

the bullionaire

BULLION 198

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Our Unique Discoveries ...

We have been working with **Matt Dunne** since the very beginning of Bullion Cellars and in that time he has gone from strength to strength. When we started he was the Sommelier of Matt Moran's signature restaurant in Sydney, ARIA, and he has since gone on to be the Group Sommelier for Solotel, who manage over 30 properties across Sydney and Brisbane, which still includes the two ARIA's. He is one busy boy and it is great to have his time and his selections. He has an awesome palate and he is a very decent human being as well. So let's cover what he has chosen as we head into the cooler months.

Over the past 12-18 months, we have had a lot more Italian wine selections from our Sommeliers. A few more importers seem to be popping up in Australia, bringing in more of the wines we love at Bullion and not just cheap Chianti and high end Super Tuscans. Every part of Italy makes their own regional wines, with a few having gained international fame over the past few decades. Regions like Tuscany and Piemonte now compete with Burgundy and Bordeaux with wine lovers around the world, however it is mainly their red wines which garner all the attention. Italy does produce a lot of white and sparkling wine, with Pinot Grigio and Prosecco leading the way, which can be found on a lot of wine lists around the country. However, Matt has decided to select a white wine from Veneto in North Eastern Italy. You might not be familiar with this wine, but it is a style you should know about and I am sure will become a new favourite.

Soave (pronounced "swah-vay") is a white wine made from the Garganega grape variety from Veneto. This region is also a big supplier of Pinot Grigio, which since the late 1990's has taken over the mantle as Italy's largest white wine export. However, in my humble opinion the Soave and especially the Soave Classico offer better quality. The use of the specification "Classico", means the grapes are harvested from the older, hillside vineyards around the town of Soave, from which the wine derives its name.

For most of its history, Soave was produced in a medium-bodied style that was often compared to Chardonnay, except with a distinct almond, nutty note. In the late 1990s, production styles shifted to a lighter and crisper style, closer to the popular Pinot Grigio style. But quality producers now realise this was a mistake and have shifted to a Soave which better reflects its own character and that of the Garganega grape.

The most common flavour descriptors of Soave are peach, honeydew, citrus and nutty, almond like characters. They are normally dry and medium bodied, somewhere between a Pinot Grigio and a Chardonnay, with a slight oily like richness that adds a little extra punch. They can also benefit from time in the bottle.



Matt has chosen the **2016 Gini Soave Classico**. The Gini family have been making wine in the Soave region since the 1600's, and they believe this vintage is one of the best over the past 10 years. It also happened to be selected 69th in the 2017 Wine Spectators Top 100 wines. Quite an achievement for the winery and the region. With almost 3 years in the bottle this wine is just sensational and a great example of the region and the style.

Spain is a seriously under rated country, but one that offers the best value for money at the moment. The Chinese billionaires and Russian Oligarchs are yet to discover these wines, which is great news for us. (Long may this continue!) We have enjoyed a number of Spanish wines over the years and Matt has chosen a fresh and vibrant red wine which shows why the wines from Spain are so on trend at the moment. The **2016 Talento by Ego**, is a blend of Monastrell and Syrah from the region of Jumilla in South Eastern Spain.

Monastrell is what we call Mourvedre in Australia, where it forms an important part of the GSM blends from the Barossa and McLaren Vale (Grenache / Shiraz / Mourvedre). It is also an important blending component of the wines from the Rhone, including Chateaufort-du-pape. Jumilla in Southern Spain is at the forefront of Monastrell production in this country, with wines from this region required to include 80% of the grape. It has a very arid and hot climate, which the variety needs, with a large day/night temperature differential and a relatively high altitude, which tick a lot of boxes for quality wine. However it is only in the past 2 decades that the region has changed its reputation from one of bulk wine, to quality wine production.

Continued back page

bullion CELLARS
SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

THE WINES

2016 GINI SOAVE CLASSICO VENETO *Italy*



Soave is made from the Garganega grape variety in Veneto, in the North East region of Italy. Veneto is one of the largest wine producing regions in Italy, with Soave and Valpolicella being the most important. The Gini family have been making wine in this region since the 1600's, and they own vineyards in the Classico region on steep hillside slopes. The wines are made exclusively from the Garganega grapes and they show the potential of this region with stylish, complex and long lived wines.

Gini believe this is one of the best vintages over the past 10 years, and Wine Spectator agree, naming this wine and this vintage, number 69 in their Top 100 in 2017. Sourced from their low yielding hillside vineyards they have produced a beautifully aromatic, yet

dry white wine, displaying intense notes of white flowers, white peach, tropical fruit notes with hints of almond and mineral on the back end. A wine with drive, energy and precision.

It is great to see a white wine with a little bit of age, and Soave has a great reputation for cellar worthy wines.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Salads, grilled white meats and seafood, or simply as an aperitif. A wine that can be enjoyed in a number of different situations.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine is drinking great right now, but Soave has the potential to age for up to 7-10 years.

2016 ALMA NEGRA MENDOZA *Argentina, Bonarda / Malbec*



Ernesto Catena is the eldest son of Nicolás Catena of Catena Zapata. A fourth generation winemaker, Ernesto has travelled and lived around the world, and along the way has earned a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Economics, a Master's in Design in Milan, and a degree in history in London. Defined by many as the "bohemian" side of the Catena family. In 2002 he branched out from his father to produce wines that reflect his personality on a much smaller scale than the parent company. Alma Negra is one of those brands, which remains a bit of a mystery. No information is given about the wine, other than it is from Mendoza and a blend of Bonarda and Malbec. Alma Negra means "Black Soul" and it represents the dark colour of the wine, and the overall intention of Ernesto to be a little edgy and dangerous. He wants the label and the wine to stand by itself, without all the fanfare that comes with a name as famous as Cantena.

This is an outstanding wine which is distinctly Mendoza. There is a richness to this wine which is extremely enjoyable. On the nose, you have largely dark fruits with underlying chocolate overtones. The palate is plush, as you would expect, showing lovely Asian spices with dark fruits again shining through with toasty oak and firm tannins. Predominantly Bonarda, this blend changes from vintage to vintage and is the wineries primary wine. Bonarda is the second most planted grape variety in Argentina behind Malbec and is normally seen as a blending component.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Red meats of any kind, but when in Mendoza, a medium rare steak should be your first, second and third option.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

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



2016 TALENTO MONASTRELL / SYRAH BY EGO *Jumilla, Spain*



Ego Bodegas is what we would call a boutique winery in Australia, which is not that common in Europe, where most wineries are the result of generations of family ownership. Ego was established less than 10 years ago, but it has been created by passionate people with plenty of money and resources behind them. They purchased an established (50 year old) vineyard, planted to Monastrell and Syrah and then went about the process of building a new winery, restaurant and tasting room to take advantage of the growing interest and quality focus of the Jumilla region. The quality of wines started high and have only improved.

This wine is a blend of 80% Monastrell, which is what we call in Mourvedre in Australia, and is part of the famous GSM blends of South Australia and the Southern Rhone. It is not a variety we see by itself, however in Jumilla in South Eastern Spain, it takes its seat at the big table and shines.

This wine is all about freshness, juicy flavours and a cracking acidity. The wine only sees 2-3 months in oak, allowing the fruit and acidity to shine. This is a great example of modern Spain, where dark fruits dominate and they do not rely on stuffy old American oak to give their wines structure and weight. There is a tension and complexity to this wine, as it is just so fresh, vibrant and enjoyable. Nice, grippy tannins finish what is a very engaging and enjoyable wine.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Anything off the grill would do the trick. Lamb, steak, chicken or pork.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before drinking. Can be safely cellared for the next 3-6 years.

2017 MARQ CUT & DRY SHIRAZ *Margaret River*



Marq Wines is a boutique wine producer situated in the Margaret River. Mark Warren is the owner and winemaker and after 25 years of winemaking is still experimenting and looking at this very old and established industry with the enthusiasm of a teenager. He is a self-proclaimed chemistry nerd who is producing classic wines, using some alternative grapes and winemaking methods, including partial grape drying.

The Cut and Dry Shiraz is an example and something a little special, paying homage to the great Amaraone wines of Italy

When their Shiraz grapes reach the desired ripeness, the canes are 'cut', thus effectively separating the bunches from the vine. The grapes are then left to hang on the severed cane to 'dry' for a period of 2 weeks, whereby the berries shrivel, concentrating the flavour, colour, tannin and acidity. This drying process is a variation of the Amaraone style, where the grapes are left to dry on straw mats for a period of 6-8 weeks. The result is a

quite luxurious wine, full of dark berries and a very prominent Christmas cake type aroma and flavour. The best thing about this wine is that despite being luscious and full bodied, it still is fresh and vibrant with great acidity.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Rich stews and slow cooked casseroles. Roast Lamb with plenty of garlic and thyme would be an ideal match.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant the wine for 30 minutes before serving. Can be safely cellared for the next 5-6 years.

ABOUT THE SOMMELIER



Matt Dunne

In the past 15 years of his professional life as a sommelier, Matt Dunne's career has covered a multitude of areas such as managing fine dining restaurants, creating wine lists, food retail merchandising and food and wine training.

Matt's role now as Group Sommelier for Solotel has him in charge of the commercial, creative and training aspects of the group wine program, which includes the award winning 1200 bottle wine list at ARIA Sydney and ARIA Brisbane's 700 bottle wine list, as well as the new multi-level business at Barangaroo House. Matt created the wine list at everyone's favourite local 'Chiswick' in Woollahra Sydney, which won the 'Best Small List' in 2017 for the third time, at the Australian Wine List of the Year Awards. Matt oversees a total of 30 Solotel venues, with key venues including North Bondi Fish, Opera Bar, Chophouse, Paddo Inn Bar & Grill and the Golden Sheaf.

Matt completed the Court of Masters Sommeliers Certified Sommelier Examination in 2009. Matt is an active wine show judge and in 2015 he was awarded a scholarship to the prestigious Len Evans Tutorial, held annually in the Hunter Valley. He is experienced as a keynote speaker, educator and has a fresh and approachable take on wine.

Continued from front page

Ego Bodega is a newish, small winery that was established less than 10 years ago, taking advantage of this new found reputation. They purchased an established vineyard, planted over 50 years ago and moved in, focusing on quality winemaking and building a magnificent new winery, cellar door and restaurant.

This wine is a blend of Monastrell and Syrah, which is medium to full bodied, with a certain opulence to it. Dark fruit flavours, with plenty of "oomph" but with a great intensity and freshness to the wine. Perfect for a wide variety of dishes.

Catena is the most famous wine name in Argentina and their family seems to be littered with over achievers. Nicolas Catena the third generation was the person who transformed the business, from local producer into International superstar. He started this in 1982 when, as a visiting Professor of Economics at the University of California, he became entranced by the wines of the Napa. Upon his return to Argentina he introduced his family winery to modern "New World" winemaking and viticultural techniques and the rest, as they say is history. To put it into perspective, Catena is the Penfold's of Argentina, with prices and reputations to match.

Ernesto Catena is the eldest son of Nicolas and is considered by many the "bohemian" of the family. He is a painter, art collector, horseman, polo player and archer. Along the way he has earned a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Economics, a Master's in Design from Milan and a Degree in History at London. Oh, did I tell you his sister, the General Manager of Catena, is also a Harvard and Stanford educated Physician. This is before you even get to the wine qualifications they have.

Wow – Quite a family. Matt has chosen the **2016 Alma Negra** from Mendoza for this selection which is a blend of Bonarda and Malbec. Bonarda is the 2nd most planted grape variety to Malbec and the two are often blended together. The reason is simple, as it offers a great counterpoint to Malbec. Bonarda delivers lower tannins and a slightly higher, juicier tasting acidity, ensuring a more balanced and interesting wine. This Alma Negra is packaged in quite a bottle as well. South Americans love big bottles and it looks and feels bloody fantastic. However you cannot shake the feeling that this has cost a lot of money to get to Australia. The terms "Carbon Foot print" spring to mind.

Margaret River is a quality wine region. In fact there is a strong argument that it could be the best wine region in Australia. The winemakers of the region like to quote the fact that despite only representing 3% of the total crush, they represent 20% of the total production of Australia's premium wine market. This does raise a few eyebrows in South Australia, for what do they say about statistics and how do they classify the premium wine market? However there is no denying the overall quality of the region and the famous winery names that litter this very beautiful part of Australia's coastline. The region is most famous for its Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, and their version of the SSB (Sauvignon Blanc Semillon). However these are readily available from any of your local bottle shops, with Matt choosing a Shiraz from a sensational winemaker with an Italian twist. **The 2017 Marq Cut & Dry Shiraz.**

The inspiration for this wine is the Italian wine style known as Amarone, which is made in Veneto. The Amarone wine style uses grapes which are harvested and dried on straw mats, such that the berries shrivel and concentrate prior to being made into wine. This laborious process produces a wine with intense ripe fruit flavours, roundness and power. Lacking the traditional varieties of Valpolicella, (Corvina and Rondinella), Marq have adapted the process and applied it to their Shiraz.

At the desired ripeness the canes are 'cut', thus effectively separating the bunches from the vine. The grapes are then left to hang on the severed cane to 'dry' for a period of 2 weeks, whereby the berries shrivel, concentrating the flavour, colour, tannin and acidity. After drying, the grapes are harvested and made in the traditional method. The result is a richer more full bodied style of wine, with distinctive fruit cake type aromas and flavours. Very delicious, but thankfully retaining plenty of acidity and freshness, as sometimes these styles can be a little dull and flat.

Thanks Matt for these great wines. I cannot wait to enjoy them over the coming cooler months.

Enjoy,

Matt The Bullionaire