



Rose Bay Drive In Liquor

# Alex's Newsletter #5 June 2007

## Feathertop Pinot Gris 2006

**The region:** Alpine Valleys (Vic)

**The alcohol:** 13.5%

**The taste:** Nectarine, pear, citrus

**The price:** \$19 or 10% off in a dozen



### More detail:

We stumbled across this wine by accident. We were chatting to one of the wine distributors about another wine and he suggested that we try this. We haven't looked back since.

The Alpine Valleys are situated in North-Eastern Victoria. Not many people know that this is even a wine region, but it's starting to establish itself on the map.

Unfortunately, the 2007 vintage in the Alpine and King Valleys is going to have a lot of problems due to bushfires nearby. When smoke from bushfires goes through vineyards, you can taste it in the ensuing wine. It may also be evident in the next vintage too, the 2008.

Fortunately this wine is from the fabulous 2006 vintage. There's only a little bit of it left, so I wanted to make sure that those who love pinot gris and grigio get a chance to stock up before it all runs out.

This is a great wine to stock up on. Light, crisp, refreshing. Perfect with just about any meal from seafood to chicken to Thai.

Hints of nectarine, pear and even kiwifruit are evident, but it is quite a restrained wine. It doesn't jump out of the glass at you, but it does linger around for a little while after you swallow it.

One for drinking now rather than cellaring, but if you put a little bit down to get you through 2007, you should be fine.

## d'Arenberg "Footbolt" Shiraz 2004

**The region:** McLaren Vale (SA)

**The alcohol:** 14.5%

**The taste:** Smooth chocolate & pepper

**The price:** \$20 or 10% off in a dozen



### Wine Faults (1)

**Cork taint** – smells mouldy, like wet cardboard. Comes from a chemical (TCA) in bad corks. "Corked" means this fault, but is often used to describe any fault.

**Volatile acidity (VA)** – smells like vinegar, nail polish or rotten egg gas, usually a result of dirty bottles.

**Brettanomyces ("Brett")** - the wine smells "mousey". A bad type of yeast, controlled by adding sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) during winemaking.

**Reduction** – sulfurous smells (eg matchsticks, burnt rubber) are strong when the bottle is opened. Open the wine for 20 minutes and these will waft away. Mostly an issue with screw-capped wine.

### More detail:

Since I started this newsletter, I've been meaning to write about this wine. This is the wine that got me into wine.

I managed to score an invite to Francis d'Arenberg "d'Arry" Osborn's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday bash. We tasted over 50 wines of theirs and afterwards, when chatting to him and his son about how good their wines are, I just may have gone on about it for a little too long. Still, made my point!

McLaren Vale is a personal favourite. The reds are luscious, rich, full-bodied and yet silky smooth. It's the silkiness that makes McLaren so famous, compared to the brutish nature of the Barossa.

The d'Arenberg wines tread a fine line between old-fashioned and outlandish. The famous red stripe on the labels has been around for yonks. The wines are foot trod and basket pressed. All very old school.

And yet the current winemaker, Chester Osborn, is not afraid to try new things. Always looking at new blends, new marketing ideas and even planting grapes that no one has ever heard of. Also, he wears weird shirts.

Deep in purple-red colour, hints of the usual pepper evident in shiraz, this wine also shows a hint of "chocolate" character, a hallmark in McLaren shiraz. Serve it at a BBQ after dark or with nice harder cheeses for dessert.

It can cellar quite comfortably for a decade, or even two in particularly good years.

## Craggy Range "Block 14" Syrah 2005

**The region:** Hawkes Bay (NZ)

**The alcohol:** 13.0%

**The taste:** Blackberry, blackcurrant, pepper.

**The price:** \$55 or 10% off in a dozen



### Wine faults (2)

**Oxidation** – the wine has a brown colour to it. It will generally have little or no fruity taste. Comes from too much exposure to oxygen (eg a bad cork that lets air in), or from aging a wine for too long. Happens to varying degrees.

**Heat damage** – aka "cooked". Happens when the wine is stored in a temperature that is too high, or it varies too much. Can happen to varying degrees. Usually a similar result to oxidation.

**Lightstrike** – too much exposure to ultraviolet light. More likely to happen to wines in clear glass bottles. Wine tastes dull and sulfurous.

### More detail:

Craggy Range is quite a new label from an area known as Gimblett Gravels in the Hawkes Bay region of New Zealand. Owned by a very rich family in Brisbane who got rich moving waste around, they're putting a lot of money into their investment... and it shows.

All of their wines are made to the highest standards and no expense is spared. Although the wines are relatively expensive, it's not because of those expenses. You're paying solely for the quality of the wine.

So who knew that the Kiwis could do shiraz? And who knew they could do it so well? The length of this wine is tremendous. Sometimes a wine hits you upfront with a lot of fruit but drops away the closer it gets to the back of your mouth (what we call your mid-and back-palate). Not this one, this fills up every part of your mouth, without being overpowering at any stage.

Now this one is the best shiraz (syrah) in their normal range. I have managed to get a tiny, tiny allocation of this wine (2 dozen), as well as some of their Prestige Collection, including the "Sophia" (1 dozen) and a couple of other little beauties. If there are any left next month, I'll do a full write-up on them.

Now, just how good is this wine? Well, of all the wines in the shop, I chose this one to drink with my friends when I graduated recently... that should say something!

## Morris Liqueur Muscat and Liqueur Tokay

**The region:** Rutherglen (VIC)

**The alcohol:** Both are 17.5%

**The taste:** Sweet. Christmas cake.

**The price:** \$18 or 10% off in a dozen



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### More detail:

So we're coming into winter. Time to dust off the doona, plug in the heater and put on that Winter fat that you're going to hate yourself for in Summer!

But another great way to keep warm is with a bottle of fortified wine. Most people aren't too fussed on them nowadays, but we're here to change all that. Port can be a little bit full on for beginners, so I'll suggest a nice muscat or tokay instead.

Imagine getting a Christmas cake and liquefying it in a blender. That's the kind of flavour you can expect.

Even better, once you open a bottle, you don't have to finish it in the next day or two, because they keep quite well for even a couple of months.

So when you get home on a cold, rainy winter day over the next few months, why not just have a small sip of one of these? We have them open in the shop so you can even try before you buy. Just ask us.

Morris is one of the more well-known labels for their fortifieds. What's more, they're from the famous Rutherglen area in Victoria, which is the home of fortifieds in Australia.

By the way, fortifieds are made by adding an amount of brandy spirit during the initial fermentation. This stops the fermentation early, leaving more residual (left over) sugar, hence the sweetness in the wines.

However, it's not quite as good as having someone warm next to you!