

Decanter Club

October 2001

Coming Events:

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

One of the big conglomerates of the Australian wine industry. These guys represent the lovely Orlando and the Jacob's Creek range. This will be a wonderful selection of old and new vintages. There will also be a few surprises on the night.

Stephanie Hagen: Huia Thursday 4th October *cost: \$10.00*

Stephanie from Huia will present new releases from their impressive portfolio including the Chardonnay, Pinot Sauvignon, Riesling, Gewurztraminer and their Pinot Gris PLUS a few older wines for interest value.

Mike Jemison: Fromm Tuesday 9th October *cost: \$20.00*

Mike represents very good Marlborough vineyards, including Fromm (La Strada), Greenhough (Nelson), Staete Landt and Greiner. He will also introduce Cockfighters Ghost, a Victorian winery, new to NZ.

Cuisine tasting: Fizz 8th November *cost: \$20.00*

Trophy and Top 100 Methodes from NZ and from around the world. Unfortunately due to the cost of French champagnes this tasting will not include that style of fizz.

Bigger than Texas Tasting Saturday 10th November, 12.00 – 6 p.m. *cost: \$10.00*

Now in our 4th year of hosting this special tasting for Munslow's clients. Last year there were over 150 wines to try. It's a mammoth effort, but worthy of spending a rainy November Saturday. An excellent opportunity to try before buying for Christmas.

Munslow's Xmas Party Sunday 11th November from 1 p.m. onwards *cost: Address: 6 Harden Street, Leith Valley, Dunedin*

Come and join the Munslow staff and friends at Peter and Laurie's home for our annual get together, wine and sausage. This is our way of thanking you for your continued loyalty and friendship. Of course your family are welcome, however we have a stream running through the garden and parents need to be watchful of their wee ones.

Check these Rieslings Out

Konrad and Konrad Noble Riesling 2000 \$25.95 (375 ml)

A new label from Marlborough with Brent Marris from Wither Hills making the wine for them. A poised and balanced sticky, carries the 120gm residual sugar with ease, and is well balanced by good

acidity. Botrytis and citrus notes on the nose lead one to the mandarin and honeyed palate.

Orlando Steingarten Riesling 1999 \$26.95

Long a single vineyard wine, this wine is definitely built for the long haul. Taut and minerally for now, with intense fruit showing some of those limey touches we come to expect from Australia. Put this away for several years and watch it blossom.

Richmond Grove Watervale Riesling 1999 \$16.95

Made by John Vickery (the Mr Riesling of Australia) and somewhat of a classic. Clare Valley fruit give this wine lime and kero notes along with a creamy texture. A touch of dissolved CO2 on the front palate gives a refreshing spritz effect to the wine. Lovely rounded drinking, but history says this wine will age magnificently.

Spring Wine Releases

Spring is in the air...well, during the daytimes at least, whereas the mornings still have the nip of winter behind them. This time of year is always exciting wine-wise as the first of the new releases hit the shelves. It is an opportunity to make the first judgments on whether the vintage is or is not everything it is cracked up to be. First up tend to be the Sav Blancs and Rieslings, though October and November will see the trickle turn into a flood.

Drylands (Selaks) Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$18.95

Drylands has become a stand-along label within the Selaks range, and in recent vintages has carved out a position at the top range of Marlborough Sav Blancs. While the price has crept up over the year (I did moan at both the rep and the winemaker), I would have to admit that it was intrinsically underpriced, and that the quality of the wine makes this excellent buying. A powerful and complex nose leads on to a creamy textured palate and is certainly one of the standout wines I've tried thus far.

Babich Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$19.95

A label with a long track record, and once again it brings home the goods. Explosive nose which to me was honeysuckle and bubblegum (sounds unusual, but it really works), with eh classically zesty Marlborough palate. Marlborough Savvy at its freshest and most typical.

Wither Hills Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$21.95

Over a few short years Brent Marris has propelled the Wither Hills label to the top of the tier. As much about texture and complexity as fruit, this is a wine that will build up a head of steam as it gains a little bottle age. Complex and wonderful drinking now, but will be even better in the New Year.

Nobilo Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$14.95

On of the value wines in the marketplace each year and unlike many of its competitors, the Nobilo has held its price this vintage. I tried this side by side with Drylands: this has a huge lift of fruit, which gives a perception of sweetness to the wine (though it is dry), which admirably marries with and

balances the crisp acid finish.

Dashwood Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$15.95

Made by Vavasour, yet not a second wine so much as an alternate label made in a fresher, more approachable style than the Estate label. A consistent medal winner year in year out typifying the Marlborough style with its bold nose. And flavours of gooseberry, cut grass and sweet capsicum.

Forrest Sauvignon Blanc 2001 \$16.95

John is well known to many of our Decanter Club members due to his regular visits down this way. I guess that you could say that the Savvy has become his signature wine, almost as big as the man himself. John has held his price for us this year, making the wine a bargain, and has taken a strong stand against cork taint by bottling this wine under a screw (stelvin) top closure. Picking a variety of vineyard blocks over a series of picking dates has given a wine of great complex flavour and weight.

Kim Crawford Riesling Dry 2001 \$19.95

Stunningly packaged with its eye-catching blue stelvin closure, the wine inside the bottle is also a stunner. Citrus blossom on the nose flows through the lemony citrus notes on the palate with a touch of honey on the finish. Wonderful purity and balance, a fine young Riesling with good aging potential.

Mills Reef Riesling 2001 \$17.95

Crisp, fresh and zesty; great summer drinking though will certainly age well. It's no secret that Riesling is one of my favorite wine styles and this wine is a good example. The sleek acidity and the citrus nose married to a touch of honey, creates a beautifully balanced wine: at home on its own or with food.

Wines of the Month

Marks choice:

Charpoutier Mt Benson Shiraz 1999 \$34.95

Australian Shiraz made by a French winemaker. Charpoutier have set up three joint arrangements in Australia (two in Victoria, and this one in South Australia), with the Mt Benson Shiraz and Cabernet being the first fruits of the union (forgive the pun). Perhaps not surprisingly, nose is more reminiscent of the Rhone, i.e. rather than Australian berryfruit there are more earthy nuances rather than overt complexity. A lively wine that has you keen to have an extra glass. As a special we are clearing the last of the 98 of this wine at the same price. Another retailer brought it in and retailed at \$49.95, so is a bargain now.

Alastair's choice:

Yalumba Barossa Shiraz 1999 \$18.95

Another great wine from the impressive Yalumba portfolio. Made from 100 percent Barossa Shiraz it displays ripe, sweet berry aromas on the nose. Plum and licorice notes are present on the palate, with a long smooth finish. Equally as good as the previous vintage and a great under \$20.00 buy. Limited supplies only.

Laurie's choice:

Forrest Estate Gewurztraminer 2001 \$20.95

This is a wee beauty. I have had the opportunity to try this wine on several occasions already and each time it gets better. I first tried it at John's vineyard earlier this year just after it had been bottled and it had already developed those wonderful honeyed characters that gewurzs often get. I'm not usually a huge fan of this style as I often find the perfume and spice just too overpowering. I also have to admit to not being a fan of lychees and mangoes (the flavours often used to describe gewurzs) because to me they are just too strong and rich a flavour for my palate. Well I have changed my mind about this one. It has all those lychee (but not sickly flavour), rose petal and spice that more mature gewurzs get. It's almost Alsatian but not quite...maybe it will develop into that more refined style in time. At the moment though, it has massive fruit and that wonderful viscosity or mouth feel that only Gewurztraminers (and Australian Semillon) can get. Try this on its own, with Indian food or perhaps at Yum Char. Guaranteed to cellar for several years.

Peter's choice:

Bodegas Castano Domino Espinal Selection 1998 \$14.95

Joelle Thomson's "Under \$15 Wine Guide" has reviewed the wine extremely well giving the previous vintage the prized STAR BUY. However Michael Cooper thinks the 1998 is even better with fabulous, luscious warm berry fruit. The length of this wine will amaze for a wine of this price. Perhaps with all the raros coming from across the ditch we will be seeing more from wineries such as this from the Southern European area. Made for drinking now either as an aperitif style or perhaps with a tomato based dish. Will also cellar for a few years, either way, enjoy.

Mark's Mutterings: Australian Super Premium Shiraz

My inspiration for this column comes from Peter, Laurie and I recently being guests of Nobile Wine Group at a theme dinner. Along with each course, they showcased a selection of their (primarily) red wine portfolio, culminating in tasting the magnificent E and E Black Pepper Shiraz '98, and the equally stunning Eileen Hardy Shiraz '98. (I can just hear Alistair McLaren saying..."yeah, I know it's a hard job, but someone has to do it!") It was undoubtedly a treat, and Peter, Laurie and I were up to the task. It is becoming a rare treat nowadays as wines like the E and E and Eileen are now highly sought after in the US and Asian markets, are commensurately highly priced, and are becoming more and more difficult for us to get meaningful allocations of.

Quite simply, if this hasn't already been blindingly obvious to you, Australian red wines, and particularly Shiraz, are on a roll, especially in the US market where wine scribe Robert Parker Jr is a strong convert. At the day to day drinking level, you will have all noticed the inexorable climb in prices; what may surprise you will be the discovery that many of the wines that you will have regarded as a special occasion treat in the past, now command very high prices in the marketplace. While many of us (including myself) do 'trade down' and search for the next undiscovered (read here underpriced and unParkerised) star, it is still nice at the same time to splurge now and again for that special occasion wine.

The following is a short list of some of the shining starts of Australian Shiraz. Some have reached icon status, others are seen as super premium, or are rising stars. All are necessarily in tiny quantities of only a few bottles.

1996 Grant Burge Mesach \$119.95

Sourced from select parcels of fruit from the Burge's Filsell vineyard in the Barossa Valley, and then given the Rolls Royce treatment. Quite unashamedly Burge's tilt at the Grange throne. Now selling in the US for US \$135.

1998 E and E Black Pepper Shiraz \$92.95

Aromatic, silky and lush; a powerful red wine with finely balanced tannins. Deceptively drinkable now, but a fantastic '91 of this that I opened several months back showed just what this wine could do with time.

1998 Eileen Hardy Shiraz \$TBA

From a mix of McLaren Vale and Padthaway fruit this is a concentrated wine with layers of flavour and complexity. Brooding at the moment, and built for the long haul. Laurie's favorite, so you'll need to get in quickly before she buys the lot.

1998 Penfold's RWT \$109.95

Bin 389 has been dubbed the 'Poor Man's Grange'; the new Penfold's label (2nd vintage) has been called the 'Baby Grange'. All Barossa fruit and aged in French rather than American oak provides a stylistic departure from the old Penfold's style.

1999 Torbreck 'The Descendant' \$69.95

Dave Powell is an Aussie 'garagesite', buying in parcels of old vine fruit and handcrafting small parcels of wine. This wine has a huge reputation in the UK, and in the US (where this sells for US \$70). The little brother to 'The Runrig' this Shiraz is fermented on Viognier to pick up that perfume, and with a tilt towards the Rhone.

1999 Wild Duck Creek Springflat Shiraz \$69.95

Wild Duck Creek has sprung to fame in the US with the rather unfortunately named, but highly famous 'Ducks Muck' which is now selling for in excess of US \$1000

1999 Turkey Flat Shiraz \$54.95

A personal favorite of mine, which in the past I've had to buy direct from the vineyard. This is the first year it has been available in NZ. Very old vine Barossa fruit gives a supple richly flavoured wine, which is about balance. One of those wines with immediate drinkability, but with the poise to sustain long-term cellaring.

1999 Clarendon Hills Australis \$269.95

Roman Bratisjuk (the winemaker) has unashamedly gone for the most super concentrated Shiraz he can make, and in overseas markets it is seen as the most serious contender to Grange supremacy.

1998 Metala Original Plantings Shiraz \$48.95

A famous old name with considerable pedigree. Langhorne Creek plantings give wine rich in blackberry, spice and earthy/tarry note aligned with sophisticated oak treatment. The fine-grained

tannins and layers of complexity would suggest serious long term cellaring.

Gone already for this year are the Penfold's Grange and 707, the Hill of Grace, and the Jim Barry Armagh. Coming up shortly will be the new vintage of Torbreck 'The Runrig'. We have good connections with the industry, so if any of you do have particular favorites that you find hard to source, come in and talk to Peter, Alistair or myself, and we'll see what we can find for you.

Bargain Busters

With the festive season coming up, we all need something to drink without breaking the bank. Here are a few ideas:

Cedar Creek Chardonnay \$10.95

Salisbury Cabernet Sauvignon \$11.95

Leasingham Bastion \$14.95

Omni Methode \$11.95

Sanctuary Sauvignon Blanc '01 \$13.95

Quartz Reef Methode \$24.95

Te Whare Ra Riesling 1998 \$13.95 (as a super special we will sell this at \$120 per case order, making this a \$10 wine)

Cheers, Peter, Mark, Alistair and the crew at Munslow's.