

# the bullionaire

BULLION 18D

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## Wine seems to be getting better with age!

Where did 2018 go? Before I start talking about the excellent wines Dan Sharp has selected, I thought I would provide a quick re-cap of 2018.

Donald Trump continued to be Donald Trump, I guess everyone is becoming immune to his particular style of ranting and raving. We lost another Prime Minister to a collection of back room schemers. I don't think many people really understood why, apart from a few people on the extreme right, but I don't think Scott Morrison should get too comfortable at Kirribilli House. There was a Royal Commission into Banking, which showed an industry built around greed and bonuses rather than customer satisfaction. (Not much news there!) Australian Sporting teams seemed to stumble from worse to worst. First it was our Cricketers and their rather unusual use of sticky tape on balls, then it was the continued decline of the Wallabies. Will we ever beat the All Blacks? Also didn't we used to be good at swimming? I doubt 2018 will go down as a great year, but at least I had wine, which seems to be getting better with age. (The older I get, the more I like it.)

So to Dan Sharp and his selections. Dan works at Fred's in Sydney which has just been awarded Two Hats and is still one of my favourite restaurants. It has this amazing vibe, so relaxed yet so "fancy" at the same time. It's like going to your best friend's place for a dinner party, if your best friend happens to own a 2 "hatted" restaurant. Dan has gone for an Australian slant in this selection, and whilst I seem to say this each and every time, these are some of my favourite selections.

Australian wine is on a roll at the moment. Our Chardonnay is rightly regarded as world class. Regions like the Yarra Valley, Adelaide Hills, Margaret River and Tasmania are found on the great wine lists of the world, straddling that fine line between flavour and texture, whilst still retaining elegance and acidity. Australian Shiraz is also in the midst of a makeover, moving away from the brashness and over the top nature of say a Donald Trump, think big alcohol, big oak and big tannins; moving towards a Barrack Obama style, impressive and imposing but with a lot more class, elegance and style. Then we have the Pinot Noirs from the cool climate regions of Australia. Regions like the Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula and Tasmania are shining, as wine drinkers around the world move towards medium bodied and elegant wines. At the moment the wines from Tasmania are shining just a little brighter than most. Vineyards which were planted 20-30 years ago are now starting to hit their prime, with winemakers who have travelled the world and brought back the experience and knowledge to make world class Pinot Noir. Tasmania is also a very "cool and trendy" place, thanks in part to David Walsh and the MONA museum, which also has a pretty flash winery and brewery attached.



This leads us to Dan's first wine, the **2017 Clarence House Estate Pinot Noir**. Sourced from a vineyard in the Coal River of Tasmania. This vineyard is owned by David Kilpatrick, who in 1998 planted 12 hectares of vines on a North East sloping block just below the Coal River Valley. What was even more important for David, is they are close neighbours to a pretty sensational winery called Pooley Wines, who make their wines. This is important as they just happen to have one of the most talented winemakers, not only in Tasmania, but also in Australia - Anna Pooley. 2017 was a great vintage in the Coal River and this wine is a knockout. It is in a zone right now, plenty of weight and complexity, which is strangely what you want in a mid-weight wine.

The next Aussie wine Dan has chosen is from the Heathcote Region in Victoria. The **2015 Grailot Heathcote Shiraz**. I feel a little sorry for Heathcote. I have always liked the wines from this region, but it kind of feels like the forgotten child of the wine industry. The wines are great but they just don't get the attention they deserve. There are two possible reasons for this, at least in my opinion. They don't have a large, marquee winery or brand providing a halo for the region, nor are they close to a large city, which has proven so critical to places like the Hunter Valley, Yarra or Mornington. Oh well, their loss is our gain, for the value and quality is pretty sensational. Heathcote is like the Coonawarra, where the region is dominated by their soil, in their case a soil type called Cambrian, which is a rusty red colour, found on well drained sites with gravelly loams on undulating hillsides. This obviously ticks a lot of boxes for high quality grape growing.

*Continued back page*

bullion CELLARS  
SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

# THE WINES



## 2017 CLARENCE HOUSE ESTATE PINOT NOIR *Coal River Valley, Tasmania*

This wine is sourced from a small, well established vineyard in the Coal River Valley in Southern Tasmania. The quality of the wines really picked up from the 2016 vintage, when Anna Pooley started making their wines, who is one of the most talented winemakers in country. 2017 is regarded as one of the better vintages from this region and Anna's skill in drawing out and combining all the elements is a tribute to her skill. This wine is just starting to show its true glory.

The vineyard was planted in 1998 on Hobart's eastern shore, on the site of Hobart's original market garden (early 1800's). The Vineyard is now hitting its maturity at 20 years and the results can really be seen in this 2017 vintage.

In the past 5-6 years the wines from Coal River Valley have taken the world by storm. The wines tend to be a little richer and darker in colour than what you get from the mainland, offering a greater complexity.

This is one of the best value Pinot's we have come across and also a bloody great glass of wine. It was the palate weight in the mouth that really impressed Dan, plus

the captivating aromas of raspberry, dried flowers and spice cake. It has such an impressive volume, and finishes incredibly long, but with a cracking acidity.

### 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

Decant the wine for 20 minutes before drinking. Can be safely cellared for the next 5-7 years.



## 2015 GRAILLOT SYRAH *Heathcote, Victoria*

This exciting venture is a collaboration between one of the Northern Rhone's best winemakers, Alain Grailot; with an Australian Vineyard, owned by an Australian Importer. Robert Walters is the owner of one of Australia's largest wine importers, Bibendum. He has been importing Alain's wines for years, and when there was a suggestion to make a wine together, they both jumped at the chance. Over the past 4 years they have worked with a special 3.3 hectare plot in Heathcote and the wines have just got better and better with each new vintage.

Alain's role in this project has been critical — despite the limitations of distance. His input into the vineyard, winemaking and blending had an immediate and major impact and has grown more impactful over the years. Much of his advice has directly contradicted the guidance they previously received, most notably in the areas of vineyard management, barrel ageing, blending and when and how to bottle. The simple fact is that without Alain, this project would not succeed.

This wine reflects a barrel selection (often corresponding to sections of the vineyard) with the aim of selecting the most refined, perfumed and elegant Shiraz / Syrah. They use large format, older wood for ageing the wines over 13 months. It was vinified with 50% whole bunches, although the aim is certainly not to have any 'stems' character. Instead the aim is for finesse,

structure and perfume that whole bunches can bring.

This is just a fabulous glass of wine and a great example of the modern style of Aussie Shiraz. This wine bursts with flavours and aromas but there is nothing over the top, rather it is all about elegance and class.

### 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, winy sauces too. Also great with hard cheeses, or quite frankly just by itself.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before drinking. Can be safely cellared for the next 3 years, however it is in the perfect drinking window right now.



## 2014 DOMAINE BRUNO SORG RIESLING *Alsace, France*

Alsace is a thin, narrow region found on the border of Germany. For a long time during its history it was actually part of Germany, resulting in a distinct culture and feel, which is more Alsace than French. They are a white wine region, with Riesling in all its glory as the star. This is one of my favourite regions and I was fortunate to visit there a number of years ago and it lived up to its reputation as the Disneyland of Wine regions. Tiny medieval villages dot the country side with their cobble stoned streets and thatched roofs, combining with vineyards which snake down the hillsides to their back doors. The wines are bloody good, with this region battling it out with the Mosel for the producers of the best Riesling in the world.

Domaine Bruno Sorg was a new producer for me, and after a bit of research I was surprised to discover it has been around since 1965. Young by Alsace standards but pretty ancient from where we come from. They have recently started down the Organic route of farming and the quality has never been better.

2014 was a great vintage in Alsace and we were over joyed when we were offered this parcel of wine with a bit of age. Lime and green apples

explode off the nose and palate, and you have these lovely toasted, honeyed characters which are now starting to come to the forefront. This is a wine that you will want to savour in a nice big glass and explore the different aromas and flavours that seem to change from moment to moment.

A great wine from a great region, from a producer on the rise.

### 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 Asian dishes, and almost any Thai home delivery – Uber Eats - eat your heart out!

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

At 4 years in the bottle this wine is in the zone now, but can still be safely cellared for the next 2 years, but I will be drinking my bottles over the next 3-6 months (or 3-4 weeks).



## 2015 MONTE BERNARDI TZINGARELLA (IGT) *Tuscany, Italy*

### Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Cabernet Franc

The Monte Bernardi estate extends over 53 hectares (130 acres), of which 9.5 hectares (23.5 acres) are planted to vineyards with an average age of over 40 years. The vineyards are situated in the hilly, southern-most region of Panzano, an area acknowledged as one of the Grand Cru's of Chianti Classico.

Over 90% of the vineyard is planted to Sangiovese with the balance planted to Bordeaux varietals which go into this Tzingarella. The estate took a new lease of life in 2003, when Michael Schmelzer, an American, moved to Italy with his family and purchased the estate. He has spent considerable time and money converting the estate to biodynamic practices and they have never looked back.

This is a beautiful Cabernet blend that drinks well above its price. It is distinctly European or Tuscan in taste, but it is obviously made in a new world style with the power and flavour required. Thankfully they have avoided a heavy handed oak treatment, which is a common complaint of other Super Tuscans.

Natural Yeasts and very minimal winemaking practices were used, consistent with the Biodynamic policies of the estate. The wine spent 18 months in oak and then another 12 months in bottle before release to the market. Only 500 cases are made of this wine.

This medium-bodied wine is packed with fruit that is richly complex and smooth. Its tannins, acidity and cherry soul are unmistakably Tuscan with the added characters of fresh cassis, blackberries and minerality which are typical characters of Bordeaux.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

Like with Cabernet or Bordeaux, rich protein dishes like steak and beef would be ideal. The tannins and rich flavours will cut through the strong flavours of these red meats. You could also match with Roast turkey and ham or even slow corked Pork belly.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 30 minutes before drinking and it can be safely cellared for the next 7-8 years.

# ABOUT THE SOMMELIER



## Dan Sharp works at the “Two Hat” restaurant Fred’s in Sydney.

Prior to Fred’s he was the Head Sommelier at Sixpenny, where he was Gourmet Travellers Sommelier of the Year in 2017. To get his hands dirty so to speak, he also worked a vintage at Pegasus Bay winery in NZ.

Dan continues to travel the world honing his craft and if not in Fred’s, can be found in a winery or vineyard somewhere in the world, or at University where he is studying for his Aeronautical Engineering Degree. A busy boy indeed!

*Continued from front page*

The Grailot brand is a joint venture between Robert Walters, the owner of Bibendum, one of the larger drinks wholesalers based in Melbourne and Alain Grailot, a leading producer in the Northern Rhone. Bibendum have been importing his wines for years and when the opportunity arose to partner on a venture they both jumped at the chance. Their collaboration began with a small 3.3 hectare sub plot within a Heathcote vineyard. They manage this site differently to the rest of the vineyard, with the goal of producing a powerful yet graceful Syrah and a merger between the Old and New Worlds. Alain has been described as the man who makes Shiraz taste like Pinot Noir and whilst I think this is getting a bit carried away, the wine certainly has an elegance to it, but it is a wine that still packs a punch. The minute I tasted this wine with Dan, we both knew it had to be included. It just screamed class and style. This is the type of wine you want to sit down with your partner and solve the world’s problems, or at least whether you should open another bottle, or buy another case.

Alsace has been a long-time favourite of our Sommeliers, so it was no great surprise when Dan choose a wine with a bit of age. He was offered a parcel of wine from the 2014 vintage which is just on song. It is hard to find good imported wine in Australia with a bit of age, as the good wines do not last long. However the importer got a bit excited a few years back when she purchased this wine and ended up buying a little too much stock. There really is only so much demand for Alsace Riesling, no matter how good it is. We were able to pick up this wine at a handy discount and if you are a lover of Alsace Riesling, get excited. Unlike German Riesling, most of the Riesling from Alsace will be dry and the **2014 Domaine Bruno Sorg Riesling** is a great example. I was not familiar with this winery, but it turns out they are a small family concern, founded in 1965. (Young by Alsace standards). They focus on Organic grape growing practices and they tend to produce a slightly drier, crisper style of wine. 2014 is considered a top vintage in Alsace and with almost 4 years in the bottle, lovely toasty honeyed characters have developed, adding to the richness and enjoyment of the wine.

We seem to be on a roll with Italy at the moment, with another wine from this fascinating country chosen by Dan. This time from Tuscany and what I call a “Mini Super Tuscan”. Super Tuscan was a term given to a new style of wines released in the late 1960’s early 1970’s, when producers in Tuscany started to make wines outside the restrictive rules of Chianti. They began using varietals like Cabernet and Merlot and introduced newer, smaller oak in an attempt to make wines more suited to the US market. The result was a richer more forward style and fast forward

40 odd years, it has become a style and a brand all by itself. The official Italian rating is IGT (**Indicazione Geografica Tipica**) which is a very generic term, but in Tuscany it has come to mean a lot more. The wines can vary in quality and price, however most tend to be on the more expensive side, with some wines priced over \$300 a bottle. Most Tuscan wineries are experimenting with and releasing a “Super Tuscan” style, which is mostly a Bordeaux blend with or without some Sangiovese. Dan has chosen the **2015 Monte Bernardi Tzingarella (IGT)** and the reason I call this a Mini Super Tuscan is purely based on price. I could not believe how good this wine was when I tasted it with Dan. This is a Cabernet blend that could be and should be a lot more expensive, but as it is from a relatively unknown winery, they had to be more realistic in their pricing. Monte Bernardi is an estate in the hilly, Southern-most region of Panzano, an area acknowledged as one of the Grand Cru’s of Chianti Classico. It is planted to 24 acres of vineyards - 90% to Sangiovese, the rest to the Bordeaux grape varieties. It was purchased by an American family in 2003 who have spent considerable time and money updating the vineyard and winery, moving to Bio-dynamic practices and all that this entails. The quality of this wine is pretty outstanding, and a stand out for the price. It is blend of mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot, with only 500 cases produced each year.

If you wanted to look at some other, more expensive, examples of Super Tuscans, here would be my wish list (Tignanello / Solaia / Ornellaia- Go nuts!).

So there are 4 pretty sensational wines I know you will love.

Enjoy, **Matt the Bullionaire**



*Stu Freeman and Matt Eagan*