

the bullionaire

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Evoking the Spirit of France, with a Kiwi Kicker



Matthew Dunne of Aria / Chiswick / North Bondi Fish is selecting the wines this quarter. Not sure where he finds the time with all the restaurant wine lists he looks after, but he had a lot of fun selecting these wines for us. He didn't go with one theme this time, but rather a number: New school vs old school, Bordeaux vs Languedoc, Pinot Noir vs Pinot Blanc. What is common amongst all the wines however is the quality. The first red wine is the **2010 Chateau Caronne Sainte Gemme - Haut Medoc** from Bordeaux. A region we have never looked at before.

Bordeaux is the most famous wine region on the planet with very complicated and rigorous rules. Centuries of tradition dictate the grapes that can be grown, and how the wine is made. However, when looking at Bordeaux, you cannot think of it as one region. You need to think of it as many sub-regions, with different quality and price levels.

At a quick glance, the region produces some 700 million bottles from 120,000 hectares of vineyards, with prices ranging from \$3 to \$3000 per bottle. A prominent feature of Bordeaux is the many "classifications" of their Chateaus or estates. They are ranked on their quality and heritage and they take these very, very seriously.

The original and most famous of the classifications started back in 1855 when the top Chateaus of Medoc were ranked into 5 different "growths". These growths are still in place today, headed by the famous "Five First Growths" – *Lafite Rothschild- Mouton Rothschild – Latour – Margaux – Haut Brion*. The current vintage of these Chateaus sell for over \$2000 per bottle and are rightly regarded as some of the best and most sought after wines on the planet.

Of course like any classification there are a lot of grey areas and plenty of disagreements, but on the whole they are pretty accurate indicators of quality. But when these classifications only account for 300-400 of the nearly 8,500 estates in 54 different appellations, how do you know which of the wines are good. Then how do you find these wines, as most of the good

wines are on allocation and then what do you pay for them, when in most cases price alone is not a guide

Confused – so am I, which is why I never thought we would get a wine from Bordeaux into one of our packs. The good wines are just too expensive and the quality value ratio just does not work for what we do.

We can thank Matthew Dunne and a meeting he had with an importer that needed some quick cash, for this fantastic wine from the Haut Medoc region. It is also from a newish classification called Cru Bourgeois. Newish in that it first began in 1932 and was ratified again in 2003 and then in 2010. (These more recent changes were due to the many legal battles with the Chateaus that missed out on attaining this classification- I told you they take it seriously) Today there are some 246 chateaus that are able to list Crus Bourgeois on their label. The great thing about this classification is that it is awarded to the wine and not the Chateau. There is a rigorous selection process which requires each vintage to be reassessed every year, so just because your 2010 was given the stamp of approval, doesn't automatically mean your 2011 will get the same classification.

Whilst these wines will never reach the heights of the First and Second growths, they really give the Fourth and Fifth a run for their money.

Continued pack page



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SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

THE WINES



2010 CHÂTEAU CARONNE STE GEMME HAUT MÉDOC CRU *Bordeaux France*

65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot

Château Caronne Ste Gemme dates back to the mid 17th Century. The estate has been owned and guided by the Borie-Nony family since 1900. The 94 acre estate (45 planted to vineyards) lies on the southwest border of Saint-Julien, a stone's throw from classified growths Châteaux Gruaud Larose and Lagrange. Many Bordeaux insiders consider the wines of Caronne Ste Gemme's to regularly match the quality from these higher classified neighbours and to be among the best values in Bordeaux today.

Over the past decade the Nony family have invested considerable resources to give the estate the state-of-the-art winery, equipment, and barrels necessary to produce these top level wines.

2010 was a great vintage in Bordeaux, one of the top half dozen in the past 30 years. They tend to be rich, ripe wines with splendid aromatic complexity and energy. They possess an added measure of concentration owing to the low crop levels following a difficult flowering. The berries were small, as were the number of grapes per bunch, and the high skin-to-juice ratio helps to explain the concentration and power of the 2010s. This is a vintage to stock up on.

The 2010 vintage from Caronne Ste Gemme spent 15 months in oak (20 % new) however it is the fruit that shines through in the wine. It has aromas of plums, black cherries and minerals, with the unmistakable tobacco or cigar box characters framing these black fruits. It is full bodied with velvety tannins that are polished and clean. An impressive wine that showcases what a good producer can achieve in a great vintage. You do not need to spend \$150 to get this type of quality. But you need to know where to look. (This wine has a RRP of \$55 in Australia)

FOOD MATCHINGS

Cabernet Sauvignon based wines like Bordeaux are not meant for light and delicate dishes; in fact the wine will simply crush the meal, spoiling the flavours of the dish. Instead you want dishes overflowing in protein and fat to tame the tannins, and mesh with the rich flavours of the wine. You want red meats, roasted or grilled, plus dishes like hearty beef stews, or braised ribs

CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine could be safely cellared for the next 8-10 years. However, it is so engaging and enjoyable now. Decant for 20-30 minutes prior to serving.



2012 DRAKE TE MANU PINOT NOIR *Martinborough New Zealand*

Drake Samson is a collaboration between two long time friends. Our very own Matthew Dunne and wine marketer and seller Nicholas Crampton. They both have a love of thought-provoking wines with individual character and expression, with a focus on Pinot Noir. They release two wines each year, a Yarra Valley Pinot and this beauty from Martinborough. It was touch and go which wine Matt selected, but he felt the Te Manu was drinking a little better as a younger wine, so this got the nod. The wine is made in conjunction with winemaker Rod McDonald, with fruit purchased from Larry McKenna (who owns Escarpment Vineyards and considered the Godfather of Pinot Noir in NZ). They have created a bold but balanced Pinot Noir with the hallmark intensity and structure you get from Martinborough (Only 250 cases were made.)

Martinborough is near Wellington down the bottom of the North Island of NZ. It began its life as a wine region around 30 years ago when they discovered the soils and climate were pretty much the same as Burgundy. After some early plantings and then some great wines, a new regional star was born beside Burgundy, Oregon, Central Otago and the Yarra Valley

For the Pinot nerds out there, and there are plenty, this uses hand-picked fruit from a single close-planted vineyard that cropped at 2.3 tonne per acre. A mix of Clones 667, 114, 115, CL 5 and Abel Clone in reasonably equal parts was primarily

de-stemmed and then fermented separately in small one tonne open fermenters with hand plunging. Racked to 100% French oak barriques, 30% new for nine months maturation before bottling with minimal fining or filtration.

What this means is we have a pretty serious wine, from a serious vineyard. A complex and evocative nose with an array of red cherry, wood spice, wild forest and almost gamey aromas. The palate is medium bodied and fruit driven with more red fruits, fennel and spice along with some darker, exotic notes. Fine tannins and bright acidity provide shape to a wine still developing

FOOD MATCHINGS

The combination of great acidity, silky tannins and subtle flavours is what makes Pinot Noir so successful for pairing with a tremendous variety of foods. Pinot Noir is light enough for salmon but complex enough to hold up to some richer meat including duck, games birds, casseroles and of course stews like beef bourguignon. In a pinch, when everyone orders a vastly different entree at a restaurant, you can usually win by picking Pinot Noir; it will make everyone happy.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Ready to drink now – decant for 20 minutes before serving. Can safely be cellared for the next 4-6 years.



2011 CHATEAU VIRANEL "AROMES SAUVAGES" LANGUEDOC ROUSSILLON *Southern France*

The Bergasse brothers are generally described as the pin up boys of Languedoc-Roussillon in the South of France. Charming and articulate, they exude French charm and are known to behave with the enthusiasm of boisterous teenagers. They are however very serious about their wines and their 400 year old family estate in the St Chinian sub-region. This is considered the oldest winemaking area in this region of France, with vineyards being cultivated since ancient Roman times.

The AOC rules of St Chinian require the wines to be a blend of different grapes, so in a strange twist of logic, a 100% varietal wine can only be given a humble Vin de Pays classification. However this does not do "Aromes Sauvages" justice. For starters, the fruit is sourced from a vineyard planted in 1939 and the only reason a vineyard lasts this long, is if it produces amazing fruit and wine.

This wine is made from the pretty obscure grape variety called Alicante Bouschet. This is a French grape variety that was made in 1855 by Henri Boushet in Montpellier. It is actually not that unusual for scientists to cross and create new grape varieties last century. This grape was a crossing of the Petit Bouschet (itself a cross) with Grenache. It is a very thick skinned grape and makes wines of amazing colour and concentration. For this reason it was very popular during the early part of the 20th century, where it could be blended with lighter and cheaper wines to make the producers more money. Today it is mainly found in small areas of the Languedoc and in Portugal where it is used in single varietals. Only the best vineyards have survived the years, and this is what the Bergasse brothers have with their vineyard planted in 1939.

The fruit was handpicked, and then underwent a long maceration period to really develop that rich dark colour. Maturation is carried out in stainless steel and concrete tanks only, as oak characters are not considered necessary or complimentary with this variety.

The most amazing thing about this wine when it is poured into the glass is the colour. Inky midnight black. Then these amazing aromas gush out of the glass – pepper, black fruits (plums/ cherries) framed by these gamey, wild forest like flavours. The palate is surprising for its soft and fleshy nature. The palate is mid weight and the tannins are soft and approachable. This is just a joy to drink.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Dark game meats would be ideal- Rabbit if you can find some or Boar if you are really adventurous. If not, stick with duck, or roasted meats like Chicken or Pork. During winter, roasted pork with lashings of gravy and potatoes – Yum. Would also be lovely with some hard cheeses.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 20 minutes before serving. You can safely cellar this wine for the next 4-6 years. The winemaker thinks 8, but I don't think I could, or would want, to wait that long.



2012 ANDRE KIENTZLER PINOT BLANC *Ribeauville Alsace France*

The Kientzler domaine is a small family run estate consisting of just 12 hectares of vines, of which 3.7 hectares are classified as "Grand Cru". These special sites have been identified over the past 300 years as the region's best. They produce some truly amazing wines. One of the best wines I have ever tried is a Riesling from this estate- The 2008 Riesling Grand cru "Geisberg". It is expensive, but worth every cent. These wines make up a tiny percentage of the 6000 case production, so it is with the village wines of Riesling, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc that the estate is judged on year after year.

These guys are at the top of their game and right in the heart of the region along with all the big boys of Alsace, including Trimbach and Hugel.

Pinot Blanc is a wine that is pretty unique to Alsace, which is now the most planted varietal in the region. When it is given the focus and effort it deserves, it is a racy wine that is just a joy to drink. A versatile wine not far in style from a Chablis (a leaner Chardonnay). As previously stated, Pinot Blanc can be a blend of Pinot Blanc and Auxerrois and this wine is mainly made from the Auxerrois grape variety.

The grapes are hand harvested from a number of vineyards around the village of Ribeauville. After pressing, fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled barrels or vats (at 18 to 24°C). The wine is racked just once, before natural

clarification during the course of the winter. The wine is lightly filtered just before bottling.

It is lively and fragrant with lovely fruit and floral aromas on the nose. You then get these mineral notes, which are flinty with hints of almond and lime. The wine has a dry finish with a full bodied palate. Youthful but full of promise.

FOOD MATCHINGS

You don't want to over chill this wine. Enjoy it at 8°C with all manner of seafood (poached, grilled, smoked, marinated or in creamy sauces), or at the start of a meal as an aperitif where it would be perfect with goat or sheep cheese. It is also just amazing with most spicy Asian dishes.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

A wine that is in the zone now, thirst-quenching, refreshingly dry and very drinkable. Can be cellared for next 2 to 4 years.

ABOUT THE SOMMELIER



Matthew Dunne - Aria / Chiswick / North Bondi Fish

Matthew Dunne has worked in a number of key restaurants, not only in Australia, but also the US (Charlie Trotters) and UK (The River Café). Since 2008 he has been the head sommelier for Matt Moran's restaurant ARIA in both Sydney and Brisbane. He was also heavily involved in the opening of Sydney's hot new restaurants – CHISWICK, Woollahra and NORTH BONDI FISH which offer different styles in both food and wine selection. Matthew has won numerous awards for both the restaurant and himself, but he is most proud of his "Good Food Guide Sommelier of the Year" in 2011.

Continued from front page

So when we were offered a wine from the great 2010 vintage we had to include it in the pack. Thanks Matt, I have already picked up a case for my cellar.

Matt was also heavily involved in the next wine, a Pinot Noir from Martinborough New Zealand. **The 2012 Drake Samson Te Manu Pinot Noir**. This wine is actually from a wine label that Matt owns – more on that later. The New Zealand wine industry is known for two things. Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir. (With the later focusing on two regions - Central Otago in the South Island and Martinborough in the North Island)

If you are into Pinot Noir, you would have heard of these regions. These regions regularly top the many Pinot Noir tastings around the world, including the wines from Burgundy, America and yes Australia.

Pinot Noir is a lighter bodied wine, but what they lack in colour, they make up for in complexity and character. I really think you need to be in a contemplative mood when drinking good Pinot Noir. The flavours and aromas are not immediate and they do not whack you over the head like a Cabernet or a Shiraz. What they offer is elegance and character. So sit down with a nice meal and enjoy this wine. Pinot Noir is considered by many to be the holy grail of wine, but it can be bloody expensive, with the whole quality / value ratio thrown completely out the window. So be careful what you buy as you might be disappointed!

The third red is from a grape variety I had never heard of before, which got me thinking about how many grape varieties there are in the world. According to the bible – Wikipedia- there are between 5-7000 different types, but only 1300 or so are used to make wine on a commercial basis. One of these 1300 is Alicante Bouschet from the Languedoc in Southern France. This is a grape that was created in 1855 when it was crossed with another obscure grape variety and Grenache to make a very thick skinned grape. It makes a wine of incredible colour and fragrance and when matched with old vines and a winemaker who gives it a lot of focus and attention, you get an amazing wine. **The 2011 Chateau Viranel "Aromes Sauvages"** is one such wine from a vineyard planted in 1939. This grape variety was very popular during the early part of the 20th century, but now is only grown in a handful of areas (Languedoc and Portugal) This wine is inky black and it has this amazing freshness and acidity on the full palate. A joy to drink!

The white wine is from Alsace and continues to be one of our favourite regions. The stunning and racy **2012 Andre Kientzler Pinot Blanc**. We have had a few wines from Alsace over the years as they offer such incredible value and quality. Somewhat confusingly, the designation "Pinot Blanc" for Alsace AOC wine does not necessarily mean that the wine is varietally pure Pinot Blanc. Rather, the designation means that it is a white wine made from Pinot varieties. Under Alsace appellation rules, the varieties Pinot Blanc, Auxerrois Blanc, Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir (vinified white, without skin contact) may all be used, but a blend of Pinot Blanc and Auxerrois is the most common. The most full-bodied "Pinot Blanc" wines from Alsace, with a spicy and smoky character and moderate acidity, are dominated by the Auxerrois grapes. The 2012 Andre Kientzler Pinot Blanc is one such wine, made primarily from Auxerrois. It shows the fine floral perfume and fresh acidity so typical of this variety and producer. Finishing dry with length and persistence.

So there you go, four wines, all different, but all a joy to drink

Enjoy, I know I will and if you want some more of these great wines, be quick, as I don't think they will last.



Stu Freeman and Matt Eagan – Bullion Cellars



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