

Decanter Club

October 2003

Coming Events:

Matt Dicey: Mt Difficulty Thursday 16th October *cost: \$15.00*

Hand's up those who haven't heard of Mt Difficulty yet? Not many we'd think. Next question? What don't they make? Syrah and that's the only grape varietal (with the exception of Muller and other cask varietals) grown in NZ that this burgeoning company is not making. Matt Dicey is the very talented winemaker who is now starting to pick up awards for his talent. Please book early for this tasting, as it will be absolutely packed.

Mike Henley: Craggy Range Vineyards Thursday 23rd October *cost: \$15.00*

Mike is the marketing manager of this newly established boutique winery from Hawkes Bay. The winemaker is Steve Smith MW and has established a fine reputation for making Bordeaux style wines. This will be a fascinating tasting to attend.

Mark Henderson: Aussie vs NZ Thursday 30th October *cost: \$15.00*

Yes he's back, albeit for only a short time, and following from his award for tourism in NZ, Mark would love to catch up with Decanter Club members, so has agreed to do a mini Bledisloe Cup of the wine world. We are not sure what he'll be tasting but knowing Marks' rather eclectic taste in wine, not only will it be interesting, but also very different and informative.

Chris Staynes: Aromatic wines Thursday 6th November *cost: \$20.00*

The wine market (in Dunedin at least) is turning its head towards aromatic wines and away from the hefty reds and over-oaked Chardonnays, and Chris has certainly been enjoying varietals that include Pinot Gris and Riesling lately. This will be a fascinating exploration of aromatic varietals from around the globe.

Bigger than Texas tasting Saturday 22nd November from 12midday – 5 pm *cost: \$10.00*

A wee reminder to put in your diary, and to coincide with the All Blacks playing in the final of the world Cup and just in time to juice you up to enjoy the game, we will be holding the biggest tasting of the year.

Wines Recently Tasted:

Akarua Pinot Noir 2002 \$36.85

Another blockbuster from the superb 2002 vintage in Central Otago. This is a dense, powerful style Pinot with rich aromas of plum, wild mushroom and cherry. The palate is silky smooth and is drinking remarkably well now. There is good tannin structure, which suggests it will cellar well.

Albert Mann Gewurztraminer 2002 \$33.25

Turkish delight, rose petals and spectacularly floral. This very elegant and intense style is what Albert Mann

Decanter Club Newsletter

thinks Alsatian Gewurztraminers should be all about. After trying this you'll have problems arguing with the theory. Being from Alsace there are limited supplies of this wine.

Ashwood Grove Merlot 2002 \$13.45

Another beauty from this Victorian producer. Concentrated yet delicate flavours of plums, raspberries and mulberries with a long finish. Excellent value for money.

Barossa Valley Moculta Cab/Merlot '01 \$16.15

A well-known label to our regulars over the years, always known as a good quality wine. This is no different. It has a lovely soft tannin structure with rich, intense blackcurrant flavours.

Bladen Riesling 2002 \$17.95

This 2002 Riesling is just coming into it's own now. It's off dry in style with pear and mandarin flavours and a slightly honeyed character. Lovely stuff. Canterbury House 'Good Times' Chard '02 \$12.55 From Waipara comes this excellent 'value for money' Chardonnay. This is a vibrant, fresh, fruit-driven style with soft, citrus and peach flavours. Ideal summer drinking.

Cape Mentelle Shiraz 2001 \$30.55

We've managed to get hold of some more of this outstanding Shiraz. It's a powerful, weighty style with complex berry, spice and pepper characters underlain with chewy tannins. It is drinking now but time spent in the cellar would be well rewarded. A favourite of ours.

Carchelo Jumilla 2002 \$13.45

New vintage of this ever popular Spanish red. Made from a blend of Mouvedre (50%) Tempranillo (30%) and Merlot (20%) this red is velvety in texture, producing some delicious intense berry-fruit flavours, softened nicely by the presence of Merlot. A great wee wine in a drink young style.

Drylands Pinot Gris 2003 \$17.95

Another cracker from Drylands, this Pinot Gris is every bit as good as the previous vintage. Made in more of an Alsace style with rich apricot and pear fruit flavours and real weighty complexity.

Frescobaldi Castiglioni Chianti 2002 \$20.65

New vintage of this impressive Chianti from this famous Tuscan producer. Made from Sangiovese (90%) and Merlot (10%) it is ruby red in colour with aromas of cherries and strawberries. It is a medium bodied wine, which offers ripe cherry fruit on the palate and hints of pepper and spice. It is designed for early drinking and makes for a perfect summer red to be enjoyed with a pasta dish or some cured meat.

Graffigna Malbec 2002 \$13.45

Made in Argentina, this wine has won amazing accolades in the international press, for instance it gained the award for Best Buy, Wine Spectator, 2002, which is definitely not to be sneezed at. It's a great robust wine full of very juicy fruit, yet soft and spicy and finishes with a touch of oak. Buy it to enjoy with pasta, or with bruschetta before dinner with friends.

Kim Crawford Unoaked Chardonnay '03 \$17.95

Made from 100% Marlborough fruit, this unoaked Chardonnay is surprisingly full and rich, having undergone malolactic fermentation. It displays luscious butterscotch and ripe tropical fruit flavours with plenty of depth and complexity.

Lawsons Dry Hills Riesling 2003 \$17.95

New release of this Riesling from Marlborough. The fruit was sourced from vineyards in the Wairau and Waihopai Valleys and has produced a dry style Riesling. There are aromas of melon and peach, which lead to citrus dominant characters and a clean, fresh finish.

Matua Matheson Syrah 2002 \$19.75

A very good example of Syrah from the Hawkes Bay. It's rich and weighty with plenty of spice, pepper and berry fruit flavours. Full-bodied with soft, ripe tannins.

Mount Maude Pinot Noir 2002 \$34.15

One of the latest 2002 vintage Central Pinot's to hit our shelves. I thought this Wanaka Pinot was one of the standout wines of last year. The 2002 is carrying on where the 2001 left off and is looking extremely good. Like many of the 2002 vintage releases, it is fairly weighty and dense with heaps of plum and cherry flavours integrated nicely with the French oak influence. Hang on to it for a while if you can.

Peter Lehmann 'Mentor' 1998 \$40.45

From the outstanding 1998 vintage comes the Mentor. It is a blend of Cabernet, Malbec and Shiraz from some of the Barossa's most prized vineyards. It is matured in French and American oak for 30 months prior to bottling and has produced a powerful wine with good fruit richness and hints of chocolate and vanilla. This wine normally retails for over \$50 and there is only a limited amount available at this special price, so be in quick.

Pikes Luccio 2000 \$18.85

Pikes is a Clare Valley (South Australia) company that has been around for years now, and we have enjoyed many of their rustic style reds. This is new to their portfolio and is made from a blend of 70% Sangiovese, 15% Merlot and 15% Cabernet. It's a juicy, plummy, cherry flavoured wine that is designed to match Mediterranean food.

Sacred Hill 'Whitecliff' Pinot Gris 2003 \$13.45

Brand new release from Sacred Hill. Made from a blend of Italian Pinot Grigio (97%) and New Zealand Pinot Gris (3%). The reason behind this is to provide a Pinot Gris on the market that doesn't break the bank and is available in reasonably large quantities so that it doesn't run out a couple of weeks after it's release. It's a fairly dry and light style with soft apple and pear flavours with a hint of spice. One for those long balmy summer evenings...if we ever get any!

Selaks Founders Reserve Syrah 2002 \$28.75

From the top range of Selaks wines, this Syrah is big and gutsy with wonderful earthy characteristics. Only limited amounts available, so be quick

St Hallett 'Faith' Barossa Shiraz 2001 \$25.15

The return of this excellent Shiraz from one of my favourite Aussie producers. Plum red in colour with a complex nose of sweet cherry, plum and an almost gamey character. It is very soft and approachable with cherry and raspberry flavours coming to the fore and fine textured tannins making it a wine to be enjoyed now and until 2005.

Waipara Hills Sauvignon Blanc 2003 \$17.05

New to us here at Munsloes, this is a classic style Marlborough Sauvignon. Upfront vibrant gooseberry and passionfruit flavours with hints of nettle and herbaceous characters. Clean and fresh on the finish.

Wines of the Month

Alastair's choice:

Kim Crawford 'Boyszone' Pinot Gris 2003 \$21.55

From Marlborough comes this stunning new release Pinot Gris. Intense aromatic pear and apricot aromas lead to a rich palate with lychees, honey and spice. This is a weighty off-dry style with great complexity and a long, lingering finish.

Martijn's choice:

Ross Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2000 \$22.45

A big Barossa Cabernet. Mint, eucalypt, hints of blackberries and chocolate. A new label for us. Going by this wine hopefully not a flash in the pan one-wine wonder. Try with a pepper steak or any steak for that matter. Yum yum.

Peter's choice:

Beresford Beacon Hill Shiraz 2002 \$10.75

There's nothing better than finding a wine of quality that doesn't have a big price tag added to it. I was very pleasantly surprised to come back from holiday to find this wee bottle. I took it home and gave Laurie a blind tasting of it, and she thought it should retail at about \$15-18. Being budget minded doesn't mean that you have to go without quality now. Big, rich red that's full of spicy plum flavours. It is an outstanding wine. Big with lots of fruit and huge weight at 14.5%. We enjoyed this wine with a fantastic steak from Estrick's Butchery

Laurie's choice:

Promessa Negroamaro 2001 \$17.95

The back label of this wine reads; "Once upon a time in the far south of Italy there lived an enchanted wine grape called Negroamaro. One day a fairy prince (actually just Mark) showed up and fell under her spell, for Negroamaro was one of the most beautiful grapes that Mark had ever seen. Her scent was like the heart of an apricot coloured rose and she had all the elegance and grace and flavour reward of a truly noble wine to preserve her beauty for eternity Mark made her a PROMESSA, and put her into this bottle. Enjoy it happily

ever after". Couldn't resist repeating this. I did a search on this and discovered that the Mark mentioned is the winemaker from California and combines his New World talent with Italian grace and style. This is a seriously good wine, made from a varietal that is reminiscent to Zinfandel. It is a dark grape grown in the heel of Southern Italy. I'm not a fan of big jammy simplistic wines, I'd prefer wines that are more subtle, but with spice and different layers that you can contemplate and really enjoy a glass or two. This is what this is for me. Thought it was fabulous when I first tried it, and I've had a couple of bottles since. It reminds me of sunny, warm days in Tuscany and those fabulous big, ripe tomatoes. Stop torturing yourself Laurie!! Do try it though. Bound to cellar well.

Mutterings from Mark – What We're Drinking Here.

Working in fine wine, it is easy to lose sight of the "volume" end of the marketplace. Certainly, the \$8–13 segment of the market does provide the "bread and butter" of our business in Melbourne, but the visible emphasis of the store is the smaller producers and boutique labels from around Australia and to a lesser degree the world.

That oversight has been thrown sharply into focus recently, with the release of sales figures by one of Australia's largest liquor distributors, a company similar to Foodstuffs in NZ, in that they sell large volumes of wine, beer, spirits, and RTDs (mixed drinks) to restaurants, pubs, bottleshops and everything in between. While not encompassing all liquor sales within Australia, they will still be fairly indicative of what is going on in Australia. What are the biggest selling bottled wines? The big company labels of course, and all under (often well under) \$10. Number One in both white and red secured a coup for Orlando Wyndham with Jacobs Creek in both top spots.

Trailing Jacobs Creek (in no particular order) were labels that we are well used to in NZ, with brands like Nottage Hill, Queen Adelaide and Bin 65 Chardonnays (no sign of the ABC drinkers amongst Joe and Jane average consumer), and amongst the reds, labels such as Rosemount Split Label Cabernet Merlot, Hardy's RR and Lindeman's Bin 45.

The imported section was of special interest to me, and the top selling imported wine was Luigi Cavalli Lambrusco (Luigi who you might ask) which devoured something like 70% of the imported wine market. The next four out of the top five: all Montana labels, with Marlborough Sav Blanc and Timara being a couple of their big sellers. While not trying to decry Montana's obvious success in the marketplace, and their very active sales force, the imported figures more starkly highlight the paucity of imported wines here, and just how parochial the average Australian consumer has become! Over recent years the market share of imported wines in Australia has shrunk to a meagre 2%, a frighteningly insular statistic I feel for a wine producing nation that sees itself as a world wine power! Where would Australia's wine exporters be if other nations chose to drink local to the same degree?

The other interesting statistic was in the May figures for the top 200 sellers where the Grange phenomenon saw the '98 vintage leap into 186th place. While everyone was screaming here about reduced allocations, it does show just how much Grange actually made it out there. While not part of current statistics, the introduction of "Yellowtail" into the Australian market in September will be eagerly watched. Produced by Casella Wines, Yellowtail has proved to be the most successful start up imported wine brand in the US, with sales having topped six million cases in just a couple of years. Will Australians fall for its cute Kangaroo (actually a Wallaby) label in the same way? Only time will tell?

Bin ends:

Mark Henderson has won an award by New Zealand Winegrowers as the winner of the 2003 New Zealand Wine Adviser Award: Retail Category, as a result of his service and enthusiasm in promoting New Zealand wine. Well done Mark.

Dave Christensen works for the Tourism Dept at University of Otago and is a fellow Decanter Club member. We will be sending out a questionnaire for a thesis on winery visits and wine buying within the next couple of weeks on his behalf. Please look out for this and forward your replies as soon as possible.

Remember the Christmas bbq on Sunday 23rd November to be held at Peter and Laurie's at 6 Harden St, Leith valley, Dunedin from 1.pm onwards. All welcome, and here's hoping for good weather so we can enjoy a game of petanque to go with the wine and ham.

Cheers, Peter, Alistair, Chris and the crew at Munslow's