



the bullionaire

BULLION 200

Covid will not stop us drinking good booze...

Hard to believe 2020 is almost finished. I am writing this newsletter at the beginning of November with a lot of things still up in the air. COVID is still the elephant in the room, Donald Trump, whilst losing the Presidency is hanging around kind of and the borders between NSW and QLD are still closed. It really does make one want to turn to the booze. I am the first to admit my recycling bin is embarrassingly full every fortnight, as I drag it to the curb side, generally after dark so the neighbours cannot judge me. But I do not think I am alone. In fact, I know I am not! Let's hope 2021 brings with it a well needed vaccine and a little more sanity. But until then, we still have good booze. Before we get to our booze, I would just like to thank all our Bullionaire's out there for your continued support. I love what I do each quarter, working with our Sommeliers, and it would not be possible without you.

Dan Sharp is the Sommelier this time and I discovered an interesting fact about his personal life, his girlfriend is the very talented chef at Fred's in Sydney, Danielle Alvarez. (I also have just received her new cook book). If you have not been to Fred's in Sydney, then I highly recommend you make a booking. A sensational experience and again proving that everything Justin Hemmes touches, turns to gold. Dan has been with us for several years and I really value his palate and his intellect. A great person to spend a few hours with, which I did when we selected these wines together.

Dan had chosen 2 Italian and 2 Australian wines this time. This continues our trend of Australian wines over the past 12 months. It really is no surprise, the quality has never been better, despite a lot of head winds the industry is facing; Climate change and China closing their borders to name a few. In Australia, he has gone with a Chardonnay from the Mornington Peninsula and a Cabernet from Margaret River. Where in Italy he has gone with a Nebbiolo from Piedmont and a Ripasso from Veneto, both in Northern Italy.

Let's start with Australia and the Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay. The **2019 Kerri Greens Hickson Chardonnay**. Kerri Greens is a new name to me. It began in 2013 when winemaker Tom McCarthy and Viticulturist Lucas Blanck decided to take on the restoration of an old vineyard and a new business was formed. That old vineyard was the Hickson vineyard, planted in 1982 and they have since gone on to purchase two more vineyards and the Kerri Greens project has never looked back. They are a small producer and obviously their focus is on what they grow in the vineyards with Chardonnay and Pinot Noir at the forefront. They are also very sustainable, like most wineries these day's and have gone down the organic route with very little additions in either the vineyard or the winery



Kerri Greens Vineyard

We have said this before, Australian Chardonnay is world class, with these white wines being lauded all around the world. This wine is a great example, and a little bit of a throwback. You see there is a tendency for our winemakers to make a leaner style of Chardonnay, scaling back on the full flavoured buttery style of the late 1980's and early 1990's. Now this wine is nothing like that, but it is a full-bodied style with plenty of oak and a touch of creaminess (yes butter) from the Malolactic fermentation the wine has gone through. However, don't be scared if you think, you don't like this style, as this is a modern example and a great drinking wine. I only wish there were more Chardonnay's like this, for they are crowd pleasers and match with a wide variety of dishes. Think melons, citrus and lemons, framed by nice acidity and this awesome weight to the palate and mouthfeel from the oak and creaminess.

Margaret River and Cabernet are a perfect match, with Margaret River Chardonnay being pretty smart as well, but it is the Cabernet we are talking about now. Margaret River Cabernet is rightly regarded as one of the top regional styles from Australia, winning awards and accolades all over the world. It regularly beats top Bordeaux and Napa wines and at a fraction of the price. I must admit I do tend to find them on the expensive side in comparison to other Australian wines, which is why I was blown away when I tasted this wine with Dan. The **2018 Hutton Graffiti Cab Sauvignon Margaret River**. I was familiar with Hutton wines, having sold and drunk some of their white wines before, but this wine just jumped out of the glass and it screamed class and elegance, with a lot of blackcurrants and complex aromas floating around. A very good glass of wine!

Continued back page

the wines

2018 VALPOLICELLA RIPASSO CLASSICO SUPERIORE *Veneto, 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 has a very 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. 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 leftover 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, flavour 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. 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 barbecued 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.

2018 MAURO MOLINO NEBBIOLO *Langhe, Piedmont*



Often regarded as Barolo's little brother, Langhe offers a more approachable, softer expression of the Nebbiolo grape from the Piedmont region. Mauro Molino makes this wine in a young, fresh style to showcase the beauty and intricate complexities of the grape variety. In 1973 Mauro graduated from enology school in Alba, and then followed that with five years of winemaking experience in Emilia Romagna. In 1979 after his father's passing, he returned home to the family farm in La Morra and began consulting for local wineries while building up his own estate. 1982 was the first vintage from the famed family parcel in Conca dell'Annunziata, and the rest is history. In 2003 his son joined the company, and then in 2009, his daughter also joined the gang.

This wine is made from 10-30-year-old vines in the sub regions of Monforte d'Alba and Guarene. Fermentation was carried out in stainless steel, then aged for six months in large French oak casks, with only 1000 cases being produced.

This subtle, considered approach to winemaking brings to the fore intoxicating aromas of bright red cherries, dried herbs and the charming hints of roses and violets that are so typical of the Nebbiolo grape. The first sip offers plum, tart cherry and dried fruit flavours along with fresh acidity, gentle tannins and a smooth mouthfeel.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Try serving this wine alongside a tomato-based or creamy fresh pasta dish or combine it with a generous platter of cheeses and charcuterie for a fuss-free weeknight. Mushroom and parmesan cheese-based risottos are also extremely good matches.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 30 minutes to soften the traditional high tannins of the Nebbiolo grape variety. Whilst approachable now, this can be cellared for another 5-8 years as it will improve with greater integration of the flavours and aromas.

2019 KERRI GREENS HICKSON CHARDONNAY *Mornington Peninsula, VIC*



The Kerri Greens winery was established in 2013 when two friends and winemakers — Tom McCarthy and Lucas Blanck decided to invest in a neglected vineyard, which was planted in 1982, consisting of 2 acres of Chardonnay on what became known as the Hickson Vineyard. The Kerri Greens philosophy has become entrenched in the vineyard ever since, as they have gone on to purchase 2 more sites across the Mornington Peninsula using sustainable and organic principles. As you would imagine, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are their major focus.

This wine is sourced from the Hickson Vineyard which the two have lovingly restored. It is considered one of the heritage sites in the Mornington Peninsula and is almost 40 years old. It is managed without herbicide, systemic fungicides or insecticides and there is no irrigation used on this dryland site.

The 2019 vintage produced excellent quality fruit, hand harvested at only 1.3 tonnes per acre, which is a very low yield. Whole bunch pressed into barrel -20% new- and left on solids for a full 12 months and then settled in tank for a further 8 weeks. Primary fermentation took place using wild yeast and without the assistance of sulphur. Malolactic fermentation naturally kicked off the following spring. It is this Malolactic fermentation that contributes to the full bodied and creaminess on the palate, paying homage to the Chardonnay of the 1990's. But this is still a modern example, and is fresh, engaging and has very lively acidity. This is a real crowd pleaser and I challenge you to stop at one bottle.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Great with Seafoods and white meats but robust enough to handle most Asian dishes. Just not too spicy. Also, great just to drink with some soft white cheeses after a hard day's work.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Can be cellared for the next 2-3 years, but why wait. Enjoy now is it is drinking very very well.

2018 HUTTON GRAFFITI CABERNET SAUVIGNON *Margaret River, WA*



Hutton is an example of what the French call a “Garigiste Winemaker”, literally making wine out of their garage on a small scale. Only 100 cases of this wine were produced, which is tiny. A lot of wineries would use this quantity in the Cellar door for tastings. However, the quality of Hutton wines is always very high. This is from their Graffiti range and has a rather simple label, which is a little at odds with the quality in the bottle. But then at Bullion, we don't decide wines on labels.

Fruit for the wine was sourced from the Wildberry Springs vineyard in the Wilyabrup sub region of the Margaret River. The Houghton clone grapes were handpicked in March, then crushed into an open topped fermenter. The must fermented naturally with wild yeasts and was given regular hand plunging, and on completion remained on skins for 21 days. After pressing and malolactic fermentation, the wine was matured for 18 months in French barriques (43% new).

This wine is inky black, and the aromas of blackcurrant and cigar boxes leap out of the glass. A really impressive wine and drinking a lot better than its price. At least in comparison to the Margaret River, where I have seen other wines of this quality selling for between at \$60-\$70.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Roasted and BBQ'd medium rare meats are a great match, as the tannins and robust flavours combine really well with this type of protein.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 20 minutes. You can safely cellar for 3-5 years. It is so lively and tasty now however, so it will be hard to keep it in the cellar/wine fridge and not drink it.

Continued from front page

Hutton is an example of what the French call a "Garrigaste Wine maker", literally making wines out of their garage. Michael Hutton's family planted grapes in 1975 on their cattle property in the Margaret River and his earliest memories are of pruning and harvesting the grapes over School and Uni Holidays. However, it was not until 2005, when he made 2 barrels of Cabernet in his garage that he decided winemaking was to be his future. He still makes wine on a tiny scale, with only 100 cases being made of this Graffiti wine. I was very impressed by the quality, structure, weight and drinkability of this wine. If you like Cabernet and most wine lovers do, then you will love this wine.

Now we move to Italy, where wine is made in every region; some good, some bad and some bloody fantastic. Most people dream of spending the summer in the Italian countryside, living on an estate surrounded by rolling hills of vineyards and olive trees. Whilst this is unlikely in today's COVID, the next best thing is to drink their wines. Dan has chosen two wines from the North of Italy, Piedmont and Veneto. Nebbiolo and Valpolicella in particular. First the Nebbiolo, which is the main grape variety from the region of Piedmont, one of the most famous regions in the world of wine. If you love wine, you have likely heard of Barolo and Barbaresco. These are wines made from Nebbiolo, sourced from vineyards around the villages of the same name. These are wines very much on the lighter to medium bodied style, but very elegant and prestigious. Prices for these wines start at around \$100 and can end around \$1000. Nice wines to taste, but not something you can or will want to drink every day.

Dan has chosen the **2018 Mauro Molino Nebbiolo Langhe Piedmont**. Langhe is the given name to the region that surrounds the smaller villages of Barolo and Barbaresco. These wines share a flavour profile but are generally made from younger vines and are a little fresher and made to be drunk earlier. You will still need to decant this wine for 30 plus minutes before you drink, but you will get plenty of the floral characters, think roses and liquorice that are so common in Nebbiolo. A lot of people refer to this as the "Tar and Roses" of the variety. Tannins are prominent, but then so too is the flavour profile and mouthfeel. If you like Pinot Noir you will love this wine. If you don't like Pinot Noir, then you will find this mid weight wine a nice counterpoint to the normal full-bodied wines you enjoy. Mauro Molino was founded in 1982 and now boast the second generation with the son and daughter joining the winemaking team. They manage only 12 hectares of which 50% is Nebbiolo and they are regarded as one of the new stars of the region. Only 1,000

cases were produced of this wine, and it is a great example of the style and region.

When I first heard about the Ripasso style of wine making several years back, it always appealed to me as really cool way of making wine and I have often wondered why it is only the Italians who make wine in this way. 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", still sharing the same aromas and flavour profiles as Amarone, but just less so. Dan has chosen the **2018 Campagnola Valpolicella Ripasso DOC**, which older Bullionaire's may remember from earlier selections.

So that ends Dan's selection and the end of 2020. It has been quite a year. Stay safe, have a great Christmas and New Years and lets all hope for a successful vaccine and return to a "normal" 2021.

Matt, The Bullionaire



ABOUT THE SOMMELIER

Dan Sharp works at the Wine Library in Sydney.

Prior to this he worked at Fred's and before that 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!