

# the bullionaire

BULLION 188

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## Cote Du Rhone and Aussie Wines all the way!

In Australia we have a relatively moderate and consistent climate, resulting in mild variations to our wines from year to year. Of course certain regions can and do get hit by climate disasters (frost and hail etc), and certain vintages are better than others, but on the whole, our vintages have been remarkably consistent.

In Europe, this has not been the case. Historically only 6 in 10 vintages have been good, with 3 in 10 being sensational. (On a side note, the warming climate has dramatically evened out this vintage variation, making wine quality more consistent.) Europe has a long tradition of rewarding and acknowledging Top Vintages when they come along. Of course, Europe is a big place and do not take this as gospel, but the 2015 and 2016 vintages are widely regarded as very good, with the wines of the Rhone Valley considered some of the best of the century. There are two parts to the Rhone Valley; the Northern Rhone which is the smaller of the two, concentrating on Syrah (Shiraz) in all its glory; and the South which is much larger and home to the sensational Grenache blends of Cote Du Rhone, think Chateauneuf du pape etc.

We have been lucky enough to source two wines from both of these vintages in the Southern Rhone. They come from two highly regarded producers and whilst the wines are both Grenache based, they offer two very different styles. One very modern; quite full-bodied and fleshy; the other a medium-bodied style which is floral, vibrant and refreshing.

But first a little summary of the Southern Rhone. The Cote Du Rhone is the group name for all the wines made in what is the 2nd largest region in France. The wines range from entry level through to some of the most complex and expensive on the planet. The Cote Du Rhone is all about Reds, (89 % Red / 7% Rose / 4% White). There are actually 21 different grape varieties allowable in this region, but plantings are dominated by Grenache, Syrah, Mouvedre, Cinsault, and Carignan. It is this region which inspired the great GSM's from Australia (GSM – Grenache / Shiraz / Mouvedere)

Like any large region, there are special sites and sub-regions and the Rhone is no exception. The most famous of these subregions is Chateauneuf du pape, followed by other villages such as Carrienne / Lirac etc. Most producers in Chateauneuf du Pape will also release wines from their other vineyards in the Cote du Rhone and a great example is our first wine, from a very famous producer - the **2016 Domaine Charvin "Le Poutet" Cote Du Rhone.**

Domaine Charvin was created in 1851 by Guillaume Charvin and for the next 100 years sold their wine off in bulk. It was not until 1951 when they decided to bottle and sell their own wine. However, the modern age of Domaine Charvin really began in 1990 when the young and energetic



Laurent Charvin began to manage the estate. It has remained a small but highly regarded winery, located in the north of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. The Domaine has small vineyard holdings of just 8 hectares in Chateauneuf-du-Pape and 13 hectares in the Cotes du Rhone, but they are very quality focused, with an average age of the vineyards between 50 -90 years. They are considered quite "old school", still using a horse and plough when working their vineyards and they are known for producing finely styled wines showing finesse and elegance.

Winemaking is also very traditional, with no de-stemming and all aging is done in cement tanks. No oak is used in the aging of their wines, no doubt contributing to the freshness and overall vitality of the wines. The secret to their high quality is easy; they have old vines, with low very low yields and partake in minimal winemaking intervention.

We now move onto the more modern style of Cote de Rhone, the **2015 Domaine les Hautes Cances, Cairanne, Cotes du Rhone "Cuvee Tradition"** which has a long name, but well worth remembering. In fact, longer-term members might recall earlier vintages of this wine, but none better than the 2015 vintage.

This wine is from the village of Carianne in the northern sector of the Cotes du Rhone, near the village of Gigondas. At a fraction of the price of most Chateau-neuf-du-pape and better than many, this is a great example of the more modern style of Cote Du Rhone. They have recently opened a new winery with all gleaming stainless steel and new French oak and this shines through on the wine. It is not too heavy, but is quite fleshy and just a lovely glass of wine, with a sophistication that sets it apart. It has these amazing black fruit and liquorice characters swirling around the glass and before you know, you are onto the second bottle.

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bullion CELLARS  
SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

# THE WINES



## 2017 WALSH & SONS BURNSIDE CHARDONNAY *Margaret River*

A husband and wife team with a long family tradition of winemaking in the Margaret River. They have sourced the fruit from the Burnside vineyard, which they helped to plant with their parents in 1981. It is located in the middle of Margaret River and it is only 21kms from the ocean. A great location for a 37-year-old vineyard that is now farmed biodynamically.

The fruit was handpicked and pressed straight to barrel, where natural yeasts were used for the ferment. Only French barrels were used, 30% being new from a 300-litre Hogshead and the remainder 5-year-old barriques. There was no stirring of the lees, just topping and tasting on a fortnightly basis. Malolactic fermentation was allowed to proceed, converting the harsh lactic acids into the softer Malic acids, then the wine was left undisturbed with a touch of sulphur added just prior to a bottling in January 2018. The winemakers have prepared this wine unfinned and unfiltered which may result in some harmless deposits in the bottle. Don't worry if these are present, they all add to the complexity of what is a beautiful glass of wine.

This wine is all about freshness and drinkability. Think passionfruit, lemon and citrus on the nose, followed through with great acidity and freshness on the palate. This is a powerhouse wine, supported by very high-quality oak that adds a nice richness, with slight cashew, roasted hazelnut overtones. There is a concentration of flavours and a vibrancy which you really only see from an old and mature vineyard.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

Perfect with light and delicate seafood's such as shellfish, crab, prawns and oysters. Also great with sushi and sashimi. It can also handle slightly richer dishes like salmon and chicken, pork or pasta in a creamy sauce. A very versatile and very high quality wine.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine can be safely cellared for the next 10 years.



## 2014 SALOMON ESTATE CABERNET SAUVIGNON

### *Finnis River, South Australia*

A fantastic example of a South Australian Cabernet from the masters of Gruner Veltliner in Austria. Through a love affair of Australia and Penfolds, this winemaking family, with over 220 years in Austria, purchased a block of land near McLaren Vale and planted a vineyard in 1995. Bert Salomon has become the ultimate flying winemaker, doing vintages in each hemisphere since 2002. Not a bad way to spend your time.

The soils of this vineyard are typically gravel and sand over red and orange sandstone, with the vineyard falling gently away towards the northwest, providing ideal exposure and plenty of warmth to ripen the grapes. Balanced by the cooling breezes which roll off the Southern Ocean in the late-afternoon, ensuring excellent acid retention.

There is a richness to this wine which is so enjoyable. It is very deep red in colour, with expressive aromas of blueberry and blackcurrant, with hints of dark chocolate. However, it is on the palate where this wine really shines, as it is just so drinkable. It finishes with lovely velvety tannins.

Like most Cabernets, there is always another variety blended in to help fill out the middle palate, in this case 10% Merlot. The wine is barrel aged for 18 months in 300-litre hogsheads (approx. 50% new French oak).

A very classy, elegant, moorish glass of wine.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

Think red meats and protein. A great medium rare steak would be your best bet.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before drinking, this wine can be safely cellared for the next 6-8 years.



## 2016 DOMAINE CHARVIN "LE POUTET" *Cote Du Rhone, France*

**Grenache / Mourvedre / Syrah / Carignan**

Laurent Charvin runs this small family estate located in the north of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. The Domaine has small vineyard holdings of just 8 hectares in Chateauneuf-du-Pape and 13 hectares in Cotes du Rhone. They are best known for their Chateauneuf du Papes, however, their Le Putet Cote Du Rhone is always regarded as one of the better wines from this region. Helping this is the age of the vineyards, 40-90 years old. Laurent Charvin describes his vineyard sites as being cool, as their vines are mostly planted on sandy north-facing slopes. This adds to the overall elegance and medium bodied nature of the wines.

They always aim to produce finely styled Grenache-based wines showing great depth and finesse (approximately 80% Grenache with small amounts of Mourvedre, Syrah and Carignan) Winemaking is very traditional with no de-stemming and all aging is done in cement tanks. No wood is used for the maturation of the wine.

This all results in a very floral perfumed wine that is just a joy to drink. It is not big, but it offers so much complexity and flavour. Think lots of blackberry fruits, garrigue (lavender/ rosemary), white pepper and sappy herbs. It is medium bodied but very polished and elegant and it has this amazing length. You don't need to be big to make a huge impression and this wine is a great example.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

Best served with all types of classic meat dishes, veal, pork, beef, lamb, duck, game, roast chicken, roasted, braised, stewed dishes, barbecue, sausage and cassoulet. Domaine Charvin is also good with Asian dishes, hearty fish courses like tuna, mushrooms pasta, eggplant, tomatoes and cheese.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 30 minutes before drinking, can be safely cellared for the next 8-10 years.



## 2015 DOMAINE LES HAUTES CANCES, CAIRANNE, COTES DU RHONE, "CUVEE TRADITION" *France*

**Grenache, Mourvedre, Syrah, Cinsault, Carignan**

The story of Domaine les Hautes Cances is of a small family-run estate located in the village of Cairanne in the northern sector of the Cotes du Rhone, near the village of Gigondas. The vineyards are managed using organic principles and yields are kept low so as to express the true terroir of the region. Another reason for the great quality of wines is the age of their vines. These low yielding vines have an average age of 48 years, with several plots reaching the grand old age of 100. They can thank their grandfather for this critical vineyard resource.

The wine is a blend of 42% Grenache (from vines more than 100 years old), Syrah, Mourvedre, Carignan and Cinsault. The fruit is hand harvested, hand selected and completely destemmed. The quality of wines has really taken a step up thanks to their new gravity-fed winery. Gone are the big old foudres of yesteryear, now they have gleaming stainless steel and new smaller oak. The wines are made in a very modern way, but still retaining the freshness and vitality that you want in fine wine today. All wines are bottled on the Estate and are unfiltered.

Bright purple in colour. Prominent aromas of blackberry, liquorice, smoked meat and violet. Tangy acidity gives the wine shape, highlighted by juicy black and blue fruit flavours. Finishes broad and spicy, with firm tannins, and a meaty quality and good length.

Very, very good!

### FOOD MATCHINGS

This elegant silky wine is perfect for long slow cooked roasts of pork or lamb that may even be a little bit fatty (shoulder of lamb and lamb shanks, for example). It suits stews with dark, winey sauces too. Can also be matched with most tomato based Italian dishes.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

The 2015 vintage was a cracker in the Rhone and this wine has another 5-8 years. Decant before serving for at least 20 minutes.





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We now leave the Rhone and head back to Australia. The quality of Australian wine has never been higher. In the past Australia has been criticised for producing wines that are too big and too heavy, but this is no longer the case. In fact, it is very hard to find those wine styles, as consumers and winemakers alike are moving towards more fresher and vibrant styles. We have chosen two great examples of this, a Chardonnay from the Margaret River and a Cabernet Sauvignon from South Australia.

Cabernet has become somewhat of a second class citizen in Australia as everybody seems to be clamoring for the latest cool climate Pinot or a trendy new import from Spain. I kind of understand this, as most of the great Cabernets from Australia start at \$50 and in some cases are closer to \$100. They are pretty bloody good, but very expensive. Sure there are plenty of cheaper Cabernets around but they are largely forgettable. It is very hard to find a great Cabernet in the \$30 plus price range, which has become a bit of a "Holy Grail" for me and the Sommeliers. There are just not that many around, and when we find one, we grab it.

So we were overjoyed when we had a look at the Salomon winery in South Australia and found a great Aussie Cab Sauv, with a very famous Austrian name. Yes, Austria! Bert Salomon is the eighth generation of Salomon Undorf, one of Austria's greatest wineries. They make amazing Riesling and Gruner Veltliner at Krems on the River Danube, just an hour's drive outside Vienna.

Bert Salomon's journey into wine began when his mother encouraged him to gain some experience outside the family, taking a job with a wine importer in New York. Here he discovered a love and joy of International wines and the contacts that would lead to a successful import/ export business; still in operation today. It was through these contacts that he was the first person to bring Penfolds into Austria, beginning his love affair with South Australian Reds. Frequent trips to Australia led him to claim a piece of Australia for his own, planting a vineyard in 1995, not far from McLaren Vale. He is a frequent visitor to the vineyard during vintage, getting fully involved in the community, even so far as his children attending the local school. It has now progressed to another generation, with his 27 year old son becoming his own flying winemaker, working vintages with other wineries in South Australia.

So here we have a winemaking family with over 225 years experience in Austria and over 20 years in South Australia. Not a bad accomplishment; but only notable if the wines are good. And yes they are petty bloody good. This **2014 Salomon Finnis River Cabernet Sauvignon** is a rich full-

bodied style, with plenty of blackcurrant and cedar characters. However, it still maintains plenty of freshness and vitality.

**Chardonnay is the "New Black"**. My friends are getting sick of me saying this, but it is true. Chardonnay from Australia is world class, rivalling the great white wines of Burgundy, at a fraction of the price. However, for quality Chardonnay, you need to spend above \$25. Chardonnays under this price are more the tropical fruit punch style which is relatively simple and straightforward. When you look at wines above this price, the complexity, structure, and flavour increase dramatically. Chardonnay is grown in all the regions of Australia, however, there are a few regions that really stand out, with Margaret River being one of them.

We have chosen the **2017 Walsh & Sons Burnside Chardonnay** from Margaret River, coming from a relatively new winery with a lot of pedigree. Owned by the husband and wife team of Ryan Walsh and Freya Hohnen. Both are from winemaking and wine growing families in the Margaret River. Freya's father is David Hohnen who created both Cape Mentelle in Margaret River and then Cloudy Bay in NZ. Walsh and Sons are able to draw on some of the best vineyard sites in the area, including the Burnside vineyard which was planted in 1981 and is now farmed Biodynamically.

We have discussed Biodynamics before, which is similar to organic farming in that both take place without chemicals, but biodynamic farming incorporates ideas about a vineyard as an ecosystem, also accounting for things such as astrological influences and lunar cycles. This can get a little "out there" but the proof is in the pudding with the wine quality always high. The idea is that over time biodynamic methods and preparations create deeper topsoil, increase root mass and depth, increase carbon capture and water holding capacity of soils - thereby improving plant health and dramatically improving the plant's resistance to pests and disease.

This Chardonnay is a great example of the modern style. It has plenty of flavour, think grapefruit and lemons, but is backed up with some very high-quality oak, giving the wine great depth and sophistication. This is a very very classy bottle of wine, finishing with great acidity and freshness.

So there you have 2 great wines from 2 sensational vintages in the Southern Rhone, and 2 Aussie wines which continue to show how far we have come in the last 10 years, as our winemakers strive for greater complexity and sophistication. Enjoy!

**Matt, The Bullionaire**