



the bullionaire

BULLION 218

Here comes Winter ...



Campania Vineyard in South Italy

Kim Bickley is on board again, having been with Bullion Cellars since the start of our unique wine venture. I love talking all things wine with her. Whilst no longer working in a restaurant, she 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). She has an incredible palate and like always has chosen a great pack. Wines with a little more texture and complexity as we head into the cooler months.

Her first choice is a rather obscure red grape variety from Italy, but on tasting it with her, I can see why she selected this wine and, why we work with Sommeliers, as it is very unlikely you would have tasted a wine from this grape variety before and life is just too short to drink Aussie Shiraz alone. It is the **2018 Tombacco Aglianico Del Beneventano** from the subregion of Benevento in Campania, located around the shin of Italy's boot. 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. I have not tried a wine from this variety for a while, for we just do not see that many in Australia, but it is a really impressive wine. Well worth discovering. The wine is made by Tombacco which is a large, diverse winery, acting more like a négociant, producing wines from several regions, selling bottled wines to the public and bulk wines to other

winemakers. They were founded in 1919 and onto their third generation of family ownership. For long term members you might recall we had a white wine from this winery a few years back.

Aglianico (pronounced "ah-LYAH-nee-koe") is a black grape grown in the Southern regions of Italy, especially the said mentioned Campania. It makes medium to full bodied reds, with real complexity showing minerality and freshness, but not lacking in fruit flavour or palate weight. They generally have a prominent structure promising a long life. Aglianico's high tannins and acidity, and its evident ability to age, has inspired some to call it the 'Barolo of the South'. A variety to keep an eye out for when you are looking over that next wine list.

Next up, we head to Argentina and the home of Malbec, Mendoza.

It has been a while since we have presented a Malbec, so I was glad when Kim chose this beauty. It is a private label from one of the Importers in Australia. They work closely with one of the top winemakers in Mendoza and use the same vineyard sources each vintage. The **2019 Jed Limited Release Malbec** is a great example of the style. Medium to full bodied, with slight savoury notes to the dark fruits that dominate the palate. It is oh so smooth with velvety tannins and a supple complete finish. A very enjoyable wine that is too easy to move onto the second bottle.

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the wines

2020 DOMAIN PICHOT COTEAU DE LA BICHE SEC *Vouvray, France*



The Pichot family is one of the oldest in Vouvray with origins as viticulturists and restaurateurs going back to 1739. Harvesting is mostly done by hand and yields are kept low. All vineyards are now farmed organically with grasses grown between the rows to reduce the uptake of moisture and vigour to the vines. Chenin Blanc from Vouvray is made in a wide range of styles, from Dry, to decadently sweet, as well as sparkling wine. This wine is Dry or Sec and a great example of the style from a top producer.

This wine comes from vines situated just above the family house and winery in the prime south-east facing Vallee de Nouys. Vinified in stainless steel with about 10% of this cuvee being aged in older 400 litre barrels. Aromas of pear candied fruit and spice with hints of honey and that distinctive chalkiness that is so typical of great Vouvray. Fine, brilliantly focused flavours with exceptional texture and length shows the tension typical of great dry Vouvray.

FOOD MATCHINGS

This wine is an absolute delight for fans of light aperitifs, revealing floral notes and a sensation of freshness. Pair with most seafoods, a great match would be prawn salad with grapefruit and avocado.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Good Vouvray has a reputation to age very well. Under Screw Cap you could safely cellar for 10 plus years, but it is also drinking very well right now.

2019 JED LIMITED RELEASE MALBEC *Mendoza Argentina*



Jed is the private label of a Sydney based importer owned by three Australian winemakers. They travel to Mendoza each year to finalise this wine. Or at least, the used too. Like most things in these COVID times, zoom meetings are taking over travel. Malbec is Argentina's flagship varietal and thrives at high altitudes. The La Consulta and Altamira sub-regions of the Uco Valley are at the Southern extreme of fine wine production in Mendoza, the southern locality and higher altitudes (1,150m) result in a cooler climate. They source the fruit from the same vineyard here, year in year out.

In this part of Mendoza, Malbec shows attractive violet aromas, flavours and colours. The fruit for this wine comes from a section of the vineyard with older vines and chalky soils. The vine age provides a dense and compact Malbec and the chalk in the soils gives a savoury edge to the finished wine.

This is a very fruit forward, juicy style, showing ripe plum notes, with echoes of darker fruits such as blackberries and cherries. On the medium to full bodied palate there are hints of dark chocolate and it has a smooth, elegant finish. A real crowd pleaser and a thoroughly enjoyable wine.

FOOD MATCHINGS

This is easy – Medium Rare Steak. Or in fact most roasted meats.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant this wine for 20-30 minutes before drinking. Can safely be cellared for the next 5-7 years .



2019 MINISTRY OF CLOUDS GRENACHE CARIGNAN *McLaren Vale, SA*

Grenache 69% Carignan 31%

This is Ministry of Clouds homage to the Spanish wines of Priorat, combining old bush vine Grenache and spicy dry grown Carignan. They use 80 plus year old bush vine Grenache planted in a northerly block of McLaren Vale, blended with a parcel of Carignan from the winemaker's own estate. Both parcels are hand harvested and fermented in traditional open vats, then gently basket pressed.

They used 90% whole bunch -berries to slow the ferment and to give the wine a delicate lift, helping to create the softer more feminine style of wine.

The wine was treated very gently to preserve freshness with a long maceration to build the necessary tannins and complexity. Matured in a mixture of inert tanks and old French oak puncheons to provide maturation but not oak flavour.

From the Grenache component you get an alluring sour cherry and spicy raspberry lift, with a serious lick of dried herbs and amaro bitters from the Carignan. The palate is long and lithe, with a depth of fruit intensity and very fine tannins. Serve slightly chilled – around 15-16 degrees to preserve the aromatics.

FOOD MATCHINGS

This wine is perfect for anything over a grill.
Steak / Chops / fish etc with big generous salads.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 15 minutes before serving. It can be safely cellared for the next 5-7 years.



2019 TOMBACCO AGLIANICO DEL BENEVENTANO *Campania, Italy*

Tombacco is a long-established family business in Veneto producing their own wines and blending and bottling other people's wines in much the same way as the "négociants" of France. Founded in 1919 and onto their third generation of family ownership, they also source a few wines from other areas of Italy such as this great Aglianico from Campania.

Aglianico (pronounced "ah-LYAH-nee-koe") is hard to say but very easy to drink. They follow a very traditional winemaking process, with maturation in steel vats and old large oak casks (500 litres) to retain the freshness and vitality of the natural fruit flavours.

It is a big, rich wine that is very smooth. A dark, deep ruby red with clear purple tones. This wine is clear and complex with enjoyable hints of cherry and red berry notes, followed by a marked vanilla and spicy note.

The freshness and acidity are evident, but the flavours roll over the palate, with some added spice at the end. The wine has this earthy complexity that is intriguing. This is a great example of this variety and region and a very enjoyable glass of wine.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Roasted Meats and hard cheeses.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20-30 minutes before Serving. Can be safely cellared for the next 8-10 years.

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Just as a quick recap, Argentina is the fifth largest wine producer in the world, so if the wines from this country are not on your radar, you need to get a new radar. Argentina is all about red wines and Malbec in particular. Malbec in Argentina is a very different beast than those grown in France and the rest of world; they are riper, fruitier and fleshier. In France, the best Malbec's can be found in the Cahors, where it can be quite decadent, but in Bordeaux it has fallen out of favour as it can be very difficult to grow. In Australia and the US, it is mainly used as small components in Bordeaux style blends - but it is rarely found on its own. In Argentina it is the star and the region of Mendoza is the ancestral home. Located in the centre West of the territory, at the foot of the Andes mountain range, Mendoza holds 75% of the total vineyards in Argentina and the largest number of wineries in the country. This makes it one of the main producing centres in the world.

The highest peaks of the Andes are found in Mendoza: with, Aconcagua being the highest peak, at almost 7000 metres. The presence of the Andes mountain range, which acts as a barrier to the humid winds of the Pacific, added to the distance to the Atlantic Ocean, shape the ideal climate for the cultivation of vines. The altitude, continental climate and snowmelt are key factors in producing excellent wines. Oh, and if you ever go there, get used to eating very late and eating lots of steak, a natural food pairing for the wine.



The last red is from Mc Laren Vale and the gang at Ministry of Clouds. This winery is a little bit different. Whereas most new wineries are created by youngish winemakers looking to stamp their own identity on the grapes, or by wealthy couples looking for their own tree or grape change. Ministry of Clouds is neither. It is rather, a husband and wife team with a wealth of experience in corporate wine sales and marketing. They reached the height of large corporate wineries, only to leave this stability and predictability to create their own winery. Based in McLaren Vale and formed in 2012, they have become the darling of sommeliers and wine critics alike. We have been selling their wines for a while, but this is a new blend, and I just knew it was going to be fantastic. You see they are paying homage to one of my favourite wines and regions, that of Priorat in North Western Spain. This region is famous the world over, for old bush vine Grenache, normally blended with a relatively unknown grape variety called Carignan. However, it should not be unknown to Bullion Cellars customers, for I have commented many times that almost all the great red wine blends of Europe, include a large dose of Carignan. If you come across these wines from Priorat, whilst they are expensive, they are well worth the money and a joy to drink.

The **2019 Ministry of Clouds Grenache Carignan** is a great example, a 69% / 31 % from 80-year-old bush vine Grenache and slightly younger Carignan. This can only be described as a feminine wine, almost sexy. It is medium bodied, but don't be fooled into thinking it lacks complexity, for it has this in spades. Enticing red fruits dominate the aroma, with lovely notes of herbal spice that cannot help but excite. The palate is long and lingering, involving some darker fruit flavours, but in the end, this wine is all about elegance and grace.

The white wine is from the Loire Valley in France and the grape variety Chenin Blanc. The Loire Valley is a sprawling wine region in North central France that is home to a multitude of different wine styles and sub regions, plus home to some of the most magnificent chateaus in France. The wines include almost every style from white, rose, red, sparkling, sweet and dry. Sauvignon Blancs from Sancerre & Pouilly-Fumé, Rose's and sparkling wines from Anjou-Saumur, a wide diversity of dry to sweet wines from Chenin Blanc around the regions of Vouvray and Touraine. You then have Cabernet Franc based red wines from Chinon and the Muscadet style of wine from Muscadet. However, the most well-known regions and styles are the wines from Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé and Vouvray.

Kim has chosen a sensational dry Chenin Blanc from the Vouvray Region. The **2020 Domain Pichot Coteau De La Biche Sec Vouvray**. The Pichot family is one of the oldest in Vouvray with origins as restaurateurs going back to 1739, later followed by the purchase of the superb Coteau de la Biche vineyard in 1770. All vineyards are farmed organically with grasses grown between the rows to reduce the uptake of moisture and vigour to the vines. The average age of vines is high with the Clos Cartaud vines around 75 years old. The style of the wines here is among the driest of the appellation for each style, with sec typically being from 3-7 gms/litre residual. The region is also known for its decadent sweet wines, so be aware of the labelling. Sec means Dry, Demi Sec is what we call off dry, with a prominent sweetness balanced by high acidity and then the sweet desert style wines. This wine is a dry style from Vallee de Nouys, typically thought of as some of the best terroir to produce the tighter, drier Chenin's of the region. It showcases the lovely honeysuckle and green apple characters that are hallmarks of the variety. The acidity and freshness are prominent, and you cannot help but think of the chalky soil that is common to the area

So, there we have 4 great wines as we head into winter. I can see slow cooked meals and sitting in front of fire places in our future, all while drinking some great wines.

Enjoy, **Matt the Bullionaire**



Stu Freeman and Matt Eagan, The Bullion Cellars Team