is a wee beauty. It's already receiving attention with its gold medals from Australian wine shows. Owned by Orlando this small Barossa winery gains an impressive 4 stars by James Halliday and this particular wine is the mainstay from their range in the NZ market. Rich, ruby red in colour the subtle smoky vanilla oak from the American barrels shows a youthfulness that is truly exuberant. The palate is full, ripe, berryfruit and spice that lasts. Rock and roll. Will cellar well, but not at our place!

Central Otago Update

The buzz for Central Otago wines, and particularly Pinot Noir, continues to show no signs of abating. The interest is coming from a wide audience: parochial locals, out of town visitors, and overseas visitors to Dunedin/Otago alike. Consequently the shelves are brimming with new releases from some of the more established wineries, as well as wines from one or two newcomers. A recent count showed 17 Central Otago Pinot Noirs, along with 9 Chardonnays. Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris and Gewurztraminer are a little light at the moment, with the 2001 releases of these wines still being another month or two away.

New Pinot arrivals include the 2000 releases of Carrick from Bannockburn was originally one of the Mt. Difficulty partners, but is now striking out by themselves. Mt. Michael is owned by Sue and Martin Anderson and is situated just atop the Wanaka Cromwell road overlooking Cromwell. Fraser River Estate, a tiny producer in Earnsclough road is just outside Alexandra.

New releases from labels we have previously carried include Grant Taylors Valli (Colleens vineyard) which featured in the Cuisine Top Ten NZ Reds, the new William Hill from Alex, Hawkdun Rise from the Letts Gully also in Alex and who supply fruit to Alan Brady's Mt. Edward label, and the Alexandra Wine Company Davishon Pinot fresh from a 5 star review in Winestate.

The new vintages of regulars including Quartz Reef, Mt Difficulty, Hayes Lake, Olssens Garden Vineyard, Nevis Bluff, Chard Farm, Gibbston Valley, Felton Road, Black Ridge, Dry Gully, Kawarau, Kenley, Leaning Rock and others will be available in the near future. Keep an eye on the shelves or phone us to find out what is available.

With the constantly evolving industry up there, watch this space.

Super Tuscans

The following `Super Tuscan' wines are now available in very limited quantities

Ornellaia 1998 \$149.95

This gorgeous wine has received 96/100 in Wine Spectator ranking it the 9th best wine in the world. This score is the same that was awarded the wine from the 1990 and 1997 vintages, which are two of the greatest vintages from Tuscany in the last two decades

Tenuta del Ornellaia Le Volte 1999 \$29.95

The second wine of Ornellaia and an excellent Super Tuscan in its own right. 1999 is tipped to surpass the 1997 vintage as the vintage of the quarter century.

Tenuta Sette Ponti Crognolo 1999 \$54.95

Exciting new Super Tuscan, 100% Sangiovese predominantly from a vineyard planted by HRH the Count of Turin in 1935. 92/100 in Wine Spectator.

Fattoria d'Manzano IL Bosco Syrah 1999 \$84.95

"The best Syrah in Italy" – Wine Spectator's Top 50 Italian wines "Why buy Guigal anymore?" Wine Spectator.

The following wines are also available, unfortunately we don't have tasting notes of the current releases, but from previous vintages these are truly superb wines and in great demand.

First in first served with these wines, as we only have small quantities.

The screwcap revolution

This week has seen a revolution in the wine industry with a commitment by a number of New Zealand's top winemakers, to ditching the romanticism of corks for the share reality of ensuring the quality of their wines by introducing screwcap or stelvin caps. When we were in Blenheim in June for the Cloudy Bay International Pinot Noir Conference (which was excellent and we would recommend it), the talk of the region was stelvin. Everyone there was so enthusiastic about this development, and not surprisingly. John Forrest from Forrest Estate was in Dunedin this week, and he is among the winemakers that have made this move. He said that the research found that stelvin guarantees no changes in the wine, and ensures that the finished product is exactly what and how the winemaker intended for the consumer to consume it, i.e no cork tainting, no oxidation, no dulling of the fruit and no bottle variation. And, no problems with ageing, or storage as the bottles can be upright instead of lying on the side to keep the cork moist.

Recently after major problems with corking, Kumeu River had a whole shipment of the fabulous Mates Chardonnay returned from the States (can you imagine the cost of that!) and on examination found that over 20% of the wine were corked to some extent. This can't be doing the industry any good at all. Having judged for years, one of the bails of judging is corked wine. How often you'll try a wine that is

so mildly corked that you none of the judges picks it, but afterwards when you find what the wine is and you know that it was worthy of a gold medal you weep. So good on those who making the break from tradition. Look out for wines from the following wineries who have made the change: Forrest Estate, Jackson Estate, Lawson's Dry Hills, Foxes Island, Kim Crawford, Kumeu River, Matua Valley, Seresin, Trinity Hill, Wither Hills and Framingham.

Cheers, Peter, Mark, Alastair and the crew.