



the bullionaire

BULLION 22B

Everything gets better with age



We have chosen some wines with a bit of age in this Sommelier Selection, wines that are 6 and 7 years old. Sure, they are not 15-20-year-old wines, but it is difficult to find wines of this age still being sold in Australia. When we tasted these wines, we jumped at the chance to not only taste, but then select them for our "Bullionaires". But what is all the fuss about older wines?

As a wine ages it gets smoother and more elegant. But not all wines benefit from time in the bottle and not all wines are good enough to cellar, nor the types of wines you like to drink. I know this might sound like heresy, but whenever I taste or drink a wine older than 15 years, I feel like I have missed the boat, as it really depends on the types of wines you are used to drinking.

Most often the wines are smooth, soft and elegant, but lack the primary fruit and energy I look for in the very best wines. This tension between fruit, tannins, oak, structure and complexity is what I look for and what I am used to when I drink a top wine. But whenever I drink an older wine, all I get is mellow. Sure, it is a nice mellow, but to me it seems to lack something, and I wish I had drunk the wine 5-10 years earlier.

Now most of you will be rolling your eyes, as this is an indulgent topic that only wine wankers would consider. But, then why does everybody want to know how long you can cellar a wine for, when nobody is actually cellaring wine.

Did you know, that the average length of time, from when a bottle is purchased, to when it is opened in Australia is less than 3 hours. No one is drinking wine that is 10 years old, let alone 20 years old, but there is this romantic notion of keeping a wine in a cellar and bringing it out in its prime. Plus, there is an assumption that a wine cannot be great unless it can be cellared for 30 plus years.

I believe this assumption harks back to the days of English gentlemen in tweed jackets drinking old Bordeaux in the cellars of even older chateaus. Very romantic and very desirable, but to 99.9% of the population, totally unachievable. Modern wines are designed to be drunk on release and only a very few wines are created to last longer than 10 years.

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the wines



2016 FLUX | SHIRAZ, GREAT SOUTHERN

Western Australia

Flux is the experimental side of the Harewood winery in Western Australia. It allows the winemaker a little more freedom in the styles of wines he wants to produce. They are made in small volumes and always a little different each vintage. We loved this wine when we first tasted it. It is a little unusual to be offered a wine with 6 years under its belt, as this is normally a sign that the wine is not selling very well, but I just could not understand why this wine is still available, for it really is quite special.

Upon a bit more investigation the wine did spend 3 years in large format maturation vessels, which goes a bit towards explaining the age, for most wines will spend 12 months and at most 24 months, so 3 years is long time. Hence the experimental side of things. This has resulted in a very sophisticated take on Shiraz, with a lot more than just primary fruit. There are spicy aromatics of blackcurrant and raspberry fruits, with plenty of

spice and pepper and hints of liquorice, leather and tar. The palate is plush and moreish with bright crunchy berries leading to a complex mid palate of chocolate and more liquorice with a long finish of fine velvety tannins. This wine will easily handle another 10 years in the cellar. But why wait?

FOOD MATCHINGS

Try with grilled or roast beef (medium rare), big beefy stews, roast or grilled lamb and strong hard cheeses, especially cheddar, it can also handle a mellow blue cheese.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before drinking. This wine will cellar for another 8 years, but there is no need to wait, the wine is in a perfect drinking window right now.



2020 MINISTRY OF CLOUDS TEMPRANILLO GRENACHE

McLaren Vale

75% Tempranillo 25% Grenache

Ministry of Clouds is the creation of Bernice Ong and Julian Forwood and it's just over a decade since they decided to leave the security of the corporate wine world for the adventure of their own wine venture. And it's been quite a journey thus far. They have quickly become the darling of the Sommelier set and based in McLaren Vale, but have recently added some fruit sources in Tasmania for their excellent Chardonnay and the Clare Valley for their Riesling. But it is the red wines from McLaren Vale that they will always hang their hat.

This wine is mainly Tempranillo; however, the 25% Grenache really adds a lift, especially knowing that parcels come from vineyards that are over 100 years old. Hand-picked, open-fermented, hand-plunged, basket-pressed and matured in French oak. This is a seriously good wine with intensity and harmony. It combines the bright notes of dry grown Tempranillo, with the perfume and succulence of old vine Grenache; medium bodied and deliciously moreish.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Ideal serving temperature is 16 °C. Enjoy over a shared grazing meal, this food friendly versatile wine works a treat with a good selection of flavours from a platter of cured meats to, chorizo, prawns, pizzas, pastas, quail and duck dishes.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before drinking. This wine can be safely cellared for another 8-10 years.



2020 MASSENA MOONLIGHT RUN *Barossa Valley*

Grenache 36%, Mataro 34%, Shiraz 30%

THE BAROSSA VALLEY AT ITS BEST

Things really have come in full circle. For most of the late 20th Century, Barossa Valley Shiraz was all the rage. The bigger the better, until people started to realise these are nice wines to taste, but not to drink. Well the Barossa Valley has gone back to the future and re-discovered some truly remarkable vineyards. I am talking about old vine Grenache and the great GSMs blends. Yes, the real stars of the Barossa are not Shiraz, but their luscious, fleshy and delicious GSM's. Some Barossa winemakers will also make a straight Grenache, but this style is a lot lighter and fruitier than the blends, which are fuller bodied and flavoursome.

Massena are one of the young guns in the Barossa and they are making some sensational wines. This wine is roughly an equal blend of Barossa Valley Mataro (Mouvedre), Grenache, and Shiraz, with the Grenache coming off extremely old vines, well over 100 years (but more like 150).

This is a beautiful red wine, full of energy and precision. Intensely aromatic, youthful, with an energetic nose that dishes up scents of Christmas cake like plums, blueberries and liquorice followed by subtle incense infusions of vanillin cedar and spice. A great Aussie wine style paying homage to Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape, but different and perfect for our cuisine and climate. And yes, the colour is as dark as a midnight run through the vineyards.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Try with stews or hearty soups. Slow cooked roasts of pork or lamb that may even be a little fatty (Shoulder or lamb shanks). It can also handle a bit of spice so try with milder curries like Rogan josh.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

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



2015 ANDRE KIENTZLER PINOT GRIS

The Kientzler domaine is a small family-run estate consisting of just 12 hectares of vines, of which 3.7 hectares are classified Grand Cru. The total output is a tiny 6000 cases, so as you can imagine their focus is very much on quality. These Grand Cru sites have been identified over the past 300 years as the region's best. They produce some truly amazing wines, in fact one of the best wines I have ever tried is a Riesling from this estate- The 2008 Riesling Grand cru "Geisberg". It is expensive, but worth every cent. These wines make up a tiny percentage of the 6000-case production, so it is with the village wines of Pinot Gris and Riesling that the estate is judged on year after year. For the past 30 years this Domaine's passion has been for dry and gastronomic wines, which are revealed in each vintage.

The grapes for this wine were hand harvested from several vineyards around the village of Ribeauville. After pressing, fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled vats (at 18 to 24°C). The wine is racked just once, before natural clarification during the course of the winter.

Alsace, France

The wine is lightly filtered just before bottling. An unoaked style of wine which is all about mineral freshness and floral aromas, all brought together with this lovely nuttiness and cracking acidity. You also get a touch of apple and pear aromas with a juicy and refreshing palate. I can see why this winery is regarded as one of the region's top producers.

FOOD MATCHINGS

You don't want to over chill this wine. Enjoy it at 8°C with all manner of seafood (poached, grilled, smoked, marinated or in creamy sauces), or at the start of a meal as an aperitif where it would be perfect with goat or sheep cheese. It is also just amazing with most spicy Asian dishes.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Drinking well over the next 3-5 years. But in the zone now at almost 7 years in the bottle.

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Now, people whose palate and knowledge I really respect, think I am a moron when I raise this point of view, but I want this tension, I want this fruit, I don't just want a mellow wine! Or is this just because I am not drinking enough older wines?

These were the thoughts crossing my mind as we tasted these wines and they fit my "Goldilocks Rule" of wines under 10 years, not too old and not too young, rather they are just right and sensational.

First up is a white wine from my favourite wine region; Alsace and the **2015 Kientzler Pinot Gris**. You may have noticed a lot more Pinot Gris and Grigio on wine lists of late. Thankfully, people are getting a little bored of Sauvignon Blanc. They have not yet fully embraced Chardonnay, but they are turning to Pinot Gris. These have more texture and flavour than Sauv Blanc and at Bullion Cellars we cannot get enough of them. (Pinot Gris and Pinot Grigio are the same variety but made in different styles. The Gris style is a little fuller in body in comparison to the Grigio style, offering greater textural elements and complexity.)

Alsace is the spiritual home to the Gris style. Some of these styles can be off dry, meaning they have a touch of sweetness, which is also a common style coming out of NZ, but this wine is in a slightly dryer style. Alsace has always had a soft spot in my heart. I visited the region a few years back and it is just beautiful. Medieval villages dotting the landscape, with cobble stone streets, thatched roofs and vineyards rolling down the hills to the back doors of the houses. The Kientzler Vineyard has been handed down from father to son for over five generations, sustaining their passion for outstanding dry and gastronomic wines. Grown with a great respect of land and environment, they are a small producer with only 12 hectares of vineyards, with nearly half classified as Grand Crus. This wine has a great complexity and elegance to it, plus this unique, slightly blue cheese character that I always find in aged quality Alsace whites. But it is dominated by green apples and plenty of life left in the tank. These are wines just crying out for food, and if you are thinking of matching a wine with Asian food, then look no further.

Next is an Aussie Shiraz from Western Australia. The **2016 Flux I Shiraz, Great Southern Western, Australia**. Even by Australian standards, the Great South is a large region spanning 150km North to South, and 100km East to West. More than 40 cellar doors are dotted throughout Albany, Denmark, Frankland River, Mt Barker and Porongorup. Climates range from strongly maritime influenced to moderately continental, and this, combined with an ever-changing topography, aids in the production of a wide variety of high-quality grapes. The region is especially renowned for Shiraz and Riesling. When I tasted this wine for the first time, I felt it was the one of the best wines I have tasted this year. It is just so elegant and beautiful, offering a level of complexity that I don't normally find in Australian Shiraz and not at this price point.

Flux is the "Experimental Label" of Harewood. Experimental in that the winemaker James Kellie can let his imagination run a little wild. These wines are made in small quantities, with no two wines the same and each label and vintage slightly different. I was not familiar with the Flux wines, but I will certainly keep an eye out if this 2016 vintage is any indication of the quality.

The next wines are also from Australia and wineries longer term members will be familiar with. The **2020 Massena Moonlight Run Grenache Mataro Shiraz Barossa Valley**, was in fact in the first selection we ever did at Bullion Cellars over 11 years ago. Where has the time gone? Established in 2000, Massena was founded by Dan Standish and Jaysen Collins who until 2006 were employed full time at other Barossa wineries (Dan as winemaker at Torbreck and Jaysen as general manager at Turkey Flat). All Massena wines are 100% Eden Valley and Barossa valley fruit from dry-farmed, low yielding vines up to 155 years age. The Moonlight Run is their homage to the great red wines of the Rhone valley in France. The Moonlight Run was their combined midnight drive back to the Barossa after working vintage in the Clare Valley in 1999. They would crave a soft slurpy wine to wash down a hard night's work, so a Barossa Grenache based wine was their logical next step. To be honest this wine is really nothing like the Cote Du Rhone and is distinctly Barossa. It is full bodied, rich, with spicy fruit cake aromas layered with chocolate and the most complex and subtle of oak characters.

The last wine is the **2020 Ministry of Clouds Tempranillo Grenache**. What do you get when you mix the flair and panache of Spain, with the elegance and sophistication of France? Why you get this Tempranillo Grenache blend from McLaren Vale in Australia, which is different, in a very good way. Wineries are normally created by youngish winemakers wanting 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. Rather it is 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, they also source fruit from as far away as Tasmania and the Clare Valley, always working with the best winemakers of the region. Formed in 2012, they have become the darling of sommeliers and wine critics alike. This wine is just lovely, complex, alluring and so drinkable.

So, there we have 4 wines spanning the history of Australian wine and the history of Bullion Cellars. I only hope in 11 years' time we can select another few wines from these wineries.

Matt the Bullionaire