



WINEWISE

WWW.WINEWISE.NET.AU

OCTOBER 2011

VOLUME 27 NO 4



Bud burst in Canberra

Photo: Bob Judd

What's In This Issue?

Page 3 [2011 Riesling](#)

Page 5 [2011 Sauvignon Blanc](#)

Page 7 [Sparkling Wine](#)

Page 9 [2009 Shiraz](#)

Page 11 [Voyager Estate](#)

Page 14 [Grenache & Blends](#)

Page 15 [Yarra Valley Wine Program](#)

Page 22 [2011 Hunter Semillon](#)

Page 26 [Central Otago](#)

Page 32 [Wolf Blass Black Label](#)

Page 21 [Other Red Varietals](#)

Next Issue

[Plenty of new releases including more 2011 whites.](#)

[Want to know all about the very successful 2010 pinot noir vintage in the Yarra Valley? Look no further. We taste 57 of them.](#)

[Twenty-three shiraz from the USA tasted.](#)

[We review 2010 Hunter Shiraz](#)

[Len on Austrian wine.](#)

[European wine journey continued.](#)

[This issue will be mailed before Christmas](#)

REGIONALITY

A lot of guff has been written about regional character in Australian wine, much of it by those who sing the praises of “natural” wine.

It was recognised by Wine Australia some time ago that Australia's international future rested with convincing Europeans, Americans and Asians that our wines offer quality and diversity. The only way to do that was to focus on the wide variety of environments in which wine grapes are grown, and the effects of those environments on the resultant wines.

Winewise supports that regional push, but instead of waffling on about terroir, we'll tell you **what's in the glass**. Get set for a series of tastings which focus on regions, sub-regions and the grape varieties grown in them. Our belief in tasting regionally has been evident for a long time in our Small Vigneron Awards and now, after a few years of reviewing the current vintage Hunter semillons, we extend that approach to other regions.

With the co-operation of the vignerons, we will organise visits and taste the wines on site. The tastings will be conducted blind, and participation by local winemakers will be encouraged. This will ensure openness of process, and adherence to the old adage of justice being seen to be done.

Regional associations should feel free to contact us if they would like to be part of our exciting initiative.

Cheers,



2011 RIESLING

Mother nature showed her fickle side across Australia in vintage 2011. It's another case for using vintage charts as a rough guide at best. Very good wines were made in difficult circumstances. Conversely, some poor wines were made in regions where conditions were ideal.

Outstanding



2011 Cherubino Porongurup Riesling The classic, restrained lime blossom aromas put both variety and region in sharp focus. However, even though the nose is delicate and vibrant, it is, at the same time, comparatively shy. The palate is linear and austere, needing time to realize its full potential. Wines like this demonstrate that the, Porongurups region in WA is at least the equal of Clare and Eden Valley. (\$40.00)
12.0% Screwcap

Highly Recommended

2011 Tahbilk Riesling This is a rich, intense limey riesling, with lovely rich fruit and seamless acid integration. Enjoy it over the next year or two. (\$16.00)
Screwcap

2011 Grant Burge Thorn Eden Valley Riesling Fresh, reserved and limey. Quite delicious – packed with flavour and has a good acid balance. Another excellent short term style. (\$17.00)
12.5% Screwcap

Recommended

2011 Dandelion Vineyards Wonderland of the Eden Valley Riesling Comparatively full in flavour - between citrus and stone fruit. An attractive ready to drink style with a good acid balance. (\$30.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 The Yard Riversdale Vineyard Riesling Restrained, grassy and mineral, with sufficient intensity and acidity. (\$25.00)
12.5% Screwcap

Agreeable

2011 Chalkers Crossing Hilltops Riesling There's a touch of lime fragrance, but it's subdued by free SO₂. However, the palate offers appropriate intensity and acidity. Give it time to settle down. (\$18.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Cherubino Great Southern Riesling The citrus nose carries a slightly cheesy overtone which detracts. The palate is better, offering satisfying varietal flavour. (\$35.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Thistle Hill Riesling This riesling is full flavoured and slightly peachy. The palate is rich, but finishes fairly firmly. (\$40.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Bundaleer Clare Valley Riesling Varietal but slightly forward and tending firm. Ready. (\$16.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Heggies Eden Valley Riesling Advanced colour and nose. It has loads of flavour, but it shows development. Definitely drink now. (\$17.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 DogRock Pyrenees Reserve Riesling The aromas are tropical, papaya-like, but the palate offers flavour and acidity with a slightly firm finish. (\$N/A)
11.5% Screwcap

Acceptable

2011 Moppity Vineyards Single Vineyard Hilltops Riesling Forward, with a touch of volatile acidity and hints of apricot. (\$N/A)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Knappstein Hand Picked Riesling Fresh, but fairly full, and slightly advanced, tending broad on the finish. (\$20.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Tim Adams Clare Valley Riesling Forward colour and nose. Plenty of flavour and some phenolic grip. Now. (\$18.00)
11.0% Screwcap

2011 DogRock Pyrenees Riesling Forward and showing SO₂. The finish is on the firm side. (\$N/A)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Mr. Mick Clare Valley Riesling Tropical and dull, with a broad finish. (\$15.00)
10.5% Screwcap

2011 Pfeiffer Riesling Very restrained, but not fragrant. Firm, lacking fruit. (\$18.90)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Tim Smith Wines Eden Valley Dulled by sulphides and is hard on the finish. (\$25.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Elgee Park Family Reserve Riesling Comparatively deep colour. The nose and palate are too developed, showing volatility. (\$25.00)
13.0% Screwcap

Do you see what we mean? There are a few wines you really should try, but even some makers we hold in high regard were victims of circumstances in 2011.

Reiterating, our comment on the Cherubino riesling, the Porongurups is an A-lister in terms of Australian riesling regions. In our view, the others are Clare, Eden Valley, Tasmania and Henty.

Perhaps we should conduct a comparative tasting of the five regions.

International Riesling Challenge

The 12th annual Canberra International Riesling Challenge has seen a Tasmanian wine win the top award for the first time in the Challenge's history.

The Challenge, held at the historic Albert Hall, saw Australian rieslings go head to head with those from countries around the world including Germany, America, Austria and New Zealand.

Seven judges tasted over 440 wines from ten countries over two days to find the Best Dry Riesling, Best Sweet Riesling and finally the Best Wine of the Challenge.

The *2009 Waterton Vineyards Riesling* from Tasmania, picked up the awards for the Best Riesling from Tasmania, the Best in Australia and the Best Dry Riesling. The wine then went off to be judged against the Best Sweet Riesling, won by the *2009 Hattenheimer Schützenhaus Beerenauslese (Weingut Georg Müller)* from Germany, for the Best Wine of the Challenge.

Chairman of Judges, David O'Leary, from O'Leary Walker Wines, said that this year's judging proved to be challenging because of difficult vintages in recent years in both the northern and southern hemispheres.

"Despite the difficult vintages, some great wines were presented which finger printed the individual characteristics of the regions," Mr O'Leary said.

The trophy for the Best Current Vintage Australian Riesling was won by the *2011 West Cape Howe Riesling* from the Great Southern region in Western Australia.

2011 SAUVIGNON BLANC

Highly Recommended



2011 Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc Another little gem from Shaw and Smith – all the more praiseworthy because conditions in the Adelaide Hills weren't exactly ideal. The fresh, intense gooseberry aromas and flavours impressed the whole panel. The palate offers intensity, balance and length. (\$24.00) *Excellent Value*
12.5% Screwcap

2011 West Cape Howe Sauvignon Blanc A very fresh and grassy sauvignon blanc. The palate is intense and long, with some textural interest, and perhaps the faintest sweetness. (\$19.00) *Excellent Value*
12.5% Screwcap

2011 Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc The original and still the best of the Marlborough sauvignon blancs. Made from perfectly ripe grapes, this is textbook sauvignon blanc - gooseberry, grass, intensity, balance, acidity - all that. (\$35.00)
13.5% Screwcap

2011 Cape Mentelle Georgiana Sauvignon Blanc This wine offers varietal flavour, restraint and minerality. The grassy, gooseberry characteristics are matched to a slight sweetness and fresh acidity. (\$19.00) *Excellent Value*
13.0% Screwcap

Recommended

2011 Amberley Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Very strong yeasty passionfruit characteristics show on the nose. The palate is very punchy and flavoursome, filled out by a little sweetness. (\$19.95)
13.0% Screwcap

2011 Mount Avoca Sauvignon Blanc An attractively fresh and restrained wine with plenty of flavour and racy acidity. (\$19.95)
Screwcap

2011 Dandelion Vineyards Wishing Clock Of The Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc A fresh gooseberry/grass style which is quite linear. A hint of thiol pungency adds complexity. (\$30.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Babich Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc This is a lively, pungent, gooseberry style with a touch of thiol sweatiness. There's plenty of grunt and acidity to be had here. (\$16.95)
13.0% Screwcap

2011 Juniper Crossing Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc The gooseberry/melon aromas have appeal. The palate is slightly firm, but has plenty of acid and flavour. (\$19.00)
13.0% Screwcap

Agreeable

2011 Hardys Nottage Hill Sauvignon Blanc Has varietal character, but is fairly forward. It's a big mouthful of flavour. Drink now. (\$8.50)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Stella Bella Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Has plenty of impact, but shows too much oak. (\$24.00)
13.5% Screwcap

Acceptable

2011 Lock & Key Single Vineyard Orange Sauvignon Blanc Too developed in colour and nose. Big flavour with acid support. (\$13.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Banrock Station Sauvignon Blanc Too advanced. Has plenty of varietal flavour though, together with some residual sugar. (\$9.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 Tempus Two Copper Series Sauvignon Blanc Ripe, but also a little grassy. Too developed and broad. (\$20.00)
12.5% Screwcap

2011 Beelgara Black Label Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc A dull, plain, developed sauvignon blanc. (\$10.00)
12.5% Screwcap

2011 Moppity Vineyards Single Vineyard Orange Sauvignon Blanc Dull and stripped of flavour. Firm on the finish. (\$N/A)
12.5% Screwcap

2011 Blue Pyrenees Sauvignon Blanc Very full and forward, but has varietal character. Too phenolic. (\$17.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Rymill The Yearling Coonawarra Sauvignon Blanc Advanced, with a green chilli aroma. (\$15.00)

35 Years of Wolf Blass Black Label

Significant vertical tastings such as this one are always fascinating. We see some wines that have aged with grace; we see others that have not. One thing we always see is the negative effect of cork. Even after the examples are carefully assessed and selected by experienced winemakers, there is no escaping the taste and influence of the accursed bark plug. Because of that, I've elected to comment only on the wines that impressed me.

1979 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Nicely developed and possessing powerful dark berry and cassis aromas and flavours. Has impressive sweet fruit, and is probably at its peak. *Highly Recommended*

1983 Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Shows an attractive cabernet varietal nose with hints of red fruits and leaf. The fruit is balanced by fine, silky tannins. A delightful drink. *Highly Recommended*

1986 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Merlot Here's a wine nearing the peak of its form. The impressive fruit is enhanced by overtones of tobacco and oak-derived cedar. *Highly Recommended*

1991 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz This wine is superbly fresh, and the cabernet aromas and flavours show through. The palate is very long, fine and satisfying, enhanced, rather than dominated by, oak. *Outstanding*

1998 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Merlot Although the aromas and flavours of dark berry and plum reflect very ripe fruit, this substantial red is looking very good at 13 years of age. It's at or near its peak. *Highly Recommended*

"We took it out of American oak, and gave it 6-9 months in new French oak."
(Chris Hatcher, Chief Winemaker)

Continued on Page 25

Sparkling Wine

Sparkling wine is a very strong segment of the Australian wine industry – especially in the period from October to January. Most of the wines consumed won't be reviewed below, but, according to the marketing experts, interest in premium quality Australian sparkling wine is growing. Let's hope so.

Highly Recommended



2006 Jansz Premium Vintage The nose is attractively intense and bready and, most importantly, fresh and inviting. The palate is very lively, long and creamy. With the prices of non vintage champagne dropping into the forties, this wine holds its own. (\$40.00) 12.0% Cork

2008 Tyrrell's Pinot Noir Chardonnay Has freshness and intensity together with nutty, musky overtones. It's a well put together sparkler which is fresh and creamy, with zippy acidity. (\$25.00) *Excellent Value* 12.0% Cork

2008 Chandon Vintage Brut Vibrant, intense and attractively creamy, this wine is packed with flavour balanced by lively acidity. (\$39.95) 12.5% Cork

Recommended

2007 Jansz Premium Vintage Rosé Pale pink. Very appealing bottle-age complexity shows on the nose. The palate is delicate, long and fine – decidedly dry but balanced. (\$40.00) 12.5% Cork

2008 Chandon Brut Rosé Delicate orange-pink colour. Fresh and subtly complex bouquet, with no obvious red fruits. The palate is long, dry and fine. (\$39.95) 12.5% Cork

Agreeable

NV Yarra Burn Premium Cuvée Rosé Very pale pink. Very attractive, faintly bready nose. Uncompromising dry palate. Good length. Some grip. (\$15.00) 12.5% Cork

NV Grant Burge Pinot Noir Chardonnay Deep colour. Very big toasty/musky nose. Plenty of everything – including grip. (\$20.00) 12.5% Cork

2002 Blue Pyrenees Brut Rosé Pink with orange tints. Complex bottle aged style with hints of bread. Still fresh. Intense and long. Ready. (\$29.00)
12.5% Cork

NV Yarra Burn Premium Cuvée Rosé Fresh, intense nose with good bread/nutty complexity. Well made and very creamy. Drinks well. (\$15.00)
12.5% Cork

NV Mr. Mick Gela Clare Valley Blanc de Blanc Fresh, but simple and citrus-like. Good fresh drink. (\$16.00)
11.5% Cork

NV Grant Burge Blanc de Noirs Big, rich and bready. Quite complex, sweet and developed. (\$25.00)
12.5% Cork

2008 Blue Pyrenees Midnight Cuvée Fresh but simple and primary. Clean and fresh, but very simple. (\$33.00)
12.5% Cork

Acceptable

2007 Blue Pyrenees Vintage Brut Rich nose. Hints of caramel. Broad. (\$24.00)
13.0% Cork

NV Blue Pyrenees Luna Deep colour. Plenty of pinot noir richness. Big and slightly broad. Phenolic firmness. (\$20.00)
12.5% Cork

NV Cockatoo Ridge Sparkling Brut Cuvée Bronze-pink colour. Would pass for rosé. A bit big and broad. (\$9.50)
11.0% Cork

NV Tintilla Rosalind Crémant Sangiovese Very pale pink. Simple light red fruits nose. Fresh, simple, slightly sweet. (\$28.00)
12.0% Cork

NV Primo Estate Primo Secco Quite intense, but simple and slightly grassy. Fresh but SB-like. Sweet. (\$18.00)
11.5% Cork

2009 Deviation Road Brut Quite forward. Complexity comes from age, but there's still enough freshness on the nose. Fading on the palate. (\$34.80)
12.0% Cork

2011 Tempus Two Blanc de Blanc Young and fresh, with a hint of sulphides complexity. Too sweet. (\$15.00)
11.5% Cork

NV The Lane Lois Very attractive fresh nose with hints of nuttiness and VA. Essentially simple, forward and sweet, but has flavour and acidity. (\$20.00)
13.0% Cork

One approach that is guaranteed to drive consumers away from the premium end of the sparkling wine market is to retail very young, fruit-driven wines in the over twenty dollar market. Fresh and fruity just doesn't cut it. At that price we (and many others) expect some interest and complexity. There are plenty of wines in the under ten dollar range that do fresh and fruity quite well.

DISCOVERIES IN BRIEF

Unfortunately, we don't have much room for discoveries this issue, but some exciting wines came our way.

The **2009 Te Mata Estate Coleraine** is utterly magnificent. This blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc gives the very best of Bordeaux a run for their money. Don't hesitate. It's great cellaring value for \$70.00. *Outstanding*

On the subject of cabernets, the **2009 Wynns Black Label** is one of the best wines of that very auspicious line. It has all the classic cassis aroma and flavour, and the firm cabernet tannins are beautifully fine. I love this wine, but can't wait for the 2010, given the recent Coonawarra barrel auction. (\$25.00) *Excellent Value Outstanding LJ*

More Discoveries on Page 21

2009 Shiraz

Given previous tastings as well as this one, it seems we have a high-quality vintage Australia-wide. Once again, Hunter wines put the rest of the country on notice.

Outstanding

2009 Tyrrell's Vat 9 Hunter Shiraz Very bright purple-red mid-range colour. The nose shows fresh red berries with faintly spicy nuances. This is a vibrant, beautifully balanced wine that begs to be cellared. Without doubt, Vat 9 has reclaimed its position as one of Australia's finest red wines. (\$85.00) 13.0% Screwcap

2009 De Iuliis Show Reserve Hunter Valley Shiraz This is a lively ripe blackberry style with very classy oak. Although the oak shows though on the nose, it doesn't dominate the powerful, long, balanced palate. The complete package. Cellar. (\$28.00) *Excellent Value* 13.5% Screwcap

2009 Barwang Hilltops Shiraz A concentrated fresh, ripe, blackberry style which shows subtle spiciness. The tannins have been very well managed tannins, and the overall balance is exemplary. This wine is another indication of the success of senior winemakers Corey Ryan and Russell Cody in lifting McWilliams' wine quality across the board. The retail price for a wine of this quality is ridiculously low. Make the best of it. (\$15.00) *Excellent Value* 14.0% Screwcap

Highly Recommended

2009 The Lane Block 5 Adelaide Hills Shiraz This tasting reflects the emergence of some key Australian regions in the shiraz category. The Adelaide Hills is certainly one of them. The Block 5 shows intense blackberry aromas and flavours that are enhanced by "sweet" oak. Very well made and taut in the medium-full bodied style. (\$30.00) 14.0% Screwcap

2009 De Iuliis Steven Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz Impressively intense, perfumed and spicy bouquet. The palate fine and long, reflecting very well handled oak. At the risk of being over-critical, we feel the acid adjustment was slightly overdone, but that should enhance the longevity of the wine and won't be noticeable in the future. (\$40.00) 13.0% Screwcap

2009 Cape Mentelle Marmaduke Margaret River This is a strongly varietal wine with intense, fresh blackberry supported by toasty oak. Although this is a somewhat extroverted style in which the oak plays a starring role, it is deliciously drinkable. (\$19.00) *Excellent Value* 13.5% Screwcap

2009 Margan Limited Release Hunter Valley Shiraz A very seductive shiraz offering blackberry, chocolate, spice aromas and flavours. The richness and suppleness of this wine make it very enjoyable drinking, but don't be afraid to cellar it for a few years. (\$30.00) 13.5% Screwcap

2009 Shingleback McLaren Vale The blackberry varietal aromas seemingly jump out of the glass, and the palate is intense, long and taut. A big, but balanced red that has at least short term potential. (\$22.50) 14.5% Screwcap

Recommended

2009 Wirra Wirra RSW McLaren Vale Shiraz Very rich and concentrated – a formidable wine. The power is more that matched by layers of high quality oak. Everything about this wine suggests long term cellaring, but it's very tight and firm at the moment. (\$65.00) 14.5% Screwcap

2009 Tatachilla McLaren Vale Shiraz Very concentrated blackberry plus dusty oak. Dense, but fresh and tight. This wine should age well, and hopefully will set a trend for McLaren Vale. (\$20.00) 12.5% Screwcap

2009 Chook Shed Barossa Shiraz

This is a very rich blackberry and sweet oak style with a slight background twist of greenness. Packed with sweet fruit at the top end of ripeness, with furry tannins. (\$12.00) *Excellent Value*
14.5% Screwcap

2009 Shingleback Unedited McLaren Vale Shiraz

Powerful and ripe, but fresh, showing high quality oak. There's plenty of varietal flavour, but the palate is too oak-driven. (\$69.95)
15.5% Cork

2009 Cat Amongst the Pigeons Nine Lives Barossa Shiraz

This is a richly flavoured shiraz which shows a touch of blackberry confiture. On the palate it's definitely at the top end of ripeness, but it's firm and fresh enough. Short term. (\$16.00)
14.5% Screwcap

2009 Majella Coonawarra Shiraz

Very intense, perfumed blackberry backed by obvious, but very well-seasoned oak. The flavour is deliciously varietal, but in our opinion there's too much vanilla oak. It's your call. If you like obvious oak in red wines, you'll probably love this one. (\$32.00)
14.5% Screwcap

2009 Taylors Jaraman Shiraz (Clare + McLaren Vale)

Lovely intermingling of ripe fruit and well seasoned oak. It's just a bit too mocha-oaky. Same proviso as for the Majella. (\$29.95)
14.5% Screwcap

Agreeable**2009 Margan Hunter Valley Shiraz**

Colour lightening off at edge. Ripe, but fairly simple. This wine is comparatively forward and dry on the finish. (\$20.00)
13.5% Screwcap

2009 The Gate by Shingleback McLaren Vale Shiraz

Deep but not vibrant colour. Dense but forward nose. Big and over-ripe with chewy tannins. (\$34.00)
14.5% Cork

2009 Blue Pyrenees Shiraz

Big, ripe and simple. Disappointingly straightforward. (\$17.00)
14.0% Screwcap

Acceptable**2009 Torbreck The Struie Shiraz**

Very much blackberry-Ribena in both aroma and flavour, but it's just too oaky. (\$54.00)
15.0% Cork

2009 Shaw Vineyard Estate Premium Shiraz

A big style which is firm to the point of being over-extracted. (\$22.00)
14.5% Screwcap

2009 Mr. Riggs Piebald Shiraz Viognier

Suspect colour. Lifeless palate. (\$25.00)
14.5% Screwcap

2009 Mitolo Jester McLaren Vale Shiraz

Advanced colour. Ripe, dull fruit. Very dry finish. (\$28.00)
14.9% Screwcap

2009 Juniper Crossing Margaret River Shiraz

Big, but advanced, showing plain oak. (\$19.00)
14.5% Screwcap

2009 Mr. Riggs McLaren Vale Shiraz

Poor colour. Ripe, dull fruit with a volatile edge. The condition of the wine could be due to the closure, but that's the risk you take. (\$50.00)
14.5% Cork

One of the essential elements of producing quality wine is to pick the grapes at the point of optimum ripeness. Allow even the beginnings of shrivel in shiraz, and, in our view, you're on the downward slide. Seal such a wine with cork, and that slide is accelerated.

GREYWACKE

I tasted two very impressive whites from Kevin Judd at Greywacke just before going to print. The partial barrel ferment, off-dry **2010 Riesling** is delicious and seamless, with a slight germanic leaning. (\$34.00) *Outstanding*

The **2010 Pinot Gris** is also particularly good, being ric, fresh and complex, with excellent texture. (\$34.00) *Highly Recommended LJ*

Voyager Estate Masterclass

Established in 1978, Voyager Estate has been under the ownership the Wright family since 1991. The vineyards cover a total of 109.8 hectares planted mainly to chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, shiraz and cabernet sauvignon. Viticulturist and winemaking manager Steve James cares for the vines, whilst Travis Lemm holds the winemaking reins.

For the past three years, Voyager Estate has conducted a masterclass to benchmark their Chardonnay, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon against the world's best producers. There is only ever a small group of participants, but it is one of the tastings of the year.

I was lucky enough to be there for the second year running and I think this was an outstanding event. We saw wines from France, New Zealand, USA, and for the first time South Africa, along with top producers from Australia. All wines were tasted blind.

Editor's Note: Len Sorbello tasted the Voyager Estate range in Canberra, and his notes are included.

Chardonnay

2008 Kistler Sonoma Mountain Les Noisetiers Chardonnay – Sonoma County, California, USA The vines for this wine sit at an elevation of 800 metres, so it is very cool-climate. Visually it has a pale complexion and aromatically there is an abundance of grapefruit, pears and creamy lees characters. The palate is citrus-like and textured, with a mineral cut and lingering length. It was refreshing to see such a restrained American, and it appears to have life ahead of it. **Highly Recommended**
14.1% Cork

2008 Felton Road Chardonnay – Central Otago, NZ People tend to focus on the pinot noirs from Felton Road, but the Chardonnay is no slouch.

White stone fruits, lemon rind and a slight cashew character waft out of the glass, and the theme carries through to the palate where a creamy lees texture contributes to a long finish. The oak shows through a bit more than that of the Kistler, but it is beautifully handled.

Outstanding

14.0% Screwcap

2008 Hamilton Russell Chardonnay – Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, South Africa This deeply coloured wine shows dominant toasty and nutty characters on the nose together with ripe peaches. Stylistically it is 'old school', with plenty of oak over the fruit. It has apparently seen only eight months in small French oak, but it certainly contributes strongly. However, it does have a decent acid line. Aficionados of the style, small in number though they are, will love it.

Agreeable

13.0% Cork



2008 Voyager Estate Chardonnay – Margaret River, W.A. This pale wine shows fragrant white stone fruits together with nutty lees notes and a slight Burgundian 'funky' character. On the palate it has powerful fruit weight with layers of complexity and tightly wound acidity. A brooding wine that is just waiting to cut loose. **Highly Recommended**
13.3% Screwcap

2008 Voyager Estate Chardonnay Attractive, creamy barrel ferment aromas with hints of cashews. Delicately textured palate, with an enticing creamy texture and noticeable, but balancing, mineral grip on the long finish. (\$42.00) **Highly Recommended Len Sorbello (LS)**
13.3% Screwcap

2008 Louis Jadot Corton-Charlemagne (Chardonnay) – Burgundy, France.

Unfortunately the cork had emasculated the wine – a not uncommon phenomenon. Random oxidation.

2008 Kooyong Faultline Chardonnay – Mornington Peninsula, Vic This pale wine is more citrus in style, shouting its cool-climate roots from the rooftops. It is almost Chablisese, with slight chalkiness and a minerally texture together with upfront grapefruit characteristics. A restrained, elegant style. **Highly Recommended**
12.5% Screwcap.

Shiraz

2009 Craggy Range Le Sol Syrah – Hawkes Bay, NZ A vibrant wine showing florals, pepper, mocha and a slight herbaceous edge on the nose. It is very tight, with a solid core of fruit and fine-knit, savoury-edged tannins. Needs time and lots of it! **Highly Recommended**
14.1% Cork

2009 Clonakilla Shiraz Viognier – Canberra District, NSW A bright, beautiful wine displaying floral and white pepper aromas with a whiff of deli-meats. There is powerful fruit on the palate supported by savoury, tight tannins leading to a spicy finish. It's vin-fanticide to be drinking this now – needs lots of time. **Outstanding**
14.2% Screwcap

2009 Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock – Heathcote, Vic Here's a lovely wine that has that added 'feel-good' factor. It's organic and biodynamic, displaying appealing florals, spice and dried herbs with a slight mocha note. Respectable fruit core on the palate with very tight, drying tannins and a spicy finish. Needs time. **Highly Recommended**
14.0% Cork

2009 Voyager Estate Shiraz Vibrant purple in colour, it shows bright forest fruits, blue fruits and exotic spice. The palate has a strong spiced-berry fruit core with fine tannins and a generally tightly wound structure. A very pretty wine. **Highly Recommended**
13.9% Screwcap

2009 Voyager Estate Shiraz *For me, this wine had been the star of the winery's range over a number of years. It's been a proven performer, not only in Winewise panel tastings but also, in our International Shiraz Tastings. It is, quite frankly, grossly undervalued. This new vintage doesn't disappoint and may indeed be the best of its line so far. There is a tiny proportion of viognier in the mix.*

The aromas are vibrant and invitingly spicy, with hints of red and dark berries. The palate has great depth, with multi-layered flavours underpinned by persistent silky tannins. The flavours linger, making it very attractive drinking now, but it will really reward those with more patience. (Maximum three bottle purchase from winery: (\$38.00) **Outstanding LS**
13.9% Screwcap

2008 Bernard Burgaud Côte-Rôtie – Northern Rhône Valley, France On the nose, lots of forest fruits with a slightly funky edge. Quite peppery, spicy and meaty with a touch of animal. Fruit still evident, but finish is slightly drying. At least the animal is tame in this one. **Agreeable**
12.5% Cork

2009 Shaw and Smith Shiraz – Adelaide Hills, SA. Containing a smidgen of viognier, this wine shows highly spicy and floral aromatics supported by a tight, firm sweet fruit core and an attractive spicy finish. A wine with finesse. **Highly Recommended**
14.5% Screwcap

WINEWISE HALF DOZEN

The lateness of this issue caused several problems, not the least of which was the make-up of the half-dozen which hadn't been finalised by publishing time. However, we can tell you that all are **Highly Recommended** value for money wines. We'll post the list on our web site as soon as it comes to hand, and send it out as a Winewise Alert. You can also contact Phillips Cellars on 03 58212051.

Cabernet Sauvignon / Bordeaux blends

2007 Wynns Glengyle – Coonawarra, SA Very good colour with varietal cassis and tobacco leaf aromas. Very tight on the palate with a sweet fruit entry and fist-clenching tannins. Time may rectify this. **Recommended**
14.0% Screwcap

2007 Cullen Diana Madeline – Margaret River, WA. This biodynamically produced Bordeaux blend displays ripe cassis along with cedar-box and that telltale Margaret River mint. On the palate, it shows characters in the herbaceous spectrum along with blackcurrant, fine abundant tannins and a decent length. Another keeper. **Highly Recommended**
14.0% Screwcap.

2007 Voyager Estate Cabernet Merlot – Margaret River, WA This vibrant Western Australian showed its roots through its typical choc-mint aromas. The palate was surprisingly savoury, with firm tannins, impressive length and a slight lick of herbs on the finish. A lovely balanced wine. **Highly Recommended**
14.2% Screwcap

2007 Voyager Estate Cabernet Merlot (88% cabernet sauvignon, 12% merlot) Quite perfumed red berry aromas with a hint of leaf which breathes off. The palate is elegant, displaying good depth of fruit and savoury, fine tannins. (\$60.00) **Highly Recommended LS**
14% Screwcap

2007 Montelena Estate – Napa Valley, California, USA. This wine needed time to breathe. At first it was dismissible, but it opened up to be a revelation! At first look, the nose showed red licorice, a touch of meatiness and sage hints with a whiff of oak. The palate was VERY savoury, but not animal (Brett), as there was an abundance of cassis fruit, and the length was impressive. After many swirls, it opened up to reveal wonderful floral aromatics. The palate was multi-layered and long-lasting. This was my first Montelena and I loved it! **Outstanding**
14.3%. Cork.



Voyager Estate Cape Dutch architecture

2007 Tenuta Dell'Ornellaia – Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy If ever there was a wine that needs time to integrate its components, it's this one. Bright in colour, it is currently quite leafy and showing lots of oak. The cassis and plum fruits are powerful and tightly packed on the palate and need time to unwind. It seems wrong to be drinking this wine now. Lay down for a decade and it will be a different story. **Outstanding**
14.5% Cork

Editor: Deb's showing a lot of faith here.

2007 Leoville-Las-Cases – St. Julien, Bordeaux, France For a vintage that is deemed to be a bit mean and not too flash, this is a very good effort from Bordeaux's finest producer - in my opinion. Bright in colour. A symphony of cassis, plum, vanilla and cigar-box rises out of the glass. The palate shows a clean, sweet fruit entry with firm, fine-grained tannins, a tight acid backbone and a persistent finish. Many wines were green and mean in this vintage, but not this one. **Highly Recommended**
Alcohol usually around 12.5% Cork

Deb Pearce

Other Voyager estate wines - next page.

Other Voyager Estate Wines

The following wines are all reviewed by Len Sorbello.

2010 Voyager Estate Chenin Blanc

The wine has recognisable varietal character and attractive, lingering flavours. A mere five grams residual sugar balances the zesty acidity. (\$20.00) **Highly Recommended**
12.9% Screwcap

2010 Voyager Estate Sauvignon Blanc Semillon

Grassy, green pea aromas which follow through onto the palate. The acidity is high, making the palate quite tart. (\$24.00) **Agreeable**
12.9% Screwcap

2009 Voyager Estate Girt by Sea Cabernet Merlot

Lovely, vibrant varietal aromas, with a hint of typical Margaret River leaf. The palate displays abundant blackcurrant flavours in an elegant, lighter style, which is very fresh and drinkable. (\$24.00) **Recommended**
14.0% Screwcap

2005 Voyager Estate Cabernet Merlot

(75% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot and 5% malbec) This is a classic example of Margaret River cabernet, commencing with its tobacco leaf aromas. It has a long future. [Available in restaurants or through online retailers – approx. \$50.00] **Outstanding**
14.0% Screwcap

Thanks to Deb and Len for a very informative coverage. It's particularly interesting to reflect on their views of the same wines, and understand how personal a pursuit wine tasting is. For example, Deb sees a choc-mint character in Margaret River cabernet, while Len, describes that same aroma as tobacco leaf. Both views are entirely valid.

Back in the seventies I was under the instruction of Len Evans, and had a lot of difficulty understanding his use of the word "mint" in describing Coonawarra cabernets. Whenever Len mentioned mint, I saw it as tea leaf. Len quickly put me at ease when I told him of my difficulty. He simply said, "Lester, that's no problem. I see mint. You see tea leaf. The most important thing is to be consistent." **LJ**

GRENACHE & BLENDS

Grenache-based wines are some of the most deliciously drinkable reds. We don't see any point in trying to make huge, sold wines from grenache. "Hang time" is an anathema to a variety which is best expressed medium bodied and fresh.

Highly Recommended

2009 d'Arenberg The Derelict Vineyard Grenache

An impressive young grenache which shows fresh and intense perfumed dark fruits characteristics. It's vibrant and long, with background complexity and firm but balanced tannins. (\$30.00)
14.5% Screwcap

2009 d'Arenberg The Custodian Grenache

Quite fragrant with secondary earth and black truffle notes. The palate is very fresh, with savoury but fine tannins. (\$19.00) **Excellent Value**
14.5% Screwcap

2009 d'Arenberg The Beautiful View Grenache

This wine is fragrant and appealing, with beautifully expressed fruit and balanced savoury tannins. (\$99.00)
14.5% Screwcap

Recommended

2010 Yalumba The Strapper Barossa Grenache Shiraz Mataro

Here's a very drinkable, fruity, well balanced red with fine tannins and good persistence. Just right for pasta and Middle-Eastern lamb dishes. (\$21.95)
13.5% Screwcap

2009 McGuigan The Shortlist Barossa Valley GSM

Rich spicy dark cherry. Plenty of fruit, but tannins are a little stern. (\$29.00)
14.0% Screwcap

Continued Page 21

YARRA VALLEY WINE PROGRAM

Every two years, the Yarra Valley winemakers present their Wine Program to a cross-section of the wine trade and media. I always look forward to the event because it's always far removed from the usual wine presentations.

The Yarra wine producers aren't afraid to push the boundaries, and the organisers of the Wine Program don't shy away from showing the wines of the boundary pushers. Hence the tongue-in-cheek heading for the group below.

The Delinquent Children - Whites

Highly Recommended

2010 Yarraloch Arneis Very fresh and attractive, tending towards lemon and grapefruit. Quite tight, dry and minerally, with excellent line length and freshness. Very enjoyable for its comparative austerity.

2010 Hoddles Creek Pinot Blanc An element of greenness in the way of lantana and verbena, together with a whiff of thiol funk. The palate is beautifully textured, with some grip, and is quite complex and intense.

2011 Crisp Valere Riesling Quite secondary and perfumed bouquet, seems lees-driven. There's a hint of sweetness to the palate contributing some fullness and texture, and the acid balance is good, lifting the finish. Some phenolics. 10 gm/litre RS. (Partly fermented warm in puncheons.)

2010 Soumah Savarro (Savagnin) Fairly rich and full, showing hints of stone fruit and honeysuckle. The palate combines fruit, sweetness and texture very well, delivering a good volume of flavour allied with a firm, phenolic structure and dryness.

2011 Allinda Alba Toro Savagnin Quite perfumed in a scented soap/musky kind of way. A dry, slightly savoury wine with good palate carry and freshness.

Recommended

2010 The Wanderer Chenin Blanc Good freshness and intensity – apple-like fruit slightly subdued by funky sulphides and chalkiness. Definite minerality and dryness with good length.

The Delinquent Children - Reds



2011 Bobar Syrah Funky and wild stems/whole bunch. Exciting, peppery and Rhône in a light-medium bodied style devoid of green tannins. **Highly Recommended**

2011 Jamsheed Harem Series Mon Petite Francine (Cabernet Franc) Beautiful fresh cherry with some whole bunch complexity. Strongly savoury with all manner of interesting notes including mint, leaf and tobacco. **Highly Recommended**

2010 De Bortoli Roundstone Gamay Perfumed light cherry nose with a hint of green character. Sappy/stemmy flavours matched to firm, fine tannins and obvious acidity. Genuinely interesting. **Recommended**

2008 Seville Hill Tempranillo Shows a porty ripeness. Dark bramble berry. Rich "sweet" firm tannins. A bit clumsy. **Agreeable**

Chardonnay

Outstanding



2008 Tarrawarra Reserve Chardonnay This is an exceptional chardonnay that embraces both finesse and power in the manner of Puligny-Montrachet. The palate has length, structure and a supremely fine texture.

2010 Oakridge 864 Chardonnay Lovely restraint and power, with subtle complexity. The cool site of Lusatia Park makes its mark here in terms of pristine fruit and lingering acidity which intermingle with a very attractive chalkiness, and a pleasing grip which adds considerably to the textural impact.

Highly Recommended

2010 Coldstream Hills Reserve Chardonnay Impressive nose with freshness and plenty of secondary nutty, Meursault-like character. The palate is long and creamy, showing low-level oak and excellent acidity. Very classy.

2007 Gembrook Hill Chardonnay Rich but fresh citrus aromas added to by positive sulphidic and solids complexity. The wine has a delightfully creamy palate with a strong line of acidity.

2008 De Bortoli Reserve Chardonnay An impressively all-together wine that is not dominated by either fruit or complexity. The palate is long, balanced and texturally excellent.

2010 Seville Estate Chardonnay Plenty of power and freshness, showing hints of white peach. Barrel fermentation has given the wine texture and subtle complexity, and the palate is impressively long, built on a strong line of acidity.

2010 Sticks No.29 Chardonnay The nose has clean varietal character, and is intense and focused. Complexity meets chardonnay seamlessly. A long, vibrant, creamy-textured wine.

2010 Oakridge Lieu Dit Chardonnay Very fresh and restrained, with both complex and floral notes. Well-judged phenolic firmness sets the tone for a palate which is also creamy and taut.

Recommended

2010 Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay Very much in the white peach spectrum with excellent enhancement from nutty lees. There's also a buttery hint which contributes positively, giving the wine richness without heaviness.



Wine Program tasting venue

Agreeable

2010 Medhurst Chardonnay The fresh white nectarine aromas and flavours are attractive, but the oak shows a little too strongly at this point in time.

2010 Wedgetail Single Vineyard Chardonnay Comparatively forward, reflecting significant winemaker input. The nuttiness, butteriness and acid intermingle well with the rich fruit. The oak is a bit obvious right now.

2009 Coombe Farm Chardonnay A fairly plain chardonnay showing lemon and butter overtones. It offers some creaminess on the palate but is somewhat simple.

2008 Domaine Chandon Yarra Valley Chardonnay Quite vibrant fruit-wise, but the oak comes to the fore and shows resin-like characteristics.

2010 Hoddles Creek Estate Chardonnay Good restrained expression of chardonnay with hints of passionfruit and a touch of lees character. It's a tight, pure linear style with a strong acid backbone.

2005 Coldstream Hills Reserve Chardonnay The white peach notes have a faintly herbal edge, and the top quality French oak is very much to the fore. However the palate has length and creaminess that virtually compensate for the strongly stated oak.

2008 PHI Chardonnay Quite complex, with hints of almond meal and butter. The palate is comparatively full, but has excellent acidity and texture.

2010 Domaine Chandon Barrel Select Chardonnay The nose shows very attractive white peach and grapefruit aromas backed by nuttiness. Although the wine is fairly clean and backward, it does show a bit of oak at the moment. To be released in June, 2012.

2006 Yering Station Reserve Chardonnay Full-on, complex and toasty, showing hints of bacon and butter. There's a lot of winemaker influence here, and, even though there's a lot of artifact, the intense fruit carries it.

Acceptable

2007 Toolangi Chardonnay Shows its age, with hints of marzipan and caramel. Still has something to offer, but is on the way down.

This tasting portrays a dramatic shift in the thinking of some chardonnay makers. That change began 5-6 years ago, and it involves a cut back in oak, and picking fruit before it reaches the yellow peach, or, even worse, the tropical fruit stage. The best of the 2010s exemplify the success of those who have followed that path.

THREE VICTORIAN WHITES

They're not from the Yarra, but we can't leave them out of this issue, so here they are - beautiful fresh varietals. All have that magic element, texture, allied with intensity, freshness and dryness. They are: **2011 Pizzini Arneis (\$20.00)**, **2011 Pizzini Pinot Grigio (\$18.50)**, **2010 Tallis Dookie Viognier (\$18.00)**. All *Excellent Value* All *Highly Recommended*

2010 PINOT NOIR

Outstanding

2010 Gembrook Hill Pinot Noir

Delicate, showing a delightful fragrance. The perfume and silky texture are the highlights right now. Let this wine grow for a couple of years, because it has an impressive core of fruit.

2010 Oakridge Lieu Dit Pinot Noir

The nose shows intense, fresh morello cherry and the palate is very satisfying, built within a savoury tannin structure derived from oak and stems.

2010 Rob Dolan Pinot Noir Rich, vibrant, dark cherry aromas and subtle whole-bunch input make this wine very enticing and seductive, as does the plush, silky palate.

Highly Recommended

2010 The Wanderer Upper Yarra Pinot Noir

Impressively perfumed and subtly complex, with a touch of whole-bunch complexity. The palate has structure, power and balance. Too young now. Cellar 3-4 years.

2010 Punt Road Chemin Pinot Noir

A sublimely perfumed, complex pinot noir with suggestions of whole-bunch. The palate is fine, offering excellent persistence of fruit on a clean finish.

2010 Coldstream Hills Reserve Pinot Noir

There's good interplay between the rich fruit, somewhat prominent oak and forest floor notes. This is a very well structured, intense pinot that needs a couple of years at least.

2010 Shelmerdine Pinot Noir

Quite bright straightforward dark cherry. Delivers good varietal flavour and silkiness on a satisfying palate.

2010 Coombe Farm Pinot Noir

The aromas carry a vibrant perfume enhanced by a touch of whole bunch complexity. Palate-wise, this wine is firmly structured, begging for some time in bottle.

2010 Timo Mayer Pinot Noir

Quite a ripe style with complex and oaky notes. Very much a full-on dark cherry style with plenty of tannin grip.



What a vintage! Here we have some of the best young pinot noirs yet made in Australia.



Above: The incomparable Timo Mayer, winemaker for Gembrook Hill as well as his own label.

2010 Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Pinot Noir The nose is powerful, fruit-driven dark cherry making the opulent palate no surprise. A well-rounded, satisfying young pinot.

2010 Innocent Bystander Pinot Noir Delightfully vibrant red berries. A delicious, fruit-driven palate with supple fine tannins.

Recommended

2010 Domaine Chandon Yarra Valley Pinot Noir A delicate, perfumed style of pinot with a touch of toasty oak and very fine, firm tannins.

2010 De Bortoli Estate Grown Pinot Noir The nose offers intensity, freshness and purity of fruit which translates to a mouthfilling palate with comparatively robust, furry tannins.

2010 Elmswood Estate Reserve Pinot Noir Very fragrant, and the palate is fine and long, but shows its oak a little too much.



The Oakridge crew

2010 Sticks No.29 Pinot Noir Good interplay of fresh cherry and oak aromas. The oak interferes a little too much structurally.

Agreeable

2010 Oakridge 864 Pinot Noir Very appealing cherry aromas with forest floor and spice influences. It is too astringent from the enthusiastic use of stems. Time will tell, but I fear the astringency will always rule.

2010 PHI Pinot Noir Decidedly ripe, but a little dull, lacking perfume or any high notes. Firm and dry-reddish.

There's a sense of adventure evident in this line-up. Stems, for better or for worse, are being fermented with the pinot noir grapes which may be crushed, partly crushed or left whole. Like everything else in wine, balance is the key. If stemminess dominates, the aromas, flavours and tannin profile can be compromised. Let's not forget what has been learned in Burgundy, and focus on subtlety which is paramount in wines made from pinot noir.

Note: I was so impressed with this tasting that Winewise will return to the Yarra Valley in November for a more wide-ranging look at the 2010 pinots.

Shiraz

A most interesting bunch. Of the wines which received significant stems input, only the brooding Innocent Bystander Mea Culpa coped. Please, winemakers, think carefully about stems. In overdoing it, you may think you're creating a legitimate style. What you're creating is an out of kilter wine, the general appeal of which will quickly diminish.

Outstanding

2010 Payne's Rise Syrah The nose is very impressive, displaying vibrant dark cherry and subtle, complex earth and chocolate notes. Balance, length, intensity and structure are exemplary.

2010 Timo Mayer Big Betty Syrah Lovely fragrant cherry fruit with a faint stems influence showing through on the nose. The palate is quite voluptuous within a fine, savoury framework. Well worth cellaring.

Highly Recommended

2010 Yering Station Reserve Shiraz Viognier Fragrant, ripe dark cherry with an injection of funk. The palate is impressive, combining persistent fruit with fine, savoury tannins. The acidity shows out on the finish. (To be released September, 2012)

2010 Elmswood Estate Reserve Shiraz Fresh, intense cherry with maceration character, positive sulphides, black pepper and oak input. The palate is relatively dry, but has excellent fruit length.

Recommended

2010 Innocent Bystander Mea Culpa The nose reflects intense blueberry with fairly strong oak. Puckering firmness dominates right now, but will ease with time.

Agreeable

2010 Seville Estate Shiraz The nose is vibrant and complex, showing strong red fruits together with oak, pepper and forest floor. This is a wine with power and a firm structure that is a too stern.

2010 De Bortoli Reserve Syrah Fragrant and lifted, but a bit too stemmy on nose. The stems scenario is repeated on a palate unbalanced by green tannins.

Acceptable

2010 Jamsheed Silvan Syrah Full-on stems to the point of being herbal and dominating good rich fruit. Lovely fruit. Pity about the stems.

2008 Medhurst Syrah (cork) Intense and ripe – on the big side, showing some oak and development. Rich and firm, but not as vibrant as it should be.

2010 Punt Road Chemin Syrah Light but fragrant, with some potato peel greenness. The palate has some green hardness. Simply too stemmy.

All the wines presented at the Yarra Valley Wine Program are reviewed above. Together they present an accurate snapshot of what is happening in one of Australia's most exciting wine regions. Please note, all were served "blind", and my notes were not adjusted in any way after the identities of the wines were revealed.

Thanks to all concerned for the series of fascinating tastings.

Lester Jesberg

Continued from Page 14

Agreeable

2009 d'Arenberg The Blewitt Springs Grenache Fragrant and spicy. Palate a disappointment. Firm and hard for weight. (\$99.00)
14.5% Screwcap

2009 Chapel Hill McLaren Vale Bush Vine Grenache Ripe but dull. Better palate, but solid. Plenty of fruit. (\$30.00)
15.0% Screwcap

Acceptable

2008 McHenry Hohnen 3 Amigos Margaret River Intense leathery dark fruits. Solid and firm.
14.5% Screwcap

2008 Torbreck The Steading Dull tomato sauce very ripe. Very ripe, solid, dull. (\$46.00)
15.0% Cork

2007 Schwarz Wine Company Thiele Road Grenache Light, advanced colour. Mushroom nose. Drying out.
15.0% Screwcap

This was a varied group of wines. The d'Arenbergs are a serious group indeed, and you can make up your own minds where the value lies. Without doubt, the most quaffable drop is the Yalumba.

MORE DISCOVERIES

We liked both of the **2011 Grosset** Rieslings, but had a leaning towards the **Springvale (\$32.00)** which has all the classic lime, acidity and elegance of Clare. **The Polish Hill (\$43.00)** isn't as aromatic, but has excellent acidity and is a riesling of substance.

Also right up there is the 2011 Grosset Semillon Sauvignon Blanc (\$28.00) which is crisp, racy and mouth-watering.

All three wines are *Highly Recommended*.

2011 Hunter Valley Semillon

Deb Pearce and the editor conducted the annual Winewise current vintage Hunter Semillon tasting. We also appreciate the great support of the Hunter vignerons, and this year Sarah Crowe of Bimbadgen was the hard-working organizer.

All the wines were tasted "blind" and scored before any discussion between the two tastes took place.

The Vintage

The growing season was challenging, to say the least. Significant spring rains created boggy vineyards, limiting the ability to apply appropriate sprays. The mildew threat was very serious, and some growers managed the situation better than others. Then came periods of very hot weather in January that led to sunburn of grapes in some cases. The vintage, however, was carried out in dry conditions, and for those who remained on top of the vineyard issues, was successful.

Highly Recommended



2011 Pepper Tree Alluvius Semillon
This is a delightfully fresh semillon with hints of lime aroma and flavour. The palate is mouthwatering, long and seamless. (\$32.00)
10.8% Screwcap

Photo: Pepper Tree winemaker Jim Chatto

2011 Tulloch Semillon The nose is classic Hunter lemon/lime and is very vibrant. There's also plenty of rich varietal flavour with perfect acid support.
11.3% Screwcap

2011 Tulloch JYT Selection Semillon
The nose is attractively limey with some SO₂. This is a classic example of young Hunter semillon to cellar. (\$25.00) To be released February, 2012
10.5% Screwcap

2011 Tempus Two Pewter Semillon
Fresh, restrained, grassy and varietal. A very backward cellaring special. (\$30.00)
10.5% Diam cork

2011 Scarborough Green Label Semillon This wine has an intense, fresh lime/lemon nose. The palate is richly flavoured, with excellent supporting acidity. (\$20.00)
11.0% Screwcap

2011 Tyrrell's Johnno's Semillon
This semillon offers impressive lime/lemon aromas and a whiff of SO₂. The palate is seamless and vibrant. (\$60.00)
11.4% Screwcap

2011 Audrey Wilkinson Winemakers Selection Semillon Shows quite a bit of SO₂, but has good lemon grass aromatics. The palate is impressively fresh and seamless. (\$25.00) To be released January, 2012
11.0% Screwcap

2011 De Iuliis Sunshine Semillon

A little shy on the nose at the moment, but this is a semillon in the typical hay-like style that is fresh and lively. Good acidity assures a cellaring life. (\$25.00)
10.5% Screwcap

2011 De Iuliis Semillon

Shows hay and lemon characteristics. A bit forward, but has good fruit and acid. (\$18.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Leogate Creek Bed Reserve Semillon

A pleasing nose of citrus and hay. There's excellent weight of varietal flavour to be enjoyed. Short term.
11.0% Screwcap

2011 First Creek Winemakers Reserve Semillon

Very attractive citrus nose, and good rewarding varietal flavour supported by racy acidity which lingers. (\$30.00)
Screwcap

2011 Two Rivers Stones Throw Semillon

Closed up by SO₂ at the moment, but has appropriate fruit and acidity. Will settle down and improve in bottle. (\$16.00) To be released mid 2012
11.8% Screwcap

Recommended

2011 Pokolbin Estate Phil Swannell Semillon

Fresh and lively, with a hint of passionfruit on the nose, and plenty of flavour and acidity.
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Hart and Hunter Oakey Creek Semillon

Very reserved fruit at the moment. The palate offers plenty of encouragement to cellar. (\$27.00)
10.5% Screwcap

2011 Ballabourneen Major's Lane Semillon

Grassy, with slightly soapy (positive) overtone. Fruit and acid are in sync. Cellar. (\$N/A)
10.8% Screwcap

2011 Tulloch Julia Semillon

Attractive citrus nose with a suggestion of passionfruit. Good rich palate with acid zip. (\$28.00)
12.0% Screwcap

2011 McGuigan Bin 9000 Semillon

Grassy, soapy and minerally, showing SO₂. A bit austere right now. (\$13.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Thomas Braemore Semillon

Forward and peachy. Generous flavour supported by acidity. Looks a comparatively short term style. (\$27.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Ernest Hill Cyril Semillon

Fresh nose with hints of guava. Clean, well made, faintly sweet, with good acidity. (\$22.00)
11.0% Screwcap

2011 Tyrrell's Lost Block Semillon

Forward, but still fresh, showing citrus/peach characteristics. Satisfying and ready. (\$15.00)
11.5% Screwcap

2011 Tyrrell's Vat 1 Semillon

Slightly dull, tending tropical in aroma. The palate is comparatively full flavoured. (\$60.00)
11.5% Screwcap

Agreeable

2011 Audrey Wilkinson Hunter Valley Semillon

Plenty of peachy fruit impact and a hint of sweetness supported by good acidity. Ready. (\$20.00)
11.0% Screwcap

2011 Briar Ridge Dairy Hill Semillon

Attractive lemon, peach, grass nose. Comparatively full flavoured and almost ready.
11.0% Screwcap

2011 Tyrrell's Stevens Semillon

A citrus/stone fruit style with a whiff of SO₂. Full flavoured short-term style. (\$30.00) To be released in 2015
11.0% Screwcap

2011 Tyrrell's Belford Semillon

Forward and peachy. Generously flavoured and ready.
10.9% Screwcap

2011 Pooles Rock Hunter Valley Semillon

Plain stone fruit aromas. Slightly sweet and firm. (\$40.00)
Screwcap

2011 Bimbadgen Estate Semillon

Very pale, restrained and acidic. Needs plenty of time. (\$20.00)

10.0% Screwcap

2011 Bimbadgen Signature Hunter Valley Semillon

A reserved, backward semillon that is very acidic and needs plenty of time. (\$40.00) To be released 2015

10.0% Screwcap

2011 Saddlers Creek Semillon

There's a green, grassy edge to the nose, and the palate is slightly hard, showing adequate fruit. (\$25.00)

11.0% Screwcap

2011 201 Semillon

Plain, forward and peachy. (\$18.00)

12.0% Screwcap

2011 Ridgeview Semillon

Dull and broad, with wet straw characteristics. (\$20.00)

10.7% Screwcap

2011 Tranquil Vale Semillon

A bit dull on the nose, but shows varietal character on the palate. Should improve short-term. (\$N/A)

10.9% Screwcap

2011 Audrey Wilkinson The Ridge Semillon

This wine has a full, forward nose with a whiff of VA and plenty of SO₂. Comparatively advanced flavour. (\$35.00) To be released January, 2012

11.0% Screwcap

2011 Pepper Tree Limited Release Tallawanta Semillon

Fresh, but slightly forward, showing hints of stone fruit. Has both flavour in acidity. (\$28.00)

11.5% Screwcap

2011 Thomas Wines The O.C. Semillon

Slightly deep colour. Tends peachy on nose. Forward and a little firm on the palate. (\$22.00)

12.2% Screwcap

Acceptable

2011 Tinklers School Block Semillon

The nose tends to stone fruit and shows obvious SO₂. Too hard on the finish. (\$18.00)

12.0% Screwcap



2011 Tyrrell's Brookdale Semillon

Comparatively developed colour. Both nose and palate reflect the advanced nature of the nose.

11.2% Screwcap

2011 Ridgeview Generations Reserve Semillon

Fresh, clean aromatics, verging on tropical fruit. The palate is full, soft and absolutely ready. (\$25.00)

11.5% Screwcap

2011 James Estate Reserve Semillon

A forward with hints of apricot and a firm finish. (\$23.00)

11.0% Screwcap

2011 Tower Estate Coombe Rise Vineyard Semillon

Varietal but plain. The nose lacks lift at the moment and the palate finishes a little hard. (\$45.00)

11.5% Screwcap

2011 Scarborough White Label Semillon

Forward nose with a touch of earthiness. A bit lean. (\$25.00)

10.0% Screwcap

2011 Marsh Estate Holly's Block Semillon

Forward and peachy. A hint sweet and phenolic. (\$29.50)

11.5% Screwcap

2011 Tower Estate Semillon

The nose shows rich semillon varietal character with a strange hint of shitaki mushroom. The palate tends to broadness. (\$22.00)

11.0% Screwcap

2011 Bimbadgen Signature Semillon

Very pale colour. A wine that is very lean at the moment, with plenty of acidity. (\$40.00) To be released in 2015
10.0% Screwcap

2011 Tintilla Estate Angus Semillon

Light, showing SO₂. Very lean. (\$26.00)
10.9% Screwcap

2011 Brokenwood Semillon

Light and green, with a slight celery overtone. Green On the tart side. (\$20.00)
11.0% Screwcap

2011 Hope Estate Semillon

Slightly advanced, showing pronounced green chilli aromas. Decidedly odd. (\$20.00)
Screwcap

2011 The Little Wine Company Semillon

Quite dull, not expressing its fruit well at the moment. (\$N/A)
11.4% Screwcap

2011 Glandore Estate Elliott Semillon

Comparatively deep colour. Very forward and peachy. Too advanced. Slightly sweet. (\$30.00) To be released January, 2012
Screwcap

2011 Ironbark Hill Semillon

Very pale colour. Generally dull, lean and hard. (\$16.00)
11.0% Screwcap

Tasting young wines like Hunter semillon so soon after they've been bottled is an exercise fraught with risk. Many will have been "knocked" by bottling which often causes them to show more sulphur dioxide and less fruit. However, most are now on the market, and we've done our best to provide you with a guide

in the early to mid nineties. We stuck to American oak, and the wines tended to be a bit leaner and more angular."

Those prepared to tolerate the pre-2002 oak-derived inconsistencies will find some good examples of Black Label at auction. Although productive and fertile seeds were sown early in this wine's history, you'll do well to treat 2002 as the start of the line.

Lester Jesberg

Continued from Page 6

2001 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz

There's plenty of power in this wine, and it's still slightly closed and showing its oak. I think another five years' cellaring is in order depending on each and every cork. **Highly Recommended**

And now Screwcap makes its appearance like a Messiah. Cue the fanfare and light show.

2002 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Malbec

Brilliant purple-edged colour. The nose is vibrant and intense, suggesting dark berries and licorice. This wine has everything, but needs time to knit all the components together. **Outstanding**

2003 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Malbec

Opulence is the word for this wine. It's a delicious, smooth, complex mouthful of red. **Highly Recommended**

2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Malbec

The intense red fruits and superb oak merge beautifully. Everything is right about this sublime, silky wine. **Outstanding**

2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz

A wine which demonstrates the deft hand of a winemaker working with top quality fruit. The fine tannins and seamless oak integration are testimony to that. **Highly Recommended**

2006 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Malbec

If this wine had been sealed with cork, it would most likely have looked and tasted five years older, and oxidation would have dulled the fruit. This stunning purple-red, blackberry-cassis scented red is a revelation. Enjoy it now and then follow it for at least two decades. **Outstanding**

2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz Malbec

Fresh and concentrated, reflecting dark berries, cherries and cassis. It needs time to bring all the components together, but it will. **Highly Recommended**

I've always found Chris Hatcher to be very frank about his wines, and he demonstrated that when I was discussing this tasting with him. He told me that *"There was a dark period*

Searching for the Great Terroirs of Central Otago

There is real excitement in the Central Otago wine industry, near Queenstown in New Zealand's South Island. While the oldest pinot noir vines in the area are still teenagers, the region is often touted as producing some of the most compelling and convincing pinot wines in the new world. I visited the area in early September 2011 to find out what the hype was all about, and in particular search out the sites producing the highest quality wines. My focus was on pinot noir, but I review a few of the other stand-out wines of the region that found their way into my tasting glass as well.

While I visited eight cellar doors spread around the region to talk to the winemakers and taste the wine, there was one comparative tasting to bring my visit into focus. Nigel Greening, the engaging and enthusiastic owner of Felton Road, sourced the 2009 bottlings from the three makers who produce pinot noir wine from the Calvert vineyard in Bannockburn. This would provide an opportunity to examine in detail the impact of winemaking on the wines from this exceptional site.

The Central Otago region is starkly beautiful, and all of the vineyards in the region are overlooked by snow capped, jagged mountain ranges. It is hard to believe, but this tiny region, nestled in the foothills of the New Zealand's southern alps, has a continental climate, with a high range of temperatures each day, and through the year, very low rainfall (semi-desert 400 mm annually), low humidity and hot dry summers with long days. Many of these factors are a blessing to winemakers. Winemaking here is modern and has a low environmental impact. The leading wineries are either entirely or partially biodynamic, converting, or almost organic, with the only chemical inputs being glyphosate for weed management.

At 45°S latitude, Central Otago is the southernmost grape growing region in the world, and Nigel Greening figures

that UV radiation is responsible for much of the grape ripening just prior to harvest. In fact, solar radiation is higher than in the northern hemisphere, and one balancing act the viticulturalists of the region must perform is the coinciding of physiological, and flavour ripeness. Too often the former occurs before the latter, and as a consequence many of the pinots of the region are 14.5% alcohol, probably a solid 1.0% higher than makers would prefer, and higher than the great pinots of Burgundy. However, I did not encounter any hot wines on my visit, where the alcohol stands out as an unbalanced component in the finished wine.

Tannin ripeness must also be carefully managed, with skin tannins ripening well before stem tannins in hot years and sites. Frost can be a problem in vineyards with poorer air drainage, but this is usually managed by placing large fans in the vineyard. The region had good or very good vintages in 2007 and 2009, and my tasting notes show that 2010 is also proving to be above average.

The Central Otago region is divided into several sub-regions, and my reading of the wines suggest that these regions impart the following characteristics on the wines:

Bannockburn: A warm sub-region, with a variety of soil types, aspects and slopes just south of the village of Cromwell. Sometimes dubbed the “dress circle”, this area can deliver beautiful florals on the nose through to darker berry notes, and contributes spice, textural weight and fine tannins to the palate, depending on the site.

Bendigo: The hottest subregion, supplying black fruits and prominent tannin, giving great structure. Examples from Aurora show that microsites in this subregion are warm enough to ripen shiraz.

Pisa Range: Pretty, expressive florals, red fruits, much softer tannin and great aromatics. Misses out on the long hot summer afternoons of Bendigo because of the proximity of mountains directly to the west.



Gibbston Valley: Crushed or dried herbs (particularly thyme), wild berry, spice, very fine tannin and chalky acidity. Cooler site, and the longer ripening hang-time allows the grapes to build flavour profile and for stem tannins to ripen.

Felton Road

Felton Road is the dominant Central Otago winery in terms of quality and consistency. Winemaker Blair Walter crafts detailed and elegant wines across the range of riesling, chardonnay and

pinot noir that are the products of obsessive attention to detail in vineyard and winery. While the other Bannockburn offerings are seriously good wines, there is no doubt that the block and vineyard-designated Felton Road pinot noirs are exceptional wines of individuality, often of grand cru quality.

Felton Road wines come from three sites, the Elms, Cornish Point and Calvert vineyards covering a total of 32 hectares. The Elms and Cornish Point sites are owned by Felton Road, who also manages the Calvert site, only about 1 km from the Elms vineyard. The Block-designated wines come from the two soil types, the alluvial loams in the valley floor and schist gravels (often mixed with clay loam) higher up the slope, both present in the Elms Vineyard. This diversity of slope, aspect and soil type in the Elms vineyard has been exploited to the full by the winemaking team at Felton Road. Both the Calvert and Cornish Point vineyards are on deep alluvial loams on the banks of the Kawatau River.

Winemaking at Felton Road is gentle. Most of the pinot noir grapes are not crushed, but destemmed, and a varying percentage of whole bunch (usually 20-25%) is used. Wild yeasts, small open-topped fermenters and extended maceration both before and after fermentation all help to extract flavour, colour and tannins. Oak treatment is subtle and complementary, and the oak regime comprises barrels from the Meursault coopers Damy and Billon (also used by Coche-Dury) for 12-18 months. The oak is usually generally 1/3 new, 1/3 one year old, and 1/3 two year old. The wine is not filtered or fined, and normally racked only once before bottling. Blair Walter manages tannins in an exemplary way. All wines are sealed under screwcap.

2010 Felton Road Bannockburn Pinot Noir A blend of components from the three different Bannockburn vineyards. Bright clear crimson. The nose is an enticing, fragrant blend of rose petal and dark cherries. The palate has great length and complexity, with classic pinot notes of dark cherry and suggestions of Asian spices. Fine, unobtrusive tannins. (\$60.00) **Outstanding**
14.0%

2010 Felton Road Calvert Vineyard Pinot Noir Tight, linear, with greater minerality than the Bannockburn bottling, slightly more reserved on nose and palate, great textural weight and velvety tannin structure. Palate with red berries and darker florals, great length. Requires cellaring. (\$85.00) **Highly Recommended**
14.0%

2010 Felton Road Cornish Point Vineyard Pinot Noir Beautifully structured wine – precise, with fine minerality, texture and balance. Palate with cinnamon, clove and Asian spices underpinned by deeper, darker forest floor notes. Exceptional length again carried by characteristic velvety tannins. (\$75.00) **Outstanding**
14.0%

The 2009 Calvert Vineyard Wines

The vineyard is managed biodynamically by Felton Road, but the fruit is divided evenly between Felton Road, Pyramid Valley and Craggy Range. This creates the opportunity for a unique experiment, comparing winemaking styles used by these three quality-obsessed winemakers.. The wines were tasted blind, and all rated Outstanding, but each had its own characteristic personality. My favourite was the Felton Road, but this was a stylistic choice, because this wine has a little more flavour and texture on the mid palate, balancing the florals on the nose and red berry and spice notes on the palate beautifully. In comparison, the Craggy Range wine seemed to be holding a little back for the future, and the Pyramid Valley, while the most expressive of the three on the nose, was made in a natural style (see below) that is not my preference.

The 2009 vintage started well, and good weather over flowering resulted in an excellent fruit set. The summer was on the cool side, and then February was unseasonably cool and wet. In recognition of the cooler summer, crop thinning was more aggressive than normal, and leaf plucking was used to expose fruit. March saw a return to normal warm, stable weather, and the vines ripened very evenly, holding great canopy despite the



challenges of the weather. Vintage began in early April, with an average crop of 5.5 Tonnes/ha.

2009 Pyramid Valley Calvert Pinot Noir Hand picked, 75% destemmed, transferred by gravity to tank. Ambient soak of 3-5 days, warm vineyard-yeast fermentation. Seventeen months on original lees in French barriques (20% new); bottled unfinned and unfiltered in September 2010.

In comparison with the other two wines, the Pyramid valley was a little less bright and clear, but had a lifted nose of pomegranate and plum with some crushed thyme and funky notes. Elegant and well balanced palate with Satsuma plum and other red berry fruits, and underlying deeper spicy notes. The winery uses natural winemaking techniques, with little or no sulphur dioxide added, and this was evident in the finished wine. (\$85.00) **Recommended**
14.5%

2009 Felton Road Calvert Pinot Noir Hand picked, 75% destemmed, transferred by gravity to tank. Extended maceration and warm vineyard-yeast fermentation. Fourteen months on original lees in French barriques (33% new); bottled unfinned and unfiltered in June 2010.

Beautiful bright clear crimson colour, in comparison to the other two wines the nose was more floral, with violets and rose petals. The fine, long palate has spice, dark cherry and deep forest floor characteristics, with incredible mid-palate depth. (\$65.00) **Outstanding**
14.5%

2009 Craggy Range Calvert Pinot Noir Hand picked, 90% destemmed, transferred by gravity to tank. Extended maceration and warm vineyard-yeast fermentation. Ten months on original lees in French barriques (35% new); bottled unfinned and filtered in March 2010.

This wine was slightly more austere, and dominated by minerality than the first two, with a beautiful bright colour like the Felton Road bottling. Palate of spice and red cherries, lavender and some deeper blackberry and forest floor notes. Again great length and complexity, with well integrated tannins. (\$67.00) **Highly Recommended**
14.5%

Peregrine

2009 Peregrine Pinot Noir 15% from the cooler Gibbston Valley near Queenstown and 85% from the warmer Bendigo and Pisa districts near Cromwell. Hand picked with no whole bunches used, 27% new French oak for 10 months. No fining and light filtration.

Bright crimson colour, nose dominated by primary red fruits but with some spice undertones. The palate is fine and elegant, with velvety tannins and a slight vegetal firmness on the finish. Trophy for best wine at the 2010 Air New Zealand Wine Awards. (\$50.00) **Highly Recommended**
14.0%

Quartz Reef

Rudi Bauer is one of the fathers of the Central Otago winemaking scene, and he and assistant winemaker Sam Jary are crafting beautiful pinot noirs and stylish sparkling wines from their steeply sloping vineyard in the Bendigo sub-region. One of Sam's main tasks was to convert the vineyard over to biodynamics. The pinot wines tend to have more flavours in the dark fruit spectrum and are more structural due to the tannins delivered by the warm Bendigo site.

Quartz Reef Methode Traditionnelle NV Bright colour with a very light blush, delicate fruit and yeasty notes on nose. Similar palate - very fine and delicate with excellent interplay between acid and deeper freshly baked bread notes on the long finish. 61% pinot noir, 39% chardonnay, two years on lees. (\$50.00) **Highly Recommended**
12.5%

2006 Quartz Reef Methode Traditionnelle Light bright sparkling colour. Palate beautifully delicate but intense, with deeper brioche and toasty notes complementing excellent acidity on the long finish. 3% pinot noir, 97% chardonnay, four years on lees. (\$75.00) **Outstanding**
12.5%

2008 Quartz Reef Bendigo Central Otago Pinot Noir A combination of Asian spices and dark berry fruits on

nose, with layers of similar flavours plus deeper forest floor grunt on the palate. Great tannins and acid providing structure for the long haul. (\$50.00) **Outstanding**
14.5%

2010 Quartz Reef Bendigo Central Otago Pinot Noir Nose more shy and with a greater minerality than the 2008 bottling. A combination of Asian spices and red berry fruits on nose, with intense similar flavours on the palate. Very good tannins and acid on the long finish. (\$50.00) **Highly Recommended**
14.5%

Carrick Wines

Carrick is one of the pioneers of the region, and CEO Steve Green showed me over the vineyard and wines. The vineyards are situated on terraces adjacent to the river in Bannockburn, with soils of a similar structure to those of the Calvert vineyard. They are all managed biodynamically, with numerous clones planted. Some ferments contain whole clusters, and the oak regime is similar to other makers in the district, with about 1/3 new oak for 10-12 months. The winery uses screwcap closures.

2009 Carrick Unravelled Pinot Noir Fruit from the estate and also the Sluicings vineyard adjacent to the Calvert vineyard. Deep but bright royal purple colour, nose dominated by primary red fruits, rose petals and lavender, palate with Asian spices, savoury tannins and well integrated acid. 20% new oak. (\$30.00) **Highly Recommended**
14.0%

2010 Carrick Pinot Noir Unravelled Fruit as per the 09. Deep but bright royal purple colour, nose dominated by primary red and some dark fruit notes, palate with black cherries and plum, tannins fine and soft and great acid balance on the finish. Great effort for this entry level pinot, and could be kept for 3-5 years. 17% new oak, (\$30.00) **Highly Recommended**
14.5%

2009 Carrick Pinot Noir All estate grown fruit. Expressive earthy notes on nose, relatively fleshy and expansive mid palate of black cherry and plum, with some

savoury flavours. Slightly drying tannins on finish. (\$50.00) **Highly Recommended** 14.5%

Rockburn

Malcolm Rees-Francis showed me the wines of Rockburn. Malcolm was the assistant winemaker at Felton Road from 2002-2005. The winery has vineyards in the Gibbston Valley and the Pisa Range, and makes pinot gris, a really lovely barrel fermented sauvignon blanc, chardonnay and pinot noir. In good vintages the interplay of characteristics from the cooler herbal Gibbston Valley and more feminine light florals from Pisa Range make the pinot noir complex and appealing.

2009 Rockburn Three Barrels Sauvignon Blanc Nose with intense grapefruit and citrus lift, palate with fleshy bright fruit, barrel ferment complexity and refreshing minerality and acidity. Great complexing texture and acid balance on finish. Excellent effort, and great reply to Marlborough. 14 months in a mixture of older oak barrels. (\$30.00) **Highly Recommended**

2009 Rockburn Pinot Noir Really beautiful expressive rose petal nose no doubt derived from the Pisa Range fruit component (85%), with darker black cherry notes and minerality. Palate precise and intense with darker cherry and plum drive. Tannins and acid well managed on long palate. (\$40.00) **Outstanding** 14.0%.

Mt Maude Wines

Sarah Kate and husband Dan Dineen once made wines in the Hunter Valley but have crossed the Tasman to produce wines under the Maude label in Central Otago. They have vineyards in the Gibbston, Bannockburn and Pisa Range subregions, as well as the home vineyard on steep slopes in the Wanaka subregion that was originally planted by Sarah Kate's parents.

I predict great things for the Wanaka subregion. It is not as hot as most of the other subregions and the later vintage time allows greater flavour complexity and tannin ripeness to

develop. Vineyards with the right aspect planted higher on the slopes of the valley avoid frosts and have deep clay soils that add weight, texture and flavour to the wines. Dan and SK have crafted some beautiful dry and kabinett style Rieslings and precise chardonnay from the Wanaka site, as well as a range of pinot noirs.

2011 Maude Pinot Gris Pisa Range and Mt Maude vineyard Intense white pear and mineral notes on nose. Similar components on palate, great flesh, texture and acid lift on finish. (\$22.00) **Highly Recommended** 14.5%

2009 Mt Maude Chardonnay White stone fruit on nose with some melon, biscuit and hints of toasted almonds, palate also with citrus, beautifully integrated oak and fruit, great acidity carrying a long finish. Mt Maude Vineyard, 9 months in 1 yr old 500 litre French puncheons. 'Cuve Marc Antonin' on the back label, the wine made with input from Marc Antonin Blain of the famous Blain-Gagnard Domaine in Chassagne-Montrachet. (\$33.00) **Outstanding** 14.0%

2009 Maude Pinot Noir Central Otago 2009 Fruit from all four vineyard sources. Nose with black cherry notes and dried herbs. Palate with deep red fruits including pomegranate and plum. Deeper forest floor notes on the end of the palate resonate with the fine structural tannins and acid. 30% new French oak for 12 months. (\$37.00) **Highly Recommended** 14.0%

2007 Mt Maude Pinot Noir Fruit entirely from the Mt Maude vineyard. Nose with complex asian spice, cinnamon, ginger and capsicum with deeper red fruit characters underneath. Palate luscious and powerful with crushed herb notes as well as deep black cherry forest floor notes, and considerable mid palate weight. Great tannins and acid contribute to the length of the wine. 85% whole bunch fermentation give this wine great structure and elegance – a perfect response to the "fruit bomb" style. (\$60.00) **Outstanding** 14.0%

David Yeates

European Wine Journey

Sweeping across the south-west of France, we stopped over in the amazing old Cité of Carcassonne. Unfortunately it had to be on Saturday in the first sunny weekend of spring. The place was packed. We stayed at the Hotel Le Donjon and recommend it. The trip from the car park to the hotel in a tiny van driven by the porter is almost worth the cost of admission.

Travelling via Armagnac and Cahors, we reached the Graves region of Bordeaux to visit our friends Jean-François and Marie Lespinasse who run an excellent winemaking operation called Château Bichon Cassignols. As usual the wines were excellent, but we were on a tight schedule, and, after lunch, headed for the beautiful old harbour town of La Rochelle. Although La Rochelle is beautiful and simply swims in history, we were there for another reason.

The restaurant André www.barandre.com is an unpretentious place in the pedestrian zone of La Rochelle, but it is legendary – famed for its platters of exquisite, simple seafood. We had been looking forward to this dinner for months, and we weren't disappointed – oysters, mussels, sea snails, crab, scampi, prawns - we had it all, washed down with liberal draughts of muscadet. The following morning we headed for the Loire Valley. More next issue.

Lester Jesberg

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Six issues per year including air mail post.

Australia \$A70.00; New Zealand & Papua New Guinea \$A79.00; Asia \$A82.00; Europe & USA \$87.00

Note: Credit card surcharges apply. Mastercard & Visa add \$2.00, American Express add \$3.50 per subscription.

Please post or fax a cheque/money order or credit card authority with name and address to:

WINEWISE, PO BOX 391, Belconnen ACT 2616

FAX 61 (0) 2 6166 9473

If you are a current subscriber, please use our EFT option:

BSB: 082902 Acct. No. 617374440

You must state your subscriber number and as much of your surname as possible, as the lodgment reference.

TELEPHONE: 61 (0) 412148577

winewisemagazine@gmail.com
www.winewise.net.au

© 2011 Winewise ISSN 0815-0168
ACN 062 835 509

Registered by Aust Post NBG 7241

