

Welcome to the IWM Weekly Bulletin, a weekly round-up of our favourite wines, snippets, news items & perhaps, even sometimes, gossip...

The Marlborough Express quotes Michael Cooper: "If my wine-writing career failed I would either set up a wine competition or start up a religion because they are both good ways of making money."

Unsurprisingly, this comment raised the ire of those involved in running wine shows with Belinda Jackson (Spiegelau International Wine Competition and The Marlborough Wine Show) stating, "Shows were conceived to add value to the wine industry and the wine consumer. While returning a small profit for the value we provide is highly desirable, 'making money' as suggested by Mr Cooper is totally incorrect."

The oft-quoted aim of original A&P Shows was to improve the breed but nowadays wine competitions are heavily sponsored and the entry fees not inconsiderable so is hard not to see these shows as purely commercial ventures. Judges are asked to take part without being paid so it can't be that a hefty wages bill is a concern (indeed it would be interesting to see how many shows would survive if judges were paid a proper daily rate . . .). Only last week, a respected Port producer showed us a spreadsheet where he'd calculated the cost of entering the International Wine Challenge, Decanter Wine Awards and International Wine and Spirit Competition. The total entry fees alone were in the region of £8,500, and this is before the cost of the wines was taken into account.

Wine shows in New Zealand may not be the huge money spinners Cooper claims but overseas this seems not be the case. The International Wine Challenge attracted over 12,000 entries last year, each paying an entry fee of \$160. Less a philanthropic pursuit and more hard headed business venture . . .

Emma's Choice: **2010 Grove Mill Grand Reserve Pinot Blanc** **Marlborough** **\$27.00**

This wine caught my eye as you seldom see pinot blanc in New Zealand and I was interested to see what Grove Mill had made of it. An enjoyable wine it turned out to be, reflecting the characteristic vibrant fruit of the region but with a bit of sensitive lees and barrel usage giving extra layers of texture and flavour to the ripe peachy palate. Medium-bodied with fair intensity and length, this is a good choice of you fancy something a little bit different while still pretty mainstream in style. We had friends over the night I opened it and they were intrigued by the 'new' variety: I did wonder if it might necessarily be a hand-sell/cellar-door wine; this seems a pity as it certainly garnered positive comments at our BBQ. Grove Mill having no mention of it whatsoever on their website can't help matters here, though perhaps they have more pressing concerns at present.

Jane's Choice: **1963 Quinta do Noval Nacional** **Douro** **\$4,712.00**

Every so often you have a glass of something that makes you realize there are actually wines deserving of fulsome praise and for whom such words as *legendary*, *outstanding* and *fabled* actually do mean something. Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of my host, I was served this port blind and was sure that it was from the late 1970s/early 1980s such was the intensity of colour and the still very primary nature of the fruit. An immense wine that had real power and richness with an amazingly long finish. I find it hard to make comments on the potential of older wines to mature further as conditions of storage are so variable but if the bottle has been well stored, on this showing, it is a wine capable for ageing for another twenty years at least? Though with a retail price tag of around \$NZ\$4,712 per bottle (according to Wine-Searcher.com), I am not sure I'll ever have the opportunity to find out.

A fascinating juxtaposition reading the following two articles: one about Champagne's excitement over its dawning '[new and great period](#)' and the other Australia facing its '[unpalatable truths](#)'. Australian (lo, even New Zealand) producers could be forgiven for feeling envious. Well, chalk and cheese you might think, and perhaps rightly so. Yet the fact remains both are in the business of making and selling wine. And, whilst a quick glossing over the fact of we are comparing a region with a country (for this purpose 'tis as good as...) it would be fair to say that when the gimlet eye is cast, Champagne is as guilty of making average wine as Australia is capable of making some of the world's finest. So, why the dichotomy?

It is clear that Champagne has been an enduring success for reasons that many other wine countries/regions/producers are perfectly capable of emulating, and indeed many of the success stories within their own ranks illustrate this point with almost brutal clarity at times. Viz: a clear and consistent message; generally (but most crucially *perceived*) quality product; association with quality/*glamour/luxe/celebration/etc* but at promoted at a level consumers can engage with; fierce protection of the brand; and a concerted, united, almost pig-headed, effort in marketing the aforementioned.

Simple, eh?

Elder Wines

www.theelderpinot.co.nz

Nigel Elder, a Martinborough stalwart (he was the viticulturist for Martinborough Vineyards) together with Mike and Margaret Hanson has released an impressive, if perhaps slightly ambitiously priced, brace of wines under the new The Elder label. The quality is good and there is much potential here but it is a pity to see the attractive and pretty pinot bottled in such a heavy bottle. It isn't so much about the environmental issue of these bottles, after all the percentage of wines produced worldwide and marketed in these uber heavy bottles is tiny, but it is the expectation of a certain style of wine that makes my heart sink. Argentinian Malbec or luxury Napa Cabernets with their high alcohols, lushness of flavour and generous layer of new oak seem to be able to bear the weight on their not inconsiderable shoulders but perfumed, feminine pinot noir? Even the most honkingly plump examples (and let's fact it, there are a number of those about) seem to be swamped rather than enhanced by these bottles.

2010 The Elder Pinot Gris

Martinborough \$35.00

Shy at first but then opens up to reveal white peach, orange bossom and some floral notes. Barrel fermentation characters add a savoury complexity but the oak influence is very subtle. Medium dry, rich and powerful. An intriguing, lovely wine and a good reminder that pinot gris can be interesting if given some attention.

2010 The Elder Pinot Noir

Martinborough \$56.00

Very pretty aromatics; dark plum, dried herbs and a touch of spice. A plumpish, fuller bodied style of pinot, again subtly oaked, rich and warming. Still very youthful and whilst not overly lengthy, has the potential to develop over the next 3-5 years.

From *The Drinks Business*: An Englishman working in Chile has launched what is believed to be the first wine aged with a meteorite formed during the birth of the solar system, claiming "The idea behind submerging it in wine was to give everybody the opportunity to touch something from space; the very history of the solar system, and feel it via a grand wine".

Well, it's a mystery indeed to us why more wineries haven't gone in for this particular marketing angle...