

the bullionaire

BULLION 14C

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Bullion Cellars and the G4 ... Wines from 4 different countries



We have not done this for a while. Normally we have a few wines from the same country, but not this time. Australia, Germany, France and Spain. We are calling this our "G4 Wine Selection" in recognition of the G20 coming to Brisbane in a few months. Thankfully there is no Russian wine, but maybe that is getting too political for a wine newsletter.

The wines have been selected by Kim Bickley and the white she chose was a complete joy to discover. We have selected a number of wines from Alsace before, but this is the first German wine. Sommeliers love the white wines from these regions as they are so great with food and totally dominated by the region, rather than the winemaker. There are very few winemaking tricks that the winemaker can use, such as oak treatments etc. It is down to the climate, fruit and soil. They are clean and crisp and when made well, total engaging, offering a complexity that is hard to find in other wines and regions. Kim has chosen a sensational dry Riesling from Rheingau in Germany –**2012 Lunden & Cie Riesling**.

Germany has suffered from what I call the "Blue Nun" curse. During the 1970's this wine, in a distinctive blue bottle was all the rage. It was sweet and people just could not get enough of the stuff. However in the 1990's when everyone started talking about drinking "Dry", sales of German wine nose dived. Making it even worse, they have a quality ranking of wine based on the ripeness of the grapes and sweetness of the wines and their label regulations are overly complicated and difficult to read, even if you speak German. It gets even more confusing when you discover that wines carrying the same quality ranking can vary significantly in sweetness level.

Despite all this, "Troken" or dry Rieslings from German and even the Off Dry and sweet wines are remarkable. The wine we have chosen is definitely

dry, but if I told you the residual sugar is 9.0 g/l this would be shockingly sweet, if I did not mention that the acid is 9.3g/l – balancing it all out.

The first red wine is from the Rhone valley and the village of Lirac - **2011 Chateau Mont Redon Lirac**. This is the second time a sommelier has chosen this wine but when Kim suggested the 2011 vintage we could not wait to include it in the G4. Lirac is one of the last and best-kept secrets in the Rhone Valley. This Southern Rhone region has for years been over shadowed by the likes of Chateauneuf-du-Pape and Gigondas. Great news for us because Lirac is still ridiculously good value.

What also got us excited about this wine is the embossed bottle Mont Redon is now using. This looks just beautiful and is quite expensive to implement, so it shows the faith the winery has in the wine and region. It is a Grenache based wine that is a joy to drink, and looks bloody good too.

Australian Shiraz is going through a significant change of late. It is very similar to what has happened to Chardonnay. (It is now almost impossible to find a full bodied, heavily wooded Chardonnay as the modern style is more lean and crisp). Shiraz is going through a similar transformation. In the 1980's / 1990's the Barossa /South Australian style was all the rage. (Big alcoholic wines with copious amounts of oak). US magazines and wine journalists lapped this stuff up and most winemakers tried to chase this style to make their fame and fortune. Like most gold rushes, the people who prospered the most were the people who sold the oak barrels. Probably the most obvious example of this change in style is the Jimmy Watson Trophy. This is the most prestigious and sought after wine award in Australia, but it has been 6 years since a big full bodied wine from South Australia has won. The Barossa barons were even seen crying into their oak barrels when a Pinot Noir from the Yarra Valley won last year.

The 5 Most Recent Jimmy Watson Trophy Winners ...

- **2013 Yabby Lake Block 1 Pinot Noir 2012**
(Yarra Valley – Cool Climate)
- **2012 Great Western Bin 1 Shiraz 2011**
(Central Victoria – Cool Climate)
- **2011 Mon Pere Shiraz 2010** (Tasmania – Cool Climate)
- **2010 Harvey River Bridge Cabernet Sauvignon 2009**
(Margaret River – Maritime Climate)
- **2009 Eden Road Long Road Shiraz 2008**
(Hill Tops NSW - Cool Climate)

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SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

THE WINES



2012 THE LANE - BLOCK 14 SHIRAZ *Adelaide Hills, South Australia*

Two Trophies, two Gold Medals, a finalist for the Jimmy Watson in 2013, plus scores from local journalists of 94 and 96. This is the new style of Australian Shiraz, focused on elegance rather than power. Sophistication, rather than over the top fruit flavours and oak. It reminds me of the great wines from Northern Rhone and Cote Rotie – another cool climate region.

The Lane is a show piece winery in the cool climate region of Adelaide Hills. The Edwards family planted the vineyard in 1996, originally supplying fruit for Hardy's Starvedog Lane label, before they decided to go it on their own in 2005, focusing on single vineyard wines from their 56 hectare estate. Their rather basic philosophy of "grown in our backyard- every berry" belies what they are trying to achieve and in the case of the 2012 Block 14 – have achieved. That sense of place; that this wine could only come from this vineyard. In other words "Terroir". All the great wines from around the world have this sense of place and we are very excited to have this wine in our current selection.

The Edwards family can be rightly proud of their achievement over 20 short years, where they have focused on their own style, rather than chasing what was fashionable at the time. (Big full bodied Barossa Shiraz). Cooler climate, more elegant wines are now all the rage, so they can relax for they are now the fashionable, trendy young kids in the skinny jeans. They also have one of the most popular cellars doors and restaurants in the country, regularly booked out and becoming a wedding function favourite.

Adelaide Hills is a smallish wine region, 20 minutes out of Adelaide. It is one of the cooler regions in Australia, with warmish days in January and February when the grapes are ripening, but with cool nights. This significant "diurnal variation" is considered vital when producing wines in cooler areas. The acidity is maintained

during the extended ripening period, but it is not so cold that you cannot ripen the grapes.

Sourced from a single block (Block 14) at an elevation of 450m it has a North facing aspect, perfect for collecting the sun in this part of the world. During the growing season they also practice bunch thinning, where grapes are dropped to the ground, reducing the yield which allows the remaining grapes to fully ripen. Something the winemakers love to do when needed, but a practice the bank manager hates.

This is a commanding, impressive wine. A fine example of just how far cool-climate Shiraz has come in Australia. Don't expect a blockbuster. In fact I am a little surprised this wine did so well on the show circuit, for it is hard for these elegant wines to stand out amongst other bigger wines. I guess the judges know what they are talking about. But it is on the dinner table where this wine really shines.

The wine is inky black and vibrant, with lifted violets, wildflowers and red fruits on the nose. But it is on the palate where this wine really excels. Soft, silky and plush with a minerality that shines through, followed by black fruits and pepper. An excellent wine from a future "superstar" winery.

FOOD MATCHINGS Lamb of any type, roast or rack will do the trick. The elegance and sophistication of the wine also makes it perfect for non spicy Asian foods, or even Korean BBQ. A lot of Asian restaurants are BYO and this would be the perfect choice.

CELLARING POTENTIAL You could safely cellar this wine for the next 4-6 years. I think it will be drinking in its prime in around 2 years. For immediate drinking, decant for 20-30 minutes before serving.



2011 CHATEAU MONT REDON *Lirac, Rhone Valley, France*

Grenache / Syrah / Mourvedre

Lirac is a small village on the western side of the Southern Rhone Valley. It is one of the 13 designated regions in the area eligible for an AOC classification and is 10 kms west of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. In fact the two regions share an incredibly similar climate and soil profile. They both have the famous large rounded stones or "Galets Roules" that are so important in retaining the heat from the day to help ripen the grapes during the cooler nights. Whilst they do not have the fame or fanfare of the wines from Chateauneuf-du-Pape they have the same quality profile at a fraction of the price.

Wines from this region are all about the blend, with Grenache, Shiraz and Mourvedre leading the way, or as we say in Australia – GSM. GSM's from Australia have become super trendy of late with Charlie Melton's Nine Popes leading the way. They tend to be a little richer with more of a fruit cake character than what you see in the Southern Rhone, which has more mineral notes and elegance.

Chateau Mont-Redon is one of the largest and oldest estates in the Southern Rhone, based in Chateauneuf-du-Pape. They can trace their history back to 1334, but the current family took over ownership in 1923. It is a family affair with two brothers and a cousin controlling the estate- Jean and Francois Abeille and Didier Fabre. They diversified out of this appellation in 1997 to purchase a 21 hectare vineyard in the village of Lirac, from where this wine is sourced.

A blend of Grenache 70 %, Syrah 20% and Mourvedre 10% , it is a modern twist on a very traditional estate. They have introduced a higher percentage of new wood into the blend, with one third of the wine seeing up to 18 months in new French Oak. Medium to full bodied, but certainly not lacking in any power. In fact, I believe this wine needs to be decanted for at least 20 minutes before drinking. It has a super aroma of red fruits, with engaging floral or wild flowers scents. The palate is full bodied with great acidity and freshness that makes it very easy to go to the second and third glass. This is the kind of wine I could happily drink every night.

FOOD MATCHINGS It has layers, but is still refined. I would match with slow cooked shoulder of lamb and sweet new potatoes. Try also with grilled rack of lamb, herb encrusted pork tenderloin wrapped in prosciutto, or Braised beef, mushrooms and tomato with Pappardelle pasta.

CELLARING POTENTIAL This wine can be drunk now with its prevailing taste of primary red fruit, but will reach it fullness in the next 3-5 years with careful cellaring. As stated before best to decant for 20 minutes before serving.



2012 LUNDEN & CIE RÜDESHEIM - RIESLING *Rheingau, Germany*



The Rheingau is one of 13 designated wine regions in Germany and is completely dominated by the Rhine River. Around the town of Wiesbaden the river detours from its Northward direction to flow west for about 30 km. It is only on this short (West flowing) stretch of the South facing river banks that the vineyards of the Rheingau can be found on steeply terraced sites. You see it is only on the south facing banks that there is enough sun throughout the day for the grapes to come even close to ripening.

The 2012 Rüdesheim is the type of wine sommeliers just love. A winemaker who works at a larger established winery who moonlights to make their own wine. In this case, the winemaker is Markus Lundén, who is the chief winemaker for Weingut Georg Breuer, also based in the Rheingau. Through his relationship with the great growers in the area, he has been able to source fruit from some key vineyards. If you take a look at the picture above, you can see the west flowing Rhine River and the various vineyards that are listed. We were also able to get a direct quote from the winemaker:

“Rüdesheim 2012 is sourced from 4 different vineyards, the Klosterberg, Klosterlay, Magdalenenkreuz and Drachenstein. They all vary in climatic conditions and soil composition. The Drachenstein is the highest situated one with the lightest soils and gives elegant wines with good minerality. The Klosterberg and Klosterlay situated near the monastery in Rüdesheim are primarily loam soils and are a little bit warmer than Drachenstein which give wines with more fruit character and body. Magdalenenkreuz has the heaviest soils which are great for acidity structure and backbone.”

2012 is a classic Rheingau vintage, an elegant dry wine with beautiful acidity structure and very nice development potential. What amazed me about this wine was the sherbert like intensity on the palate, and the incredible balance of sweetness and acidity. Both are relatively high, 9 g/L residual sugar, 9.3g/L titratable acidity, but together they make for a perfectly balanced wine that is a joy to drink. On the German wine scale it is referred to as “Troken” or dry.

FOOD MATCHINGS The most obvious pairings are Asian foods and seafood, and when in doubt stick with these. I could list a whole heap of dishes, but experiment, you will have a lot of fun.

The wines of Lunden and Cie are imported in to Australia by a fellow winemaker and Riesling nut. Dom Valentine is a senior winemaker at Oakridge in the Yarra Valley who has worked a number of vintages in Germany with Markus.

Dom Valentine - “The decision to import the Lunden & Cie Rudesheimer Riesling was an easy one. It is created by a truly great friend of mine who I met whilst working at Georg Breuer. We have the same philosophies and employment setup whereby we each make wine for fantastic companies and source some fruit to play around with ourselves. Also the Lunden Rudesheim “mirrors” my Riesling with similar analytical parameters however are obviously distinctly different wines truly reflecting the sense of vineyard and region.”

CELLARING POTENTIAL Drinking in the zone now, but will safely cellar for the next 3-5 years, where you will get a pronounced toasty type development.

2007 CONDA DE VALDEMAR RESERVA *Rioja, Spain*

90% Tempranillo, 5% Mazuelo and 5% Graciano

Some pronunciations: Tempranillo (temp-ruh-NEE-oh) Rioja (ree-OH-hah)

Bodega Valdemar dates back to 1889. Their wines have for a long time been a reference point for quality and innovation in this world-famous region. There have been 5 generations of family ownership and they own over 820 acres of vineyards, making them one of the largest estates in the Rioja. Over the years they have branched into over vineyard areas of Spain, but Rioja will always be their home.

They built a new winery in 1984 integrating both new and time-honoured traditions of winemaking and they named this estate Conda de Valdemar, which Wine & Spirits Magazine recently selected in their top 5 wineries in Rioja over the last 25 years.

This Reserva has been aged for 22 months in oak and is a serious, elegant wine that is considered the flagship and benchmark of the Conde de Valdemar style. Many Rioja wine enthusiasts swear by the Reserva level because they fit between the super fruity Crianza style and oakey-bottle-aged Gran Reserva style. At any one time they will have over 3,500,000 bottles aging in their cellar - A mixture of Reserva / Gran Reserva .

The wine has a bright cherry red colour. It is very modern and assured with these really enticing aromas of red fruits, tar and vanilla that are just so appealing. Then there is the oak, which is incredibly supportive. It has an amazing freshness for a wine of this age, with silky tannins and lovely red fruits. So fresh, vibrant and powerful, with this minerality and acidity framing the wine. Oak is prominent, but supports the wine. A wine that is very tasty fleshy and well balanced. It is just crying out for some meat and a second glass.

FOOD MATCHINGS Great with stews, roasts, baked and grilled red meats, game and sausages. More specifically try with Roast Beef and mushroom sauce, Rack of Lamb (Garlic and rosemary) or try something Spanish, Beef Tenderloin and Chorizo sausage skewers with a plum and coriander sauce.

CELLARING POTENTIAL The wine is 7 years old and in the zone right now. Decant for 10-15 minutes just to freshen the wine up. Can be safely cellared for another 3-5 years, but I would be drinking the wine over the next 1-2 years.



ABOUT THE SOMMELIER



Kim Bickley

Kim Bickley is one of the top Sommeliers in the country, previously working at “Hatted” restaurants Glass Baserie and Black by Ezard. She has decided to spend some time on the other side of the counter, working with one of the largest drinks distributor in Australia. She remains an active committee member of Sommeliers Australia NSW chapter.

A CMS Certified Sommelier, who finished in the top eleven students in Australia to be certified by the Court of Master Sommeliers in Australia in 2008, Kim is also an enthusiastic wine show judge, a Len Evans and Sommeliers Australia Tutorial Scholar and was one of the first, of only two Australian scholars, of the International ‘Landmark Australia’ Tutorial 2010.

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Winemakers and journalists are now getting excited by mid-weight, cooler climate Shiraz. Will it ever get to the point where Chardonnay finds itself? (Where you just cannot find the big styles anymore). Probably not; but there is definitely a trend. I cannot remember where I read this quote from a journalist, but to paraphrase: “Shiraz has been liberated from the wooden hulls of tiny new American oak barrels and been reinvented into cool, spice-laced expressions” A little on the extreme side, but interesting none the less

Kim has chosen a sensational wine from the cool climate region of Adelaide Hills. **The Lane 2012 Block 14 Shiraz** has won two trophies, and was a finalist in the Jimmy Watson tasting last year, being the highest pointed Shiraz. This is not a blockbuster, but a wine that is totally engaging, impressive and thought provoking. A wine that is just made for the dinner table and to drink sitting down.

The wines from Spain are on a roll right now. The top regions of Rioja, Ribera Del Duero and Priorat are in the discussions when the top wines of the world are discussed. In fact the US Wine Magazine -Wine Spectator - listed its top wine last year as the 2004 Cune Imperial Gran Reserva from Rioja. It should come as no surprise when you consider the combination of old vines, local grape varieties and great winemakers, from the trendy new upstarts to the old family estates with centuries of tradition. What more could you want. If Spain is not on the list of wines you drink and cellar, then you need to take a good hard look at yourself.

As an introduction to Spain it is hard to go past the three regions I have mentioned above. With these regions it is all about Tempranillo and Grenache, or Tinto Fino and Grenache as they are known in Spain. Most wines are blends, however Tempranillo or Grenache will represent around 70-80% of these. In Rioja and Ribera del Duero it is mainly Tempranillo, whilst in Priorat it is mainly Grenache.

The wines of Priorat are particularly impressive and very trendy; however the pricing in Australia generally starts at \$90 and quickly escalates. These wines are amazing, so do yourself a favour and indulge if you come across these wines in a retailer or restaurant. They are special wines, full of intensity, elegance and sophistication.

Kim has chosen a wine from Rioja for this G4 selection, with the **2007 Conda de Valdemar Reserva**. Rioja is the old daddy of the three, being the most established, with its vineyard history going back to 873. (Yes 873 not 1873) Today there are some 57,000 hectares under cultivation, producing some 250 million litres.

One of the primary features of Rioja is the oak characters in the wine. It can be a very prominent, which is not surprising when the quality rankings are based on barrel and bottle maturation.

Joven - meaning young or less than 12 months - normally unoaked

Crianza - 24 months with 12 months in oak

Reserva - 36 months with at least 12 months in Oak

Gran Reserva - 60 months, with at least 24 months in oak

Conda de Valdemar Reserva is considered the flagship style of this Bodega. If you love the structure of Cabernet Sauvignon and the fruitiness of Grenache then you'll love Tempranillo. It's a big wine with high tannins that will match with any piece of rich meat.

When drinking these four wines you will notice there is a strong sense of minerality that links them all. These are wines that favour elegance and structure over power, but there is nothing “wimpy” about any of them. They are all different but they have this freshness and yes minerality that cannot be ignored. Enjoy these wines with some great friends and meals. I know I will.

Matt, The Bullionaire



Stu Freeman and Matt Eagan – Bullion Cellars



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