



the bullionaire

BULLION 20A

ABC ... Not Anymore!

ABC - Anything but Chardonnay / Cabernet

Back in the late 1990's and early naughties this was the proclamation "from on high" by nearly all of the wine aficionados. You heard it everywhere from wine journalists, sommeliers and even taxi drivers. People got sick of the big buttery Chardonnay and capsicum driven Cabernet and were looking for something different. The only problem, in my humble opinion, is that these people turned en masse to Sauvignon Blanc, and especially Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. Now I don't want to start another rant against Kiwi Sauvignon Blanc, having come to the realisation that a lot of people like this style, but it is just not for me. In fact, our sommeliers have been given only have one rule. They cannot choose a Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc and so far, this rule has been kept. In saying this, rules are meant to be broken and I hear there are some new interesting styles being made from this region. But that is for another newsletter and another time.

During this ABC time, Chardonnay and Cabernet completely fell out of fashion, unless of course you were talking about White Burgundy and Bordeaux, but even these greats felt a little tarnished as people raced to Tempranillo, Pinot Noir, Grenache and obscure Italian varietals and regions. But the times they are a changing. Cabernet and especially Chardonnay are limping back into fashion, being led by great Aussie winemakers who are turning out world class wines. In fact, if you talk to most wine experts from around the world, the best wines coming out of Australia right now are cool climate Chardonnay and to a lesser degree Pinot Noir and Cabernet. I personally have been telling anyone who will listen that Chardonnay is the new black. The secret, is that you need to spend above \$25, as below this price you will get the commercial, slightly sweet tropical white wines which are OK, but kind of bland. The Chardonnay chosen for this pack is anything but bland. The **2017 Clarence House Estate Chardonnay Coal River Tasmania.**

Tasmania is red hot right now as their Sparkling wine, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir continue to excite wine lovers and sommeliers alike. (I just realised we had a Tasmanian Riesling in the last pack, but I am sure you



are not tired of this region or these wines.) Clarence House Chardonnay has been one of my go to wines over the past 6 months and we have been able to secure the last cases of this great 2017 vintage. Clarence House is like a lot of boutique producers, they were started by a very passionate and successful professional from another industry. In this case David Kilpatrick, a former cardiologist and Professor of Medicine at the University of Tasmania, who purchased Clarence House Estate in 1998 and planted the first 6, of what would eventually become, 16 hectares. The fruit was sold off to other wineries, until they created their own label in 2006. What is different at Clarence house, is that they have their wines made by one of the top wine makers in the country; Anna Pooley.

Anna Pooley is the third generation of Pooley wines, one of the benchmark producers in Tasmania and Australia. They are neighbours and I have been reliably informed would love to purchase this vineyard off David, with a lot of the fruit already going into their own wines. Anna is a seriously well-respected winemaker working for the large Treasury Wine Estates, before the lure of her family's vineyards brought her back into the fold. This class and experience shines through in this 2017 Chardonnay. It has the fullness of flavour I look for in a Chardonnay, but with out the excess flabbiness. This wine is racy, elegant and sophisticated and just a joy to drink by itself or to match with a wide variety of foods.

the wines



2017 CLARENCE HOUSE CHARDONNAY *Coal River, Tasmania*

This small vineyard is located just north of Hobart on a perfectly positioned north-east facing slope in the Coal River valley. Planting began in 1998 when David Kilpatrick, a former cardiologist and Professor of Medicine at the University of Tasmania, purchased the property. He has since grown the vineyard to 16 hectares and was very fortunate to be neighbours to Pooley Estate who just happen to have one of the best winemakers in the country, not only making their wines, but also buying his fruit for their own wines.

Anna Pooley is the winemaker and her class and elegance shines through in all the Clarence House wines, which to me, are not only some of the best wines I have tasted from the Coal River, but also represent some of the best value. This has been my go-to Chardonnay for the last 4 months.

Anna Pooley's winemaking philosophy is of a minimal intervention, allowing the regional characteristics to shine. "I try to bottle the vineyard". In doing so she captures the intensity, freshness and elegance that Tasmanian wines are famous for. This wine has

plenty of flavour, almost full bodied, but it is also fine and elegant, with apple and citrus, plus a whiff of sulphide/struck match complexity, with spicy oak. There's a nice energy and crunch to this wine and a tight finish of impressive length.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Great to drink by itself, which is what I have done over the past 3-4 months. It has the flavour to match robust dishes featuring chicken, pork, but also great with Japanese food, like sushi.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Can be cellared for the next 2-3 years, but at almost 3 years of age is in the zone right now. Can be enjoyed over the next 6 months.



2014 VALENCISO LADERAS DE CABAMA *Rioja, Spain*

Laderas de Cabama is crafted from a single vineyard, planted to 35-year-old Tempranillo vines. This vineyard, which is behind the winery, is simply named Cabama and sits on the classic clay/limestone profile of Ollauri (Rioja Alta). The grapes were fully destemmed and then naturally fermented in concrete vats where the wine stays for seven months before going into low-toast French oak for 12 months. The 2014 vintage was bottled in 2017 and offers a purity and structure that shines through, with the extra time in concrete adding a delicious suppleness and focus to the palate, without the excessive oakiness which can be so evident in Rioja. Everything Luis Valentín and Carmen Enciso, the youngish winemakers, touch has quality written all over it and their wines are a staple in the top restaurants of Spain.

You can expect a fragrant red wine of great finesse, with red and black currant fruit, tobacco and secondary sandalwood aromas and flavours, finishing with a silky, medium-bodied, super-fine palate. This wine offers ridiculous quality for its value.

FOOD MATCHINGS

When I tasted this wine with my wife, we could not believe how drinkable it was, but also how much we wanted a selection of "tapas", so we could really get stuck in. Think jaman, egg plant, olive oil, BBQ'd meats and all things Spanish.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decent for 20 minutes before drinking. Can be safely cellared for the next 2-4 years.



2016 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

Thinks 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 .



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 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, winy 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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In writing this newsletter I noticed there is a connection between Anna Pooley and the Australian Cabernet selected, the **2016 Salomon Cabernet Sauvignon Finnis River South Australia**. You see Anna worked a vintage in her earlier travels and work experience at the very distinguished Austrian producer Solomon, who also happen to own a vineyard in the Finnis River of South Australia. 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 and they make amazing red wines from their South Australian Estate.

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.

So here we have a winemaking family with over 230 years' experience in Austria and over 25 years in South Australia. Not a bad accomplishment; but only notable if the wines are good. And yes, they are petty bloody good. This **2016 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.

Wines from the Rhone valley continue to impress and when we were offered the last cases of this sensational 2015 vintage, we had to say yes. The **2015 Domaine les Hautes Cances, Cairanne, Cotes du Rhone "Cuvee Tradition"** has been a favourite of Bullion Cellars for a long time and has been included in past selections over the years. The 2015 and 2016 vintages are considered classics of the area and drinking this wine again, shows me why. It has just everything you want in a fine wine, complexity, balance but overall just great drinkability and enjoyment.

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 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 Carriane / Lirac etc.

The wine selected is from the village of Carriane in the northern sector of the Cotes du Rhone, near the village of Gigondas. At a fraction of the price of most Chateauneuf-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

Last, but certainly not least, we have a wine from Rioja in Spain. The **2014 Valenciso Laderas Cabama Rioja Spain**. Rioja is all about Tempranillo and the region is going through a resurgence of late, as they move away from the excessively oaked and rather clumsy wines over the past decades, moving to fresher, more elegant wines which are offering a sense of place, rather than just how much new American oak was used in the aging process of the wines. Oak is required and necessary in most fine wines, but it should be in the background, enhancing the flavours and characters of the wine. Rioja of years past have forgotten this and presented wines which tasted like licking an American oak popsicle. Kind of nice, but in the end disappointing and disjointed.

Valenciso has been described as one of the most modern of the traditional producers, or the most traditional of the modern producers. Either way this small producer is creating a lot of waves for a winery which only started in 1998. They even have reverted to the use of French Oak over the traditional US oak of the region. Like a lot of wines which our Sommeliers love, this winery is a labour of love from 2 youngish winemakers who left the security and money of well-paid corporate winemaker gigs, to start their own venture with all the excitement and risks this entails.

So, there we have our recent selection. Enjoy and I am glad that we are continuing the recent trend of more Australian wines in our packs.

Matt, The Bullionaire

