

Silver Wings Newsletter No. 4

After eleven consecutive years of drought, one begins to contemplate whether it will ever rain properly again. It has rained sometimes – like once when I was moving my winery and everything was exposed to it and again when I was bottling the other day, seems I have to schedule something out of doors to break the bloody drought!

After bottling finished, I wiped the mud from every bit of clothing and tried to identify my boots from the mound of wet earth on the floor of the ute – I thought ... it must be time to cheer myself up with another newsletter, so here it is.

My move to North Melbourne has been very rewarding in many ways, not the least through the recognition of my wines by many of this City's best sommeliers and consequent sales have been very satisfying. But I must offer an apology to my cellar door clients – I forget to put out the barrel to indicate we are open .. must be old age, but more likely a psychological reaction because I was open more hours than Ronnie Barker's shop (in his social satire) in my previous business. Never be dissuaded through the lack of an 'open' sign, just call my mobile or knock on the door and no doubt I'll be here to welcome you.

Things are moving along Globally, George W is a lame duck and Kevin is in heaven and occasionally Canberra, and the Oz dollar is a 30yr high – Oh No!! what about my export business?

Yes, like all Oz exporters I've been hard hit and things won't change by themselves – so I'm off to the U.S. in September to see if I can make good things happen again. It will be interesting and I remain positive of the outcomes, and also in expectation after the U.S. of another pilgrimage to Burgundy and afterward to Piedmonte (the other Burgundy).

My next news will be of those adventures but for now, please read on.
Cheers, Keith

OPEN WEEKEND at 28 Munster Terrace.

Sat. 26th and Sun. 27th July

10 a.m til 5 p.m.

New Release 2005 'Vincenzo Old Vines' will be open for the first tasting -plus all my Sparklers including the X.O. Grande Reserve and many other exclusive wines, both aged and current release! Cheese & bread will be available with tastings, so please bring some friends to join the fun

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DEEP FRIED LANCEFIELD

On the 21st. February after 26 years, I departed Lancefield for the last time as an owner of property. What a difficult time that has been in so many ways, yet also exhilarating and rewarding in a personal sense – certainly not a financial one. I shall miss many aspects of the unique beauty of this coldest of climates. The daylight mists, cascading clouds across the mountains, frost in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon and the shafts of late afternoon sunlight piercing the cold clean air beneath low cloud to illuminate a winter landscape in majestic depths of colour that are awe inspiring to behold. Aesthetically it is a wonderful place & there has even been some development in the village with several small art galleries offering respite from the unchanged and sometimes bleak commercial aspect. The beauty will always remain and change will eventually come to this by-passed area, I hope it's not so severe that it loses it's historic charm, however there are other things that should be forgotten. Packing all cookware & food for the move made eating out a necessity so I visited the pub for a meal, I was utterly astounded that nothing had changed since 1982 when I first arrived in the area. Everything was beer battered & deep fried – even the salad I think! I observed that whether fish, veal or beef it was a mound of batter indistinguishable from any other choice ... and the service was best described as Stalinist.

The cuisine is not something I will miss, nor some of the residents, however there is a large part of my life in all it's endeavours and achievements that will remain in that sleeping valley forever.

“A woman's work is never done” ... the Old Fashioned way!



MOURVEDRE - VARIETAL INFORMATION.

A vine species native to Spain where it is known as Monastrell and is second only to Grenache in importance. Migrating from the Spanish town Murviedro (hence the French name) near Valencia, it was planted in Provence and the Rhone area of France in the middle ages where it became the dominant varietal. During the 19th C Phylloxera devastated the major plantings and due to difficulties with finding compatible American rootstock for grafting, it fell into obscurity surviving only in the sandy soils of Bandol on the Mediterranean coast where it remained phylloxera free, being blended with Grenache and Cinsault and made into a dry Rose. With the development of compatible root stocks after W.W.2., the variety has regained some of its prior prominence and is a major component of many Rhone, Provence and Spanish red wines. During the 1850 -80's the variety was introduced to Australia through cuttings taken from the town Mataro near Barcelona, where it became known for many years by that name. Major plantings progressed through South Australia and Victoria along the Murray River for most of our early history but these were grafted over or replaced by growers in the rush to supply more fashionable varieties from the 1970's, until today it represents a tiny proportion of red wine plantings in this country.

Wines made from Mourvedre in Australia should be intensely coloured, rich and velvety with aromas of game, leather and often the earthiness of truffles. The very high tannin content of European Mourvedre is not emulated in the Shepparton growing conditions so I employ different winemaking techniques to extract the fine grain tannins. This ensures the great aging potential of this variety is maintained

Grand Cru or Vin de Pays?

Regional Appellation is a very important definition of vine territory and implied quality within Europe, mostly for a variety of historical reasons now largely irrelevant, but remaining strongly supported. The concept is nurtured and revered by many wine lovers the world over, so... does 'Vincenzo' have an appellation?

The vineyard lies on a patch along Ford Road Shepparton, and my new winery is in Holden Road, Diggers Rest so does this imply Van do Pay?

THE NEW RELEASE WINES

2005 Vincenzo Old Vines Mourvedre/ Shiraz

* see tasting notes on order form.

2007 Riesling (Great Southern) Clean Skins.

The first Australian release of the Riesling I produce for the U.S. Marquee brand.

Bouquet: Intense aromatics with pungent fruit characters of fresh cut grass and lime-juice overlaying some mineral and stone-fruit nuances.

Palate: Distinct Riesling characters and mouth-watering freshness lead a complex wine with a delightful and long tingling finish. A fresh, although complex wine now it will offer wonderful development in the cellar for many years for those with patience.

2006 Grenache/ Shiraz/ Mourvedre (S.E.Aust.) Clean Skins.

First Aust. release of the most popular blend in the U.S. portfolio.

Bouquet: Earthy, complex berry fruits mix with 'stewed' rhubarb and soft overtones of French oak.

Palate: A rich forward palate from the dominant Grenache fruit gives strong Raspberry characters that lead a finely textured medium bodied wine, gaining elegance and structure through hints of aniseed and rhubarb, balanced by soft 'smokey' oak tannins. A surprisingly earthy and complex wine for it's fine texture, it reveals the wonderful complexities gained by blending these classic varieties

READERS DISCOUNT VOUCHER

Present this form at time of purchase to receive the following

Newsletter Special Offers:

1/ \$12.00 off any whole varietal dozen purchase.

2/ Further 10% off any order combination in excess of two dozen wines.

3/ Purchase of any and each of one dozen wines places your name into the draw for a magnum of the New Release 2005 Vincenzo Old Vines Mourvedre/ Shiraz.

(Ticket drawn on 31st August 2008—winner notified by mail and telephone/ email).



The next batch of '98 Brut on the racks ready for disgorging

GRAPE GRIPE

When introducing other than the garden variety grape types like Shiraz or Cabernet to the Australian public at large, one can often uncover strange interpretations of what's actually in a wine. During a tasting of the "Vincenzo Old Vines" Mourvedre/ Shiraz recently I was pouring tastes to a chap who appeared to be listening intently to my patter, until he leaned forward and asked, "are there many blocks of this Vincenzo planted in Australia?" so I responded with "very few blocks". He then asked, "is there much in Italy?" I couldn't resist it – "yes, there are quit a few plots, very small sites particularly in the South around Napoli" "Humph, ... strange I've never heard of it before" with which he downed the sample and headed for the next tasting stand.



Hard at work again!!

CORK or SCREW

Too much has been debated recently about the benefits of Cork Vs other closures. As soon as an acceptable commercial alternative was presented several years ago an avalanche of change swept aside any debate as to whether winemakers would support Cork or not. If this experience wasn't enough, then the scientific trials that have been completed over the last thirty years are sufficient to quell all argument. Natural Cork does not meet the standards of a modern Wine Industry. Not only regularly inadequate as a bottle closure, it also carries a legacy of an approx. spoilage rate of 10% of the wine it actually successfully seals! There is not a winery on earth that does not suffer this preventable failure and loss of product through various Cork taints, not only my wines but as personal experience dictates, Grange Hermitage, Chateau Latour, Chateau Margaux, Chateau Haut Brion, Chateau Lafite, Chateau Mouton Rothschild, Domain de la Romanee Conti, Moet Chandon and Bolinger L.D. (worth may hundreds if not thousands of dollars per bottle) are but a few of the wines from great houses I have poured down the sink due to Cork contamination or failure.

So, is screw cap the only answer? Unfortunately NO!

From personal experience, having committed never to seal my wines again with natural Cork, the answer is complex and variable. Screw cap is the perfect air tight seal for long term cellaring in correct circumstances and for some wines. However in many wines, amongst other things, it fails to allow the desiccation of natural wine metabolisms to develop into what we as consumers, equate to bottle age "ON CORK".

There is nothing worse than opening a wine with 5 yrs of bottle age and seeing the same angular, youthful structure unchanged, waiting to develop into the next sphere of drinking interest. How long will that take and what will be the result? who knows? I probably won't live long enough for the answer.

So, in the foresee-able future there are a few seals that are known to deliver current Industry and consumer expectations – I use DIAM, a reconstituted cork with all taint eradicated and there is another called PROCORK that is affectionately known as the 'Cork in a Condom' that meet both the high levels of technical quality and consumer expectations.

No doubt there will be other alternatives in the future and perhaps one may be tempted to look back and think "what if Cork was correctly harvested and treated?" but the arrogance, malpractice, misrepresentation and opportunism from the natural Cork Industry over the past 40 years has tainted that prospect irreversibly.

Keith

Julie Andrews and the Sound of Muscat.

Have you noticed how inoffensive and smooth tasting wines are these days? Or is it insignificant? almost to the point that if you closed your eyes, it's difficult to tell red from white? Corporate dominated marketing of Australian wine as "just another beverage" means that their marketeers have insisted that all wine should be purchased and consumed without much thought – previously called dumbing down! So now trainee winemakers are taught in University that most wine is consumed within 7 hours of purchase, conveniently ignoring that the finest wines is stored in cellars for many, many years to be savoured & appreciated by passionate enthusiasts in the future. Despite proof to the opposite, the 80's wine-Guru catch-cry "if it isn't balanced when young it will never be balanced when aged!" is still heard amongst winemakers & judges of the wine show Circus. 'Oenotechs' they may be, but as cultural emissaries more like Sir Les Patterson, without the slightest insight into the discerning and intellectual factors that continue to drive demand for the highest priced wines in the world. Great wines that can be cellared for the long term command higher and higher prices each vintage. However, this excludes most of the wines made presently in this country! Not many of our supposed great labels will be drinkable after 5 – 10 yrs, because winemaking techniques have altered under pressure from company Sales executives, accountants and journalists to produce a saleable, broadly appealing commodity.

What too of the health statistics that divided wine from all other alcoholic drinks? They are also under bombardment from Govt. & Wovser propaganda and from convenient Corporate studies based on marginal criteria and methodology. The 'old' realities are undeniable from earlier comprehensive and unchallengeable research that have long proven the significant health benefits of moderate consumption of dry table wine with meals as opposed to alcohol per se. Aside from strategic disinformation ie. 'marketing', there is an alarming difference today in the winemaking.

The more marketable 'bigger impact' wines have resulted in average alcohol levels of table wines in this country rising by 3 - 5%, and because of the related over-ripe and jammy flavours, there are many grams per ltr. of unfermented sugars remaining at bottling. Technology is a wonderful thing, 25yrs ago a winemaker couldn't safely bottle red wines with the residual sugar levels of the average 'Dry Red' of today. Sadly most Australian consumers, if given a truly dry table wine, will spit it out and claim they are being poisoned! And unfortunately, most wine makers in the world have realized the marketing advantages within the Julie Andrews song, 'a spoon full of sugar makes the medicine go down' ... and the profits go up.

Drink Dry, Keith

Hugh Heffner was a Boy Scout.

Have you ever wondered how much spam your server, firewall and virus protection filter out of your daily email reception? Well ... I have the benefit of being sent a daily report from my Marquee address because the parent company are I.T. specialists, and it is staggering. It makes the original 'Playboy' look very saintly, last Saturday their spam filter caught no less than 35 emails selling viagra, dildos, penis enlargements, porn sites and all sorts of sexual fantasy paraphernalia

N.B. must tell them to let it all through!

Cheers, Keith

Noosa on the Roof.

After 25yrs living in Lancefield and acclimatising to the regularly frigid Mountain air, my move to Melbourne has meant some environmental readjustments. I don't need a bedcover, I awake regularly on winter nights because I'm too hot and remove the blanket! and BBQ's with balaclava and gloves are things of the past. So different are the evenings on our roof-top terrace that I've taken to calling it Noosa, "I'm going up to Noosa" is my call to Cheryl as I make way with select cuts of marinated meat for my evening cooking ritual. If I cock my ear to the wind, with a little imagination I can hear the surf (actually a lot – because it's probably the trucks in Laurens St.!) & if I breathe in deeply I can occasionally smell the Salt Air (mixed with dog biscuits from Weston Mills).

Yes ... life is good in my new surrounds and all is happiness.

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