

Fryer's Cove Sauvignon Blanc 2011 Bamboes Bay WIP

15 Jan 2013 by Richard Hemming

This wine of the week is notable for several reasons, not least that it isn't a burgundy: after weeks of saturation in the stuff, this is blessed relief!

More saliently, it is labelled as only 12% alcohol, and sealed under cork. When you consider that it is a South African Sauvignon Blanc (a grape to which I am usually indifferent at best), this is a rare beast indeed, and it invites investigation.

Most new world Sauvignon Blanc (in the UK at least) is either from Marlborough or aspires to be. We are awash with highly ripe, often off-dry wines with pungent citrus flavours frequently accompanied by herbal, green characters from the pyrazine family.

Not that there's anything wrong with that, and large numbers of drinkers still seem super-keen to lap up that sort of thing. Some others, however, have been tiring of its unsubtle flavours, alcohol levels that reach 14% and ever thickening mouthfeel. It often seems like each new vintage is more exaggerated than the last.

Especially for those doubters, then, Fryer's Cove Sauvignon Blanc 2011 from Bamboes Bay represents a very refreshing change. It is recognisably Sauvignon Blanc without any gross greenness. Three months of lees ageing and bâtonnage, including a small oak-fermented proportion, has given texture and mouthfeel without undue weight. It is only 12% alcohol, but finishes bone dry and with well-aligned acid and fruit intensity.

I found it very heartening to know that wine can be made with these characteristics without compromising on balance or flavour. It isn't an especially complex wine, nor hugely lengthy, but nor is it expensive. Indeed, at £10 I can't think of a Sauvignon I'd rather have – and it's certainly better value than most Sancerres at the same price.

I see that Julia very much liked the 2008 vintage, which was 13.5%