

Decanter Club

May 2000

Coming Events:

Ross Wellgreen: Corbans Wednesday 3rd May at 6pm *cost: \$15.00*

This is the first Corbans tasting Munslow's has held for a number of years, and I am looking forward to it. Corbans is one of the top 3 wineries in production size in New Zealand, and have produced some wonderful wines over the years like the PB Chardonnays, Stoneleigh Rieslings and many more. Certainly Corbans can be attributed to the rise in the popularity of wine drinking in New Zealand. Ross will present the current release wines including the new Cottage Block range.

Paul Brajkovich: Kumeu River Wednesday 17th May *cost: \$20.00*

Paul is the marketing manager of Kumeu River. He is the little brother of wine-maker Michael Brajkovich MW, and obviously the son of the influential and much loved Mate Brajkovich. A very talented family indeed, and one that produces some of New Zealand's finest wines. I like many wine enthusiasts have always been a big fan of their chardonnays, the Mates has got to be in the top 3 in New Zealand. If you have not had the opportunity to visit this remarkable Auckland vineyard, come to the tasting. You won't be disappointed.

Alastair Picton-Warlow: Dows Port Wednesday 24th May *cost: \$20.00*

Founded in 1798, Dows Port is one of the oldest and most distinguished of all Port houses. It is owned by the Symington family group, which also owns Taylors and Grahams Port. Like most ports, the grapes are grown in the Upper Douro Valley in northern Portugal. This tasting is very special and will cover wines from Ruby, Tawny through to Vintage 1977.

John Forrest: Forrest Estate Wednesday 31st May *cost: \$15.00*

2000 looks like it could be John Forrest's year. It started with the Royal Easter Show naming him as the wine-maker of the year. The award is given for high standards in wine-making. We've always known that he is good. When we opened our shop in 1995, John was one of the first to offer support to us and he has held regular tastings at Munslow's ever since. Come and try John's new releases and the wines that gained him his award. His tastings are always very popular, so please book in early

Claire Giffard: Orlando Wyndam Thursday 8th June *cost: \$15.00*

Claire will be presenting wines from their portfolio, ranging from the Richmond Grove Sauvignon, the multi-award winning St. Helga Riesling, the gold medal Montrose Black Shiraz, plus Morris Muscat++.

Wines Recently Tasted

Cedar Creek Chardonnay \$9.95

Back in stock. This wine has quite a following, not surprisingly, as it is the best buy in the shop. Fantastic quaffer for parties and other social occasions.

Dennis Shiraz 1997 \$23.95

We hadn't tried this for about a year, so decided to give it a bash recently. We were thrilled to see it had come on so much. Whereas last year, the wine had shown an abundance of fruit, the oak seemed clumsy. Now the wine has integrated beautifully with the fruit. The wine is reminiscent of those fabulous Hunter Valley Shiraz (which always took a few years to mellow out) wines that went out of fashion in the '80's when the market pushed for up-front, full-on fruit. Check it out with pasta, steak or late-summer roast vegies.

Felton Road Pinot Noir 1999 \$TBA

I liked this better than the Block 3. Jam-packed with flavour, we managed to obtain only a small allocation of this wine, so it's available only to Decanter Club members from the newsletter. I expect it will sell for around the \$40 mark.

Glazebrook Merlot 1998 \$22.95

We had sold out of this wine, but now have one case available. A big chewy Hawkes Bay Merlot from the magnificent 1998 vintage. Lashings of plummy fruit held together with a good tannin backbone.

Matua Matheson Chardonnay 1999 \$20.95

We had another opportunity to try this wine at a very enjoyable tasting last week with Matua's Bill Spence. Absolutely my pick of the wine in this price bracket. An elegant chardonnay with ripe fruit and finesse.

Maxwell Cabernet Merlot 1998 \$25.95

If you have enjoyed Maxwell's Lime Cave Cabernet, you shouldn't overlook the Cab Merlot. With a 25% merlot component, it is typically vibrantly dark purple in colour, more in the red berry and plum spectrum, with a brambly. Wild herb note on the palate. The lick of tannin suggests cellaring potential, but all that fruit gives it good drinkability now. (Mark)

Mildara Chardonnay \$8.95

For those who like less oak in their chardonnays. Great buy.

Mitchell Pepper Shiraz 1998 \$31.95

The best yet from this Clare Valley vineyard in South Australia. Beautiful balance, lovely spice and a very long finish, while still being soft and supple.

Mitchelton Preece Cabernet 1998 \$19.95

Ideal conditions ensured a smooth textured wine with lovely blackcurrant flavours enhanced by barrel maturation and fine gentle tannins.

Penfolds Koonunga Hill Shiraz Cabernet 1998 \$15.95

Once again Penfold's have produced a brilliant value for money wine. Ripe spicy shiraz and rich full bodied blackcurrant and berry fruit.

Peter Lehmann Grenache 1999 \$12.95

A bargain not to be overlooked. Every home should have this for an easy drinking quaffer. Earthy raspberry flavours make it an ideal for BBQ, pizza or pasta dishes! (Lyn)

Rockford Dry Country Grenache 1997 \$18.95

We have managed to source one more case of this wine at a bargain basement price (it should be \$26). This is serious grenache, dry farmed i.e. un-irrigated, intensely flavoured and capable of cellaring for a few years. This is as good as it gets for Barossa grenache.

Saltram Mamre Brook Shiraz 1998 \$20.95

Like us the weather conditions in '98 were very kind to Australian winemakers, and this is being emphasised as more of the reds arrive in store. The Mamre Brook Shiraz has impressed me for its sheer drinkability. A classic Barossa wine that combines intense fruit, a silky palate, and simply are very, very moreish wine. (Mark)

Sandihurst Riesling 1997 \$10.95

Fabulous drinking full of lemon and lime flavours which have developed complexity with bottle age. A great buy.

Selaks Marlborough Chardonnay 1999 \$13.95

Gold medal wine at this price is hard to find. Subtle oak and malolactic fermentation with citrus and melon flavours make this incredibly drinkable.

Sevenhill Shiraz 1998 \$23.95

Many of our regular customers have bought earlier vintages of this wine, and eagerly await each new release. The '98 version is as big as ever, with the eucalypt character of the Clare Valley. Pop it in the cellar, or partner it with a rare steak. (Mark)

St Hallett Faith Shiraz 1998 \$21.95

Those of you that haven't already been in to try the '98 vintage of the St. Hallett Faith Shiraz are missing a treat. Lovely spicy berry fruit and pepper characters with smoky toasted oak flavours on the finish. (Lyn)

Stonecroft Gewurztraminer 1999 \$32.95

We've seen some fantastic Gewurz's come out of the '99 vintage, but this is my personal favourite. We have managed to obtain a tiny allocation of this gem of a wine from Hawkes Bay. A fragrant nose of rose petal and jasmine, with rose, honey and spice flavours on the rich oily palate, with a great finish. Forget about food matching; savour this wine by itself. Limit: two bottles per customer. (Mark)

Synergy Pinot Noir 1998 \$19.95

From South Australia, this is a different style from the fruit driven Central Otago styles. Lovely fruit, a savoury finish and with a nice touch of forest floors this is more like a French Burgundy Excellent wine at this price, and one that make pinot noirs affordable drinking.

Tyrrells Steven Semillon 1993 \$23.95

Laurie and Peter's favourite Semillon. Little brother to their Vat 1 Semillon, which has won every accolade that any wine, could receive. Full of toasty citrus flavours, developed beautifully. A great change from chardonnay. It's only a baby at 7 years old, but it has years to go.

Wynns Riesling 1999 \$13.95

I really enjoyed a '93 of this wine over the weekend, a fine example of a wine, which costs little, but amply rewards cellaring. But it's really an each way bet! Drink it young for it's exuberant citrus freshness, or put it away for five (or more) years and see a wonderfully toast and honey, lime and kero wine evolve. The Wynn's people rate this vintage very highly. (Mark)

Wynns Shiraz 1998 \$14.95

The best vintage yet. Packed with ripe cherry flavours and spicy oak. Put a case under the house; we have! James Halliday writes 'the large-scale production has in no way prevented excellent wines covering the full price spectrum from the bargain basement riesling (above) and shiraz through to the deluxe John Riddoch and Michael. Wynns offers extraordinary value for money'. You can rely on Wynns.

HARVEST IN BANNOCKBURN: MARK

Over Easter, I joined the exodus to Central, but unlike 106,000 other people I did not go to the Warbirds show. It was harvest time at the Robertson Green Vineyard, and there was work to be done. Sadly, I must dispel the myth that grape picking is a leisurely activity undertaken by the vineyard owner and a few friends, tossing plump bunches into the picking bins in between glasses of wine, on a warm summers day (oh that it were). Harvest is hectic and is a nervous time for both the grape growers and winemakers alike, constantly monitoring the ripeness level of the grapes, while keeping a wary eye open for the threat of rain or an early frost. As tonnages increase in the region, grape growers are reliant on a large and necessarily of local labour, as the majority of grapes are hand picked. It is full on, but very social as you chat with your fellow pickers while you make your way down the rows, and quite rewarding when you see all the laden grape bins mounting up and ready to be taken to the winery.

The harvest day starts a little after 7.00. By necessity, harvest is an autumnal affair, and some of these mornings are crisp. The picking bins need to be hosed down, and then are taken out by tractors and dropped off down the rows ahead of the pickers. Shortly after, the net lifting team assembles. Birds love ripe grapes, so the vineyard has to be netted against them, but these nets need to be removed ahead of the pickers. Net lifting will have started the day before harvest, with a team of four: the tractor driver, the winder and the two runners who stay ahead of the tractor clearing the net from drippers, posts, and other obstructions so it does not rip as it is wound on. I can attest to this being hard work—you jog several kilometres a day.

By Easter Tuesday it is all over. Everyone gets together for a harvest lunch, with a few beers, and some of last year's wine, before being invited back to do it all again next year.

Wines of the Month

Lyn's choice:

Pegasus Bay Riesling 1999 \$19.95

A small winery from north Canterbury that always gets huge press both in New Zealand and abroad. Matt Donaldson, son of Ivan and Chris who set the winery up in the late 80's now makes the wines. Richly fragrant wine with superb intense concentrated flavours of citrus and honey. Complex and luscious. This is one of the stars in the world of Riesling this year. If you haven't tried this wine yet, I would urge you to buy a few now, because the availability is limited.

Coriole Lalla Rookh Grenache Shiraz 1997 \$23.95

Every time I try this wine I am incredibly impressed. Complex flavoursome wine aged in French oak with delicious sweet red berry and spicy plum characters. Fantastic

Mark's choice:

Australis Romanov Baltic Stout \$6.95 375ml.

I have made a slight departure into beer tasting this month. From Galbraiths in Auckland, this is supercharged stout full of chocolate, malt and roasted barley aromas and flavours. Definitely not to be guzzled, this is a beer to be savoured.

Peter's choice:

Magliere Shiraz 1998 \$20.95

I have judged with James Halliday several times and I respect his palate enormously. He's also one of the best writers/commentators on wine in this part of the world. He gives the Magliere vineyard a rating of 4.5 stars and wrote 'one of the better-kept secrets among the wine cognoscenti. It's dry red wines are invariably generously proportioned and full of character, the Shiraz particularly so—and of the highest quality. This gained 5 stars in Cuisine. It is big, rich and is packed with ripe plums and spice flavours. Great now, but will cellar superbly. We've done a deal with this wine, was \$23.95, now \$20.95! A steal!

Wine Options competition 2000

The wine options competition this year is to be held on Sunday 11th June in Queenstown. We have received an amazing amount of comment from regular players about it not being held in Dunedin. We endorse the frustrations of so many of our clients and have passed on these comments to the organisers. However we will run a few evenings for those who are interested. Please let us know how many people/teams want practices organised.

Hint from Laurie's kitchen

I have an old saying that never fails me. 'If in doubt, use pesto'. I add pesto to almost everything from pasta to pate. I make my own, and that way I can be assured of the quality. The most important thing to remember is only use good quality products and that way not only will the pesto taste fantastic, but it will also last for ages.

Favorite Recipe

Pesto

Ingredients:

60-g fresh basil leaves

60 g dry-roasted pinenuts

2 cloves garlic

60 g Parmesan (see footnote)

1 tsp. salt (or less as you desire—there's nothing worse than having too salty a pesto)

125 ml good quality olive oil.

Method:

Put basil and roasted pinenuts (roasting brings out the flavour and natural oils in pinenuts), garlic and half the salt into a blender or food processor. Process until smooth. Add grated Parmesan and process further 1 minute. Gradually add the olive oil until it is at a consistency that appeals to you. Add further half teaspoon of salt to taste.

Pesto can be kept in an airtight jar in the fridge for weeks, or try placing into ice cubes and freezing and only bringing out, as you need it. I add it to everything so I never have any wastage. Equally I make it all year round depending on the availability of basil. As an alternative to basil, try parsley and walnut, or for the adventurous, try coriander and almond.

Next time you make pasta, add a tablespoon to the drained pasta.

My fridge always has both the basil and the Pasta D'oro sundried tomato pesto which I use interchangeably.

Footnote: (See Jim Carroll at Leith Distributors for good quality Italian Parmesan at a good price. Don't go for anything other than Italian, because the flavour and texture have yet to be replicated in NZ or Oz).

Cheers, Peter, Lyn, Mark and the Crew