

Landmark Australia - Day 3

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Last night's dinner was another opportunity to taste wines that couldn't be squeezed into the day's tastings (see list below). To me the most remarkable wines were the **Tahbilk Marsannes** - such a good wine at such a great price, which is probably why I made the 2005 a previous <u>wine of the week</u>. Not only that but also a wine that develops well in bottle.

I sat next to Jeff Grosset, who told me he has planted some Nero d'Avola after being impressed by the wines he tasted on Sicily. He and his partner (Stephanie Toole of Mount Horrocks in the Clare Valley) did their serious research into the potential of the variety by buying up as many samples as possible and tasting them on the ferry back to the mainland. One to watch... along with the Fiano.

The three wines by John Duval (who was there at the dinner) showed very well, especially the **Eligo Shiraz 2005**, made from both Barossa and Eden Valley fruit. John was at the dinner but I didn't get a chance to talk to him about the wines. Chester Osborn's **d'Arenberg Ironstone Pressings 1996** showed that this wine has the potential to age, even though in this vintage he dropped the sulphur a little too low, he said, so it was ageing more quickly than it should.

Osborn's wines are as brimming with life as the man himself - he's apparently in the process of setting up his own fashion label. The fact that he has time to do so may be due to the fact that, he claims, they go into the vineyards just once a year, ie to harvest, the old bush vines needing no pruning or other curbs on their vigour. (Which reminds me of a great comment from lain Riggs - see below - that they had perfected the art of bonsai viticulture in the Hunter Valley, so poor are the soils and so small the canopy.)

Here's the full list of last night's dinner wines:

2001 Yarrabank Late Disgorged Sparkling Chardonnay/Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley

1998 Tahbilk Marsanne, Nagambie Lakes, Goulburn Valley

2004 Tahbilk Marsanne, Nagambie Lakes, Goulburn Valley

2008 Tahbilk Marsanne, Nagambie Lakes, Goulburn Valley

1996 d'Arenberg The Ironstone Pressings Grenache/Shiraz, McLaren Vale

2002 d'Arenberg The Ironstone Pressings Grenache/Shiraz/Mourvèdre, McLaren Vale

2006 d'Arenberg The Ironstone Pressings Grenache/Shiraz/Mourvèdre, McLaren Vale

1992 Yalumba The Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz, Barossa

1996 Yalumba The Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz, Barossa

2002 Yalumba The Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Shiraz, Barossa

2006 John Duval Wines Plexus Shiraz/Grenache/Mourvèdre, Barossa Valley

2006 John Duval Wines Entity Shiraz, Barossa Valley

2005 John Duval Wines Eligo Shiraz, Barossa Valley

Disgorged 2008 Rockford Sparkling Black Shiraz, Barossa Valley

Today, Wednesday (had to think hard to work out which day it is), was the turn of Sauvignon and Semillon followed by Cabernet and Cabernet blends.

Iain Riggs of Brokenwood in the Hunter Valley showed varietal Semillons mainly from the Hunter. The **Tyrrell's Vat 1 Semillon 1998** was terrific but I was quite surprised that it was the oldest one put before us. Riggs explained that this was because of the problems of random oxidation under cork, which made older wines in good condition difficult to source. As if to prove a point, the **Brokenwood ILR 1999**, the only one of the selection bottled under cork, was definitely not in perfect condition, though you could still see the begnnings of toasty, nutty aromas and flavours that make mature, low-alcohol Hunter Semillon so attractive and distinctive. The Sauvignons were a long way from the herbaceous styles of stereotypical NZ Sauvignon, though after my recent tasting with Montana's Jeff Clarke (see Whither New Zealand Sauvignon) I was at pains to point out that it really is a stereotype. Even though the **Shaw + Smith Sauvignon 2009** was a tank sample, it had a fine yet intense apricot and citrus fruit character that demonstrated the quality of the fruit picked before the heatwave.



The Sauvignon/Semillon blends were not the most impressive examples I have ever tasted and did not really do justice to this particular category, though the **Cape Mentelle Walcliffe 2006** was excellent.

We tasted:

1998 Tyrrell's Wines Vat 1 Semillon, Hunter

1999 Brokenwood ILR Semillon, Hunter

2002 Peter Lehmann Margaret Semillon, Barossa Valley

2003 Tempus Two Copper Zenith Semillon, Hunter

2005 Vasse Felix Semillon, Margaret River

2006 McWilliam's Mount Pleasant Lovedale Semillon, Hunter

2008 Thomas Wines Braemore Individual Vineyard Semillon, Hunter

2009 Shaw + Smith Sauvignon Blanc, Adelaide Hills

2008 Angullong Sauvignon Blanc, Orange

2008 Logan Sauvignon Blanc, Mudgee

2008 Goundrey 'G' Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon, Mount Barker, Great Southern

2006 Cape Mentelle Walcliffe Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon, Margaret River

2008 Brookland Valley Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc, Margaret River

2007 Rosemount Show Reserve Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc, Western Australia

2007 Lenton Brae Wines Wilyabrup Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc, Margaret River

Robert Mann, grandson of Jack Mann (winemaker at Houghton from 1930 to 1974), had made an admirably concise selection of Cabernets and Cabernet blends: the first five wines were, on the whole, models of restraint and finesse, and the **Mouton**, at this stage in its evolution, looked very oaky and definitely in need of considerable futher ageing to reach its peak, unlike the Australian wines. The last six wines were definitely in a more powerful, rich-fruited style but even so there was good diversity of tastes and textures. The **Wendouree Cabernet/Malbec** blend split the room but I particularly liked its dark, minerally style and the savouriness that came with the Malbec.

Robert Mann's selection:

2005 Mount Mary Quintet Cabernets, Yarra Valley

2005 Howard Park Abercrombie Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot/Cabernet Franc, Great Southern/Margaret River

2005 Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River

2005 Woodlands 'Colin' Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River

2005 Sandalford Prendiville Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River

2005 Château Mouton Rothschild Cabernet/Merlot/Cabernet Franc/Petit Verdot, Pauillac

2005 Parker Coonawarra Estate Terra Rossa First Growth, Cabernet/Merlot, Coonawarra

2005 Majella The Malleea Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz, Coonawarra

2005 Henschke Cyril Henschke Cabernet/Merlot, Eden Valley

2005 Wendouree Cabernet Sauvignon Malbec, Clare Valley

2005 Hardys Chateau Reynella Basket Press Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale

2005 Penfolds Cellar Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Barossa Valley

Lunch at Yalumba turned out to be a first: dining inside a concrete fermentation tank, its insides now polished to a lustrous sheen. The tasting took place in another former tank and was led by Yalumba chief winemaker and queen of Viognier Louisa Rose and Max Allen, Melbourne-based journalist best known for his column in *The Australian* and for his instigation of the <u>Australian Alternative Varieties Wine Show</u>. They had included a couple of Pinot Gris wines, though apparently this is no longer alternative enough to be allowed into the show next year - I much preferred the Henschke to the Delatite, though both were firmly Pinot Gris rather than Grigio in style.

Many of these wines are still very much a work in progressive, with most of the varieities having such a short history in Australia. **Yalumba's The Virgilius Viogner** could certainly not be called a work in progress, showing lovely varietal character and real refinement. The Albariño sparked discussion of the recent Albariño/Savagnin debacle (reported here). I found the Gamay (total non-interventionist winemaking, including no sulphur at botllting) bizarre and not very nice, though Max Allen was a big fan. The Sangiovese and the Tannat, on the other hand, were very good. The three Nebbiolos were pretty good for this recent immigrant.



2008 Henschke Littlehampton Innes Vineyard Pinot Gris, Adelaide Hills

2008 Delatite Pinot Gris Upper Goulburn

2008 Yalumba The Virgilius Viognier, Eden Valley

2006 Castagna Ingénue Viognier, Beechworth

2008 Giaconda Aeolia Roussanne, Beechworth

2008 Dal Zotto Arneis, King Valley

2008 Crittenden Estate Los Hermanos Albariño, Mornington Peninsula

2008 Spinifex Lola Semillon/Marsanne/Viognier/Ugni Blanc/Grenache Blanc/Vermentino, Barossa Valley

2008 Quealy Senza Nome Tocai Friulano, Mornington Peninsula

2008 Coriole Fiano, McLaren Vale

2008 R Wines Mod Gamay, Geelong

2007 Greenstone Vineyard Sangiovese, Heathcote

2007 Gemtree Vineyards Bloodstone Tempranillo, McLaren Vale

2002 Hewitson Old Garden Mourvèdre, Barossa Valley

2006 Arrivo Lunga Macerazione Nebbiolo, Adelaide Hills

2007 Luke Lambert Wines Nebbiolo, Yarra Valley

1998 Pizzini Nebbiolo, King Valley

2005 Boireann Tannat, Granite Belt

2006 Cobaw Ridge Lagrein, Macedon Ranges

2007 First Drop Minchia Montepulciano, Adelaide Hills

And so to dinner ... (I'd love to say 'And so to bed ...' but then again I'd hate to miss some great wines and interesting company.) The photo shows sunset in the Barossa, the view from my room.

For all related articles and tasting notes, see Landmark Australia - a quide.