



WINE REVIEWS

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ABOUT KRISTINA 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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THIS ARTICLE
(DETAILS ON PG. 3)



THOMAS WINES Braemore Semillon 2011

Hunter Valley, NSW. RRP \$28

I have this lovely American friend, let's call her Mary-Lou, who has a sensitivity to quite a few things in the food chain. When it comes to wine, Mary-Lou has a certain intolerance to most red wines, although she is generally okay to have a sip of a white. One chilly June evening my partner and I were invited over for dinner. Not knowing the menu that lay ahead, I decided to bring the Braemore Semillon made by Andrew Thomas in the Hunter Valley. The Braemore vineyard has a good track record for consistency in quality, which is something I was relying on given the challenging vintage conditions of 2011.

We were served succulent pieces of tandoori chicken with rice and vegetables. Perfect. The wine had aromas of lemon and lime mixed with some grassy elements for added complexity. I always find a typical aroma of sour yoghurt on the nose of a young Semillon, which I found again here. The Braemore Semillon was extremely appealing, especially when contrasted against the spice of the tandoori dish. The palate had mid-weighted texture, and steely acidity with flavours of hay, malt and vanilla slice. It went down a treat.

The good news is that Mary-Lou had more than just one sip of the Braemore Semillon with her final comment being, "It was worth the pain."

Stockists: I clearly bought this a number of months ago, but the WineHouse in Southbank has the 2012, and the 2013 is available directly from Thomas Wines.

BEST'S Young Vine Pinot Meunier 2011

Great Western, Victoria. RRP \$29

Tasting this wine is like drinking in the pages of an old history book on Australian wine. It makes sense because Best's winery in Great Western is home to some of Australia's oldest and most notable vineyards. The Millers Burgundy vineyard at Best's was planted way back in 1868 with 85 per cent Pinot Meunier and the remainder Pinot Noir. However in 1971, some cuttings of Pinot Meunier were taken and planted adjacent to the original block. This younger stock represents the base material used for this delicious wine.

It poured with a pale Pinot Noir-like hue then opened with aromas of

forest fruits, raspberries and malt extract. This bottle had great sapidity on the palate with mouth-filling flavour of sweet red berries and a lovely tartness. Finally, the mouthfeel of this wine was like a piece of silk draped inside my mouth with its delicate, soft texture. Very pretty and very tasty.

I was fortunate to attend an event in early 2012 where there was a bottle of Best's Old Vine Pinot Meunier 1980 on for tasting (Note: the Old Vine Pinot Meunier is a premium selection of grapes from the same vineyard). Apart from being utterly beautiful, it was a revelation to try a wine that was made before I was born and to see it in such good condition. A bottle of Best's Pinot Meunier represents the depth of history that can be found right on the back of our doorstep and is definitely worth seeking out.

Stockists: Available online via MW Wines and East End Cellars.

VINTAE La Garnacha Salvaje del Moncayo 2009

Ribera del Quieles, Spain. RRP \$20

I'll admit that it was the label that caught my eye. Such striking packaging deserved to be picked up from the shelf. It was only later at home that I realised I had picked up a bottle of Grenache (called Garnacha in Spain) from the Ribera del Quieles region of northern Spain. A little further research and it seems this is made from younger vines on an originally 55-year old vineyard grown wild in harsh conditions on rocky soil atop the Moncayo mountain, 810 metres above sea level. It is made in a drink now style with only five months in some French oak barrels before release.

The result is a bright coloured wine with aromas of raspberry, blueberry, rose, blackberry and an overriding element of olive brine. The palate is medium-bodied with notes of sweet cherry liqueur, spice, smoky old oak and violets. Overall, the effect is quite juicy with fine tannins and a delightful whisky-like warmth at the finish.

The Spaniards would shake their head if I tasted this wine with anything else but meat, so I dutifully obeyed. I opened it with friends as we shared our last remaining portions of homemade salami and cotichino. I would have made the Spaniards proud.

Stockists: Boccaccio Cellars in Balwyn have all the remaining stock.