





WINE REVIEWS

Words and photos by Krystina Menegazzo



ABOUT KRYSTINA MENEGAZZO

La Donna del Vino is the pseudonym of this young lady from Melbourne who worked in wineries throughout Australia and Italy. After years of gallivanting she returned to Melbourne to market wine and share her love of all things vinous. In her spare time she enjoys cooking, gardening, drinking good vino and is a self-confessed Neb Head (someone really into Nebbiolo).

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SILENT WAY Chardonnay 2012

Macedon Ranges, Victoria. RRP: \$38.00

Many moons ago I used to go to a winery for work wearing the standard gear of Hard Yakka pants, Blundstone boots and perhaps a flannelette shirt. It was a charming look, to say the least. One day, I was requested by my winemaking boss to spend a weekend up at his farm in the Macedon Ranges to help plant a vineyard. I was keen as a bean to give it a go, as I had never had that experience. I thought it was another accolade I could put on my resume: Has planted vineyard – tick! Had I known the amount of exertion involved, I'm not sure I would have held the same level of enthusiasm. How it worked was that a tractor would start at the beginning of the vineyard row and move along ramming holes into the soil and filling it with water. My job was to follow with the vine cuttings and ram them roots down into the hole and stuff it with earth. Then I would move to the next hole... and the next. Hundreds of cuttings later, instead of walking up and down the hill, I was crawling on my hands and knees from the fatigue. Oh such cherished memories.

Silent Way Chardonnay is made from these vine cuttings. It is a project run by dear friends, Matt and Tamara Harrop. The name, Silent Way, pays homage to a record by jazz genius Miles Davis. The label design includes symbols of love and connecting with the earth and was in fact used in their wedding invitations. While I should probably hold some bitter feelings towards this wine for all the knee and back pain it caused, I can't help but sing its praises. This Chardonnay is surprisingly flavoursome for a wine of relatively young vine age. It has good character with aromas of white peach, yellow nectarine and pine nuts. The palate offers gentle flavours of honeydew, lemon wedge and a hint of parsley with a smooth, creamy texture that is balanced by the typically taut Macedon acidity. This acidity is lovely and fresh on the front palate, and then mellows out at the finish. All elements are in balance, something that was probably assisted by the use of 100 per cent old French oak barrels to not overpower the natural Chardonnay flavours.

Stockist: King & Godfree in Carlton.

COBAW RIDGE Lagrein 2008

Macedon Ranges, Victoria. RRP: \$60.00

My partner Jess and I were recently travelling through the Lancefield countryside on a lazy Sunday. We decided to take a shortcut to the town of Macedon by venturing through the serious dirt roads of the Cobaw Forest in our new 4WD. At one point, I had the bright idea of getting our manic blue heeler Billie out and running beside the car. As usual, she ran berserk through pools of water along the road and kept pace with the car most of the way. Towards the end, Billie began to lag behind. We came around a corner

and saw a large pool of murky water ahead but naively assumed it would be shallow and drove straight through. Suffice to say that we did not make it out. Instead, the car sunk deep into the sloppy slurry that crept right to the base of the car doors. I looked out my window to the rear of the car to see if we could reverse back. At the same time, Jess revved the engine and splashed a bucketload of beige goodness inside the car and all over myself. I squealed with surprise and Billie just stood there looking bemused. We got out of the car so Jess could try and build sticks around the wheels to get out while I ran for help. We had only run 100 metres when I came across a sign that read 'Cobaw Ridge winery – Open'. Tractors! I thought.

I turned right and pelted up the long dirt track and arrived breathless at the empty cellar door. After ringing the bell several times I was finally greeted by the gracious owner, Nelly Cooper. She saw my panic-stricken face and wandered into the vineyard to grab her husband Alan. He kindly stopped kangaroo-proofing his fence and jumped into the tractor with a chain and pulled our newly christened vehicle out. In order to say thanks, we decided to head back to the cellar door and try some of their wines.

The 2008 Lagrein was one of a couple of bottles we bought. It is Alan's homage to the red grape of the Trentino-Alto Adige region in Northern Italy. The Lagrein has an admirable deep inky hue followed by seductive Italian-like aromas of black cherries, plums and hints of violets. The wine is incredibly moreish with intense flavours giving way to super supple medium-bodied tannins and texture that peters out to a smooth finish. Lagrein tends to be drunk young and can be underestimated because of its medium-bodied-ness, but it can be just as fresh and delicious with 5-10 years of bottle age.

Stockist: The latest vintage is available directly from the cellar door.

DIRTY THREE Pinot Noir 2012

South Gippsland, Victoria. RRP: \$43.00

"Wine is all about the dirt – from the vineyard soil, to the dirty purple hands of the winemaker." This is the ethos behind the Dirty Three lads, Marcus Satchell, Stuart Gregor and Cameron Mackenzie, who work together to create this Pinot Noir out of fruit from South Gippsland, 150km south east of Melbourne. The purity and silkiness of this vivid red Pinot Noir were what captured me. A collection of aromas jump out of the glass, including green plum, black cherry and kola nut. There is a chappy cocoa note as well from the 11 months in French oak. The pomegranate-like acidity is youthful and keeps the wine crunchy on the palate. This light to medium-bodied Pinot finishes all class with its silky texture and finely grained tannic finish. If you can hold off finishing the bottle in one sitting, try it the next day for an even more mellowed version.

Stockist: Prince Wine Store in South Melbourne.