



WINE REVIEWS

Words and photos by Krystina Menegazzo



ABOUT KRISTINA MENEGAZZO

La Donna del Vino is the pseudonym of this young lady from Melbourne who completed her winemaking degree whilst being a gypsy working in vintages throughout Australia and Italy. Finally she decided to return home and sell wine instead. In her spare time she cooks, eats, drinks buon vino and is a self-confessed Neb Head (someone really into Nebbiolo).

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BY FARR Chardonnay 2008

Geelong, Victoria. RRP \$55

There are times when a wine passes through that adolescent phase. I don't mean that it is punked up and wearing torn stockings with hair dyed a horrid green colour. In wine I refer more to a loss of primary fruit that you normally achieve in youthful, 1-2 year old wines. This little lady is passing through her third year and with that is torn between gradually losing those more frivolous aromas to moving into the bottle-aged characters as seen in the same wine of 2007. Nevertheless, given time in the glass you detect clean white peach and lanolin on the nose crossed with some marzipan and those delightful malt o'milk biscuits I grew up eating way too many of. The 2008 is more plush in texture with a hint of almond meal and a beeswax finish. Based on how the 2007 looked a year on, I think it's fair to say that the By Farr Chardonnay isn't a wine that you'd have to worry about drinking too quickly, even if left in the cellar that little bit longer.

BONNY DOON VINEYARD Contra 2009

Central Coast, California. RRP \$46

Bonny Doon Vineyard was the brainchild of idiosyncratic "Rhône Ranger" Randall Graham, a man present in the US winemaking scene since 1983 when the business was born in the Santa Cruz Mountains. His spirited fascination with seeking alternative, non-classical grape varieties suited to the Californian climate has seen vineyards planted to syrah, roussanne, marsanne and viognier amongst a conglomerate cast of other French varieties. While the wine regions of southern France provide the crux in a style that is core to Bonny Doon's wines, Mr Graham has worked fervently to ensure his ultra premium wines speak of their idyllic Santa Cruz site. This wine is a fusion of Carignan with Grenache, Mourvedre, Zinfandel and some Petit Syrah (or what we commonly call here, Durif). The Contra aims to contradict the very definition of what is termed 'normal winemaking' in the modern world. It harks back to southern-French Languedoc-Roussillon blends of carignan, grenache and mourvedre in a less typically proportioned style and stands proud in its solitary glory. The carignan provides a chewy continuum, the grenache and mourvedre act as the rich, red berry carriers and together with a dense schist-like minerality to the finish wields an overwhelmingly intriguing concoction. On a side note, Bonny Doon's flagship red is termed Le Cigare Volant and is a wine that pays homage to Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but will exceed any preconceptions of what French-inspired American wines may taste like. Definitely worth a peek into these wines if you're able to hunt them down at your independent wine store.

TAR & ROSES Tempranillo 2010

Heathcote, Victoria. RRP \$20

This regional Victorian blend showcases some of the very best for value in Australian Tempranillo. It is fragrant and highly appealing in a cuddly and warming way with its earthen spices coiled around a plump cranberry, vanillin base. With its mid-palate weight and unobtrusive tannins, it acts as a deserving addition to the table even in these warmer winter days.

WOODSTOCK The Stocks Shiraz 2008

McLaren Vale, South Australia. RRP \$60

I really enjoy going through an entire line-up of a producer's wines, not only for the sake of getting the overall scope on their ranges, but also their wine styles. This is where cellar doors come in handy or even tasting events by wine-loving organizations such as Sommeliers Australia. Today I got to try the Woodstock wines from McLaren Vale. A number of the wines were impressive, such as the Cabernet Sauvignon 2009, which sits at a mere \$23 a bottle, or even his weighty mid-palate Grenache Tempranillo 2010 for \$25. It was Woodstock's viticulturist and winemaker Scott Collett's baby, The Stocks Shiraz 2008, which captured most of my attention. I even daringly requested an extra bit be poured into my glass. Shocking behaviour, but can you blame me? This wine is clearly the fruit of a culmination of dedication and meticulous attention in the vineyard.

The colour is inky and the bouquet wafting scents of your grandmother's secret silk-lined chocolate box that lay next to your grandfather's cigar box. There is a dapper, old-school charm about this wine. The tannins grace the palate in a fine but firm manner, prolonging the complex array of scented wood, dark berry flavour that sits favourably towards the back-palate. It looked even better post an hour in my glass, which was the maximum amount of time I could last without swilling the rest.

PIERRO LTC Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2010

Margaret River, Western Australia. RRP \$32

As the pioneer of this blend to the Margaret River region, Pierro's Mike Peterkin has had ample years of experience to be able to weave his magic on this LTC wine. The palate is zingy in all its pithy, citrus glory but filled out with a red apple lusciousness to complement the slippery texture. Whether you refer to the LTC on the front label as 'Les Trois Cuvées' or 'Little Touch of Chardonnay' is irrelevant. The combination of the three varieties has resulted in a wine that is at ease in its youth, yet with the definite potential to hold its weight with time.