



Rose Bay Drive In Liquor

Alex's Newsletter #3 April 2007

Huia Sauvignon Blanc 2006

The region: Marlborough (NZ)
The alcohol: 13.5%
The taste: More complex than other sauv blancs. Passionfruit.
The price: \$26 or 10% off in a dozen



More detail:

Marlborough is generally seen as the spiritual home to the sauvignon blanc grape. Just don't tell the French that, unless you enjoy making them unhappy.

Sauvignon blanc is known for its passionfruit and pineapple characters. The wines are generally unwooded so the delicate flavours of the grape are not drowned out.

A lot of people in the industry tend to agree that once you've tasted a Marlborough sauvignon blanc, you've pretty much tasted them all because they all have quite similar tastes. The more you spend, the better quality they are, but they do tend to have a certain Marlborough flavour.

This is something a bit different. 10% of the wine goes into oak to give the wine more complexity, which makes it stand out from the crowd. Don't worry, you don't taste oak though. It's brilliant in a different kinda way.

The winemakers are husband and wife, Claire and Mike Allan. Huia refers to an extinct wattle bird.

A little while ago I was talking to a Russian couple about sauvignon blancs and they burst out laughing when I mentioned this one. Apparently Huia means something rude in Russian. They didn't tell me what it means, but if you're going over to visit some Russian friends, you might get a similar reaction.

They also make a stunning pinot gris for \$30, definitely worth a try.

O'Leary Walker Polish Hill Riesling 2006

The region: Clare Valley (SA)
The alcohol: 12.5%
The taste: Lime, floral, minerals
The price: \$20 or 10% off in a dozen



Riesling - It's not always sweet!

The most common reaction when I recommend a riesling is "Oh no, it's too sweet!". There are some sweet rieslings on the market, like those blended away with gewurztraminer, or some of the cheaper rieslings.

But not all of them are sweet. A lot of the Australian \$16+ rieslings are actually bone dry. In wine, sweetness comes either from leftover sugar that wasn't fermented, or from natural sweetness in the fruit flavours.

German rieslings tend to have a lot of residual sugar, but try some rieslings that we suggest with seafood and you'll see why this grape is loved by the experts.

Now I feel like prawns.

More detail:

Polish Hill and Watervale are two subregions of the Clare Valley in South Australia. Clare is considered to be the best region for riesling in Australia. The two subregions have quite different soils, which produce different styles of wine. Polish Hill is slatey and Watervale is limestone.

The Grosset label has produced rieslings from both regions for years at about the \$35 - \$40 level, but these guys have been able to keep their price tag around \$20.

These guys are David O'Leary and Nick Walker. They met at Roseworthy College over 25 years ago and went on to work in some of our biggest wineries around the country. About 7 years ago they got sick of working for someone else and decided to join forces and make their own label.

The result? Astounding success. Initially they found it hard to keep up with demand and their wines sold out pretty much as soon as they were released. Now they have developed a second label, Blue Cutting Road, which is a cheaper wine that helps them keep up with demand.

So enough about them... let's talk about the riesling. It's awesome. I've been discussing rieslings with some other winemakers recently and they're all astounded at the quality of this one given it's price.

You get your typical citrus/lime flavours through, as well as hints of grapefruit, but it lingers for quite awhile. Bit of a cracker really.

**Mr Frog
Pinot Noir 2006**

The region: Yarra Valley (VIC)
The alcohol: 13.0%
The taste: Spicy, dark cherry
The price: \$15 or 10% off in a dozen



Yarra Valley

When you think of top-notch wine regions in Australia, most of the ones that come to mind are in Western Australia and South Australia. Fair enough.

But it's a little unfair to just dismiss the Yarra Valley because it's in the wrong state. With a cool climate, the grapes in the region tend to produce more elegant, delicate wines rather than massive overripe styles.

It's only 40 minutes outside Melbourne and it's pretty. If you get the chance, do a hot air balloon ride over the valley.

It's also worth checking out Yering Station because the winery is incredible. The other place to go is the Healesville Hotel. One of the most amazing meals I've ever had.

More detail:

Ever heard of Yering Station? One of the oldest wineries in the Yarra Valley. Well, they make this one. It's their cheaper label and it's rapidly picking up a loyal following in the shop, including a lovely brunette.

It's called Mr Frog coz the frogs in the Yarra Valley are all over the freaking place. At night, they're almost deafening. The guys at Yering Station even appear to have named some of their regular frogs, such as the original Mr Frog, which was Cyril Tiberius Frog II. I don't know why he's the second if he's the first, but it must have been a day with not a lot to do.

Yering Station is famous for the pinot noir and chardonnay that they produce, so with that heritage behind this label, you might get the inkling that it's gonna be great value for money. And you'd be spot on.

It's a lighter style pinot, not the most complex number I've ever tasted, but that's a good thing sometimes. It depends on what you're eating it with. You'll pick up aromas of cherry, raspberry and maybe blackberry. There is some sweet fruit to it, but it's certainly not a sweet wine. Chill it down if you like for lunch on a hot summer's day.

There are two other Mr Frogs. One is a chardonnay which is delicate and subtle rather than a big fruit bomb due to the cool climate. The other is a cabernet/shiraz blend with one of the nicest aromas on a wine under \$25 that I've smelt for awhile. They're all worth trying and all \$15.

**Old Plains "Power of One"
Shiraz 2005**

The region: Adelaide Plains (SA)
The alcohol: 14.0%
The taste: Warm cherries and vanilla
The price: \$35 or 10% off in a dozen



Adelaide Plains

You don't often hear about the Adelaide Plains region. Generally it's the Barossa and Coonawarra regions that get all the attention.

But the fruit in the Adelaide Plains is famous. Fruit for the first few vintages of Grange came from there. Most of the time the fruit is used in higher quality wines from the neighbouring Barossa or Adelaide Hills regions.

If you or a friend wish to join the mailing list for this newsletter, just call me on 9371 9608, e-mail me at rosebaydrivein@bigpond.com or let me know when you're in the shop.

More detail:

Some of you have tried the Torzi Matthews Frost Dodger shiraz and a lot of you have been back for more. I even had a customer through the other day because she specifically wanted to drink that wine on her birthday, coz she loves it so much.

So, Domenic Torzi knows what he's doing. Now, here's another one that he makes, the Old Plains "Power of One" shiraz, with fruit sourced from the Adelaide Plains (different to the Adelaide Hills region).

When we tried this one, we were blown away again. The wine has brilliant structure which will allow it to age for quite awhile, but it drinks well now. It gains this structure because the vines were originally planted in the 1950's, so they have thick, gnarly trunks that produce less fruit, but of a higher quality with more complexity.

You'll pick up your pepper, cassis, red berry flavours that are typical of shiraz, but you also get that lovely vanilla toasty flavour from the oak used. The thing that stands out though is the body. It's big. Really big.

Once you swallow it, it lingers for awhile, but it's nice and dry on the finish.

Sure, it's a little more than you might spend for every day drinking, but it's not really an every day wine. Take it out for special occasions and treat yourself. Make sure you're eating something full-flavoured, or a massive steak.