

the bullionaire

BULLION 19A

www.bullioncellars.com.au

We Welcome Alice ...

The Year of the Pig has begun. Not sure what this has to do with wine, but I sure do love pork. Who doesn't remember a few years back when pork belly was all the rage at our favourite restaurants? 2019 also brings with it a new Sommelier to our merry band of brothers and sisters. Alice Massaria has brought her spittoon to the table with a wealth of experience and a fabulous palate. She comes from Italy, but has lived in Australia for the past 8 years, working first with the prestigious Merivale Group at Ivy and then joining a new venture called Bistecca. Bistecca is a little unusual, but at their core they are a sensational steak house and Italian cocktail bar. It also happens to be a very on trend venue, as it is a "hidden secret". You feel like part of the cool gang when you finally get there, as it is hidden away in the basement of a building and down a side alley of the Sydney CBD. It seats only 50 people and serves only 1 main course, the "**Bistecca alla Fiorentina**", or as we generally know it, the T-bone steak. But it does it so very, very well. There is a dazzling array of sides and entrees, and a delightful Italian themed wine list. Do yourself a favour and search it out, as it is well worth the effort, even if they do confiscate your mobile phone for evening bookings. One of their little quirks!

So to Alice's selections. As you would expect she has chosen an Italian wine. This is one of the biggest sellers at Bistecca and it is the wine she normally drinks at home. The **2014 Poggio Mandorlo "Il Guardiano" IGT Toscana**. It is a Super Tuscan, which some of you will remember from our last delivery. Here is a brief recap for our new customers

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 blending varietals like Cabernet and Merlot with their Sangiovese 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.

It is no surprise that these wines are so popular, for they are just so moorish. They have everything you love about Italian wines (Especially Sangiovese and Chianti) Medium bodied red fruits, with soft tannins, but with an extra level of energy and tension. Poggio Madorlo is a new winery a little over 17 years old. Founded in 2001, it sits at the foot of the Monte Amiata mountain range in a very lovely part of Tuscany. The Estate is 38 hectares, of which only 12 are planted to grapes (Sangiovese / Cabernet Franc / Merlot). The rest of the estate is devoted to wild wood lands, a large lake and a small planting of Olive trees. This mixed farming is so typical of the Italian country side and especially the rolling hills of Tuscany. I can see why this is a favourite wine of Alice's! It is a blend of Sangiovese and Merlot and utterly delicious.



Next up, Alice has chosen two French wines; one rather intriguing white wine you might be familiar with, and an old favourite of hers and mine, a red from the Cote Du Rhone. Literally every part of Italy produces wine, and they are obviously the biggest selling wines in the country, but Alice was keen to point out that the interest and consumption of international wine (really only French) is pretty large, and she and her family have always enjoyed the wines from France.

The white wine is from the grape variety, Aligote, which is one of three grape varieties grown in Burgundy. I am guessing the other two you might have heard of (Pinot Noir and Chardonnay). Aligote is like the forgotten step child, but from the right sites and the right winemaker, they can be pretty sensational. As we all know Burgundy is considered the holy grail of winemakers and wine enthusiasts alike. The wines are tremendously exciting, but also tremendously expensive. (The most expensive wines on the planet, come from a small Burgundy producer called Domaine Romenee Conti, or DRC for short. Current vintages of these wines can be purchased for up to \$30,000 per bottle. With one bottle of the 1945 vintage being sold for US\$496,000 last year.) These wines have become like fine art, endlessly traded but seldom enjoyed. Yes Burgundy is expensive, but value and enjoyment can be found. So step up to the plate, Aligote.

Aligote is a white variety, but its ancestry can be traced back to Pinot Noir. Typically, Aligote, is ready to drink in its youth. It shows minerality and peachy, melon-like flavours not unlike Chardonnay, but in the right hands it makes for brilliantly well-valued wines, which sommeliers just love; as they

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SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

THE WINES



2016 GILES ROBIN "TERROIR DE BRAMAREL" COTES DU RHONE

France

Syrah 60% - Grenache 40%

Giles Robin seized the opportunity to make and bottle his own wine when the contract with the local co-operative ended in 1995. Since 1945 the two previous generations of Robin have sold their fruit this way, but Giles's talents as a winemaker were immediately apparent and the wines have only got better over the ensuing two decades – more alluringly spicy, more silky-textured and with greater depth and complexity. The vines are farmed organically, the fruit is picked by hand and Giles's underground winery allows gentle, gravitational handling of the juice and wines. His winery and vineyard holdings are based around Croze Hermitage, but this wine is something a little different.

Giles Robin has a good friend south of his village who is a third generation truffle farmer, with a small planting of Grenache, planted in 1950. (Don't you just love regional France?) Four years ago these close friends decided to create a new wine blending wines from these 2 estates and so Terroir de Bramarel was created.

The wine is a blend of 60% Syrah and 40% Grenache, which has been aged with little to no oak and bottled early to retain the freshness and vitality of the sensational 2016 vintage.

The wine has an excellent depth of colour displaying an opaque dark purple core. A fragrantly scented nose is led by fresh dark plum and black raspberry aromas over subtle liquorice, earth and dried herb notes. Medium bodied, fresh and elegant and not at all over powering, but you just cannot wait for that second sip, glass and bottle

FOOD MATCHINGS

We like this wine with a nice antipasto plate, or grilled red meats, think lamb / steak. A very food friendly wine that will match with most Italian foods, Break out with your new Pizza oven. (Add some truffles to the Pizza if available, or Truffle oil, for a great match.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes, this wine can be safely cellared for the next 2-3 years. I like to drink this wine a little chilled. Not cold straight out of the fridge, but closer to 12-15 degrees. You will really get to enjoy the freshness and vitality of the wine.



2016 ARNO WINE CO. CABERNET SAUVIGNON *Barossa Valley*

Arno Wine Co, is a newish venture in the Barossa Valley, but with a well-worn history. A talented winemaking husband and wife team striking out to create their own wines, using a network of growers and contacts to source and make their wines. They only make small volumes which are largely sold through restaurants and they have become a darling of the Sommelier set.

Barossa Cabernet Sauvignon is rare beast, as most of the valley is planted to Shiraz and Grenache. Don't expect the herbaceous, capsicum-edged wines you can find in some of the cooler areas Australia. No this is a pure expression of the Barossa soils and climate. You get the lovely blackcurrant aromas and flavours you expect of Cabernet, it is just a little more fuller and rounded, with the power you expect from the Barossa.

They harvest the Cabernet a little earlier than they do Shiraz, retaining the natural acidity, tempering the alcohol and keeping that freshness, which is so evident in the wine. It spends around 3 weeks on skins, before pressing off into old French oak barrels for 12 months aging.

Deep in colour with the classic Cabernet Sauvignon nose of blackberry, blackcurrant and dark plum fruits of impressive purity.

FOOD MATCHINGS

This wine is built for more robust meat dishes, especially a T-bone steak where the tannins of this wine will match so perfectly. Think also hearty pasta dishes and slow cooked lamb or casseroles. This wine is one of the biggest sellers at Bistecca.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before serving. This wine can be safely cellared for 5-8 years.



2014 POGGIO MANDORLO "IL GUARDIANO" IGT TOSCANA *Italy*

Sangiovese 85% Merlot 15%

Poggio Mandorlo is a small winery at the foothills of Monte Amiata in the picturesque region of Tuscany. They tick a lot of quality boxes. A small vineyard planted in 2001 after an exhaustive research into the area. What they found is a pre mountain landscape with a microclimate mitigated by the winds from the nearby coastal region of Maremma and the extraordinary richness of the volcanic soils; perfect for quality wine production. Add to this the winemaking talents of a very well-known producer from the nearby Montalcino and it is no great surprise that the wines are so good. With almost 20 years vineyard maturity, this new winery is in the zone right now.

They produce less than 3,000 cases per year and they keep their yields tiny, less than 3 tonnes per acre, which is very important for Sangiovese, as it needs to be heavily restricted. If left unattended it can produce a lot of wine, which will be pretty average. They have around 24 acres of vineyards planted to Sangiovese / Cabernet Franc and Merlot.

The "Il Guardiano" is a blend of 85% Sangiovese with the balance Merlot. The fruit has been hand packed from their estate and made at their onsite winery. Their aim for this wine is to be fresh and vibrant with only a little oak maturation. The beauty of this wine can be seen after almost 4 years in the bottle. Whilst this wine has plenty of life left in the tank, it is so enjoyable to drink a wine from Tuscany that has settled down, with all the edges rubbed

away. What you have left is just a beautiful glass of wine.

This wine is a classic example of a Super Tuscan, a dark ruby colour, but it is on the nose that the "Tuscany" is so evident. Red ripe fruits, black cherries, dried cherries and cranberries with some floral nuances, and earthy accents. It is medium to full bodied with a great structure and a smooth, balanced finish. The Acidity and tannins are prominent, but engaging, allowing this wine to be a great food match with most red meats.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Red meats, and yes T-bone steak. It is the biggest selling wine at Bistecca. Other obvious matches will be tomato or meat based pasta dishes, or simply by itself.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 20 minutes before serving. This wine has already had 4 years in the bottle, so I would only recommend cellaring for another 2-3 years. I will be drinking my bottles over the next 3-6 months.

2017 DOMAINE COLLOTTE BOURGOGNE ALIGOTE *France*

Domaine Collotte are based around the village of Marsannay, which is one of the youngest appellations in Burgundy, created in 1987. Because of this, their wines are a lot more affordable than others, and in most cases, the quality is just as good. Remember quality and high prices do not always mean the same thing in Burgundy. Phillippe Collotte, has been able to take over his family holdings of fully mature vineyards above the village and he is quickly garnering a reputation for high quality and value.

Aligote is one of 3 varieties which can be planted in Burgundy, but in most cases it is an afterthought to Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. However the Aligote vineyards which have remained, have remained for a reason. The soil/grape/ climate/terroir are all perfect.

This is a text book example of Aligote. The wine is designed to be drunk in its youth, where it is showing plenty of minerality and peachy, melon like aromas and flavours. It has a prominent acidity, but has a full bodied

finish meaning it can be perfect with your favourite meal or as an aperitif. Also, at only 12.0% alcohol, this is a wine you can drink on a lazy weekend afternoon and not get too tipsy. (For a number of people this is quite important!)

If you like Chardonnay, Riesling or Semillon, you will love this style. A lovely glass of wine.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Seafood, salads or most non spicy Asian dishes. Perfect to take to your local Thai or Japanese BYO.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Designed for early consumption, however can be cellared for the next 1-2 years.

ABOUT THE SOMMELIER

Alice Massaria - Restaurant Manager/Head Sommelier.



I was born in Vicenza, an area of Italy where wine is part of our culture and present on our everyday life. After beginning my studies at the Italian Sommelier Association, I decided to move to Australia to continue my education. My wine career officially started, working on the floor as a Sommelier at Mr Wong and Uccello before being promoted to head sommelier role. In 2015 I sat the exam for the Court of Master Sommelier passing the introductory and certified level.

I have travelled back to Europe for Vintage work in Sicily – Cos Winery (2016) and then to Spain – Terroir al Limit (2017). After returning to Sydney in November 2017, I embarked on creating a service which focuses on private, in-home and corporate tastings and wine events in addition to consulting to develop wine lists for bars and restaurants. Wine Concept (www.wineconcept.com.au) was born.

Bistecca's wine list was the Wine Concept's first project where I was tasked with creating a wine list with over 300 wines all made by Italian grape varieties (from Italy and Australia). My passion for wine and great service intersected while working on the launch of Bistecca, a venue I am still involved with in training and management of the restaurant.

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can show their customers something new, which they can understand, enjoy and more importantly afford!

Alice has chosen the **2017 Domaine Collotte Bourgogne Aligote**. This producer is based around the village of Marsannay, which is a relatively new Burgundy appellation (created in 1987) but a well-respected source of fine wine. It is situated on the southern outskirts of Dijon at the northern end of the Côte de Nuits. The producers of Marsannay have worked hard to establish its reputation after years of quasi-abandonment. The results of the last 10 to 15 years have been quite remarkable and this is the region where value and quality can be found, none more so, than from Phillippe Collotte.

The Cote du Rhone should be a stranger to no one. It is home to some of the most expensive wines in the world, and home to some of the most drinkable and cheapest wines in the world. This is due to the sheer size of the region and the number of wines made. The expensive wines can be found around the famous villages of Chateauneuf-du-Pape and Cote Rotie, whilst the value can be found in the generic Cote Du Rhone village wines. If I were made to choose only one region from which I could drink wine from, that region would be the Rhone. (Thankfully, however, I don't have to make that decision).

Alice has chosen the **2016 Giles Robin "Terroir de Bramarel" Cotes Du Rhone**. Giles Robin are based around the Northern Rhone village of Croze Hermitage and own 15 hectares of vineyards, mostly planted to Syrah. For this wine, he has partnered with a friend who owns a truffle farm in the region of Grignan, further south in the Cote Du Rhone. The wine is a blend of 60% Syrah and 40% Grenache from the fantastic 2016 vintage. You may recall a few selections back, when we were extolling the virtues of the 2015 and 2016 vintages from this region. This wine is a perfect example, so fresh vibrant and racy. Little to no oak has been used, all you have is the fruit, the vineyard and the excellent 2016 vintage.

In the past 8 years Alice has grown to love Australia wine, and like everyone in the trade, has been blown away by the quality and diversity over the past 5 years. Australian wine has never been better and never more affordable in comparison to the rest of the world. Our top wines

are world class and at a fraction of the price to similar quality international wines. At the moment, they may lack the pedigree and prestige of some of these wines, but the times they are a changing and a changing fast.

The Australian wine she has chosen is the **2016 Arno Wine Co. Cabernet Sauvignon Barossa Valley**. Cabernet and Barossa is a little unusual as most of the plantings are devoted to Shiraz and Grenache, however in certain cooler parts of the region, Cabernet has been grown and continues to deliver amazing wines for those in the know. What you won't find is the herbaceous, capsicum-edged, lean style of wines which you can find in some cooler parts of Australia. No this is the Barossa and that means full bodied wines. However the fruit is picked a little earlier than their Shiraz to retain its freshness and elegance. But you still get that lovely Barossa Power, it has just been toned down a bit. Lots of dark fruits and plenty of tannins, just crying out for some protein. Arno and Co are a small husband and wife team making some pretty amazing wines, with fruit sourced from some grower friends around the valley. They have become a favourite of the Sommelier set as they offer a modern take on Australian classic wines, which will not over power the dish, but rather compliment the dining experience, which is the goal of any sommelier.

Thanks Alice for your selections, I cannot wait for your second selection next year. In the meantime, are you sure you need to take my phone for my next booking at Bistecca?

Matt The Bullionaire



Stu Freeman and Matt Eagan