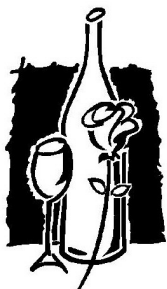


# Alex's Newsletter

## #14

### March 2008



Rose Bay Drive In Liquor

## Poole's Rock Chardonnay 2006

**The region:** Hunter Valley (NSW)

**The alcohol:** 13.1%

**The taste:** Rockmelon, grapefruit and elegant but restrained use of oak

**The price:** \$30 or 10% off in a dozen



Poole's Rock was set up in 1988 by David Clarke, the guy from Mac Bank. They make three ranges of wine, the Poole's Rock stuff, the Cockfighter's Ghost range and the Firestick thingies.

If you're ever in the Hunter, be sure to drop past this place. The winery is all nice and shiny and they've got pretty new restaurant there too called ROCK, which is one of the best places to eat in the Hunter. With that sort of money behind them, are you surprised?

Since they're in the Hunter, it's not that surprising that the top range, the Poole's Rock wines, contain a Semillon and Shiraz, the two grapes for which the Hunter is best known. However, the best wine in the range is the chardy. The 2005 picked up a trophy and a few gold medals too, always pretty impressive. The 2006 is the current vintage and is a great follow up. It's destined to impress judges on the wine show circuit, as it always does. Normally we find that Hunter wines are hard to sell, but this one just walks out the door.

But they're smart enough to realise that not everyone likes Hunter wines. The Cockfighter's Ghost range is all about making a wine of most of the mainstream grapes. They choose the area that they think works best for that grape. So, the Cockfighter's shiraz grapes are chosen from McLaren Vale vineyards, the cabernet from Langhorne Creek and the reserve pinot from select vineyards in Tasmania. It's clever and no matter who you take with you, there's sure to be a wine there to please them. Any trip to the Hunter is not complete without visiting this place.

## Rhône Valley

The Rhône wine producing region in France is the home to some fantastic, easy-to-drink wines, which is why you're seeing these styles pop up more and more in Australia and around the world. The region can be roughly separated into two major areas, the Northern Rhône and Southern Rhône.

### Northern Rhône

Generally, wine made in the Northern Rhône is made predominantly with shiraz and viognier. In fact, shiraz (syrah) is the only red grape allowed to be planted in the AOC regions of the Northern Rhône. The appellations are Côte-Rotie, Condrieu, Château-Grillet, Saint-Joseph, Crozes-Hermitage, Hermitage, Cornas and Saint-Péray.

All have their own distinct rules about which grapes can go into the wine and bear the appellation on the label. One of the most interesting is the Côte-Rôtie AOC, where the reds are made from Shiraz and up to 20% Viognier. Sound familiar? It's becoming a more common style in Australia these days.

Hermitage and Crozes-Hermitage are easy to confuse, and both have the same laws about which grapes are allowed to go into their whites and reds. However, the stuff from Hermitage is usually better quality than the wines from Crozes-Hermitage.

Prominent producers from the area include: Vidal-Fleury, Rene, Delas Freres, Chateau Grillet, Chapoutier, Guigal, Chave, and Jaboulet.

### Southern Rhône

In contrast, the wines from the Southern Rhône are usually blended. The reds are made from Shiraz, Grenache and Mourvedre in particular, but up to 13 varieties can be used.

The most famous appellation is Châteauneuf-du-Pape meaning "New House of the Pope". In 1308, Pope Clement V moved the Papacy to Avignon, a nearby area. He liked Burgundy wine, but later popes, particularly John XXII lurved the wines from this region and did a lot to promote them. The region became known as "Vin du pape" and later changed to Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Those popes had taste, as this appellation is home to some of the best wines in the Rhône valley.

Other appellations include the Coteaux du Tricastin, Côtes du Ventoux, Côtes du Vivarais, Lirac, Tavel and Vacqueyras and Gigondas AOC's. Fortified wines can be made in the Muscat de Beaugues-de-Venise and the Rasteau AOC's.

Prominent producers include Paul Jaboulet Aine, E. Guigal, Château de Beaucastel, Domaine du Vieux Telegraphe, Chapoutier, Mordoree, Grand Veneur and Château La Nerthe.

### Côtes du Rhône

A producer in either the North or South can label a wine Côtes du Rhône if the wine does not fit in the guidelines of another appellation that would bring a higher price. This allows producers to sell their wine under an appellation, but also allows them to experiment to a certain extent. To me, that's a good thing.

## Chateau Mont-Redon

**The region:** Châteauneuf-du-Pape AOC, Rhône Valley (France)



### Monthly Tastings

Our next monthly tasting will be Tuesday April 1<sup>st</sup> at 6.30pm, held in our cellar.

We'll follow the same format, 3 whites and 3 reds for now, but we'll mix this up as we go along.

Remember to book early, the first one filled up pretty quickly.

Mont-Redon is well recognised when it comes to producers in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. It's the largest estate that is still owned by a family, rather than a company. The wines are cheaper ("more affordable") than a lot of the others in the region, but stack up well against them. Recently, the family has invested a lot into the winery and vineyards, modernising a lot of the machinery.

### Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$70)

OK, I know a lot of you won't pay this for a wine, particularly a French one, but it's still a good example of C-du-P and at a good price. Most of the others start above \$100. Mind you, this is a bargain compared to some of the wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy! Also note the decorative C-du-P bottle.

You'll pick up the typical grenache and shiraz ripe berry flavours, plus some earthy tones that are so common to Old World wines. The thing to note though is that European winemakers concentrate on texture more than Aussie wines do. You'll see that here with a rich and textured palate with a lot of length (which means the flavour goes on and on... like me sometimes).

### Côtes du Rhône (\$25)

Here's the entry level wine, labelled MonRedon to confuse you. Normally I find French wines under about \$40 pretty light, watery and nothing to write home about, particularly compared to the Aussie wines at the same price. This one is great value though, it has richer flavours of cherries and hints of plum. Again, a European earthiness, but still nice and rich. Compare it to an Aussie \$25 GSM and see that it's actually quite good value.

## Brand's Laira Cabernet Sauvignon 2004

**The region:** Coonawarra (SA)

**The alcohol:** 14.0%

**The taste:** Soft, luscious blackberries

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



### Our Website!

[www.rosebaydriveinliquorstore.com.au](http://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 [sales@rosebayliquor.com.au](mailto:sales@rosebayliquor.com.au)

Past newsletters are available on the website, feel free to have a browse. Great for procrastination!

Don't forget our tastings, starting Tuesday March 4th at 6.30pm. Next one, April 1<sup>st</sup>

Brand's was established by Eric and Nancy Brand when they purchased the Laira vineyard in 1946. At the time, the only wine grape planted in Coonawarra was shiraz, right up until 1950. Over time, the Brand's extended the Laira vineyard, planting more vines including cabernet sauvignon. The brand's sons, Jim and Bill, took over the reigns. McWilliams bought a 50% stake in 1991, then the remaining 50% in 1994, but Jim and Bill stayed on as the winemakers. McWilliams also purchased two more huge properties in Coonawarra, making them one of the largest landholders down there and giving the guys and girls at Brand's lots of fruit to choose from.

Brand's has a history of success at wine shows, including the Coonawarra Barrel Series auctions, where about a dozen of the best wineries in Coonawarra offer a barrel of their best red for sale to the highest bidder(s). When the wine is ready, the wineries bottle that barrel in special bottles and boxes for the winners. Other contributors include Parker Estate, Leconfield, Rymill and Wynn's. Brand's does well at these auctions, so they're clearly pretty good!

This is their entry level cabernet, but it's certainly not cheap and at the price is an absolute steal. If, like me, you're not a huge cabernet fan because of the green, mint flavours that can show up, then this wine is for you. It's all luscious fruit, all the way from the tip of your tongue to the back of your throat without that mintiness that is so often present in Coonawarra cabernet. It will age well for the next five or so years. Buy a case to treat yourself... at this price, it's an absolute steal.