

the bullionaire

BULLION 190

www.bullioncellars.com.au

Our Unique Discoveries ...

Kim Bickley is on board again, having been with Bullion Cellars since the start of our unique wine venture. I always enjoy working with her and talking about wine. She no longer works as a sommelier in a restaurant, but is still heavily involved in the wine industry, consulting for one of the larger wine companies in Australia and working closely with her partner in the Hunter Valley - (Andrew Thomas Wines, one of the better winemakers in Australia). We are overjoyed that she can continue working for us, as I always enjoy her selections and her perspective on all things wine. She has an incredible palate and like always has chosen a great pack. Wines with a little more texture and freshness, perfect as we head into the warmer months.

She has chosen a rather obscure white grape variety from Italy for her white wine. The **2016 Tombacca Pecorino "Terre Dio Chieti"**.

Italy is a country where every region produces their own wine, developing grapes and styles over the centuries which have come to closely match the local cuisine. It is often difficult to separate the two, however most of the wine is consumed locally. Abruzzo is a region on the east of the country and home to a famous hard cheese made from sheep's milk called Pecorino. But don't be fooled, Pecorino is not just relegated to a cheese! The interior of Abruzzo is hilly and mountainous and home to some of Italy's best preserved Medieval and Renaissance hills towns. It is a perfect place to raise sheep and the milk responsible for the Pecorino cheeses. It also happens to be the name of a native white grape variety of the same name. However, Pecorino the grape variety is grown around the flats, centred around the town of Chieti. (On a side note, from what other wine retailer are you being offered a white wine from the Pecorino grape variety that tastes this good. I really do love working with our sommeliers).

Pecorino has been around for centuries, however for most of Italy, there was severe culling and a general neglect of vineyards after World War II, as the economic factors of the time completely changed the rural landscape. It is only in the past 20-30 years that these obscure regions and grapes have started to come back into vogue with new winemakers and ventures starting up, as sommeliers, retailers and more importantly consumers, start looking for new and interesting varietals and regions. Modern Italy is now producing these types of wines from all over the country.

The other reason Kim was so enamoured with this wine, is that she has started to see and hear of some Australian winemakers experimenting with this grape. Climate warming may be disputed by a few politicians and experts, but for people in the wine industry, who work closely with the land and observe the climate, there is no debating the fact that when the grapes are picked are getting earlier and earlier as each year and decade pass, and the vineyard areas are getting hotter. A lot of the major players



have moved south to Tasmania, however the smaller family vineyards who cannot, or do not want to move, are looking for new varietals which are drought resistant and thrive in warm areas. The trick is to find these varietals which also produce lively and fresh wines full of acidity. Pecorino ticks a lot of these boxes, so keep an eye out for these wines in the future, but in the meantime, you get to enjoy this lovely wine from Italy.

Dominic Valentine is a winemaker who like many of his profession has ventured from the security of a paid winemaker's job for a large winemaker, to establish his own brand. He started several years ago with a Riesling, which we included in one of our earlier packs, as well as importing some German Riesling from one of the producers he worked with in his earlier travels around the world. His Valentine project has now developed into a Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the Yarra Valley and this sensational Grenache from the Heathcote region of Central Victoria. The **2018 Valentine Grenache - Heathcote Victoria**. Heathcote is famous for its Red Cambrian soil and Shiraz, but like most regions in Australia, different grape varieties also thrive. I tend not to be a massive fan of straight Australian Grenache as the Aussie winemakers tend to favour light to medium weight wines, with natural winemaking all the rage. There are some exceptions of course with D'Arenburg making some great Grenache based wines from McLaren Vale and Charles Melton of the Barossa and Nine Popes fame also excelling. But overall, a lot of the Grenache I am trying from Australia, seems to be aiming for the bright and fresh look of an early drinking red wine, which benefits from being in the fridge for a while. It is just a style I don't particularly enjoy, and certainly not when I am paying above \$25 a bottle. Which is why I loved this wine from Heathcote so much, as it reminded me of one of the great Village level Cote Du Rhone wines I love so much.

Continued back page

bullion CELLARS
SOMMELIER SELECTED AND DELIVERED

THE WINES

2016 TOMBACCA PECORINO "TERRE DIO CHIETI" *Abruzzo Italy*

Tombacca are one of the larger producers from the Abruzzo region of Italy. Founded in 1919, and now onto the third generation, they specialize in the traditional grape varieties of Italy and are the shining lights of the Pecorino grape. It is a variety which was largely lost in the 1900's, but it has a long history dating back to the 1200's and the Benedictine monks who first started making wine from this variety and this region. It is only since the 1980's that the grape has started to come back into commercial operation, thanks to wineries like Tombacco

The wine is golden in colour, but it is on the nose you really notice this wine, making you stand to attention. "This is a little different!". It has complex aromas of exotic stone fruits, but also softer notes of spices. These follow through onto the palate, which is full bodied, oily and textural. It also has these slight nutty, almond characters which I just love. The wine sees little to no oak and despite the fullness of body, it finishes with cracking acidity and freshness. If I had to describe it in Australian terms; it fits somewhere between a full-bodied Chardonnay and a young Hunter Valley Semillon.

You hear this a lot from wine writers and wine snobs alike, but there is a



minerality to this wine that really enhances to the overall enjoyment. Minerality is difficult to describe, but easy to understand when you are drinking this wine.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Great to drink by itself, but a perfect match with Salmon, fried / BBQ'd white fishes, or sushi and Vietnamese /Thai based dishes (but not too spicy).

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Drink now, but can be cellared for the next 1-3 years.

2018 VALENTINE GRENACHE *Heathcote Victoria*

Dominic Valentine is an Australian winemaker who has trodden a well stomped path. Multiple vintages around the world with some of the leading wineries, extensive experience working for one of the larger wineries in the Yarra Valley — Oakridge, then venturing out with his own wines, using contacts made over the years to not only make the wine in borrowed winery space, but also selling it via the Sommeliers he has met. We love wines like this at Bullion Cellars.

Grenache is a variety you mainly see in the GSM blends from Australia (Grenache Shiraz Mouvedre) but over the past few years we have started to see some single varietal wines. (However, it would not surprise me if there was a splash of something else in the final blend.) The grapes have been sourced from the Mount Camel Ranges in Northern Heathcote, handpicked and then refrigerated for 2 days. It can get bloody hot during a Heathcote Summer. Dominic then employed quite traditional hands-off winemaking, before the wine went into barrel, for a short maturation. (7 months in older barrels). It was racked twice, to remove any sediment etc, and bottled with no filtration or fining.

I loved this wine when I first tried it with Kim, as it reminded me of some great village level Cote Du Rhones, I have been enjoying from their great 2016



vintage. This wine is sensuous and full of flavour, without trying to smack you around the head, which some South Australian Reds are trying to achieve. It is full of red fruits and fresh, vibrant flavours with this cracking acidity.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Great with a T Bone steak, or tomato based Italian dishes. If you have a pizza oven, this wine would be great with your latest home-made pizza recipe.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 20 minutes before serving. Can be safely cellared for the next 2-5 years.



2017 CAMPAGNOLA VALPOLICELLA RIPASSO CLASSICO SUPERIORE *Italy*

Since 1907 the Campagnola family has managed this winery located in the heart of the Classic Valpolicella 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 which 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 a fascinating 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 left-over grape skins and seeds from the fermentation of Amarone are added to the batch of Valpolicella wines for a short period time.

This re-fermentation process (Ripasso, or passed over) gives the wine greater structure, colour, flavor and weight.

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.

2013 BIGA DE LUBERRI CRIANZA *Rioja*

This wine is made from the grape variety, Tempranillo, from the region of Rioja.

Tempranillo is one of the top 5 varieties planted in the world, and whilst not a household name in Australia, in its native Spain, it is both king and queen, responsible for most of the great wines of this country. Here are the correct pronunciations if you want to roll some "r's" around and sound like you have just jetted back from Barcelona.

Tempranillo - tem / prah / NEE/ yoh

Rioja - ree OH hah.

Biga De Luberrí is a relative newcomer to the wine industry, starting their venture in 1991, following a successful farming and agricultural services career. They are now onto the second generation, with production kept at around 30,000 cases of wine, maintaining their quality focus and use of their own vineyards, in the Alavesa subregion.

Winemaking and viticultural is very traditional as they strive to reflect the character of Rioja and Tempranillo. Despite its six years of age, the colour is still vibrant and enticing, but it is on the nose and palate that the wine really shines. Cherry and red fruits dominate, on a medium bodied palate, where the fruit and oak have meshed together to offer a complex and exciting wine.



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 several 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 barbequed red meats like steak, sausage and game. Ripasso also goes well with aged cheeses like Parmigiano-Reggiano.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

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



You also get hints of leather, spices and floral notes. But this wine is all about the age. It is great to drink an aged wine that is so well put together.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Roasted meats of most kind, lamb, pork and beef, plus casseroles and mushroom based risottos. Great with blue cheese as well.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 5 minutes and serve straight away.

No need to cellar - Drink now.

ABOUT THE SOMMELIER



Kim Bickley

Kim Bickley is one of the top Sommeliers in the country, previously working at award winning restaurants Glass Brasserie and Black by Ezard. From there she used her qualifications as a wine educator, teaching WSET wine courses for Lion Beverages alongside being the brand ambassador for Bollinger Champagne and Henschke wines.

Most recently Kim has relocated to the picturesque Hunter Valley and is working for one of its top producers Thomas Wines.

A CMS Certified Sommelier, who finished in the top eleven students who were certified by the Court of Master Sommeliers in Australia in 2008. Kim is also a wine show judge, a Len Evans and Sommeliers Australia Tutorial Scholar and was the first, of only two Australians in the International 'Landmark Australia' Tutorial 2010.

Some of her most favourite wines are Pinot Noir particularly from Morey-St-Denis, good Barolo and Hunter Valley Semillon.

Continued from front page

It is sourced from the Mount Camel Ranges in the northern part of Heathcote and has been made in a very traditional method with no filtration or fining, helping to create a very sensuous and pleasurable wine. It certainly brought a smile to my face as I drank it and I am sure it will do for you as well.

When I first heard about the Rippasso style of wine making several years back, it always appealed to me as cool way of making wine and I have often wondered why it is only the Italians who seem to make a big deal of it. You see Rippasso is a way of making average wine, into something a little special. 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 quite a wine, but not for everyone, or for everyone's budget. They are very expensive - \$100 plus a bottle as an entry level.

At vintage the grapes are handpicked and placed in specially designed lofts, used to dry out these grapes for a period of 4-6 months. The semi-dried grapes are then squeezed and fermented. (The grapes will have lost 30-40% of their moisture and weight allowing for a greater concentration of flavours). The wine is then 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 winemakers then take wine made from normal (un dried) grapes, which are then passed over the "used" Amarone skins, in an extended maturation / fermentation process. This transfers some of the aromatic compounds and tannins which are still present. Thanks to this secondary process, a simple Valpolicella wines is transformed into something special and "Ripasso" is formed.

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. Kim has chosen the **2017 Campagnola Valpolicella Ripasso DOC**.

I have said this on numerous occasions, but Spain is one of my favourite countries. They still offer great value in their wines, which you sometimes struggle to find in France and Italy, and now in a lot of cases from Australia. But in Spain, there is always value to be found, combined with incredible quality. (Mainly to do with the fact that the Chinese and Russian Oligarchs have not discovered these wines, like they have French, Italian and Penfolds Wines.) The wine Kim has chosen certainly does not disappoint. From one of the most famous regions in Spain she has chosen the **2013 Biga De Luberry Crianza** from Rioja.

Spain, and Rioja use a fairly simple quality ranking, based on the time the wine has spent in oak barrels and bottle before it is released. (Joven - meaning less than 12 months; Crianza - at least 12 months aging in Oak barrels; Reserva - 3 years aging with at least 12 months in Barrel; Gran Reserva - at least 5 years, 2 years in oak and 3 years in bottle.) It is not surprising that this classification is starting to fall out of favour with winemakers and consumers alike, as just because a wine is aged in oak and bottle, does not necessarily make it a great wine. There is a push for a more regional and single vineyard classification of quality wine in Spain, with some of the better, smaller winemakers not using this "Aged" classification at all when they are marketing/ selling their wines. But for most of the bigger wineries, this classification is still used.

So, this 2013 Biga De Luberry, was aged for 12 months in barrel and we have been fortunate to buy this wine with almost 5 years in bottle. This wine has been perfectly cellared for you, so there is no need to wait, just enjoy over the next few months. At six years of age, this wine is fully mature, yet it still retains a vibrant colour, with lovely red fruits and a slight floral note on the nose. The wine is mid weight, and it is showing its age extremely well. The fruit and oak are totally seamless, and all you have left is a mellow, engaging, complex wine that is ready to drink right now.

Thanks Kim and see you next year.

Matt The Bullionaire