

Rose Bay Drive In Liquor

Alex's Newsletter #6 July 2007

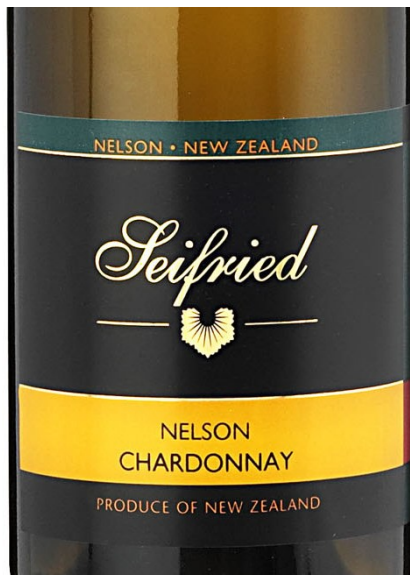
Seifried Chardonnay
2005

The region: Nelson (NZ)

The alcohol: 14.0%

The taste: Elegant, toasty
peach/passionfruit. Smooth.

The price: \$25 or 10% off in a dozen



One of our wine sales reps went over to NZ a few months ago. When he came back I asked him to bring in some things that might interest us. This was what he brought us.

Actually, he did one better than that... he brought with him the youngest daughter in the family, Anna Seifried. Her dad, Hermann, started the winery after moving over from Austria. He met a Kiwi girl (Agnes) and had three kids. The oldest is Chris who now runs the day to day aspects of the winery. First daughter Heidi is his assistant and Anna does the marketing.

The chardonnay berries for this wine are the Mendoza clone, which produces more tropical, passionfruit flavours. The fruit was picked and immediately pressed and cooled for 24 hours to let the juice settle.

The juice was then warmed a bit and the fermentation started. While fermenting, it was put into 1 year old French and American barriques, giving it a more subtle texture than using new barrels. Once the initial fermentation was complete, malolactic fermentation started, which produces a buttery taste in the wine. The wine was stirred every two weeks during these two fermentations to build palate weight and structure.

Finally, the wine was left sitting on "lees" (dead yeast) for 10 months to build extra complexity.

The end result, a delicate wine from a relatively cool climate with incredible complexity and length of flavour, without being overpowering. Drink with anything, it's too good to miss.

Dessert Wines or "Stickies"

There are a number of different ways to make dessert wines. All of them revolve around the same basic principle: reduce the amount of water in the grape, leaving a higher sugar concentration.

The four major methods are:

- Botrytis/noble
- Late harvest
- Ice/Iced wine
- Cane cut

So what do they all mean? And what's the difference between them? Time for some education!

1. Botrytis or "Noble" Rot

This might sound a little disgusting to some of you. When the climate is a bit moist, a fungus can grow on the outside of the grapes. This fungus is called *botrytis cinerea*. It sucks the water from the grapes, leaving them shrivelled and concentrated. You'll also pick up a distinct honeyed, marmalade taste and texture.



Botrytis is the most common style in Oz. It generally effects riesling and semillon more than most other grapes and tends to produce the sweetest, heaviest, most complex dessert wines.

De Bortoli Noble One (\$28)

2. Cane Cut

Here they leave the grapes hanging from the trellis, but cut them away from the vine. The grapes keep producing sugar but use up their supply of water, resulting in a complex style.

Vasse Felix Cane Cut Semillon (\$24)

3. Late Harvest

The grapes are left on the vine to keep ripening. The result is sweet, overripe grapes with a lot of sugar in them. This can be expensive because birds like to get at the grapes, so the longer they are out there, the more you lose. This style generally produces lighter wines.

Yalumba Late Harvest Viognier (\$27)

4. Ice/Iced Wine

This is an extreme version of the late harvest style, where the grapes are left out for so long that the water in the grapes literally freezes. The ice crystals are removed from the grapes. This also produces a lighter wine. This requires the right climate, including freezing temperatures, so you often see these from Canada or Germany (eiswein). But this process can be simulated by putting the grapes into freezers. This is the iced wine style.

Wellington Iced Riesling (\$27)

The Judgment of Paris (1976)

As we all know, the French are proud of the wine they produce and consider them the best in the world. But in the 1970's, US wine was beginning to develop a reputation and many thought that some of the top US wines were as good as, if not better than, their French equivalents.

Naturally the French scoffed. They're good at scoffing, it's what they do. But rather than deny it outright, a wine merchant called Steven Spurrier decided to hold a tasting in Paris. Eleven judges were assembled, including some of France's best sommeliers, vineyard owners and wine magazine editors. Wines were tasted blind so the judges did not know where they were from when tasting them.

20 wines were tasted: 10 white (chardonnay from Burgundy and California) and 10 red (cabernet, from Bordeaux and California). In each category there were 4 French wines and 6 US wines, all but one from vintages in the 1970's.

When the results were revealed, all 11 judges had awarded their top score to either Chateau Montelana 1973 or Chalone Winery 1974 chardonnay... both from the US!

In the reds, again it was a US wine, Stag's Leap 1973 that was voted best cabernet overall. The French wines fared a little bit better in the reds, all 4 French reds ranked in the top 6. But it's the comments from the judges that were the funny part here. One judge said a wine "bespoke the

magnificence of France". That was a Napa cabernet. Similarly, another judge said a wine was definitely from California as "it has no nose", while necking a Batard-Montrachet 73.

When the results were revealed, the judges were red-faced and one even tried to change his scores before Spurrier took away his scorecard. In fact, many of the judges refuse to talk about the tasting to this day.

The tasting has been repeated over the years. In 1978, the same vintages of the wines were tested in San Francisco. The results were even more in favour of the US wines.

In 1986, the tasting was replicated in both the US and France, with only the reds as the whites were seen to be past their prime. The US wines had increased their dominance!

But the "Tasting That Changed The Wine World" was held just last year, on the 30th anniversary. Naturally, the French thought their wines would be at their peak after 30 years of bottle age and that the US wines would fall apart. Guess what happened...



Torzi Matthews "Schist Rock" Shiraz 2006

The region: Eden Valley (SA)

The alcohol: 14.0%

The taste: Full-bodied, rich, sweetish.

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



Our Website!

www.rosebaydriveinliquorstore.com.au

We're updating the website this month, hopefully it'll be all pretty and high tech soon!

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

I know, I know... I keep banging on about the wines by Domenic Torzi, but with good reason. Regular readers know that the Frost Dodger shiraz (\$35) has been going nuts for us. So when I was told he was releasing a new wine at the \$18 price point, well, we were excited to say the least.

We tried a sample and bought two cases straight away. It's been snapped up and those customers just keep asking for more, always a good sign! The only problem is that you have to be very careful saying the name... so far I've only messed up once!

It's also made from Eden Valley grapes, but they do not dry the grapes on racks like they do with the Frost Dodger. Instead you get a much more pure representation of the fruit. While the alcohol is relatively high and oak is certainly used, that's not the focus of this wine. Look for beauty and elegance instead.

You'll find plum, cherry and dark spice flavours. It's a full-bodied wine, but not overpowering. The tannins (or building blocks of a red, if you will) are powdery and dry. My favourite descriptive for this wine, though, is "slurpable".

The value for money is outstanding. If you want to try a decent shiraz without breaking the bank, this is the one.

Or, if you've been intrigued by my descriptions of the Torzi Matthews Frost Dodger or Old Plains shirazes but haven't felt like shelling out \$35, try this one to see what all the fuss is about. You can find descriptions of those wines on the website. Follow the links to the newsletter page.