

# Decanter Club

## February 2002

Greetings one and all, and welcome back to Decanter Club newsletter for 2002. I hope the year has started well for you all. 2002 we hope will be an interesting one, with varied tastings and new wines coming on stream. This current vintage may prove to be a difficult one with late frosts and a bad start to the bud set time of year, and unless the weather clears up enough to ripen the grapes we could be in for a lean year. The nights are already starting to cool so we must hope that early frosts don't come to compromise the vintage. One thing for sure is that the 2001 vintage is going to be in huge demand now that the 2002 vintage is looking suspect. Don't hesitate to buy now for your cellar, because I would predict that by mid-year, the pickings of local wines in particular are going to be lean indeed. And the phylloxera reports!!!

### Coming Events:

**Cuisine: Under \$15.00** Wednesday 13th February *cost: \$15.00*

Always a firm favourite. Good opportunity to check out all those wines under \$15 that you were afraid to taste but didn't brave the vault of cheap wines. Book now.

**Peter: 1999 reds** Thursday 21st February *cost: \$20.00*

Four from the Penfolds range of red wines including the wonderful Bin 407 (which sells for over \$40), Bins 128 and 28 plus a choice of some of Peter's other picks from the 1999 vintage: probably from around the world!

**Mark: A tour through Central Otago** Thursday 7th March *cost: \$20.00*

Mark is one of the most informed people on Central Otago wines. "He's been everywhere man!". This will be a very interesting tasting with Pinot Gris Pinot Noirs and other varietals.

### Wines Recently Tasted:

**Angoves Bear Crossings Chardonnay '00 \$11.65**

We ran with this label very successfully before Christmas, and had plenty of good feedback from our customers. The wine has an excellent long finish, and it is a style that the Aussies do so well. Generous fruit at a sharp price.

**Ashwood Grove Shiraz 2000 \$13.45**

This is a wee ripper for the price! The bright purply red colour and lifted plum and berryfruit scents frame the richly flavoured palate. More plum and cherry notes with a touch of liquorice and vanilla lead on to a velvety finish.

**Blackridge Gewurztraminer 2001 \$18.85**

Fresh, lively, just off-dry style Gewurztraminer with fairly high alcohol (13.5%). Good depth of lemony, apply and spicy flavours. Should be ideal for those long warm summer evenings, should we ever get one!

**Collards Pinot Noir 2000 \$16.15 (case price \$15.95)**

Elegant fragrant wine with gentle tannins and soft cherry spice flavours. We were able to get hold of 6 cases before christmas, and it lasted 2 days instore. We have a few more cases this time, but at the rate it disappeared last time, don't delay, as it will be the last at this fantastic price. A steal!

**Collards Sauvignon Blanc 2000 \$11.65**

Very classy wine at a great price. Partially French oak fermented adds a touch of complexity. Still very fresh and lively for a 2 year old Savvy.

**Corbans Chardonnay 1999 \$13.45**

Rated in the Top 10 Bargains by Cuisine Magazine. Great melon flavours with not too much oak. Great drinking now.

**Gapsted Durif 1998 \$32.35**

Peter and Mark call this 'good grief!' A new winery on the market and a warm welcome it has received. This is massive. Bigger than Texas. Yummy stuff. Serve with elephant!

**Hayes Lake Pinot Gris 2001 \$22.45**

The first Pinot Gris release from Hayes Lake winery and a great first up effort. The central winemakers are really getting the feel for this variety, and this version is a real fruit burst with pear and stonefruit and is as fresh as a daisy. Drink young and enjoy that beautiful fruit.

**Hayes Lake Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$18.85**

A Top 10 result in Cuisine Magazine is another excellent award for this stylish Central Otago label. A regular on our shelves over the last few years, this vintage is classically bright fresh grassy and crisp. Great for gurgling on a hot summers day, or team it with some shellfish!

**Mt. Difficulty 'Mansons Farm' Pinot Gris 2001 \$22.45**

A touch different to the Lake Hayes version (made more in an Alsatian style rather than the Italian pinot Grigio), but just as enjoyable. Rich and unctious with a whicker more sweetness, but still brimming over with that wonderful fruit. Food match: who cares! Just drink by itself and enjoy.

**Nobilo Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$13.45**

A gold medal last year was just reward for this very well made yet very affordable wine. While some '01 Savvy's are already getting short in supply, this is available in good volumes. Pungent and racy, just what you expect in a good Savvy itching to be enjoyed now.

**Nobilo Pinot Noir Chardonnay Brut \$12.55**

Made entirely from Australian fruit by Nobile's parent company Hardy's. Shows good complexity with buttery, toasty characters from the Chardonnay and strawberries and cream from the Pinot Noir. Excellent value fizz.

**Rosemount Cabernet Merlot 2001 \$13.45**

Another wine in the Cuisine Top 10. Packed with juicy berry fruit and cassis flavours. Great value for money.

**Sacred Hill Barrel Ferment Chardonnay 2000 Normally \$21.95 Now \$17.05**

The big brother to the Whitecliff Chardonnay, and with greater depth of flavour and added complexity. Barrel fermentation leads to a nicely integrated spicy oak component, overlaid on the fruit, with its tropical and nutty hints. A good partner for veal and chicken dishes.

**Sacred Hill Whitecliff Chardonnay 2001 \$13.45**

A pleasant discovery for us from this over achieving Hawkes Bay winery. Lightly oaked, with ripe stonefruit and a touch of citrus; lees stirring has enhanced the creamy textured palate. This wine has become rather a favourite in store recently.

**Stoneleigh 'Rapaura Series' Sauvignon Blanc 2000 \$21.55**

The first vintage of the new Rapaura series. Partly oak- aged (5%) make for a pretty powerful Sauvignon Blanc that displays intense aromatics of ripe melons and passionfruit, which is nicely balanced by the subtle use of oak.

**Tasman Bay Chardonnay 2000 Normally \$21.95 Now \$17.05**

We've picked up a wee deal on this well known Nelson producer. Ripe tropical fruit marries well with the spicy oak in the wine, providing a big bold style for the hoped for barbeques that lie ahead.

**Taylors Cabernet Sauvignon 2000 \$16.15**

Big, rich, full of intense blackberry fruit. Trophy at the Sydney Top 100.

**Taylors Shiraz 2000 \$14.35**

Big rich and dangerously drinkable. Great value with lots of cassis and spice.

**Torlesse Riesling 1999 \$10.75**

Classy Riesling with a bit of age. Made in an off dry style, with touches of peach and vanilla pod.

**Wyndam Bin 888 Cabernet Merlot \$13.45**

Nice rich mouthfeel with lovely chocolate notes. Scored very well in Cuisine.

## **Wines of the Month**

**Mark's choice:**

**Cape Mentelle Cabernet 1998 \$51.25**

This wine comes with an interesting story. The cellar door manager at Cape Mentelle was telling me that late last year a televised tasting had been organised in France to compare a range of Cabernet based wines from around the world with several of the top Bordeaux wines. Quite a number of top sommeliers from fine restaurants in Paris and elsewhere were invited along to try the wines blind, with the aim of trying to discern why 'new world' wines are gaining so much market share at the expense of French wines. At the end of the tasting a vote was taken as to No 1 pick of the wines. To the surprise of the locals, the almost unanimous choice of the top wine proved to be Cape Mentelle '98 Cabernet. This gorgeous wine is inky in colour, with layers of flavour and complexity, a mass of soft tannins and excellent length. While hugely proportioned, it is beautifully balanced and although eminently drinkable now, should give 10 years and more in the cellar.

**Alastair's choice:**

**Pegasus Bay Riesling 2001 \$20.65**

This is a very classy Riesling from Waipara. Richly fragrant and quite intense. Very much a medium style, with concentrated citrus and honey flavours predominating, with a complex and luscious texture. Drinking nicely now, but could be very interesting in 2 or 3 years down the track.

**Peter's choice:**

**Maxwell Four Roads 2000 \$22.45**

The younger sibling of the wonderful Ellen Street Shiraz. It can hold its head high with wines costing \$30 and more. It has a complex bouquet, with liquorice and vanilla aromas. The palate is luscious with a long ripe jammy spicy finish. It is lovely drinking now, but will definitely look good in a couple of years. Certainly worth a place in your cellar.

## **Jacques et Francois Lurton**

Internationally famous winemaker Jacques Lurton has operated a thriving business applying modern winemaking talent to fruit from outstanding vineyard sites in traditional vineyard areas the world over. The jewels in his crown are wines from Southern France. Clive Coates MV in The Wines and Vineyards of France wrote of these wine as "some of the best vins de pays from the Midi. This company proves that not all the flying-winemaker geniuses are Australian!"

**Lurton Les Bateaux Merlot Vins de Pays 2000 \$15.95**

The wine is made from a number of old, non-irrigated vineyards around Carassonne in Southern France. The wine has a complex smoky aroma of dark fruit. The mouth is round and soft with ripe tannins and a fine texture for a wine of this price. To be enjoyed now with most everyday meat and cheese dishes.

**Lurton Les Bateaux Syrah Vins de Pays 2000 \$15.95**

"The world's greatest wine bargains: Blackberry and cherry aromas are accompanied by a light to medium-bodied, supple-textured wine filled with licorice, blackberries and raspberries. It is amazing that in 2001, a Syrah with so much character can be purchased for US\$6 (NZ\$16)" 86/100 Robert

Parker, The Wine Advocate.

## Cloudy Bay prices to be confirmed

The new releases of Cloudy Bay Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Te Koko are due in store and as usual our allocation of these wines are small. All these wines are showing a gradual evolution in style, and are worthy ambassadors in our export markets. The increased use of wild yeast ferments in the Chardonnay is giving a slightly wilder edge to the wine while the Pinot is seeing an increase in complexity and greater texture. Te Koko remains an absorbingly different expression of Sauvignon Blanc. Don't delay if you follow these wines. We would advice you to at least place an order with us, as the increased number of cruise boats arriving in town have seen an amazing demand from tourists for these wines.

## Lindeman's Cabernet Shiraz and Riesling: \$8.95

You won't find these for sale in the shop, but they are available for parties and functions. The red is light and fruity, and makes for a great quaffer, whereas the Riesling is much, much better than the price would suggest with lovely hints of peaches and kero. Available through the newsletter on case sale only or for functions. See Peter or Mark.

## Mutterings from Mark

I have recently returned from a couple of week's holiday in Western Australia, where I took the opportunity to have a really good look around the Pemberton, Margaret River, and the Swan River regions. There were some interesting parallels with our industry in general and also with Central Otago specifically.

Overall, wine production in W.A. is about 80% of that in NZ, and they share with us a high ratio of quality producers (with high price structures). Like us they have very successfully convinced overseas markets that they are a high quality area with commensurately high prices, while they have similarly promoted themselves as a beautiful part of the world in which to grow grapes. Overall they have a larger visibility overseas than their actual size/production would suggest. They have an intensely loyal and parochial wine buying public, winemakers working together and experimenting on new varieties; and (perhaps similarly to Pinot Gris in Central) have in Verdelho and Chenin Blanc, two lesser known, but successful wine styles. They are also planting more and more in cooler climate areas in the search for greater elegance in their wines.

On the down side, plantings have gone in at a furious pace in recent years, and the state is now facing a wine glut as these plantings come on stream. There is a heap of unwanted young vine fruit in the market, often coming from farmer/growers who have seen grapes as a lucrative way to diversify, while many wineries appear to be sitting on large stocks of unsold bottles wine or wine in tanks. Many of the mid to larger wineries have cancelled grape contracts this vintage, or at best are just not looking to expand production.

I was left with the impression that there are serious problems ahead for the industry. A large increase in the number of small wineries all fighting for a position on shop shelves, combined with a large oversupply of grapes, and a stagnant growth rate in consumption, both domestically and overseas may lead to a shake out in the future. Crucially for W.A. (and perhaps for us in the future) the export market is becoming more and more significant, yet grape supply increases have far outstripped any growth in exports. In the shorter term this may provide a bonus for consumers with cheap grape prices leading to some cheaper wines but may signal the start of the 'bust' phase in the 'boom and bust' cycle?

The silver lining in their dark clouds may be the growth in wine tourism, though one small and distant producer in the Swan Valley admitted to me that he had only had one customer the previous Sunday, normally his busiest day of the week. There is significant amounts being spent in Margaret River by the older, larger, more established wineries with restaurant and tasting room facilities. Visitor numbers do tend to flow on to the smaller players.

W.A. may well be facing problems that we will have in the future. Hopefully we can learn from mistakes overseas, and continue to have a vibrant, expanding industry locally.

If you are busy, and can't get into the shop to make your purchase, we will be happy to deliver to your home in Dunedin at no cost and only minimal cost elsewhere. We have very experienced staff working with us, and even if you have no idea what you want, give us a call and we can help plan your wine requirements to match your meal. Our delivery is not limited to caseloads. We also have a large amount of glasses that are available for your use when buying wine for functions, whether it is for 6 or 60 people (or more).

Cheers, Peter, Mark, Alastair and the Crew at Munslow's