



Eltham & District Winemakers Guild Inc.

Press Cuttings
March 2007

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The Guild encourages the responsible consumption of alcohol

The Guild meets on the last Friday of each month
at the Eltham Living & Learning Centre at 8 pm
Next meeting: 30th March, 2007

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Next Meeting

You will be busy at this meeting! There will be opportunities for those who have prepared for the meeting and have brought along samples of their wares.

Neil will instruct us on how to test for Titratable Acidity (TA). Bring along a sample of your must and he will demonstrate the use of a burette and discuss the nature of 'end-points' and other chemical stuff. Neil might even let you play with the magnetic stirrer if you promise not to splatter the must all over the room.

You will also be able to determine the pH of your must (hopefully in time to make acid adjustments). If you have a pH meter and want to see how it compares with others, bring it along. Tim will teach us some of the finer points of how to check your pH meter. If you own a meter, this is your chance to see if those measurements actually correspond to a standard. If you don't, you can check out your wines or musts.

Somebody might be game enough to explain the difference between pH and titratable acidity, and that will provide some entertainment. If we want to get completely confused, perhaps we could get other members to add points of clarification. We need the attendance of the resident chemist in Mount Beauty but I fear his absence due to geographic isolation.

Last but not least, this will be a Swap Night. In an attempt to avoid cellar palate, we will taste each others wines and swap bottles. Come loaded with samples to taste and bottles to swap if you find other wines to your taste. Please write your name on the label so that we can identify the winemaker when we drag a bottle from the cellar later on.

Presidents Press

George Wright - President

I won't be surprised if nobody reads this newsletter until next month. Vintage is early and winemakers are plunging and pressing, measuring and testing, adjusting and sniffing and wondering what's happening in those bubbling containers. It's that busy time of year.

The show committee met this month to review the last show and identify improvements that could be introduced. They are a hardworking and creative lot, the ideas flow and it's a productive committee and good fun as well. We'll be looking for interested people to nominate for the committee at the next meeting.

This month's meeting will also be busy. It will be very hands-on with practical demonstrations of acid measurement devices as well as tasting and swapping wines with other members.

We will also be looking to tie down a weekend for a trip away, so bring your diaries.

In addition, the executive has mapped out a draft guide of events for the next twelve months, based on responses to Zenon's facilitation when he elicited your wants and needs at previous meetings. We know it will change as things evolve, but it gives an indication of the sorts of meetings and events we have in mind.

Hotshots edge out Coolies and Kevin wins again!!

Spencer Field (with assistance from 'divine intervention')

The Guild's February meeting featured the culmination of the vigorous Coolies Challenge against the Hotshots for the best 2006 Shiraz wine made from Peter Raeburn's Redesdale and Bendigo vineyards. A blind tasting of nine wines overall was facilitated by Chris Ramsay. The wines consisted of a single entry from each of four Coolies groups (grapes sourced from Redesdale) and four Hotshot groups (grapes sources from the Bendigo vineyard), in addition to another Shiraz entered by guest Speaker, Peter Raeburn.

Peter, who is Senior Viticulture Lecturer at Bendigo TAFE, gave an informative presentation on the difference characteristics of the two vineyards, his management of them, and the likely contributions to wine quality by the grapes and soil.

For the tastings, Peter brought along a TAFE winemaker colleague whose comments were most helpful in identifying differences and any faults, (and how to correct/prevent) in the wines.

The Hotshots edged out the Coolies overall based on total points awarded to the wines by judges in the Guild's 2006 wine show.

We must acknowledge the very, very high standard of quality of the nine Shiraz tasted. Members credited most wines with medals and there were a lot of bronze, silvers and a few gold overall. In the writer's view this was the best group of amateur wines tasted at Guild meetings over the last eight years. **A real credit to member's skills and especially to Peter Raeburn for the outstanding quality of his grapes!!**

Although looking forward to sharing the camaraderie and discussion of members' approaches to making Shiraz, Kevin Furness unfortunately missed the meeting as he was in the midst of his 2007 vintage. He instead forwarded a gold medal Shiraz to be offered as an award to the best wine on the night, an award that he subsequently won!!

There were no doubts in members' minds that Kevin's Shiraz was the solid favourite on the night. Most golds and silvers were awarded by the membership for this wine.

Neil Johannesen, who has a very experienced and highly respected, expert palate, summed up Kevin's wine, commenting that he 'was in love' finding excellent colour, nose, spicy Shiraz character and great length of palate.

Kevin says that had he attended and reported on his Shiraz, he would have said something like the following:

What a stuff up from the beginning, I ran out of preferred yeast, and I stopped plunging about 5 days too early, believing the ferment (an extremely hot one) had stopped. At this point I added the malo culture and sealed the fermenters to let the juice sit on the skins for an extra few days. When it came time to press, a very dry cap of skins and stalks was sitting proud above the wine. An extremely pungent odour reeked from two of the three barrels, the other being the usual pleasant bouquet.

Not knowing what to do and flying by the seat of my pants, I continued on my way of uneducated mistake-making throughout the whole procedure by plunging the cap, (dry and crusty) back into the wine. I then pressed and blended all barrels into stainless steel. (I'm not sure I should continue with this summary of my 'expert wine making techniques').

I allowed the wine to go through malo in the stainless and then racked a very ordinary smelling wine into 1 x new American oak, 1 x 1 year old Hungarian oak and 1 x reconstituted French oak. Just to go back for a minute to the very beginning, the grapes had good sugar, but the pH was a little high. Picking and

crushing was done early in the morning with the job completed by lunch time before the day got too hot. Tartaric was added @ 2g/l at the initial stage and continually adjusted by 1/2 to 1 g/l at the earliest possible stages of the process until the desired levels were achieved. At the end of each significant stage, levels are checked and adjusted accordingly. The yeasts used were L2226 (danstil) and D254, both available at Cellar Plus in the city. I ran out of 2226 which I think is the best, I may be wrong but will find out, as this year I'm not using it. The wine has been wrecked - I mean racked - twice so far and will be done once more prior to bottling in mid April.

The principles I try to follow are:

- Divide the parcel of fruit and use at least two different yeasts
- Use different oak for maturation
- Adjust acid levels as early as you can and by the maximum recommended dose at the stage required, and
- When all else fails and you really screw up as I did this year, lay your hands on the barrels and pray for Divine Intervention.

Some may think that it was cheating to call in help from above, but Jesus was the greatest wine maker in recorded history and the Angels take their share of the wine out of the barrels every year anyway, so why not ask for intervention, why not, I ask? Believe it or not, this is my story for the Shiraz that is '06.

My congrats to the Hotshots and encouragement to the Coolies, for as Rocky Balboa states 'it aint over till it's over'. Let's see what happens at the end of '07, as this will test our abilities to finish a wine off. I wish every one good fortune and good wine making for 2007.

Postscript: As a losing Coolie, Kevin's divine intervention and other talents are too much for me - I hereby admit defeat!! So if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, and this is what I'm doing for the 2008 Joe Illian Trophy. Kevin and I, along with grape supplier Graham Scott, are jointly colluding in making the finest, most perfect Sauvignon Blanc. So look out!!

Rob Aitken's dribbles

Rob Aitken

"I will not be as those who spend the day in complaining of headache, and the night in drinking the wine that gives it."

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe

Jimmy's Place

George Wright

Pinot Gris and San Choy Bao

My appreciation of a good meal can best be expressed by a good burp, but it doesn't explain why I enjoyed it. If I want to communicate the nature of my experience in more detail to the cook, something more sophisticated is required, especially if I am in a restaurant and the people at the next table don't understand that the burp has to resonate sufficiently to penetrate to the kitchen. When Carol and I dined at Jimmy's Place

in Warrandyte, in deference to the other diners I suppressed my natural exuberance but decided to write down my feelings of joy when I tackled the San Choy Bao.

Jimmy's Place is a Singapore Café Restaurant in Colin Ave, Warrandyte. The food is honest Asian tucker, the serves are generous and the prices reasonable. It's our favourite eatery when we don't feel like cooking, don't want to get dressed up and don't want to blow the budget on white plates as wide as the ocean and tiny islands of food that the cook (sorry, chef) calls a feed at other restaurants. It's not that I don't like the food - I don't like filling up at McDonalds on the way home.

The part of the meal that took my fancy was the entrée. We were drinking Pinot Gris at the time which turned out to be a wonderful compliment to the food. The grapes for the wine were grown at Wild Cattle Creek vineyard in Wandin. The wine had buckets of fruit with aromas of melons, pears, violets and fresh mown hay. It was highly acidic and puckered the sides of the mouth on tasting without the benefit of food.

As our host explained, San Choy means 'lettuce' and Bao can be translated as 'bun, parcel or bowl'. The lettuce leaves were so crisp and moist I thought they may have been picked from the garden after I had ordered my meal. Inside the lettuce 'bun' part you spoon in minced pork and prawn and the leaves of lettuce are then rolled around the filling. You eat by hand and make sure you lean forward to avoid moisture and saliva dripping onto your clothes.

It's a great combination. The neutral taste of the lettuce offsets the flavour explosion of the meat and seafood combination and the texture of the crisp lettuce contrasts with the mushy solid filling.

And then there's the wine. The acid of the wine cuts through the fat of the pork, and the saltiness of the prawns accentuate the fruitiness of the wine and compliment the subdued aromas and taste of lettuce.

A bottle of Pinot Gris can be purchased from the cellar door at Wild Cattle Creek at Wandin located on the Warburton Highway. From memory it's about \$20. You can reserve your table at Jimmy's Place on 9844 4974. Don't forget to order the San Choy Bao. Burp at your discretion.

The Odyssey (a small extract)

Homer (Greek Poet 800BC-700BC)

“Wine can of their wits the wise beguile,
Make the sage frolic and the serious smile.
The grave in memory measurefrisk about,
And many a long repented word bring out.”

Zen and the Art of Amateur Winemaking

Chris Ramsay

Apologies received from Chris this month, he has been busy and ran out of time to compile a Zen article.

Forthcoming Meetings

George Wright

The following schedule is a draft of forthcoming events and meetings which has been produced by the executive after discussions at recent meetings. It will change over time and further detail is required but it does give an indication of the direction we intend to follow.

Dates	Subject
March 30	Swap Meeting. Test PH and titratable acidity
April 27	Country wines - Blind Tasting
May 28	Fining Trials
June 29	International Night
July 27	Annual General Meeting. Taste-off - Kit Wines
August 31	Varietal Night (Sauvignon Blanc?)
September 28	Citrus winemaking - a practical lesson
October 26	Octoberfest (beer)... Start brewing in preparation
November 30	Stewarding and Associate Judging - techniques and responsibilities
Nov/Dec	Wine Show
Jan 27	BBQ. Sausage Sizzle and tasting of medal-winning wines
Feb 24	Taste-off. Hotties and Coolies Revisited

Note: Trip to region (yet to be selected) and weekend date (yet to be defined). Date required ASAP so that members can insert them in diaries.

Trading Barrel

BUY / SELL SERVICE FOR MEMBERS - Ads need to be lodged with the editor by the 15th of the month to be included in the next Newsletter.

For Sale:

3 x 54ltr Demijohn @ \$35.00 each
1 x 82ltr Stainless Steel Keg @ \$70.00

Please contact **Russ Henry** on 9439 4479 if interested.

As I have no plans to use it in within the next two years, I offer for sale a high quality 225 litre barrique - Seguin Moreau oak, bought new and used in 2006 only. I have just bottled from it some of my 2006 Redesdale Shiraz which prospective owners may taste in assessing the barrel. Available at 50% of the new price: \$340. Seguin Moreau oak can be checked out at <http://www.seguin-moreau.fr> Ring me on 0408 300 523, or email me at spencerf@bigpond.com. Spencer Field.

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