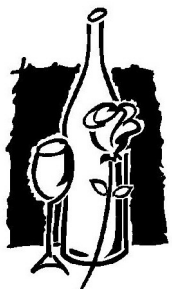


Alex's Newsletter

#8

September 2007



Rose Bay Drive In Liquor

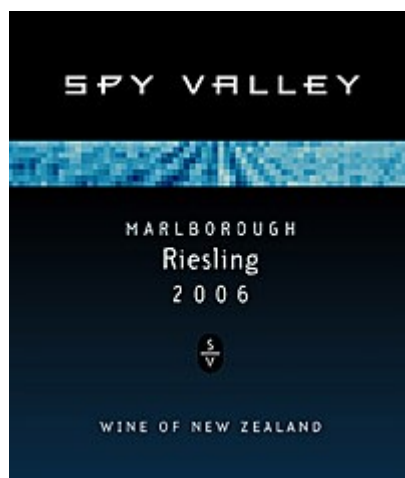
Spy Valley Riesling 2006

The region: Marlborough (NZ)

The alcohol: 12.0%

The taste: Grapefruit, melon, off-dry.

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



www.rosebaydriveinliquorstore.com.au

We all know that some of the best sauvignon blancs in the world come from Marlborough, but it's not the only white grape they grow there. You'll find bits of chardonnay, riesling, pinot gris and gewurztraminer. They're all very nice elegant styles of white wine, due to the cool climate.

Spy Valley is a colloquial term for Marlborough's Waihopai Valley, coz there's a satellite communications monitoring station nearby. There's also a bit of morse code around the neck of the bottle, keeping with the spy theme. It does actually spell something, feel free to work it out if you're bored.

They produce three rieslings, one labelled "Dry Riesling", one labelled "Noble Riesling" (a dessert wine) and one just called "Riesling". This is the latter. It does have a bit of sweetness to it, but it's certainly not over the top.

You should smell your apple/lime notes – it's a bit mineraly too. You might also pick up a bit of a honeyed nose, because there's a small botrytis component to the wine (which is part of the sweetness). This is a really refreshing wine on the palate, from the acid to the crisp but sweet flavours. Plus, it's relatively low alcohol for wine (12%), so it's a great wine for lunchtime. Goes well with a fruit salad or even a spicy Thai dish.

But don't just take my word for it. At the recent Sydney International Wine Competition this year, it scored four trophies. Four trophies, at one show! That's kinda ridiculous. Best aromatic wine, best non-Australian wine, best dry white table wine and best value dry white wine. So, start drinking!

Wine Speak

In one of his recent Good Living articles, Huon Hooke wrote about some words used in the wine trade and how weird they might seem to those who aren't in the know. I tend to lapse into wine speak sometimes too, so to get around that, here are some words used in the trade and a brief description of what they mean in terms of what you taste in the bottle.

Old vine – the grapes used for the wine come from vines that are older than a certain age. This age is different depending on the producer, but 40 years seems to be a typical cut off. This results in vines that produce a lower quantity of grapes, but those that are produced are rich and complex in flavour.

Late harvest/botrytis/noble – usually indicates a higher level of sweetness in a wine, such as dessert wines.

Dry/sweet (aka brut/sec/riche) – refers to the amount of residual sugar left in the wine after the initial fermentation (which turns sugar to alcohol). Generally, wines that are sweeter have lower alcohol levels. Dry, sec and brut all mean the same thing while sweet and riche are pretty similar (although riche doesn't necessarily mean ridiculously sweet).

Blends – wines made with more than one type of grape in them, such as semillon/sauvignon blancs. A blend can also be a wine made of one type of grape sourced from more than one region. You might also find wines that use grapes from more than one country nowadays! Using the example

of multi-grape blends, the grape listed first on the label forms the highest percentage of the blend. So, a semillon/sauvignon blanc contains more semillon than sauvignon blanc.

Classic dry white – this is a specific type of white blend. It usually means that the wine is made with semillon, sauvignon blanc and even a small amount of chardonnay.

Amarone/appassimento – a step in the winemaking process started in Italy. The grapes are put on racks to dry, resulting in more sugar and less water in the grape. This results in rich, complex, rounded red wines. Great for those with a sense of adventure!

Wild ferment – different types of yeast can be used in wine production. Controlled yeasts are much easier to work with because you know what you'll get, but often lack depth of flavour in the final product. Wild yeasts are more unpredictable, but produce more interesting and complex wines.

Malolactic – secondary fermentation, where mallic acid is converted to lactic acid, resulting in a buttery taste in the wine. Used most often with chardonnay.

Premium/Reserve – possibly the most overused terms in the wine industry. It is generally used to differentiate between a winery's standard label and their top level label. Unfortunately, when you see a \$13 wine with the word Reserve on it, well it's just getting a bit silly isn't it?

There are plenty more terms, so if you want to know about any, just ask.

Kaesler Cabernet Sauvignon 2005

The region: Barossa Valley (SA)

The alcohol: 15.5%

The taste: Rich, red berries. No green edge like a lot of other young cabs.

The price: \$32 or 10% off in a dozen



Other Kaeslers in store

Riesling – more of a broad style than rieslings from Clare. A little bit of sweetness, great with Thai. \$18

Stonehorse GSM – Rich, sweet fruit, a great red for lovers of any grape or new red drinkers. \$22

The Bogan Shiraz – A massive beast. High in alcohol and yet not ridiculously hot. Trust me. \$60

WOMS – ask us what it means. Shiraz/cabernet, only produced in great years. \$80

Newsletter regulars will know that Kaesler is one of my favourite labels. I made an appointment to meet Sarah at Kaesler to have a look through their range and was thoroughly impressed.

I've since added three new Kaesler wines to our selection, the old vine riesling (\$18), the Stonehorse Grenache Shiraz Mourvedre (GSM) (\$22) and this cabernet. I'm also going to try to make room for the Avignon, another GSM and a pretty damn impressive red. In fact, the Avignon was one of twelve finalists for this year's Jimmy Watson trophy.



Kaesler barrel room – it's under the winery

A lot of younger cabernets, particularly those from regions like Coonawarra, are recognisable because of a green, herbaceous edge to the wine. I met up with a contact of mine at the Australian Wine Research Institute and spoke to him about this issue. Some people describe it as a “minty” or “eucalypt” tone, while those in the more traditional wine regions of the world view it as a fault.

I don't like that in a cabernet, so that's why I liked this wine so much. It's lush, rich and full of red berry flavours without any of that minty taste. It's far too easy to drink – a definite must for those wishing to get into cabernet but who haven't found one they like.

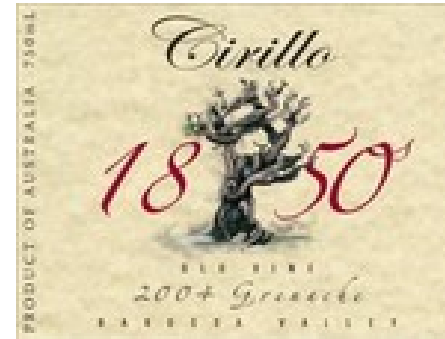
Cirillo Estate “1850's” Grenache 2004

The region: Barossa Valley (SA)

The alcohol: 16.5%

The taste: Rich, dry, complex.

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



Marco's barrels undergoing fermentation in his winery/back shed. We tasted a few of these and they're looking stunning!

Our Website!

www.rosebaydriveinliquorstore.com.au

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.

On my recent Barossa trip, a few people told me to get in touch with Marco Cirillo. I was told that he tends the oldest grenache vines in Australia. In fact, apart from a few tiny vineyards in Spain, they're the oldest in the world, originally planted in the 1850's!

The picture below shows you just how gnarled and thick they are. Thirty years ago, they were so heavy that they were sprawled along the ground. Marco's father started to train them to wind around themselves, so they could support their own weight.



150+ year old grenache vines.

Marco used to sell the grapes to Torbreck for a decent wad of cash, but decided to make his own wine instead. His style is incredibly dry, rich and concentrated, but very light in colour due to the shallow, sandy soil.

This is a wine that needs food. He makes them to match the Italian food served on his table.

He'll be releasing a shiraz in 2010. I tasted it in barrel and it looks amazing.