



Eltham & District Winemakers Guild Inc.

Press Cuttings
October 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: 26th October 2007

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Next Meeting

This meeting you will experience something new.

Andrew Watt from Winequip will be talking about the benefits of adding tannins to wine. He will demonstrate how tannin finings can make a significant difference. If you want to experience the improvement in your own wines bring along a sample and Andrew will demonstrate how it is done. It works best with wines that have a problem, so concentrate on problem wines rather than your gold medal winner. It works best with reds, so let's concentrate on red wines for this meeting. I might dust off a bottle of Blueberry wine to see what does to country wines.

Presidents Press

George Wright

Entries close for the wine show at the end of this month. The wine show committee has been working hard all year to ensure the success of the show and I know it will be up to the standard that we have come to expect. It's going from strength to strength and gaining a reputation amongst amateur winemakers from near and far. It's the best chance you will get to have unbiased comments on your home-made wines. I certainly intend to enter some of my older wines that started off pretty ordinary and have now improved as well as my current vintage wine that hasn't matured properly but may be encouraged to do better if it receives flattering comments from the judge.

Don't forget to enter your bottles. The entry kit is on the Guild website.

Chairman of the show committee, John O'Callaghan will be tapping people on the shoulder asking them to be associate judges and stewards and at the November meeting we will focus on how to carry out these tasks. Perhaps not everybody will be able to judge but John will be trying to share the experience around for those who are willing to have a go. It's a daunting task, but very rewarding and certainly educational. If you get the offer, my advice is to grab it, even if you feel it will be a challenge.

Change of Editor

Sue King

This will be my final newsletter for the Wineguild. I thank you all for the opportunity and wish the best of luck to the incoming editor.

A parting joke:

What is the difference between God and a Winemaker?
God doesn't think he is a Winemaker.

Baby Bear's Porridge

George Wright

Those who couldn't make the trip to Geelong missed out on some very good wines. The Bellarine Peninsula and the Barabool Hills were in impeccable shape and the sea was smooth and blue and flat, a great contrast to the vertical images of the You Yangs and the city buildings that poked up. It wasn't hot. It wasn't cold. In fact the whole experience was like Goldilocks tasting Baby Bear's porridge.

It was the little things that make me remember the trip. For example, I discovered that I was booked into a room with Rob Atkins, a room that appeared to have only one bed. With apologies to Rob's wife, even I have some standards. When I accosted the reception staff to remonstrate, plead for is a better word, I was told that the couch pulled out into a separate bed. It didn't help when Kevin Furness knocked on the door dressed in a Japanese Kimono wanting a drink before dinner. I did have a gay time but on the next trip I will invite a woman into the room to protect my reputation, whatever's left of it. Humm...with my new found status perhaps she may feel safe....

Rob's most incisive comment on the trip was that 'Johnno makes the beer. Roma goes to work to support him'. Mirro made a very interesting comment, amongst many: 'I made wine but all the corks blew out of the bottles. My Sauv Blanc was a blank.' And Kevin Furness topped the lot with an observation that 'Pinot Noir can be better than Shiraz', or something like that. I'm sure he will rush to clarify the exact context to this revelation.

I was also impressed with the exchange that took place at Brown Magpie Winery. Our host was explaining the difficulties of cleaning barrels and described the equipment she used and Neil just nodded and said, 'You've met Myrna', insinuating that she did all the barrel cleaning in his household. Richard Bortko interjected, 'Yes. Myrna the Barrel Girl.' It pays to stand next to Richard at these functions because some of his ripostes are delivered very quietly.

I did note that David and Liz got the only room with a spa. Evidently there are privileges for those who manage the money. When I chided Liz, she said that they didn't use it because it was too dangerous, but I didn't have the nerve to ask her to clarify too much. After all, David does have a reputation as a stern and demanding treasurer and I wouldn't like to stimulate other images of what dangerous stunts he may pull in a spa.

I found the most interesting winery was Dick and Dib Simonsen's winery at Curlewis. As a retired engineer Dick has buried his winemaking and storage facilities in concrete water tanks and has ingenious passive mechanisms for temperature control and for moving things around with minimum mechanisation. I left this winery with a severely boggled mind. He knows what he likes doing: making Shiraz. As his winery demonstrates, he is a perfectionist and his Shiraz is not just good or better. It is best.

As these things go, the weekend went. It's now just a pleasant blur. The only bad memory was excessive sulphur in the white wines (in my opinion). We need to thank Bill Laughlin for arranging such a stimulating and pleasant trip. It took many hours of preparation and his big plans and little details made everything seem easy, but we know how these things go wrong if that doesn't happen. Thanks Bill. As is normal David used his accountancy skills to organise accounts, purchases and distribution of wines. It also seemed to work well and as the difficulties we had last year did not eventuate, we can also thank him for the hassle-free weekend. Also thanks to Geoff for the Sunday lunch...feeding thirty people when you had returned from China on the previous day is a remarkable achievement.

EDWG Wine Show – 8th & 9th December 2007

Roma O'Callaghan

Members of the Show Committee have been beavering away with arrangements for another great Show - especially our Marketing guru, Spencer Field, who has lined up 35 Gift Vouchers for awards, and cash support for the costs of running the show. Not only that, but over \$1000 value in door prizes (so bring winemaker friends and potential Guild members). Your friends may be interested in another first for the 2007 show - 3 free workshops (wine appreciation, grape winemaking and country winemaking). Yet another benefit from Spencer's work is the likelihood of some very interesting and practical tutorials from sponsors at future meetings.

We hear that this year's Jo Ilian for the Best Sauvignon Blanc is being tightly contested, and that there are some special entries being lined up (watch out for some fortified's to knock your socks off!).

More good news is that there will be a 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the Best Grape Winemaker and Best Country Winemakers this year. To be eligible, you must enter wines in at least 3 Grape or Country classes respectively. And for white wine aficionados here's a scoop – sponsor Vinvicta are awarding 500 Diem corks for the Best Previous Chardonnay, Pinot Gris Wine (value \$130)!

Once again the WOTY (Wine Maker Of The Year) is the Guild Member with the highest score by totalling their three top scoring wines, at least one wine of which must be a country wine, one a grape wine, and at least one of the three wines must be current vintage. Clearly a consummate winemaker!

Because some of our regular winemakers are becoming so good they are moving towards commercial winemaking status, the Committee is reminding everyone of the Wine Show rule which defines an "amateur wine" as "wine produced on a non-commercial basis and not vintaged on commercial premises." The Committee has used this rule to clarify one query already, and if anyone is unsure, please contact Show Director John O'Callaghan on 9437 0053 or john@buckleysbeer.com.au.

Entries close on 31st October. The Entry Kit is to be e-mailed (and snail-mailed) out shortly. If you have changed your address since last year, please advise the Treasurer asap (contact details at front of this newsletter).

How's your SO₂? So, so???

George Wright

How can you be sure that the PMS (Potassium Metabisulphite) or SMS (Sodium Metabisulphite) you use hasn't degenerated in the container? The powder goes off in the packet relatively quickly and there is not obvious indication of its potency. You can't rely on the concentration of last year's packet. There may be an additional source of uncertainty. Can you be sure your supplier is using a bulk supply that is still potent? All those careful measurements you make to deliver the correct dose may be meaningless if the concentration does not match the required dose. You could lose an entire vintage.

SMS and PMS have additional difficulties in that they leave residues of potassium or sodium in the wine. In other words, salt residues.

On our recent visit to Geelong we met Dick Simonise in this small winery (the one made of concrete water tanks). While the winery displayed many inventive ways that the small winemaker could use to handle wines it was his approach to using Sulphur that took my attention. Dick uses a concentrated solution of sulphur dioxide in water as the source of his SO₂.

As this also degrades over time, he uses a very accurate hydrometer to measure the specific gravity of the solution before he uses the SO₂ and he can read off a graph the amount of solution required to bring his wine to a specific concentration. The addition will result in an accurate concentration of SO₂ and has the added advantage that no salt ion residues are left in the wine.

Dick has generously offered to sell kits to enable Guild members to emulate this approach to sulphuring their wines in the same way. The kit consists of:

- 15L of concentrated SO₂ solution,
- a hydrometer,
- a measuring cylinder, and
- a chart.

If 1 cc (i.e.) 1ml of this solution is tipped into 15,000L wine, it will bring the concentration of SO₂ to 70ppm. In other words, there is enough SO₂ to treat all the wine the guild members are likely to make in our lifetimes.

The kit costs \$150 and if more solution is required he will replace another 15L for \$50.

I would vote against the Guild purchasing a kit for two reasons:

- the general policy of not purchasing consumables as this is the province of the winemaker
- the safety implications of storage and handling such high concentrations of SO₂ solution.

Nevertheless individual members or small groups of members may decide to take up the offer. Dick is willing to provide advice.

Dick can be contacted on 5250 3861 or simonsen@pipeline.com.au.

PS He has just won a Bronze medal for his Shiraz at the 2007 Geelong Wine Show, missing out on a Silver by one point. I must say his red is luscious.

Home made Winemaking equipment

Stan Gower

George Wright has invited Stan Gower to write a series of four monthly articles for the Guild Newsletter about his home made wine making equipment. The four articles will deal with; 1. *De-stemming*. 2. *Pressing*.

3. *Lifting and moving*, and 4. *Corking*. Each process will be illustrated by a photo of home made or adapted equipment.

We did actually commence this series in the June Newsletter, but because of a technical problem could not include the photo for that month. We have decided it will be best to recommence the series from the beginning, so here is the first of four topics, with the photo included, dealing with

de-stemming.

1. *De-stemming*, (after manual crush)

To crush, I use a hand operated manual crusher sitting on top of a cleaned and sterilized "wheely-bin", sitting along side a second "wheely bin", so I can slide the crusher onto the second bin and park it there while I access the crushed grapes in the first bin, with no lifting of the crusher needed.

In my early wine making, I would de-stem by taking each bunch of crushed grapes in my hand and stripping the grapes from the stems. This worked, but was tedious, and took a long time. I discovered a better method by accident. I had used the Guild's crusher/de-stemmer a couple of times, so I knew how it operated. Then one day I was watching a video on wine making. When the commentator said that "the de-stemmer GENTLY removes the grapes from the stems". I thought, "*Bloody hell!!!! That's not how I remember it. The grapes get viciously battered from the stems.*" So I tried scooping some crushed grapes into a tray sitting on a camping table, and then just moved my fingers "criss-cross", rapidly from end to end of the tray.

Most of the grapes separated easily and quickly from the stems, and as the grapes and juice collected in the bottom of the tray, the stems sort of floated to the top. I then grabbed most of the stems, (they hung together in big clumps), and dumped them into an adjacent tray while I poured off the separated grapes and juice into a fermenter container. A quick repeat of the finger "battering" of the stems, that now had plenty of space in the tray, removed nearly all the remaining grapes. The stems were then discarded, and the remaining grapes poured off. The accompanying photo shows a heap of stems that remain after this process.



I intend to try a larger tray; to take perhaps twice the number of bunches. I think that will be even quicker. I did record the times for this task in 2006, but I can't find where I wrote them down. But I recall fairly clearly that, once the crusher and bins and tray were cleaned, sterilized, and set up, the actual crushing and pressing took something less than 6 hours to complete for 350 kgs. That's around 1 minute per kilogram of grapes. Not as fast as a crusher/de-stemmer for the actual process, but you need to factor in the convenience. All the equipment was cleaned and set up before I went to pick the grapes. I didn't have to hook up the trailer and spend travel time to go and get a crusher de-stemmer, (if it's available when I want it), and return it later. Taking all that into account, the time taken with my equipment begins to look quite reasonable. What it meant in terms of my program is that Wendy and I could pick 300 kg of grapes on one day, and I could complete the crush and de-stem on the following day, without having to run about after equipment. Of course for bigger quantities of grapes, at some point, the balance would start to change.

38th ANNUAL ELTHAM AMATEUR WINE SHOW

*N.B. Wine entries close Wednesday 31st October
2007!*

Check your winemaking and tastings against the judges' comments
at the show on

Sunday December 9th, 2007

11 am - 3 pm **Eltham Community Centre**

Award Presentations at 12.30 pm

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Nearly 700 entries last year!!!



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classes:**

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1 pm: Berry wine making

1.30 pm: Grape wine making

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For Further Information: 03 9437 0053 or Email: cheers@amateurwine.org

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.

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