



Tasting Notes by Matthew Jukes, Monday 23rd September 2013

2010 Aylward by Ocean Eight Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula

Mike Aylward raises the bar with his eponymous label increasing the fruit intensity and also the oak impact and the results are staggering. At three years old, this wine is still only a baby, as you would expect, but it shows signs of greatness in the glass. We are privileged to be able to pour this wine at Wine Rules, giving hundreds of people the opportunity to see what only a handful of journos and restaurateurs would ordinarily experience. Aylward proves that Grand Vin Pinot is alive and kicking in Victoria and I would be happy to pour this alongside New Zealand, Oregon and Burgundy's best bottles.

2012 Blue Pyrenees Viognier, Pyrenees

This Viognier is what I would describe as a classic game of two halves. As you might hope for, the nose is temptingly exotic with moments of nectarine and peach skin and this Siren call wills you to take a sip. The initial hit on the palate is fabulously tropical but then a millisecond later the door slams and the wondrous Pyrenees cool nights reveal their hallmark acidity. This abrupt switch from exoticism to firmness and control is ravishing. Without it, the wine would tip over into being too fruit-cocktaily and with it you have a benchmark Viognier in perfect equilibrium.

2012 Blue Pyrenees Cabernet Sauvignon, Pyrenees

With dusty tannins and macho cassis fruit this bold Cabernet conforms to all of the hallmarks of this variety with its upright stance and crisp mouth-watering finish. Decant it for maximum pleasure and serve it with the best steak, simply cooked, to allow the meat juices and blackcurrant notes to intermingle. This is what those rascally Frogs do, and they always get their food and wine combos right! With 5 more years ahead of it, this punchy 2012 will soften allowing its purple-hued fruit to mellow and express itself fully.

2012 Brash Higgins GR/M, McLaren Vale

McLaren Vale Grenache is an iconic style of Aussie red wine. Having said this, Grenache often enjoys the company of other grapes and Mataro (Mourvèdre) is its best buddy. Full-bodied, swarthy, swaggering and unapologetically masculine, this hefty red wine shows surprising degree of polish and charm given its textural finesse and aromatic delicacy. Brad Hickey shows his love to the grape in this superbly suave wine and I am certain that it will bring more people into the Grenache fold.



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2012 Brash Higgins NDV, McLaren Vale

Brad Hickey has nailed the elusive Nero d'Avola variety in 2012. The aroma is celestial with hilariously fruity cherry and raspberry notes overlaying an espresso bean and mocha core. The texture is ultra silky and the finish disconcertingly refreshing. As always with this heroic Southern Italian/Sicilian variety there is an element of 'steel fist in velvet glove' going on, because it packs a stealthy punch, so take care while supping this fabulously alluring creature. It's worth noting that, in my job as a UK based wine taster, I see a lot of Italian versions of this variety but I cannot remember one as magical and compelling as this. Along the flavour-trail you will find an infinite array of descriptors, here are a couple for you to track down - Morello cherries, red liquorice, fresh lavender, rhubarb stalks, salted caramels and potting mix.

2009 Coates The Consonance Red, Langhorne Creek/McLaren Vale

Those in the know will have clocked that I am obsessed with the Cabernet / Shiraz blend and this wine is made from this time-honoured recipe. Coming from two of the most famous regions in South Australia, which form the backbone of many mighty reds, Coates is looking briary and butch in the glass, calling out for caveman cuts of beef and platters of mature Aussie cheese. At four years old it's a mere babe. Safe in the knowledge that this blend makes the most age-worthy styles in the country you can drink it today or in ten years time in complete confidence that it will look magnificent.

2012 Coldstream Hills Chardonnay, Yarra Valley

I try not to use European terms when it comes to describing Australian wines and berate people who do because those days are long gone. So, breaking my own rules (sorry!), there is always something slightly Burgundian about Coldstream Hills Chardonnay whether it's the brioche-like oak barrel influence or the lean, straight-jacketed citrus-themed fruit. In 2012 these traits are highlighted making it a fascinating wine and one to compare to our other Chardonnays if only to see how site and winemaker combined make completely different flavours in the same vintage and using the same grape variety.



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2012 Coldstream Hills Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley

Within the Pinot spectrum Coldstream Hills fashions a wine with more overt herbal notes than some. This heightens the aromatic excitement by combining ripe leaf and stem nuances intermingled among the more primary cherry and plum notes. Accordingly, this tilts the balance on the palate towards the savoury so, with food in mind, you can tackle fattier or richer dishes with gravies or sauce. This conscious decision to make a gastro-friendly wine has always been the ethos at Coldstream Hills and this is the reason why their legions of fans follow them. It also marks a wine as one to cellar for the future because these more strident notes subside over time revealing more of the fruit core.

2012 Innocent Bystander Chardonnay, Yarra Valley

Cue the drumroll because this spectacular wine is in my 100 Best Australian Wines List for 2013/14. You may think it's easy for Australia to make world class Chardonnay, and many estates do, but it's incredibly difficult to push the bar as high as this estate does particularly bearing in mind the price point of the IB wines. There is so much control, restraint and complexity here without ever overstepping the mark and while the flavour seems mild and mellow, this is an extremely confident wine with a heroic finish and incredible flavour retention. FYI in 2012 Innocent Bystander nailed all of its varieties so you can be assured that this expert estate is on unprecedented form.

2012 Innocent Bystander Syrah, Yarra Valley

As an acknowledged Innocent Bystander acolyte you would expect me to expect me to give this wine a hearty smack on the back but there is more to say than just simply a nod of approval. Steve Flamsteed makes his wines with "Pinot hands", so what you get is an epically scented Syrah with a buoyant palate unlike any traditional Aussie Syrah/Shiraz. The haunting aroma and velvety texture make this wine flow across the taste buds in style proving that the Yarra is every bit as important for Syrah as it is for Pinot. You must taste this wine because it's an antidote to the monolithic creatures from over the border in the Barossa!



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2012 Ninth Island Pinot Noir, Tasmania

I have followed this brand for aeons and the good people at Ninth Island have never missed a beat. One of Tassie's most ardent cheerleaders, this estate's wines reside at the red fruit end of the Pinot spectrum and it doesn't trouble the palate with too much oak or tannin leaving you to wallow in its hedonistic, fruit-filled charms. Newcomers to Pinot should drink this wine to establish a "classic Pinot flavour" once and for all in their taste memories. 2012 Ninth Island is a benchmark for Aussie Pinot.

2013 La Bohème (by de Bortoli) Act Three, Yarra Valley

If you are following La Bohème's four act tragedy, act three features Pinot Gris and a few other unnamed cameo performances from other collaborative grape varieties. As you know, Pinot Gris has a pear juice aroma and sleek, pliable chassis making it the ideal variety to add highlights and detail and in this case the aromatics have been tweaked and the finish lengthened by extremely clever blending. The result is a wine that initially hints at being a classic Pinot Gris, but which confounds expectations by curiously morphing into anything but.

2011 La Multa Old Vine Tempranillo, Calatayud, Spain

Our only foreigner this year, this cheeky Old Vine Tempranillo from the wild outback of Calatayud in Spain. With raucous blackberry and black cherry flavours, lashings of leather 'n' spice and a hearty, grippy finish, this is a carnivorous red built for dishes with chilli spice or Indian influence. If you have tasted Rioja before, imagine a wine without the stinky, medicinal woodwork (!), but retaining the juicy black fruit because that is exactly what La Multa brings to the party.

2008 Melba (by de Bortoli) Lucia Sangiovese/Cabernet, Yarra Valley

Wines made from the Sangiovese/Cabernet blend in Italy are called Super-Tuscans. So by definition Lucia must be a Super-Yarra wine, and guess what, on the palate, it certainly has a super flavour. With Sangiovese providing the sour cherry tang and Cabernet bringing a strict blackcurrant core, this wine has intriguing fruit notes making it a compelling proposition. I am a huge critic of both Italian and Spanish grape varieties in Australia because most fall short of the mark; but this 2008 vintage release is a stunner made all the more beautiful by its five years in bottle which has mellowed this wild child into an irresistible diva.



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2012 Ocean Eight Pinot Gris, Mornington Peninsula

The crunchy green apple and white pear flesh nose on this flirtatious Pinot Gris quickens the pulse and alerts the palate. The initial burst of flavour fills your taste buds with perfect balance of stone fruit and then the crunchy tart acidity zooms in. This brilliant tightrope act between juiciness and bite makes for exciting drinking - and it allows all manner of food and wine matching exploits to commence.

2012 Ocean Eight Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula

Mike Aylward's Pinots have such an alluring scent that you cannot fail to be hypnotised when you pour a glass. This 2012 is a stunning creation, poised and rippling with sinew and splendour and it's just setting out on a magnificent life. The aroma of mulberry and red cherry pierces the senses, shocking you to attention while the refined finish rolls on and on showing the undoubted class of the raw materials involved here.

2008 Pipers, Tasmania

Don't you love two word wine names! Pipers (Brook) is a Tasmanian pioneer and there is no need to go into lengthy descriptions because the 'P' word says it all. Sparkling wine has been a forte here for decades and this wine's flavour sums up the essence of the Tasmanian sparkling wine scene. At 5 years old, it has fully developed its yeasty character, rivaling the great names from Champagne with its complexity and elegance on the finish. Bone dry and thrilling, this is what Aussie sparkling wine is all about.

2012 Punt Road Chardonnay, Napoleone Vineyard, Yarra Valley

This is a pretty controversial statement, but the Yarra Valley has had a run of difficult vintages recently and I felt that its collective star was fading a little. Cue 2012 and everything is right back on track. At only 12.5% alc, this seemingly bold wine is tethered to the floor by extremely high tensile acidity. The nose and palate bear all of the hallmarks of serious Yarra Chardonnay but unlike some of the fatter wines of the past, this is a finely honed wine with a slim finish and eerie, haunting stone fruit memory. In short, it's delicious.



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2012 Punt Road Pinot Noir, Napoleone Vineyard, Yarra Valley

There is an ethereal woodsmoke note infiltrating this summer pudding-scented wine which I find absolutely thrilling. It's fascinating how this precocious variety (my favourite grape the world) takes on these ultra-subtlet nuances. The fruit on the nose and palate is sublime, inching towards the black fruit side of the tracks. Punt Road's wines are rarely seen in the UK so it's a treat to taste this magnificent Pinot at Wine Rules. The sleek body and tart acidity are just setting out on a five year life so be sure to buy a case and watch this wine evolve around your own dining room table.

2009 Stonier Sparkling Chardonnay / Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula

I have to confess that I'm over the moon with this wine's inclusion in our Wine Rules wine list. Winemaker Mike Symons has only ever shown me this wine at the world famous Stonier International Pinot Noir Tasting and each time, with a smirk on his face, has told me no matter how much I like it I can't have any for the UK market. So imagine my surprise when Mike kindly allows us all to dive into one of the most seductive sparklers in the country at our very special event. Cultured, layered, sophisticated and downright stalkable - this wine has it all.

2012 Stonier Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula

While many producers of Pinot in Australia strive to make great red wine, they mistakenly overlook the fact that Pinot is not any old red grape. It's a rare beauty, typified by its delicate hauntingly pale colour, magical aroma and hypnotic, sensual palate. Stonier has only ever made this style of wine and the "Estate" offering is among the best value red wines in the world. I have bought it for restaurants, written it up and indeed drunk every vintage of this wine that has ever made its wine to my shores and I am waiting with baited breath for this magnificent 2012 to arrive. Lucky for you Melbournites, you can crack on with this sensory treat right now. Fill your boots.



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2011 Taltarni Blanc de Blancs

As you know, most sparkling wines have a healthy dose of red grapes in them, usually Pinot Noir or Pinot Meunier. This Blanc de Blancs, as the name suggests, is made from 100% Chardonnay and that means that the aroma is piercing and citrusy, the palate is leaner and more athletic and the finish is long, dry and invigorating. Taltarni's catwalk Blanc de Blancs is fashioned for ultra-posh canapés, such as sashimi, Coda-style bug tails, goat curd gougères and the like, because it slices, rapier-like, through these complex flavours allowing you to refresh the palate after every sip. Three cheers to Taltarni for making such a drop dead gorgeous B de B.

2012 Taltarni Sangiovese Rosé, Pyrenees

I've seen a few Sangiovese rosés this year and there is no doubt that this pale-hued style of wine suits this variety perfectly. With high natural acidity and bright cranberry and red cherry aromatics you cannot go wrong with this wine in your glass. In terms of food and wine matching you literally can go from seafood and crustacea starters, all of the way through chicken, pork and veal to a perfectly prepared rare roast beef sandwich with this very wine. The mid-palate is the highlight with the aforementioned red fruits jousting with faint herbal and liquorice notes. Serve ice cold in the knowledge that this is a guaranteed crowd pleaser.

2012 Tellurian Pastiche Shiraz, Heathcote

Tellurian's wines have captivated my palate during my time as the patron of Wine Rules and this newly released 2012 Pastiche is another compelling offering. The dark berry fruit is intense but not heavy on the palate. Heathcote has yet to truly establish its identity globally, but if wines like Pastiche (and other Wine Rules favourites over the years) continue to sound the horn as clearly and attractively as this wine, their future is bright. Pastiche confirms its origins by combing in lush black fruit and mouth-watering wild flower and herb notes. The finish is not tannic, just refreshing with grainy, moreish appeal. NB: the 2011 Pastiche is still out there on the shelves and it's slightly lighter in body and at the peak of its drinking, so slide into this vintage first before moving on to our featured 2012.



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2012 Tellurian Tranter Shiraz, Heathcote

If you fit a V12 engine, low profile tyres and Pininfarina styling to Pastiche, you end up with Tranter Shiraz. This wine is the ultra-high-spec offering from Tellurian and its impact and majesty is clear to see. This is the epitome of Heathcote Shiraz with calm, silky smooth, inky black fruit and devastating herbal aromatics. It is, most definitely, one of the finest Wine Rules reds of the year. Admittedly 2012 Tranter is still youthful, but perfectly balanced wines look great when they're young, and this is no exception.

2012 Ten Minutes by Tractor 10X Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula

Whether this is on purpose or not, I always feel like the TMbT single vineyard wines are restrained, youthful and introspective on release while their baby brother, 10X, always shows the unbridled exuberance of youth. In 2012, 10X Chardy positively pole-vaults out of the glass with expressive citrus fruit and brazen cinnamon-scented oak. This is a mouth-filling wine with bold flavours, all anchored by mouth-watering minerality and a whip crack of rasping acidity. As always, TMbT wines amaze with their daring aromas and compelling flavours.

2012 Ten Minutes by Tractor 10X Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula

My first notes on smelling this wine were the highly technical, "Oooh, that's lovely". We all know just how delicious top flight Mornington Pinot is these days, but there is something special about the 2012 vintage because the wines have heightened fruit flavours but also palate-cleansing freshness on the finish. 10X epitomises these characteristics with its trademark wild berry and sweet spice nose, velvety mid-palate and drama-laden finish. This wine has a mighty score in my notes further enhancing TMbT's reputation as one of Australia's Pinot royalty.

2009 Yellowglen Perle Vintage Pinot Noir / Chardonnay / Pinot Meunier

Chilled ice cold, this beautifully balanced sparkler, made from the three classic Champagne grape varieties, comes to life. Behind the engaging aroma of fresh-cut meadow flowers lurks a welcome hint of grapiness, beautifully balanced by the crisp acidity on the finish. The palate is lush and enticing while the aftertaste lingers snapping your palate back into order just in time for another sip.