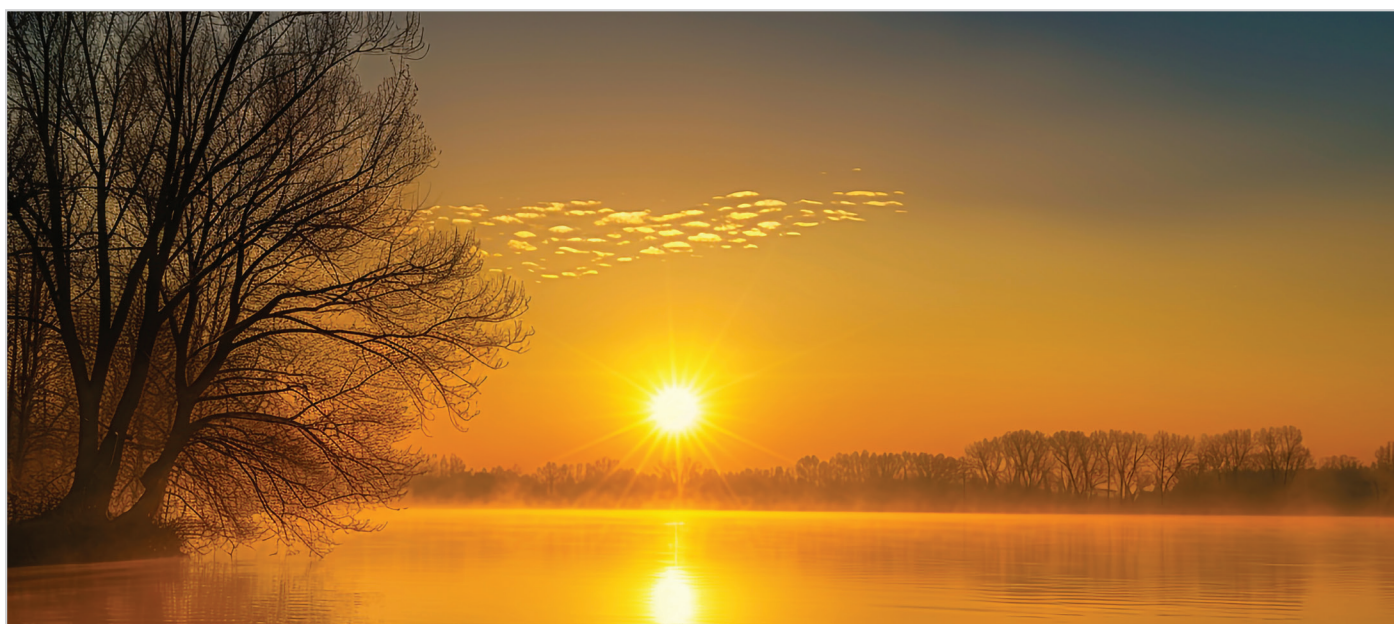




the bullionaire

BULLION 240

Wines for the season, a time to reflect ...



Every time I write this last newsletter in November, I cannot believe how quickly the year has gone. Over the past 12 months we have had some great wines, and I am proud to say we have finished on a bit of a high. As the weather gets warmer, the swimmers and thongs come out and we look forward to long afternoons in the sun, sipping wine on the deck and enjoying time with family and friends. At this time of year, you want to drink lighter wines and this is when Rose and Chardonnay shine. With that in mind, when we were tasting the wines for this selection, we looked for these types of wine styles, and two wines really shone through. An aged Margaret River Chardonnay with 6 years under its belt, and a beautiful Rose from Provence in the South of France, which has quickly become one of my favourites. I already have a few cases sitting in my wine cellar, ready for the rest of summer. For the two red wines, we have the return of an old favourite; an aged Shiraz Malbec from the Clare Valley, with the worlds ugliest label, and a great wine from North Western Spain, where the Mencia grape variety and the region of Bierzo are generating a lot of buzz for their quality and ability to age. The wine chosen is 6 years old and only just starting to come into its own.

So, let's start with this wine, the **2018 Abad Dom Bueno Mencia** from Bierzo. Bierzo is a relatively new region in the Northwest of Spain, generating a lot of attention for wines

sourced from two unique varieties, synonymous with this region. Godello which is a versatile white wine, showing a multitude of flavours. It responds well to oak treatment, so you will see assorted styles of different palate weights. Aromatically its quite floral in nature, with peach and melon overtones with a slight creamy palate and a hint of almond, mineral overtones. The better examples of this wine are well worth looking out for. However, it is Mencia that really dominates the region of Bierzo, with almost two thirds of the region planted to this indigenous red grape.

Mencia pronounced "Men-thee-ah" produces a wide variety of wines with different palate weights. From a Pinot Noir like quality to the complexity and weight of a Cabernet Sauvignon. The vines occupy both the valley floor and the hillsides, but it's at elevation that Mencia starts to excel, where the soils and diurnal temperature shifts make wines of evocative, floral fragrance and rocky minerality. Mencia's reputation comes from the winemakers who work these old, elevated and hard-to-work vineyards, who are willing to put in the effort and time to make world class wines.

These wines typically exhibit dark fruits on the nose and palate, with prominent minerality and elegant soft tannins. Not only do the wines show well when young, but many can stand the

Continued back page

the wines



2018 ABAD DOM BUENO MENCIA *Bierzo, Spain*

Abad Dom Bueno translates to “The Good Abby” referring to the Carracedo Monastery located in the same town as the winery. Built in 990, the Monastery has survived many wars and bombings. The Abbots were the ones who also took care of the vineyards and the inspiration for Bodega del Abad, “The Abbot’s Cellar”. With 40 hectares of Godello and Mencía, the winery uses the most up to date viticultural and vinification techniques to produce high quality wines that share the tradition and culture of the region. The Mencía grapes for this wine have been sourced from vineyards over 40 years in age and from an altitude of 620 metres. These are the major requirements to make quality wine from this region.

After maturation in French oak for 12 months, the wine has developed a deep black, core with a dark tinged hue. The aromas are characterised by an intense, black cherry, liquorice character, combined with dark chocolate, vanillin cedar and hints of spicy leather. As I said, very complex. It is matched with an opulent yet chewy textural feel with a sturdy tannin structure. The wine has a generous, full-bodied finish, with a slight earthiness to it. This can only be described as yummy!

FOOD MATCHINGS

Ideal with all kinds of red meats, game meats, roasts and grilled steak. Also great with grilled vegetables and an antipasto plate.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 20 minutes before drinking. Can be safely cellared for another 3-4 years, but at 6 years of age, the wine is in a great drinking window now.



2016 VINE MIND SHIRAZ, MALBEC *Clare Valley, South Australia*

No that is not a mistake. This wine is 8 years old. The short story is the winemaker wanted to see how their wines would age, so they kept back a portion of the 2016 vintages, which they have only just released. Made in the Springfarm sub-region of the Clare Valley by Jen Gardener (of Adelina fame). While most Adelina wines come from their home block, this comes from the neighbours dry-grown vineyard with vines ranging up to 100 years old. A blend of Shiraz & Malbec, the vineyard is also very close to Wendouree who make one of the most famous wines of the region and of Australia. It is very rare and only sold via the wineries mailing list. This neighbouring vineyard is red sand on clay base with lime and slate sub-surface. They work very hard on the canopy to get the light in, and all fruit is handpicked. Lightly crushed with some whole berry fermentation with aging in concrete and oak to keep things primary, clean and fresh. Vine Mind Shiraz Malbec is what you get when you let vines get to 100 years old and then cellar for 8 years. The Shiraz is dense, rich but not overly heavy. The Malbec adds some grunt and backbone. That means it adds tannins, savoury characters and complexity. Blue and black fruits, meaty, peppery. There are some rugged tannins that are perfectly balanced by the fruit intensity. This wine is in perfect balance now and a treat to drink.

FOOD MATCHINGS

This is still quite a juicy wine, but with lovely, aged characters and extremely soft and smooth. I really enjoyed the wine with a selection of soft cheeses. But would also be lovely with some roast lamb.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Decant for 10-15 minutes before drinking. There is no need to cellar the wine. Best to drink over the next 2-3 years.



2022 DOMAINE PINCHINAT *Cotes Du Provence, France*

Rosé and Provence in France are a match made in heaven. It used to be that Rose was only drunk during the summer months and when on holiday, but the times have changed. The quality of the wines have improved, becoming a lot more serious. This wine from the South of France is a prime example. It has more of everything than your standard Rosé. The property has belonged to the same family for over two centuries and is at foot of the famous “Sainte Victoire” mountain, on Pourrières commune (Var), 25 km east of Aix en Provence. The winery has 75 acres of vineyard, which have been managed organically since 1990. Making rosé is a relatively straight forward process, made complicated and exciting by the quality of the original fruit. You take red grapes and begin the fermentation process. In the case of this wine, Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, which are very traditional varieties of the area. You may recall the juice of a red grape is white and it is only after contact with the grape skins that the wine gains its dark colour. So, to get a rose you drain the fermented wine off the grape skins before the full colour is imparted. You should be looking for a salmon pink colour, rather than a light red. This is one of the more serious and complex Rosés I have drunk, well worth the extra money you need to pay. Red berries, acidity and freshness are the first things you notice but it is the palate that really shines with an extra level of texture and complexity. It has this creaminess that makes the wine just that little bit special.

FOOD MATCHINGS

Can be enjoyed with seafoods, light meals and most Asian dishes. It can also be enjoyed as an aperitif as the sun goes down, or as it reaches 12 o'clock.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Whilst you could cellar this wine, there really is no point. Chill it down, pop the cork and simply enjoy.



2018 ATTICUS THE FINCH COLLECTION CHARDONNAY *Margaret River, Western Australia*

The vineyard was first planted in 1997, by local bottle ship owner Ron Fraser. It is located at the southern end of Margaret River, with a good portion of the fruit sold to the ‘big names’ of the region, many of which have gone on to win significant awards with the resulting wines.

This is a beautiful Chardonnay from an outstanding vintage in the Margaret River – elegantly crafted, with more than a nod to Burgundy. Stone fruit and lemon curd notes abound, all backed by the gentle brioche notes of pristine French oak. There is an intensity and purity of flavour that elevates this wine, and the long, lingering finish will no doubt leave you wanting more. This will delight the lovers of serious quality Chardonnay, who like a bit of weight and body to their white wines. There’s a delicate creaminess to the mid palate and the finish is loaded with freshness. Excellent length with a long and distinguished aftertaste

You don’t often get to drink white wines with a bit of age, so enjoy the added complexity and structure of this wine and how the fruit, oak and secondary characters have started to meld together and weave their magic. Remember, this is why we cellar wine in the first place.

FOOD MATCHINGS

All things seafood, but I would match with grilled salmon, or a beautifully made and simple carbonara in all its creamy glory.

CELLARING POTENTIAL

Can be safely cellared for the next 2-3 years – but why wait. Enjoy over the next 3-6 months.

test of time. The wine we have chosen is a notable example of Mencia, from vines over 40 years in age and sourced from an altitude of 620 metres. It certainly ticks a lot of boxes. It has this very dark and brooding colour in the glass, yet it is still delicate on the nose and palate. It is medium to full bodied, with an agility and vibrancy indicating a long life ahead. The wine has rich blackberry and cherry fruits, which are supported by a backdrop of liquorice, dark chocolate, leather and spice. This is what I would describe as a “yummy” wine but has enough complexity and structure to make it classy and elegant. Mencia and Bierzo have always been a combination I have looked out for; however I have mainly tasted the lighter styles, but this fuller bodied example has quickly turned into one of my favourite wines of the year.

The second red wine is a return of Australia's ugliest label. A good thing the wine is pretty sensational. We selected the 2013 vintage of this wine back in early 2023 and we are back again with the 2016. Whilst not as old as the 2013 on release, it is only 8 years old, the wines are very similar. I received great feedback from the earlier vintage, and I am sure I will receive many from this vintage. A quick recap of the story. You don't normally get wines offered from the 2016 vintage. If a wine is being sold at this age, it is a sign the wine is not very good. So, I called up the wholesaler to find out the story. I was told the winery wanted to see what the wine looked like with a bit of age, so they kept in reserve 2 pallets of wine (128 cases) of the 2013 and 2016 vintages. Hence why we are seeing the 2016 vintage now. The **2016 Vine Mind Shiraz** is the side project of a small winery in the Clare Valley called Adelina. The Clare Valley is one of my favourite wine regions in Australia, producing a wide range of wine styles of excellent quality. Their Rieslings are world class, with their Cabernets and Shiraz's not far behind. They have a number of standout wineries and one of these is Wendouree. The reason I raise this winery is that their most famous wine is also a Shiraz Malbec blend, which retails for around \$150 a bottle. The second reason is that the fruit for this Vine Mind wine is sourced from a vineyard very close to Wendouree, with some of the vines up to 100 years old. All very good, but only if the wine is good and yes, it is! There are some obvious dark fruits shining through, but what you notice most are these lovely, aged characters. As a wine ages you lose the primary fruit characters, being replaced by these secondary characters like chocolate, smokiness, minerals etc. Hard to describe but beautiful too taste.

We now move to the white and Rose wines. Rose and summer are a match made in heaven. I love that Australians have finally found why these pink wines are such a perfect match for our climate and lifestyle. I recall bemoaning the fact that you just couldn't fine many great examples, but now when you walk into a bottle shop the Rose selection is bigger than the Sauvignon Blanc selection, and about bloody time! The colour is the most important thing when looking at Rose's and if you learn anything from these newsletters, it is this: You need to judge a Rose by its colour. You are looking for salmon pink. If it is darker than this, then you should run away at a million's miles an hour. There are some good Rose's being made in Australia, but when there are so many great examples of the Provence style available, I really think you should stay in this region. You can buy some good Province Roses from around \$25-\$30 and when we have tasted these wines during our Bullion Cellars tastings, none of them really stand out. There are some more expensive examples, but they tend to fail the value for money we consider at Bullion.

A prime example is the Whispering Angel brand. These wines are bloody good, but at \$55 - \$85 a bottle they are pretty hard to justify buying on a regular basis. But their branding is sensational, which is why they were recently purchased by the LVMH conglomerate from France.

The Rose we have chosen, is the **2022 Domaine Pinchinat** Cotes du Provence. We actually selected this same wine back in 2019, and I can see why. What really impressed us is the significant step up in quality. It has everything you expect from a good Rosé, but it is taken up a notch or two with the complexity and balance I expect in a high-quality wine. Red berries and strawberries are everywhere, but it has the creaminess and added texture and palate weight you don't normally see in run of the mill Rosé. They are a smaller producer, with fruit only sourced from their estate and this added quality and elegance shines through. Bring on summer and long afternoons with friends and family sipping this great wine.

The last wine is an aged Margaret River Chardonnay, the **2018 Atticus The Finch Collection Chardonnay** Margaret River. The Margaret River is famous all over the world for its high-quality Chardonnay and Cabernet. They have some iconic producers like Leeuwin Estate and Voyager, yet there are plenty of smaller wineries offering similar wines at a fraction of the price. Atticus is one such example.

Ron Fraser was once a wine retailer and lover of fine wines who lived in the Margaret River, and like most people who work in wine retail, they dream of owning their own vineyard and making their own wines. Most are not able to fulfill that dream. Ron Fraser did! After a long search for the perfect location, he finally found a vineyard and planting for the newly established Atticus Wines began in 1997. The first few vintages were sold off to other winemakers, and then he began making his own wines. I had not heard of this winery before, and I am guessing it is still a labour of love, but what is in no doubt, is the impressive quality and value of the wines and the fact that we can buy a Chardonnay from the 2018 vintage which is a joy to drink. The Finch Collection is only made in the best vintages and held back in the cellar before release. Despite being small in volume, it is imposing in depth, complexity and structure. It has an exuberance and depth to the palate that has benefited from a judicious measure of luxury French oak and then been given the time of 6 years on the bottle. It has a brilliant, pale straw colour with a glimmer of green to the outskirts. It has white peach and nectarine aromas, melded with biscuity oak, light grapefruit and citrusy nougat notes. Only quality fruit, quality winemaking and time can bring these elements to the Margaret River. This is a very elegant, full bodied and serious wine. If you like Chardonnay, you will love this wine.

So, there are the last 4 wines of the year. I want to thank you for all your support over 2024, I hope you have enjoyed drinking these wines as much as we have.

All the best for the Christmas and New Year period. Stay Safe, Stay Healthy and please enjoy these wines with your family and friends.

Matt, the Bullionaire.