



WINE REVIEWS

Words and photos by Krystina Menegazzo

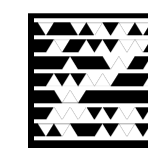


ABOUT KRYSTINA MENEGAZZO

La Donna del Vino is the pseudonym of this young lady from Melbourne who 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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(DETAILS ON PG. 3)



HEAD RED GSM 2011

Barossa Valley, South Australia. RRP \$25.00

I figured it made sense to get any laughs out of the way upfront and open my monthly reviews with a wine called Head Red [giggling and chuckling]. Ahem. Winemaker Alex Head goes to a lot of trouble to make his wines taste absolutely fabulous, even in the poorer vintage season of 2011. This wine is produced from mostly declassified 100-year old Grenache (75%), Shiraz (15%) and Mataro (10%) vines from the Greenock area in the Barossa Valley.

The uncharacteristically cool season the Barossa Valley experienced in 2011 has given rise to some strong cool-climate aromas in the fruit. This particular vintage offers scents of wild berry and intense peppercorn. On the flipside of the flavour coin there are more inky characters and notes of violets and black olives. It was suggested that I should chill the wine if I was to drink it in a warmer climate. However, given the Melbourne forecast for August is not showing any signs of t-shirt weather, I decided to drink it as is. It has a smooth, sweet wild berry entry with that peppery touch, then sparkly acidity and a gentle tannic grip to finish.

The Head Red GSM is a wonderful early-drinking style. It just goes to show that a gangbuster wine can still be made in difficult conditions when there is such a conscientious and skilled winemaker handling the fruit. Available from Blackhearts & Sparrow and Europa Cellars.

ANSELMO MENDES Muros Antigos 2010

Vinho Verde, Portugal. RRP \$28.00

I feel like I have this natural affinity with Portugal. I travelled there briefly a couple of years ago and found the cuisine comforting and homely, the people constantly smiling and generous, and the wines charming overall. So it was of little surprise to me that I was immediately drawn to the Muros Antigos when I glimpsed the words 'Produto de Portugal' on the label while browsing the shelves.

Vinho Verde literally translates to 'green wine' and denotes a quality wine area that extends along the north west of Portugal and produces youthful white wines. The two grape varieties used in this wine are Loureiro (70%), which is the most planted grape in the Vinho Verde area,

and Alvarinho (30%), which works to enhance the steely and mineral aspects in the wine. The dominating Loureiro adds aromas of white flowers, white nectarine flesh and a buttery cream touch with a light lift of lemon. While the palate is quite simple overall, it has a surprising mid-palate creaminess that balances nicely with the zesty acidity of the wine. Lingering flavours of lemon curd and bergamot flower further add to the appeal of this white wine from the Anselmo Mendes Winery. Having said that, I do not think I required too much convincing to keep drinking a wine that brought delightful memories of the Portuguese floating back. Available from Europa Cellars.

BRASH HIGGINS Cabernet Sauvignon 2009

McLaren Vale, South Australia. RRP \$39.00

Brash Higgins is the alter-ego of Brad Hickey, a former New York City sommelier who came to work vintage in McLaren Vale, fell in love with the land and its people, and seemingly never left. He now makes a range of wines from the elevated Omensetter vineyard in McLaren Vale producing Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and even a quirky take on the Sicilian Nero d'Avola black grape.

Prior to meeting Mr Hickey, my initial thoughts were that the 'brash' part of the brand name might prove to epitomise the stereotypical booming American. It was his nickname after all. Fortunately, it turned out that he has a much softer disposition and is simply a cheerful, boisterous, young-at-heart winemaker living out his dream. In fact, the 'brash' title is more aptly assigned to the wine itself. While I was unaware of this at the outset, I went on to have, quite fittingly, a ball-themed dinner. There were meatballs, and yes, this Cabernet Sauvignon had balls too. This is a classic big oak style. It is a thick, deep purple colour and opens with aromas of blackcurrant, smoke and oak. The palate does not hold back with thick, inky, vanilla-like flavours and chalky tannins. I suppose spending two years in 50% new and 50% one year old French hogsheads would do that to a wine. There is always a time and a place for a wine like this, and that is alongside any hearty, meat-based dinner. It is not often that I enter into such ballsy wine territory, but who would have thought that it would take an American to get me back there? Available from Toorak Cellars and Seddon Wine Store.