



# the bullionaire

BULLION 22A

## It's Gru VEE Baby



*Danube Valley, Wachau, Austria*

I have been waiting for one of our sommeliers to choose a Gruner Veltliner from Austria for a while. We got close a few times, only to find that the bottle was too tall to fit into our Bullion branded cartons. Yes, this is sometimes what we must deal with! A lot of winemakers will over do the weight and size of the bottle to impress the customer. It generally works, however I saw a super-premium Margaret River Chardonnay the other day (Over \$100) in a lightweight bottle and it claimed on the label this was to reduce the carbon foot print, so the times they are changing. But back to the Gruner as everything this time aligned. The wine was great, the bottle was a normal shape, so it was an easy choice for Dan Sharp the sommelier on deck this time. Dan Sharp has been working for us for a while now. His palate is awesome, and I always enjoy our tastings together. This one took place on a Sunday at Bronte and it was a nice way to spend a few hours.

Austria like most European countries has been making wines for centuries, but it is only in the past 30-40 years that their wines have crossed the oceans to head into new markets, headed by

Gruener Veltliner or "Gru Vee" as the cool kids in the US have begun to call it. Almost every restaurant in the major cities of the US will have this varietal "by the glass" and it is a bit like Sauvignon Blanc from NZ. It has a distinctive character, it is very reliable and very easy to pronounce. Don't under estimate this fact in the wine industry. Consumers don't like to look foolish when ordering a bottle or glass of wine and so being able to pronounce the wine and varietal is very important.

So, what does Gruner Veltliner taste like? It is often mid to full bodied and is quite fruit driven with melons dominating the primary fruit, but it has these noticeable spicy characteristics and distinctive white pepper notes. It is extremely food friendly, hence the reason why Sommeliers love the style. In Austria it is their most widely planted grape variety, accounting for over 30% of total plantings and we are also starting to see some plantings and wines been made in Australia. Lark Hill in the Canberra Region have been championing this varietal for a while and are producing some lovely wines. But the ancestral home is in the Wachau valley of Austria.

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# the wines

## 2017 MAGPIE ESTATE THE SACK SHIAZ

### *Barossa Valley*



This is a classic and very drinkable Barossa Shiraz. The winery was formed when a very well-known winemaker in the region, Rolf Binder, joined up with a UK importer to create a range of wines and targeted the International markets, initially the UK. They have since expanded into other markets and the quality of the wines has always been high. The Barossa Valley has toned down their styles in the past 10-15 years, but you cannot mistake the inherent power and characteristics of Barossa Shiraz. Think big full-bodied red fruits with plenty of chocolate and spices.

The fruit is sourced from 5 different vineyards, mostly in Ebenezer and Greenock with some from the Western Ridge of the Barossa. With almost 5 years of age, the fruit, oak and tannins have really melded together and totally in sync. It has an opaque black, crimson colour.

Liquorice all sort aromas leap out of the glass, followed by some black cherries, dark chocolate, vanillin oak and spicy notes. It has a medium to full bodied palate that delivers a rich flavour profile of liquorice, blackberry and subtle dark chocolate with underlying vanillin oak. An opulent feel in the mouth with soft velvety tannins.

### **FOOD MATCHINGS**

Grilled or roast beef, anything on a BBQ, big beefy stews, and especially roast or grilled lamb.

### **CELLARING POTENTIAL**

At almost 5 years of age, this wine is drinking really well now, but it will still benefit from decanting prior to drinking. It can safely be cellared for another 3-5 years.

## 2017 WEINGUT JAGER GRUNER VELTLINER STEINFEDER *Wachau, Austria*



Weingut Jäger is a very traditional Wachau producer in the World Heritage town of Weißenkirchen. They have been producing wine since the 17th century and in their historic vaulted cellars since 1837. It was not until the late 1980's that the estate was brought to the forefront, as they started to bottle and label their own wines. This quality focus has been maintained as the current generation has established Jäger as one of the Wachau's producers to watch.

They farm 7 hectares of vines over 50 small plots predominantly on steep terraces. They have vines in the three best vineyards of Weißenkirchen - Ried Klaus, Ried Steinriegl and Ried Achleiten. Low yields and careful grape selection work at harvesting ensure concentrated and clean fruit. Production sits at just over 1000 dozen per year, so they are a tiny producer

In the cellar, fermentations start spontaneously and while some stainless-steel tanks have been introduced, they still use the traditional large old casks for most wines. The cool ferments are long and slow preserving all the freshness of the perfectly ripe fruit.

Weingut Jäger's style is very elegant. Always lower in alcohol, they possess a freshness that is missed by some of the blockbuster producers of this region. If you like delicate yet concentrated dry white wines of crystalline purity, then these are a must try.

Pretty and expressive nose of lifted florals, delicate citrus and pear with a dusting of spice and light peppery note. It starts with strong stony minerality then moving to juicy lime flavours and light savoury spice. Very pure.

### **FOOD MATCHINGS**

Sea food, anti pasto plates or simply by itself. It is also perfect with lightly spiced Asian dishes- Think Thai, Vietnamese and some of the subtler Chinese dishes.

### **CELLARING POTENTIAL**

The wine is almost 5 years old and drinking really well right now. But it is still fresh and vibrant. It can be safely cellared for another 2-4 years. But no need to wait. It is in the perfect window right now.



## 2020 DOMAINE LA REME JEANNE UN AIR *Cote Du Rhone, France*

Domaine La Reme Jeanne is a small player in an out of the way location of the Cote du Rhone. They only farm 35 hectares but they tick a lot of boxes, quality over quantity as they say. All the fruit for Olivier Klein's excellent value Un Air Côtes du Rhône was drawn from the estate's highland, sandy limestone vineyards set around the hamlet of Sabran. Certified organic it is a blend of 70% Grenache and 30% Syrah Everything was picked by hand, sorted, then mostly destemmed prior to a five-day cold soak. The ferment used natural yeasts and was followed by a maturation of between seven and eight months in concrete tanks. The wine is unfinned and only saw a light filtration prior to bottling.

Full of bright red fruit, this is a beautifully crafted and energetic wine. It jumps out of the glass with scents of pure, just-picked raspberries and cherries and an aromatic

garrigue bouquet of lavender, sage, thyme and violet. Just as agile on the palate, it's supple and fragrant, with a gentle caress of tannins adding to its crunchy-fruited drinkability.

Cote Du Rhone continues to be a favourite at Bullion and this wine with its freshness and drinkability just shows us why we love the wines and region so much.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

This is a more medium bodied red, so great with roasted meats - Lamb, pork, chicken etc. Also perfect with Italian style dishes with a tomato base.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 10-15 minutes before serving – Can be safely cellared for another 2-4 years.



## 2017 DOMAINE A STONEY VINEYARD

Tasmania is generally about Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sparkling wine right! But in the right locations, Cabernet can shine. The quality of this wine should come as no great surprise, as the winery has a big reputation with a wine in the prestigious Langton's classification. We first choose this wine back in 2012 and the quality has got even better in the past 10 years. This is the third label of the winery but calling "Stoney Vineyard" a third label is an injustice. It's from vines planted in 1973, made from 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc, 4% Merlot and 2% Petit Verdot. The fruit is handpicked and sorted at the winery, then matured in French Oak for 24 months, before cellaring in the bottle for another 2 years before release. This sort of stuff just does not happen at this price. Domaine A is a 20ha property in the Coal River Valley of Southern Tasmania, recently purchased by David Walsh of MONA museum fame. The secret of the vineyard, and why they can ripen fruit in such a southerly location, is the closely spaced vines (restricting the yield) and the sloping northerly aspect, enabling the vines to full ripen, taking advantage of the prolonged summer sunshine. The wines are made without compromise in the spirit of the finest traditions of European winemaking.

## *Coal River, Tasmania*

This wine is a homage to the original owner's love of Bordeaux and it really is more European than your typical Aussie Cab. There is a great interplay between the fruit and tannins on the palate, showing lovely blackcurrant, dried herbs and glossy chocolate. A very serious wine indeed.

The 2017 vintage begins with plenty of dark fruit and a flashing herbaceousness (think just-crushed mint leaf) before more fruit presents; currants, blueberries. The length is solid, and the oak texture is fine and well-integrated.

### FOOD MATCHINGS

Steak and most red meats. Enough said.

### CELLARING POTENTIAL

This wine needs to be decanted for at least 20 minutes, allowing the wine to open. Whilst being almost 5 years old, this wine has another 5-6 years in the cellar easy. But why wait, this wine is in the zone right now.

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The wine Dan has chosen is the **2017 Weingut Jager Gruner Veltliner** from Wachau. The winery is in the Danube Valley in the middle of the Wachau and has been making wine for generations, in fact since the 17th century. They are still a small winery focusing on a few wines around some key vineyard assets. What I loved about this wine is the alcohol, at only 11.5%, yet still packing plenty of flavor and character and the age, 2017. It is rare to taste wines with a bit of age, but this wine still shows plenty of freshness and has a long life ahead of it. I cannot help but think of Austin Powers as I drank this wine. Yes, it really is "Gru Vee" baby!

The next two reds are Australian and again from the 2017 vintage. Something you don't see very often. The wineries have done part of the cellaring for us and this extra time in the bottle really shows in the glass. The first wine is an old favourite of Bullion Cellars and one of the best value Aussie Reds we have seen in a long time. I cannot understand why this wine is not on the list of every restaurant, but in my discussion with Dan he feels the winery has never really been that great at the sales side of thing. This may change in the future, but for now we can all enjoy the **2017 Domaine A Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon** Coal River Tasmania.

Domaine A is the oldest vineyard in the Coal River of Tasmania, planted in 1973, but it wasn't until the acquisition of the Stoney Vineyard in 1989 that the winery really could focus on its goal of producing top quality Bordeaux blend reds that could rival any reds in Australia and internationally. We selected this wine several years back and it was good to taste it again. I had forgotten how good it was. A lot has happened in this time period. The winery has been sold to David Walsh, who is the owner of the sensational Museum of New and Old (MONA) in Hobart as well as the Morilla Estate. Maybe he will fix up the sales side of things, but then again maybe he won't. There is a lot of tourism generated around MONA, so I would imagine he sells a lot of wine at full retail price to a lot of thirsty museum visitors. But what about the wine. Well it really is the best quality Cabernet I have tasted at this price in Australia. Plus, after almost 5 years of age, it has resulted in a wine that really pings. Think plenty of classic Blackcurrants and crushed mint leaf, with a solid length and very classy oak overtones woven into what is a beautiful glass of wine.

From Tasmania, we head to a Barossa Valley Shiraz, also from the 2017 vintage. The **2017 Magpie Estate The Sack Shiraz** Barossa Valley. Magpie Estate is a joint venture created in 1993 between Barossa Winemaking royalty, Rolf Binder, and UK wine merchant Noel Young. Initially created for the UK market they have grown in volumes and popularity, now selling in Australia and other international markets. This is Barossa Valley in all its glory. Rich and full bodied, but also elegant, with a touch of class. The time in the bottle has also softened the tannins and given time for the fruit and oak to come into balance. Liquorice all sorts aromas leap out of the glass followed by some black cherries, dark chocolate, vanillin

oak and spice. Very very Nice! Barossa Valley Shiraz has gone through a transformation over the past 10-15 years. Long known for its rich full-bodied nature, winemakers have toned back the style as they aim for drinkability and a more reserved nature. This is a good thing, for I remember these wines from the late 1990's and early 2000's and whilst there were nice and interesting to taste, they were very hard to drink and even harder to match with a meal. We can thank the decrease in influence of certain US wine critics for this change and this is a great thing for Australian wine and the Barossa Valley.

The last wine is from a favourite region, but a new winery for me. It is from the Cote Du Rhone in France and the **2020 Domaine La Reme Jeanne Un Air** Cote Du Rhone. They are an organic producer which is all the rage now, as winemakers look for a more sensitive approach to both the viticulture and winemaking. This is a harder process and involves more time and effort but the rewards in the right hands can be very high. It does not necessarily mean that the wines will be better, but it sure is a good sign. This winery is in a remote part of the Cote Du Rhone, near the village of Sabran, high in the hills with soils comprising limestone and sand. A quote from the winemaker sums up their philosophy. "Ploughing, pick-axing, manual harvesting, indigenous yeasts and long macerations are all the parameters that allow our vines, our grapes and then our wines to develop as naturally as possible". They work with only 35 hectares of vines on the hill side slopes and the wines offer a level of complexity and structure that is sensational considering their price. This wine is a blend of 70% Grenache and the balance Shiraz. It is a lovely glass of wine, with vivid aromas and flavours of raspberry, with hints of liquorice, thyme and a hint of white pepper. The finish is bright, refreshing with a very floral palate with juicy fruit combined with an excellent finish and palate. This is a very enjoyable glass of wine that can be enjoyed by itself or with your favourite Italian dish.

So, there are the first 4 wines of 2022. We really are in the "Roaring Twenties" now and I cannot wait to see what lies ahead.

### **Matt the Bullionaire**



*Stu Freeman and Matt Eagan, The Bullion Cellars Team*