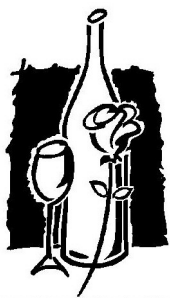


Alex's Newsletter #7 August 2007



Rose Bay Drive In Liquor

Tin Shed "Melting Pot" Shiraz 2004

The region: Eden Valley (SA)

The alcohol: 14.5%

The taste: Spicy, full bodied, smooth.

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



www.rosebaydriveinliquorstore.com.au

Check out our Mr Frog promotion!

We've had this wine sitting up the back of the shop in a dark little corner for awhile. I'd been telling one of the boys how good it is, but he didn't believe me. We shared a bottle one night and now it magically seems to be selling itself.

The main bloke behind the label is Peter Clarke. He's also involved in Vintners Bar and Grill, an awesome restaurant just outside Angaston in the Barossa. I highly recommend it if you're ever in town. A really nice bloke with a couple of really nice jobs!

We were chatting about his wines and he even cracked one open for me when he realised I hadn't tried it. After a few more bottles with him and the staff, I was dodging semi-trailers staggering back to my motel.



Now, down to the wine. This is a nice spicy little number, without being over the top. Pure expressions of fruit, rather than relying on oak for structure. Hints of cassis and licorice shine through. This is a very complex wine for the price and well worth trying.

But probably the most impressive part is how it feels in your mouth. Smooth and quite full-bodied, this wine shines on every part of your palate.

Cork or Screw Cap?

The biggest debate in the industry at the moment is whether to use screw cap or cork closures. Both have advantages and disadvantages.

Cork

Cork is seen as the traditional choice, but a bad cork can permanently ruin the wine. Corks come in different quality grades, but there is no guarantee that the bottle will be OK when you open it. They can carry little nasties in them that may cause problems, including the dreaded cork taint, due to trichloroanisol (TCA).

Corks can also shrink if left in the fridge for an extended period of time, resulting in too much air getting to the wine. This can also happen if wines are not stored on their side, because the wine in the bottle keeps the bottom of the cork moist and expanded.

The biggest problem is the cork taint issue. Wines can be "corked" to varying degrees. Sometimes you may not realise that it's corked, you just won't like the wine and probably won't buy it again. Sometimes you'll smell the tell-tale wet cardboard or musty smells. Either way it's risky for the winemaker, particularly since it is estimated that around 10% of wines that use a cork closure are tainted to some extent. For most producers, it's not worth losing that much wine through no fault of their own.

Pros: more proof for aging, traditional, romantic, easier to sell in Europe.

Cons: can crumble, shrink or cause cork taint issues.

Screw cap

Screw caps have been around for years, but were originally used on cheaper wines. Now you can find them on wines of all prices.

The reason they are being used more often is because they cannot become "corked" from TCA, but that doesn't mean they don't have other problems.

One major issue is called reduction, which refers to sulfur compounds being evident when the bottle is first opened. Fortunately, these will waft away over about 15 minutes after you open the wine, so if you open a wine under screw cap and it smells like sulfur, just let it sit there for awhile and it should be OK.

Various wineries have trialed aging wines under screw caps since the 70's, but the jury is still out..

Pros: no cork taint, easy to open.

Cons: reduction issues.

The next big thing is probably the DIAM closure, a cork-based product apparently treated to destroy TCA by using a "supercritical CO2 process"... righto then.

Other options include the Zork closure (sort of a plastic stopper with the pop of a cork and the freshness of a screw cap) or glass closures called either Vino-Lok or Vino-Seal, which keep the wine fresh using an o-ring seal.

Still, they're all better than what the French used before cork... stuffing rags soaked in olive oil down the necks of the bottles!

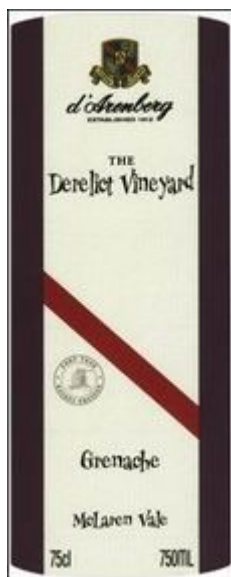
d'Arenberg "Derelict Vineyard" Grenache 2003

The region: McLaren Vale (SA)

The alcohol: 14.5%

The taste: Big, rich and warm. Dark fruits and licorice.

The price: \$33 or 10% off in a dozen



Derelict Grenache tasting notes

Inky black colour, you can hardly see through this wine.

Warm aromas of dark fruits jump out of the glass at you, but when you take a sip, that's when the force of the wine really hits you. Big fruit on the front of your tongue, hints of licorice. You can see that this wine will age well.

Make sure you serve it with a big fat juicy steak or something along those lines! Be sure to decant it.

I managed to go through d'Arenberg when I was in McLaren Vale in late July. Amazing little restaurant and one helluva winery. If you're in town, be sure to go there for lunch.

I've been a grenache fan for awhile, but not many people know too much about it... it's kind of the "forgotten red" of the more mainstream varieties.

So it was a revelation to see that so many wineries in McLaren, Barossa and Eden are doing more and more with grenache. It's a bitch to grow, but when you get it right, it produces some amazing wines.



It's difficult to talk about grenache in Australia without mentioning d'Arenberg. The photo above shows a grenache "bush vine" (ie no trellis support) on the d'Arenberg property.

The Derelict is made from grenache vines that were forgotten for twenty years, left to grow wild without manual pruning, apart from horses eating the grapes from the vines. This resulted in low-yielding vines that give fruit of incredible complexity and depth of flavour. Built to age, but enjoy it young after decanting.

Punt Road Pinot Gris 2006

The region: Yarra Valley (VIC)

The alcohol: 13.5%

The taste: Pear, honeysuckle.

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

PUNT ROAD



Our Website!

www.rosebaydriveinliquorstore.com.au

I will be updating it with tasting notes and pictures from my South Australia trip later this month.

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.

I ran into the winemaker, Kate Goodman, one night at the Healesville Hotel in the Yarra Valley. At the time, we were selling a bit of their sauvignon blanc, but she told me to keep an eye out for the pinot gris.

Now, a year and a bit later, we finally got it into the shop. It's a bit of a cracker really, but not your typical style of pinot gris.

You do get the typical peach, pear and honeysuckle characters throughout, but you also get this really interesting mouthfeel from the use of spicy French oak. It's more of a savoury style than a really fruity kind of white.

You can drink it with just about anything. For those who are trying to convert from sauvignon blanc to pinot gris or pinot grigio, this may not be the best starting place. But for those seasoned pinot gris drinkers who are after something new and interesting, this is the place to be.

The name comes from the original Punt Road, which runs through Melbourne into the Yarra River. Originally it was a little dirt road, but is now one of the busiest roads in Melbourne.

The road was surrounded by some of the earliest vines planted in the region, dating back to the 1850's. The name of the winery is all about the history of wine in the region.

Their wines tend to be more about structure than primary fruit flavours. While they certainly have flavour, that's not the main focus. This is also evident in their brilliant merlot (\$26).