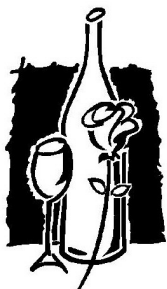


# Alex's Newsletter #12 January 2008



Rose Bay Drive In Liquor

## Mojo Shiraz 2006

**The region:** Barossa Valley (SA)

**The alcohol:** 15.0%

**The taste:** Full flavoured plums

**The price:** \$17 or \$14 in a dozen



With everyone a little bit broke coming into January, let's look at some budget wines that are actually half decent to get you through the month.

Rockbare is a new winery, founded in 2000. The winemaker, Tim Burvill, has a passion for shiraz, grenache and chardonnay. He set his new winery up in McLaren Vale, initially using grapes just from that region.

After initial success with the Rockbare wines, he expanded the range and started the Mojo label to include a sauvignon blanc from Adelaide Hills and this Barossa shiraz.

Barossa shiraz is generally full flavoured, rich and high in alcohol. You'll pick up typical plum and blackberry flavours, plus a bit of sweet vanilla from the oak contact – fourteen months in older French oak. French oak usually results in a more elegant flavour than American oak. Older barrels means less oak influence.

The oak is well integrated though, rather than standing out and overpowering the flavours of the fruit. It's silky smooth and has a slightly spicy finish, typical of shiraz.

This goes great with a BBQ, beef in particular. Why not put a few of these in your next purchase to get you through the inevitable onslaught of BBQs that happen in summer?

The sauvignon blanc is also worth a go. It's crisp and fresh and drinking well. Both are on special til the end of February at \$14 in any dozen that you care to mix up.

## Organics, biodynamics and preservatives

Requests for organic wines have never been stronger, but are they what everyone thinks they are?

The idea behind organic winemaking is to produce crops without any artificial stuff like pesticides, fertilisers or preservatives.

In terms of the stuff that happens in the vineyard itself, most wineries meet organic standards because they believe it is best for the grapes at the end of the day anyway. They still spray the crops to deter or kill pests, but use organic sprays for this. However, some of the bigger producers do use artificial sprays due to the sheer volume of area they have to cover. It's up to the winemaker or vineyard manager at the end of the day, but most of them want what is best for the grapes.

It's what happens in the winery that is the issue. Now, most people have the misconception that organic wines in Australia do not contain preservative 220 (sulfur dioxide), preservative 224 (potassium metabisulphite) or any other types of sulfites that end up in wines. This is not true. According to organic standards in Australia, wine can contain minimal levels of sulfur and still be called organic.

The USA does it differently. A wine that is labelled organic cannot contain any preservatives. Instead, wines made with grapes that are grown to organic standards but have sulfur added to it is labelled "made with organic grapes".

Now, is sulfur all that bad? Is that why you get those thumping headaches and get all blocked up after a big night on the vino? The answer is a definite maybe. For some people it can certainly cause issues, but there are many different compounds in wine that can cause issues for different people.

Sulfur dioxide is added to wine for a couple of reasons. It kills a number of little nasties that may be in the bottle or wine. Most importantly though is the fact that it's a preservative and holds the wine together. Without it, the wines literally fall apart and become undrinkable within a year or two.

However, if you want to buy wines without sulfur dioxide, we do carry the Hardy's range of No Preservative Added wines. They're nice enough and if you're worried about preservatives then they might be worth a try for you. You should be aware that the wine still contains natural preservatives that exist in wine.

The next big thing is biodynamic farming and winemaking. Here is a definition: "Biodynamics is a regenerative agriculture, holistic in approach and practice, through which the farmer and gardener brings the substances and forces of nature into a quality and sustainable production." Tree-hugging, sandal-wearing hippies.

It's a good idea, but it's hard not to laugh when they take into account phases of the moon and things like that. You can even buy special biodynamic moon phase calendars. There you go, that can be the next gift for the guy who has everything. Bet he won't have one of those.

## Blue Pyrenees Brut Rosé 2001

**The region:** Pyrenees (VIC)

**The alcohol:** 11.5%

**The taste:** Apple and bready aromas

**The price:** \$18. Usually \$23.



### Tastings

This year, I intend to start a series of educational tastings in our cellar. They will be held on the first Tuesday night of each month at 6.30pm, starting in March.

The aim is to open up a few wines that you might not see very often and chat about them with your friends. The tastings will be open to all and friends are more than welcome. Please let me know if you are interested in attending.

I will send out more details once we are closer to our first event.

Blue Pyrenees was initially set up by the owners of Krug and Charles Heidsieck in 1963 as Chateau Remy to produce brandy.

These days they produce a range of different wines. While the table wines are quite drinkable, the sparkling wines stand out the most to me.

The Vintage Brut is the non-rosé brother of this wine. Both have apple-like flavours to them, with an undertone of bread flavours that results from five years of yeast contact in the bottle during maturation.

The grapes for their sparklings are picked at night when the temperature is cool. This wine is made purely from pinot noir grapes. When the wine is pressed, a small amount of pink colour is imparted to the wine. No chardonnay or pinot meunier grapes are used in this wine. Chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier are the traditional grapes used in Champagne and most Australian sparklings. When a sparkling wine is made from chardonnay only, it is called a blanc de blanc (white of white). When it's only pinot noir and/or pinot meunier, it's a blanc de noir (white of black). The French call red grapes black. Mostly because they're insane.

So, you'd expect this to be sweet right? Cheap pink sparklings usually are right? Not this one. It's pretty dry and complex (brut = dry). Great value for money! Try this one with a salad or BBQ. Even the guys I've tried it on have loved it, once they got past drinking something that's pink. Of course, the girls love it too, so it's great for everyone.

## Dominique Portet Fontaine Rosé 2007

**The region:** Yarra Valley (VIC)

**The alcohol:** 13.5%

**The taste:** An unusually dry finish

**The price:** \$22 or 10% off in a dozen



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Past newsletters are available on the website so feel free to browse through them. Great for when you can't be bothered doing any work or study!

Keeping with our summer theme, let's hit another rosé. The Wirra Wirra Mrs Wigley has been going strong since I reviewed it, but let's try something a little more dry. Try it with food.

Dominique's family has been in the wine trade for nine generations but he is the first to establish a winery in his own name. His father was a manager at Lafite-Rothschild (one of the world's most famous wineries). He went on to get an oenology degree at Montpellier University and did a year's compulsory military service – as the French army's wine purchasing officer! Told you the French were insane, they give their troops a daily wine ration!

After that, he spent vintages in Médoc, the Rhone Valley, Moët et Chandon and even the Napa Valley in California before moving to Australia in 1976. Here he set up Taltarni and Clover Hill. Then he found the Yarra Valley and stopped moving around. With all this experience, this guy knows his stuff.

It's unusual to find a really dry rosé in Australia - most have a bit (or a lot!) of sweetness to please the masses – but that's what this is.

Raspberry, maybe even guava – the kinds of flavours you might expect from a rosé. What really sets it apart is the long, dry finish. The flavour hangs around in your mouth for awhile. Plus, it's really dry which is unusual for a rosé. Great with seafood, salads or sitting in the sun on a hot day with a tray of dips, cheese and biscuits. If you chill it down too much, you'll lose a lot of the more interesting flavours, so let it warm up a bit first. If you've never been into rosé before, try this one.