

# CURLY FLAT

I recall when I first tasted a Curly Flat pinot noir. I was holidaying in Noosa in October, 2002 and a friend visiting from Brisbane brought along a bottle for me to try. I enjoyed the wine and made a mental note to follow up at some stage. Not long after, to my good fortune, I began a five year association with the Macedon Ranges Wine Exhibition, first judging alongside James Halliday and then succeeding him as chairman of judges. During my tenure Curly Flat was the star of the show.

Curly Flat's Phillip Moraghan was the driving force behind the event at that stage, and I struck up a friendship with he and wife Jeni. Unfortunately the marriage is no more, but Jeni, who reverted to her maiden name of Kolkka, still plays a key role in the running of Curly Flat, as does Phillip.

My admiration of the wines of Curly Flat is not based on friendship with the proprietors. "Blind" tasting over the years in shows and the Winewise tasting room have convinced me of their quality.

In 2010 the 2006 Curly Flat Pinot Noir topped a star-studded field in the Winewise International Tasting, conducted every year in association with the Small Vigneron Awards. It was a momentous result because some rather good wines formed the beaten brigade – wines made by producers like Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Domaine Armand Rousseau, Ata Rangi, Felton Road, Coldstream Hills and Main Ridge.

It follows that Curly Flat was a prime destination on our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary road trip, and here I review wines tasted on our visit. Note: This tasting was not conducted "blind".

The first wine took me by surprise. It shouldn't have. The Macedon Ranges has proved to be one of Australia's superior sparkling wine regions, and this bottling is better than most. It's a blend of equal parts of pinot noir & chardonnay; 60% from the 2000 & 2001 vintages and the other 40% from the 2011.

**NV Curly Flat Macedon** An attractively bready sparkling wine which combines aged and autolysis complexity and youthful freshness beautifully. The mousse is creamy and the dosage is perfectly judged, balancing the regional acidity. This is a very good buy indeed. (\$45.00)

★★★★☆

**2014 Curly Flat Pinot Gris** Barrel fermentation was used for 75% of the blend, and that, including lees contact, contributes a most agreeable mouthfeel. However, it doesn't subjugate the fresh varietal character, and the impressive dry palate has a bracing acid finish. Although it drinks well now, a couple of years' bottle age will be beneficial. (\$31.00)

★★★★

**2013 Curly Flat Chardonnay** Here we have a precise expression of genuine cool-region chardonnay. Hints of grapefruit show on the restrained nose, and the palate is reserved but long, finishing with racy acidity and only a suggestion of oak. Cellar 3-4 years. (\$44.00) ★★★★★☆

**2012 Curly Flat Chardonnay** This vintage shows much more than the 2013. White peach joins grapefruit, making the nose impressively rich, and the palate offers fruit weight, a creamy texture and a very fresh acid finish. A complete chardonnay. (\$44.00) ★★★★★

**2012 Curly Flat “The Curly” Chardonnay** There’s an obvious new oak presence here, and the harmony of the “standard” wine is missing. However, the intense white peach aroma and flavour have a chance of coping with the oak over time. (\$55.00) ★★★★★☆

**2011 Curly Flat Pinot Noir** This vintage is light by Curly Flat standards, but the wine is amazingly good for such a difficult year. Heat degree day figures indicate that 2011 was cooler than the average Champagne vintage, and it was wet, providing the ultimate test for the Curly Flat viticultural approach. The fragrance of this wine pays tribute to the soundness of the grapes fermented, and the palate is fresh and attractive, with very fine tannins. (\$48.00) ★★★☆☆



**2012 Curly Flat Pinot Noir** The perfumed dark cherry aroma is enhanced by an attractive herbal note and a kiss of oak. For Burgundy fans, this wine is more Nuits than Beaune – long, tight, firm and fine – power with restraint – begging for time in the cellar. (\$50.00) ★★★★★☆

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**2013 Curly Flat Pinot Noir** This wine was bottled only six weeks prior to tasting, so the fact that it was quite closed was unsurprising. The nose shows restrained red berry aromas and a hint of whole-bunch complexity. The palate is well structured and long. I'm sure it will score a higher rating when it's released. ★★★★★

**2011 Curly Flat "The Curly" Pinot Noir** It was a brave call to use 100% new French oak and even 14% whole bunch in a vintage like 2011. The result justifies the bold approach. There is some whole-bunch complexity, but not too much, and there's more than adequate palate weight, balanced by fine, ripe tannins. Above all, this is a very clean, fresh wine. (\$60.00) ★★★★★

**2012 Curly Flat "The Curly" Pinot Noir** The 100% whole-bunch approach isn't always a winner, but it works here, adding complexity without dominating. After the fragrance of the nose, the palate delivers great length and flavour. A very impressive wine. (\$64.00) ★★★★★

**2013 Curly Flat "The Curly" Pinot Noir** Although it had been bottled for only five weeks, this wine showed enough to convince me that it's an exceptional pinot. It's fragrant, complex, intense and long-flavoured, but, above all, it is amazingly fine and delicate. To be released February, 2015. ★★★★★

**2005 Curly Flat Pinot Noir** The colour is so bright and youthful that this ten year old pinot just has to be good – and it is. The sheer vibrancy of the wine is enhanced by bottle-age complexity, but the dark cherry aromas and flavour belie a decade's age. A joy to drink. ★★★★★

The wines of some small producers of pinot noir have achieved a "cult" status. Beware of them. They are not entered in wine shows, reviewers seldom taste them "blind", and a look at the label is worth at least 10 points out of 100.

Curly Flat helped build its reputation through great achievements at the Macedon Ranges Wine Show and continues to do so. I don't know of any small wine producer in Australia that has put more into its vineyards in terms of hard work, research and monitoring, and clearly that has paid dividends.

In one of the coolest wine regions in Australia (Chablis would be a good comparison in France) Curly Flat has a site warm enough to grow world-class pinot noir. And it does.

Lester Jesberg