

# the bullionaire

BULLION 13A

IN THIS ISSUE: YOUR WINES, RIPASSO / AMARONE - VALOPICELLA, ABOUT THE SOMMELIERS

## Who wants to be a bullionaire?



What has changed at Bullion Cellars? Well quite a bit actually! Firstly we have changed the name of this newsletter to The Bullionaire, for who doesn't want to be a Bullionaire?

We have created a new Blog under the name of "The Bullionaire", so it kind of made sense to use this name for our newsletter. If you have not taken a look at this blog yet, make sure you do. It is a great way to catch up on what we are doing at Bullion Cellars between the deliveries. (A lot of great tastings and dinner parties, but someone has to do it right!) Don't expect a bunch of tasting notes, rather it is our musings on all things cool and wine related.

In light of all these changes, we have decided to mix it up a bit with this selection as well. We decided to give you two sommeliers for the price of one. Patrick White and Kim Bickley have both chosen wines for this selection. Patrick White, Head Sommelier of Otto Ristorante in Sydney has chosen a very Italian theme, with two wines from Northern Italy and one great Aussie wine, with a Northern Italian pedigree, whilst Kim has chosen an aged Rioja from Northern Spain.

What you are looking for in quality wine is texture and complexity. The wine has to have more than one dimension and it has to leave a lasting impression in your mouth and on your palate. These 4 wines deliver on this and more.

Patrick choose two wines with a very close association to the one region, Valpolicella in Northern Italy, both having a rather unusual method of production. (Dried grapes and the reuse of the grape skins in a secondary fermentation.) We have an Australian wine, the **2008 Freeman Secco**, from the Hill Tops region of NSW. This is the first wine released in Australia made from the traditional grape varieties of Valpolicella. Dr Brian Freeman

used to teach wine making at the university in Wagga Wagga, but he has ventured out on his own to make this unique wine style in Australia. It is an amazing, highly distinctive wine that has the very traditional Amarone characters of fruit cake but with this silky, toasty mouthfeel. Then we have the **2010 Campagnola Valpolicella Ripasso**, which I reckon is the coolest sounding name in wine. Ripasso basically means the wine is "passed over" the second hand grape skins used in the production of the flagship Amarone wines. This secondary fermentation is a great way of boosting their entry level wines to a whole new level. This wine is in an awesome looking package and more importantly, a great wine.

The white wine is a Pinot Bianco also from Northern Italy. At Bullion Cellars we have fallen in love with the Pinot Blanc grape variety. It offers a real point of difference to Chardonnay and the ubiquitous Sauvignon Blanc. We also think it has more texture and weight than Pinot Gris/ Grigio. The **2010 Mals Margreid Pinot Bianco** is a great example of this style and a wine to be enjoyed by itself or with a light salad or seafood dish. The last wine in the quartet, was a real discovery, the **2001 Nocedal Gran Reserva**. Yes that is right a 12 year old wine. This is a Tempranillo wine from the Spanish region of Rioja and we were able to secure this parcel of wine at a ridiculous price. Normally Gran Reservas from Rioja would retail for \$80 and upwards. Kim Bickley discovered this producer when she visited Spain last year and convinced an importer to bring it into the country. It is a serious and very elegant wine, drinking at its peak right now and a great example of what can happen to a wine with a bit of age.

We hope you enjoy the wines. Matt and Stu "The Original Bullionaires".



Stu Freeman and Matt Eagan – Bullion Cellars

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# THE WINES

## 2008 FREEMAN SECCO RONDINELLA CORVINA

Hilltops NSW, Australia



Amarone is one of the Big Boys of Italian Wine made in the Valpolicella region of Verona. The unique feature of this wine, is that the grapes are picked when they are fully ripe, then left to dry out on special straw mats for a period of 100-120 days. (This reduces the water content, decreasing the juice to skin ratio and basically concentrating everything). After this process the wine undergoes a slow fermentation, resulting in a wine of great structure and complexity that is very long lived, plus pretty expensive.

What does this have to do with Freeman Vineyards in the Hilltops region of NSW. Quite a bit actually! This high altitude, cool climate vineyard was the first vineyard in Australia to plant Rondinella and Corvina, the classic Amarone Valpolicella grape varieties. Freeman Vineyards was established in 1999 by Dr Brian Freeman, previously the Professor of Wine Science at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. The 40 hectare site comprises several elevated vineyard blocks (560metres), with well structured free draining decomposed granite soils, perfect for vines and as it turns out Valpolicella grape varieties.

He has crafted his Secco into an Amarone inspired, trophy winning wine. In a homage to the wines from Amarone, a selection of both grape varieties (Rondinella and Corvina) are dried in a neighbours solar powered prune dehydrator for 10 days. These dried or decicated grapes are

then added to the fresh grapes during the fermentation process. The wine is then aged for 2 years in older barrels, (to mature the wine rather than impart oak flavour) and then 2 years in bottle before release. The 2008 is the 6th vintage of this wine, with many reviewers saying it is the best to date. 94 Points from James Halliday is a pretty good indication of the quality

This wine **MUST BE DECANTED** before you even think of drinking. Don't be fooled by the palish colour, this will need three hours at a minimum. Initially the wine will show raisiny characters, but it then opens into a wine of great complexity and character. You end up with these amazing characters of cherries and fruit cake, framed by toasty oak aromas. It has this amazing silky mouth feel that constantly evolves and changes in the glass. Very impressive indeed Dr Freeman.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

You will want to drink this wine with meat casseroles or osso bucco. The Freeman's recommend rabbit, but I think beef or lamb shanks would do just as well. Plus it is perfect with a Cheese plate. Some hard (parmesan) and blue cheeses would do the trick. Try also with Roast Pork or robust pasta dishes, e.g. with hare sauce (pappardelle alla lepre) But remember- to Decant. I first tasted this wine in my office, and then took it home 4 hours later to share with my wife. Only then did I get the full effect. Magnificent.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 3-4 hours before drinking. This is one of the few wines in Australia that will go beyond 10 years. But why wait, just plan ahead and decant the wine before your meal.

## 2010 MALS MARGREID PINOT BIANCO

Alto Adige, Italy



Do not judge a book by its cover. I was a little surprised when I saw this wine. Why would the winery use such a short bottle? After tasting the wine, I didn't care, because I loved it. Pinot Bianco is the Italian name for the Pinot Blanc grape variety. Some earlier members might remember the Alsace Pinot Blanc (Albert Mann) we sent out to members a few years back. Plus, all you Pinot Noir fans out there, take note, Pinot Blanc/Bianco is actually a genetic mutation of the Pinot Noir grape and it is not uncommon for the odd Pinot Noir vine to bear white fruit.

This wine is sourced from Alto Adige in Northern Italy between Austria and Switzerland and is one of the oldest wine growing regions in Europe. Nals Margreid is a cooperative of about 140 small growers from this region, with a total of 150 hectares. Nals Margreid was formed in 1985 by the merging of The Cellars Nalles (established in 1932) and Magre-Niagara (established in 1954) two well-respected entities, both steeped in tradition.

While cooperatives are typical in the Alto Adige (where parcels are often small, from high altitude mountainous vineyards) their goal in joining forces was to unite some of the best wine growers of Alto Adige into something of a "dream team".

The vineyards of Nals Margreid are positioned between 200 and 900 meters above sea level, stretching from Nalles in the north to Magrè in the south. These locations benefit from both the climactic-barrier protection of the Alps to the North, and the warmth of the Mediterranean influences from the South. (Ideal for a long cool ripening period) This wine is sourced from the Penon Vineyard, which is one of the jewels in the area, with its high altitude and limestone / clay soils.

The 2010 Nals Margreid Penon Pinot Bianco begins with great aromas of apple, and stone fruits. The wine has a smooth and creamy texture with great acidity. The primary flavors include melon, apple and lemon with a stone/mineral base that is sensational. A full bodied wine that really does give you the structure and complexity that is important in quality wines.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

As its taste is characterized by well-balanced acidity and a full body, this wine is perfect with seafood dishes or white meats. (Think prawns, smoked fish, oysters, prosciutto or chicken salad) But where it really shines is with spicy Chinese or Thai foods.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine is in the zone right now. However you can safely cellar for another 1-2 years.

## 2001 NOCEDAL GRAN RESERVA, BODEGAS FUENMAYOR, TEMPRANILLO

Rioja, Spain



Bodegas Fuenmayor was an initiative implemented by a group of entrepreneurs from La Rioja linked to the wine-producing sector. Kind of like a dream team, with a focus on a single wine. They only produce wines from Tempranillo and sell under the Nocedal brand name. A state of the art winery finishes the equation, where no expense has been spared. It is no coincidence that they are situated in the viticultural heart of Rioja, the Rioja Alta. This wine was a real find and at 12 years of age is drinking at it's peak right now.

Rioja is Spain's fine wine capital, a region characterised by rich tradition and vibrant innovation. There is a wealth of historic producers, many of whom have been making wine for centuries, but the region also saw the arrival of new wave, ultra-modern bodegas. Rioja has a wonderful variety of styles, but it fell out of favour a bit with the international wine press as they looked to the trendy Ribero del Duero. Their tendency of over producing thin uninspired wines didn't help, however you cannot keep a champion down and the quality of the wines have never been better. But you need to understand the ageing and quality level to access the good wines.

Riojan producers segment their oak-aged red wines into three classes. The simplest class is called Crianza, which is aged in oak barrels one year before release. Crianza is soft and spicy with juicy red fruit flavors. Rioja Reserva is a slightly richer and fuller wine that is aged three years before release and the Gran Reserva is aged a whopping five years before it hits the retail shelves—a

winery's cash flow nightmare. Only made in the best vintages where the fruit quality is rich enough to support two years in barrel and three in bottle.

Rioja is all about Tempranillo, and although it is not well known around the world, in Spain and in Rioja it is king! Tempranillo is in fact one of the most widely grown grapes in the world. It is a dark, thick skinned grape, which ripens early. Presumably its name stems from the Spanish word temprano, or early.

The Nocedal Gran Reserva 2001 is a seductive and complex blend of subtle spice and soft fruit: blackberries, dried cherries overlain with developed secondary characters that are the hallmark of aged Rioja. This is not a massive wine, but it is all about elegance and class with the primary fruit characters being replaced and enhanced by cigar box, mushroom and truffle characters. However it does not taste 12 years old and has plenty of life left in the tank.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

A truly elegant wine. Consider pairing with Spanish hometown favorites - tapas, pork, grilled or roasted entrees. Char-grilled and roasted meats, grilled lamb skewers and garlic prawns sound pretty good to us. The aged character of the wine also means it will handle more subtle stews and casseroles.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

No need to cellar, it has already been done for you. I would still recommend decanting this wine for 10 minutes just to freshen the wine and let it open up. It has been in the bottle for over 9 years. Despite this, you could safely cellar for another 2-3 years, but why bother. Enjoy the wine now.

## 2010 CAMPAGNOLA VALPOLICELLA RIPASSO CLASSICO SUPERIORE

Italy



Since 1907 the Campagnola family has managed this winery located in Valgataro di Marano, the heart of the Classic Valpolicella viticultural area. Valpolicella is one of the better known wine regions of Italy, near the City of Verona in the North of the country.

Giuseppe Campagnola never misses the mark. Their wines are always among the best in Valpolicella. They have a modern winery and access to 80 hectares of vineyards mainly in the Marano Valley, which is perhaps the area of Valpolicella that best expresses the grape's subtle, vibrant aromas.

The wine is a combination of 80 % Corvina and 20% Rondinella made in the Ripasso Style. Ripasso is a relatively new style of wine in Italy (first released to the market in 1980) and is a really fascinating and cool way of making wine. Basically it uses the left over grape skins, from the best fruit of the vintage, to make their basic wine a hell of a lot more interesting. In this technique, the leftover grape skins and seeds from the fermentation of Amarone are added to the batch of Valpolicella wines for a period of extended maceration.

This re-fermentation process (Ripasso, or passed over) gives the wine greater structure, colour, flavor and weight. (We have gone into a bit of detail on Ripasso and Amarone in another part of the newsletter).

The wine is then aged in a combination of new and old oak barrels for 12 months followed by 6 months in the bottle prior to release. It is a full-bodied, juicy red, brimming with aromas and flavours of black cherry, mixed berries, plum and pepper. A velvety texture, gentle tannins and a long finish will make you want to open a second bottle.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

Ripasso wines are a very versatile style of wine. It can be served with a number of dishes such as risotto or hearty pasta dishes. But they are at their best when paired with robust dishes involving roasted veal or lamb or braised or barbecued red meats like steak, sausage and game. Ripasso also goes well with aged cheeses like Parmigiano-Reggiano. We think it is best however with a porcini mushroom risotto or braised veal shank with herbs.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before drinking. This wine can be kept for the next 3-5 years.



## RIPASSO / AMARONE - VALPOLICELLA

With two wines made from the traditional grape varieties of Valpolicella, (one Aussie and one Italian) we thought we would look at the two famous wines from this region.

Valpolicella is near the city of Verona in Northern Italy and it is famous for two wines. The first is Amarone and the second is Valpolicella Ripasso; known simply as Ripasso. The link between these two wines is very strong: not only are they made with the same blend of grapes (Corvina and Rondinella, with a bit Molinara ) but the production of Ripasso is directly related to that of Amarone.

The Amarone is the big boy of Italian wines, loved by wine drinkers looking for ripe fruit, power and a sense of adventure in their wine. It is often described as dark, silky, velvety, rich, concentrated, seductive and intense. Quite a wine, but not for everyone, or for everyone's budget. They are very expensive - \$100 plus a bottle as an entry level.

In Autumn, after harvest, the best grapes are handpicked and placed in specially designed lofts, used to dry out these grapes for a period of 4-6 months. At the end of January, beginning of February, the semi-dried grapes are squeezed and fermented. (The grapes will have lost 30-40% of their moisture and weight allowing for a greater concentration of flavours). After a long skin contact fermentation, there is a gentle pressing, with the grape skins removed and the wine transferred to small oak barrels for 2-3 years maturation before being bottled under the Amarone appellation.

But that is not the end of this story. The basic Valpolicella wine that was fermented in Autumn and stored in stainless steel tanks, is then put over these "used" Amarone skins (or passed over). These skins still contain aromatic compounds and tannins that thanks to this second, short fermentation are transferred to the simple Valpolicella wine, producing Ripasso. (An Italian word meaning "review" or "go over again").

Valpolicella Superiore Ripasso is often referred to as "baby Amarone". Where Amarone is a monster of a wine, around 15% with a flavor and structure to match. The Ripasso-style wines offer a convenient alternative. They are still rich and full-bodied, sharing the same aromas and flavor profiles as Amarone, but just less so. A bit like Amarone Lite and a much easier style of wine to drink and enjoy. Drinking Amarone on the other hand is a bit like eating a meal.

A pretty cool story and a great way of making wine. I am surprised that other regions and countries do not try something similar.

## ABOUT THE SOMMELIERS

### Patrick White *Head Sommelier Otto Ristorante*



Patrick has been head sommelier at Otto since September 2005. Fine food and wine is his passion and his profession, having worked in restaurants all his working life.

In June 2010 he travelled to the UK to successfully sit the exam for the advanced certificate offered by the Court of Master Sommeliers. (One of only five sommeliers in Australia to hold this qualification.)

He is a Len Evans Tutorial graduate and an associate judge at the Royal Sydney Wine Show, plus a writer for the Gourmet Traveler Wine Magazine.

### Kim Bickley



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.