

VOYAGER ESTATE

The annual Voyager Estate tasting has become a keenly anticipated event on my calendar. As usual the Voyager Estate team put their wines up “blind” against some international high flyers. This year the line-up was probably the strongest-ever.

CHARDONNAY

2012 Tolpuddle Vineyard Tasmania Chardonnay Fresh, restrained and lemony. – in fact, lemon meringue - with a caress of oak. The intense, restrained fruit is backed up by lively acidity – typical of the island state. (\$65.00) ★★★★★

2012 Voyager Estate Project 95 Margaret River Chardonnay Quite backward citrus, with a touch of sulphidic funkiness. The dry palate has good length and is lifted by fresh acidity. Texturally it's a little lacking. (\$55.00) ★★★☆

2012 Voyager Estate Margaret River Chardonnay The white peach aromas are enhanced by subtle barrel ferment nuttiness. It's an attractive, reserved, textural wine with a fresh acid lift on the finish. (\$45.00) ★★★★★☆

2012 Seville Estate Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay What a brilliant chardonnay this is. The powerful white peach characteristics are perfectly matched with barrel ferment struck match and nuttiness. It's a vibrant, textural gem. (\$70.00) ★★★★★

2012 Voyager Estate Gin Gin Margaret River Chardonnay The fresh, restrained white peach aromas carry hints of grapefruit and toasted cashew. The palate is tight, long and pure, with uplifting acidity. (\$55.00) ★★★☆

2012 Meursault (Coche-Dury) The wines of Coche-Dury are eagerly sought after, and consequently very expensive, but they usually live up to the hype. This one certainly does. There's power plus and plenty of funk. The intensity, texture, length, structure and grip are all very impressive. (\$600.00) ★★★★★

2012 Neudorf Moutere Chardonnay Although there's some peachy fruit, there's also overt butteriness, prominent oak and melon rind greenness. A very disjointed chardonnay. (\$65.00) ★★☆☆

2012 Littorai B.A. Thieriot Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay Peachy and fresh with plenty of quality oak. It's very textural, but grippy and buttery as well. (\$130.00) ★★★

2012 Giaconda Estate Vineyard Chardonnay A rich, powerful, superb chardonnay with complex barrel ferment inputs. The balance and texture are beyond reproach. (\$120.00) ★★★★★

There was no shortage of wow factor in that line-up, and the Australia wines stood tall.

CABERNET

2004 Château Cos d'Estournel (St-Estèphe second growth) The nose shows mature cedar, tobacco and cigar box aromas together with a whiff of brettanomyces medicinal character. The palate is firm but not particularly fine, and finishes with a bretty hardness. (\$395.00) ★★

2004 Voyager Estate Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Quite vegetal and pencilly initially, but it breathed up to display red fruits with only a little maturity. The tannins are fine and firm. (\$145.00) ★★★★★

2011 Château Pontet-Canet (Pauillac fifth growth) A very fresh wine that is quite red-fruity and plummy. There's a hint of leaf together with good fruit weight and structure. (\$295.00) ★★★★★☆

2011 Ridge Monte Bello This blend of 88% cabernet sauvignon, 8% merlot and 4% cabernet franc is packed with raspberry/dark berry flavour. The oak is very well seasoned, but a little too prominent. (\$250.00) ★★★★★

2011 Voyager Estate Project North Block Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The nose shows very fresh red fruits, blackcurrant and a hint of leaf. Palatewise we find excellent weight, length and fine, firm tannins. (\$90.00) ★★★★★☆

2011 Voyager Estate Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot A bit ju-juby on the nose, showing some maturity. There's good red fruits flavour backed up by fine tannins and well integrated oak. (\$70.00) ★★★★★☆



2011 Voyager Estate Project Old Block Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon This is a stunning young cabernet showing complex blackcurrant, red fruits, licorice, subtle oak and leaf aromas. The palate gives us concentration, balance and great finesse. (\$90.00) ★★★★★

September 24, 2015

2011 Almaviva A fresh, concentrated blend (67% cabernet sauvignon, 25% carménère, 5% cabernet franc, 2% merlot, 1% petit verdot) from Chile bursting with blackcurrant and plums. The palate is opulent, with fine lingering tannins. (\$200.00) ★★★★★☆

2011 i Guisti & Zanzi Vigneti Dulcamara Very ripe, concentrated and minty, with an overdone, solid structure. (\$105.00) ★★☆☆

I wince when overseas (and some Australian) wine writers trot out the old world/new world terminology. It usually carries with it the supercilious assumption that the old is always better than the new.

Events like this, and our annual Winewise international tasting, demonstrate that the competition is now on level terms even if the playing field isn't.

Lester Jesberg

Impressive d'Arenbergs from the Hills

D'Arenberg frontman Chester Osborne has achieved a unique status in the wine industry through his wine labels (60 of them at last count). Who can ignore The Cenosilicaphobic Cat, for example? Chester happily plays the entertainer in public, but he's very serious about what goes into the bottle.

The production of d'Arenberg is centred on McLaren Vale, but two wines from Chester's collection of "High Altitude Hillbillies" captured my attention at a recent tasting.

2013 d'Arenberg The Lucky Lizard Adelaide Hills Chardonnay

What most impresses me about this wine is the sympathetic handling of delicate fruit. This isn't a full-on, all stops out chardonnay. The grapes undergo gentle crushing and pressing before fermentation in two, three and four year old French barriques. There is no malolactic and 15% of the fermentation is carried out by indigenous yeasts. The result is a vibrant, subtly complex chardonnay with a creamy texture and just-right acidity. Delicious. (\$25.00) ★★★★★☆

<http://buy.darenberg.com.au/collections/all/products/the-lucky-lizard-chardonnay-2013>

2013 d'Arenberg The Feral Fox Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir For a winery with a reputation for robust reds from the Vale, we see a commendably deft hand with pinot noir. The approach of 15% whole bunch and foot-treading in two tonne fermenters works well here, producing a fragrant pinot with a hint of undergrowth and bright red berry flavour – and there's no new oak to interfere with it. Good drinking. (\$30.00) ★★★★★

Lester Jesberg

To subscribe to Winewise go to

<http://winewise.net.au/register/>