



the bullionaire

BULLION 24B

Matt Dunne is with us again at the tasting table and during our discussions we have decided to continue with 2 reds and 2 whites in his selection. Plus, these 4 wines were the best wines we tasted that day. These tastings are always a great way to spend a few hours drinking and discussing all things wines. I also learnt about some new wine glasses that Matt is the Ambassador for, the Plumm Sommelier Series. But more on that later.

Whenever we look to start on a new wine selection, the first thing we look for is quality, then the second, is whether it offers value, and these wines offer plenty of both. We will start with the 2 reds which also happen to be both from Australia. One is a fragrant and floral Shiraz / Syrah from the very trendy Hughes and Hughes boys of the Coal River in Tasmania. Then a very structured and elegant red made by a winemaker and a sommelier, who just happens to be the partner of Matt Dunne, but trust me the wine really shone on the tasting bench. It is a rather unique single varietal wine made from Mourvèdre, which you normally see blended with Grenache, but from this duo you get a lovely midweight wine that is spicy with cherry-like red fruits and a very serious, engaging and complex palate.

The wine Matt has chosen is the **2023 The Somm & The Winemaker Mourvèdre** from Canowindra, which is situated between Orange and Cowra. Nadja Wallington of Chalou Wines in Orange, who was also the young winemaker of the year back in 2021 and Louella Mathews are the winemaker and the Somm in this partnership. They were friends at the same high school back in Orange and stayed in touch as they developed in their careers. It was only natural that they would do something together in the orange region and The Somm & the Winemaker range of wines is the result. Louella, apart from being the partner of Matt Dunne, is the Sommelier for the Trippas White Group that manages over 30 Restaurants and bars in some iconic locations including the Sydney Opera House, Taronga Zoo and Botanic gardens. The Chalou winery is a small winery based in Orange, that sources the fruit for this wine from the Canowindra vineyard that was planted by Nadja's parents back in 1992 and has since been converted to Organic and Biodynamic farming principles.

The region of Orange continues to be one of the shining lights of viticulture in not only NSW but also in Australia. It is a picture-perfect cool climate region that really excels in the whole food and wine scene. A 3 ½ hour drive West of Sydney, it is a perfect place to spend a few days touring the wineries and restaurants of the area. It is known for its Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, excelling at high altitude sites above 900 metres. This Mourvèdre wine is based from a slightly warmer, lower vineyard at 400m and the result is a really engaging complex wine.



ChaLou Vineyard

The next red is a new wine from an old favourite of ours. The **2022 Hughes & Hughes Syrah** in Tasmania. We have offered Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from this winery before, but this Syrah is a new wine and a classic example of cool climate Syrah. Think floral, seductive aromas that flow through to an elegant medium bodied palate that is just delicious.

Tasmania is red hot right now, for the very reason it is so cool. As winemakers deal with climate change, and temperatures getting warmer and picking dates for the fruit getting earlier, they are looking for cooler regions and Tasmania is where most are now heading. It also helps that consumers are turning towards fresher, elegant styles of wines, with Pinot Noir at the forefront of this trend. So, Tasmania is shining, taking advantage of the incredible demand for Pinot Noir and other cool climate white wines, think Chardonnay, Riesling and Pinot Gris, and that is before we even mention their Sparkling Wines.

Hughes & Hughes is a relatively new winery that was named Best New Winery back in 2019 by James Halliday. It is a story of two brothers who both have economics degrees. One took the more traditional path working for Macquarie Bank, JP Morgan and Morgan Stanley. The other decided a life in wine was more interesting, if less financially secure. He worked a string of vintages in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, working for several high-profile wineries, including Felton Road in Central Otago. Fast forward a few years and the brothers joined forces, planting a vineyard in their home state of Tasmania and their success and their wines are spectacular. They produce very limited quantities of wine under the Mewstone label, sourced from their home vineyard, but it is the Hughes & Hughes range of wines that are generating most of the buzz and recognition for this winery.

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the wines



2022 ALBINO ARMANI PINOT GRIGIO *Friuli-Venezia Giulia - Grave, Italy*

The family of Albino Armani have been making wine in Northern Italy since 1607. That is a long time. They have stuck to what they know best and that is the white wines of Northern Italy. This wine is sourced from their vineyards in Friuli and the sub region of Graves, starting life at the foot of the Carnic Alps in Alta Grave Friulana. These vines are planted in loose and aerated soils that are rich in calcareous stone. As the name suggests this has a very gravelly soil structure, in fact they have a distinctive “white” stone that litters the area. These have been dragged down by the flooding of the Alpines brooks and rivers and provide a loose and well-drained soil profile, perfect for grape growing.

The vines are cultivated using traditional agriculture and the harvest takes place when the grapes reach optimum ripeness. In the winery, once the grapes have been selected, they ferment at a controlled temperature in stainless steel tanks. The wine then ages on its own lees in these same steel tanks before bottling. The winemakers want to let the fruit shine through. What you get is plenty of minerality and stone fruits on a full-bodied palate with just a touch of almond nuttiness at the back palate.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Excellent by itself, also great with grilled sea food and salads.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Can be safely cellared for the next 2-4 years, but best enjoyed in the next 12 months.



2012 SCHOFFIT PINOT BLANC AUXERROIS *Alsace, France*

The Schoffit Family are newcomers to Alsace, having been established in 1986. They have some 19 hectares of vineyards based around the village of Colmar, however it was in the 1990's that they really made their name, when after years of negotiations they were able to purchase around 6.5 hectares of the Grand Cru Vineyard Rangen, which had fallen into disrepair due to the incredibly steep and rocky site. Whilst it only represents a 1/3 of their total vineyard area, it represents 2/3 of their time and resources to successfully manage the site. Now, the Grand Crus wines of Schoffit from this vineyard are regarded as some of the best in Alsace and therefore some of the greatest white wines of the world.

The wine Matt has chosen, is from a blend of Pinot Blanc and Auxerrois vines, averaging 50-70 years old on gravelly soil covered by loess in the Harth vineyard. Fermentation and aging took place in stainless steel for 11 months before bottling in August of the following year. The soft, honeyed apple and stone fruit is delicious but restrained. There is a beautiful texture and layers of mineral and spicy/herbal notes that dominate the palate. This is a very drinkable wine.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Asian Food of most styles (but not too spicy) or just at the end of a long day.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

No need to decant. It can be safely cellared for another 5 years - but I will be enjoying this wine over the next 3-6 months. It is drinking really well right now.



2022 HUGHES & HUGHES SYRAH *Coal River / Tamar Valleys, Tasmania*

Brothers Matthew and Jonathan Hughes established the Mewstone Vineyard in 2011 on the banks of Tasmania's D'Entrecasteaux Channel in the tiny hamlet of Flowerpot. The small, boutique vineyard is a former cherry orchard, with planting to reach a maximum of just 3.5 hectares. However what forms that back bone for this winery is the Hughes & Hughes range of wines that brings together fruit sourced from around Tasmania, with the aim of producing wines that are high on quality, natural acidity and drinkability, plus in larger volumes so we actually get a chance to buy them.

This Syrah is a new wine for this winery, and it is a picture-perfect example of cool climate Shiraz / Shiraz. The source fruit from vineyards in the Coal River and Tamar Valleys. Then basically follow similar winemaking techniques that they do with their Pinot Noirs. Five percent whole bunch fermentation, nature yeasts, held on skins for 21 days whilst gently pumping over for a day when the ferment was most active (4-5 times in total). Then pressed directly to oak barrels for maturation (15% new). The wine was bottled unfined and unfiltered.

This wine is black. Black Cherries, blackcurrants and black licorice. But it is the floral notes and elegance that shine through. These aromas carry to the palate with fine supporting tannins and a little oak influence. This is the Hughes boy's homage to the great wines of the Northern Rhone.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Lamb / Roast Beef / Roast Chicken In fact any meat that has been roasted.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before serving - Can be safely cellared for the next 3-5 years.



2023 THE SOMM & THE WINEMAKER MOURVÈDRE *Canowindra, NSW*

This is a collaboration of two school friends who both have careers in wine. One as Sommelier in Sydney (Louella Mathews) and the other as a winemaker in Orange NSW (Nadja Wallington). Their shared passion is obvious, and the wine quality is really high. They have taken a rather unusual single varietal wine and made it a very drinkable high-quality wine, which as you would expect is great with food.

The Mourvèdre is sourced from a vineyard just 10 minutes outside Canowindra, located between Orange and Cowra. It was planted by Nadja's parents back in 1992 on soils that are sandy clay loams, producing elegant medium bodied wines at 400 metres above sea level. In 2008 the vineyard was certified as bio dynamic.

The focus of this wine is all about mid weight drinkability, so they have used some Pinot Noir winemaking techniques, with 40% whole bunch fermentation used to soften the tannins and add some mid palate complexity. They have succeeded. In fact, you can also enjoy this wine slightly chilled. Not cold like white wine but say 12-15 degrees Celsius. Continuing this trend the fruit was cold soaked for 4 days before fermentation was allowed to start with native yeasts, before it was racked with fine solids to older French barriques for maturation. Minimal filtration was used with no fining before it was bottled.

Expect plenty of red fruits on a medium weight palate. It has this distinctive spiced clove, black pepper kind of thing. But then the red fruits kick in with cherries flowing through to a lovely mouth feel.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Scotch fillet – medium rare on the Bone with chimichurri.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before serving. Serve slightly colder. Can be safely cellared for another 3-5 years.

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They source fruit from a number of different vineyards around southern Tasmania and these wines offer insane quality and value. Plus, they are more widely available than the Mewstone wines. The plantings of Syrah in Tasmania are increasing, and it will be fascinating to see the development over the next few years, but in the meantime we can all enjoy this fabulous example of cool climate Shiraz from a great winemaker.

So now to the whites and a Pinot double. There are two main white Pinot varieties, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris, which is also known as Pinot Grigio in some countries / regions and Matt has chosen both of these wine styles, but let's concentrate on the Pinot Blanc first. Matt has chosen the **2012 Schoffit Pinot Blanc Auxerrois** from Alsace. Alsace is one of my favourite regions, especially if you like crisp and elegant dry white wines. In fact, Alsace, which is in Northeastern France is really only known for its white wine, with only a little red wine (Pinot Noir) produced. But it is the Rieslings, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc that you really want to focus on. Alsace is a rather unusual French wine region in that it has more similarities to German wine making. Although Alsace is part of France its borders have not always been clear, the region has been passed between French and German control several times since 1681. As a result, Alsace is a unique mix of French and German influences. Alsace is a very pretty wine region, with small villages dotted at the foot of hills of mountains, with vineyards coming right up to the thatched roof houses and churches that are a hall mark of the area. A lot of Americans refer to it as the Disneyland of wine regions, but the wines are super serious and rightly regarded as some of the greatest and long-lived white wines of the world.

Schoffit is a relatively newcomer to this old region, with the winery only starting in 1986, but in the past 30 years they have become one of their shining lights. This Pinot Blanc / Auxerrois is a great example of the regional style. Green apples and honey dew dominate the aroma whilst on the palate it is all crisp acidity and minerality.

The relationship between Auxerrois and Pinot Blanc is a little strange especially in Alsace. It is a little-known fact that Auxerrois can be used in wines that are labelled only as Pinot Blanc, in fact, it is legal under AOC Alsace appellation laws for a 100 % Auxerrois wine to be labelled as Pinot Blanc.

As a wine, Auxerrois is more full bodied and less crisp than Pinot Blanc, but the two varieties complement each other's weaknesses. These blends are the hidden gems of Alsace, known for their subtle elegance, balanced acidity and excellent minerality. They offer notes of fresh orchard fruits and a smooth clean finish but are full-bodied and offer plenty of complexity and structure.

The last wine is a Pinot Grigio from a winery that traces their background to 1607. Now that is a long time ago. In fact, we have selected a different wine from this winery before, but that was a long time ago. The wine Matt has chosen is the **2022 Albino Armani Pinot Grigio Friulo Grave** Italy. The region is Friuli Venezia Giulia, and the sub region is Grave, which is in the Northeast part of Italy and is all about white wine and vineyards that are on the south facing slopes of the Alps foothills. In fact, 76 % of all the wines in this region are white, higher than any region in Italy, except the neighbouring Veneto. As the name might suggest, the soil is all about stone and gravels that are rich in limestone. This type of soil is perfect for wines as it helps in the ripening process by retaining the day's heat and re-distributing this heat in the evening, whilst also assisting in the drainage of the soil when it rains.

Albino Armani has a long history of making wine, starting off as farmers in 1607 in the Trentino- Alto Adige in the northern part of Italy, however it is really only in the last 80-90 years that wine became the major focus for this family, as they expanded into other Northern Italian regions of Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. These all share similar climates, altitudes and soil profiles, but each create different styles. Pinot Grigio is the star white wine of these regions, but it is important to control the yield to ensure you get the right flavour profile. Albino Armani are very good at this, especially taking advantage of the gravelly soil of the vineyards. Only a few bunches of grapes are allowed to grow, allowing the wine to reach its full expressiveness. Like the Pinot Blanc from Alsace this wine reeks of minerality and has a rich straw like colour and an intense aroma of pears and mature apples, evolving into scents of toasted almonds. It is full bodied and has a lovely engaging palate.

So there we have the 4 wines from Matt Dunne. Enjoy!

Matt, the Bullionaire.



ABOUT THE SOMMELIER

Matt Dunne has left the role of Sommelier after many years at Aria and has joined the Joval Wine Group as Group Wine Ambassador, focusing on Imports, Wine Education and Plumm Glassware. Matt completed the Court of Master's Sommeliers Certified Sommelier Examination in 2009 and is an active wine show judge across Australia. In 2015 he was awarded a scholarship to the prestigious Len Evans Tutorial held annually in the Hunter Valley which legendary wine writer James Halliday refers to as the 'most exclusive wine school in the world'. Matt was a regular host for the Solotel Hospitality events program across all venues when he was in his previous role of Group Sommelier. Matt is an experienced as a keynote speaker, educator and has a fresh and approachable take on wine. Matt was featured as one of the NSW wine judges on the TV series called 'Battle of Vines' on the Food Network in June 2018".