

# *The Cellar Club Inc*



*Established in 1980*

## *October 2020 Newsletter*

**FROM THE EDITOR** - It's excellent now we're in COVID19 Level One! Well done everyone!

*LAST MONTH* One of the most prestigious tastings in the 40 years of the club's existence". That's what the Independent Herald wrote in their 17<sup>th</sup> September issue when reviewing last month's tasting. And what a night it was. For those of you fortunate enough to attend our second (and last?) meeting under Covid Level 2, I am sure you will agree it was impressive.

Presented by Life Member and former President, Alan Evans, this carefully curated (by Alan and Wayne) selection was sourced from Alan's temperature-controlled cellar and the Club's cellar. This is what they came up with:

- 2016 Ogier Cotes du Rhone Blanc
- 2016 Askerne Semillon
- 2017 Dom. Vincent Careme Vouray Le Clos
- 2011 Penfolds 389
- 2001 Penfolds 389
- 1991 Coleraine
- 2017 Troplong Mondot St Emilion Grand Cru

It is difficult to pick favourites as all the wines were superb. However, there was some consensus at our table, so I will highlight a couple. Of the whites, the Ogier Cotes du Rhone Blanc was our pick. This bargain-priced (under \$20) blend contains five grapes: Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Bouroulene, Roussane and Viognier. Produced without any oak at all, it showcases the region's fruit above all else. Alan has become an expert on that region since, as he explained, at the Magnum Society the popular areas of France, i.e. Bordeaux and Burgundy, had already been taken. No one wanted Cotes du Rhone, so he took it!

Of the reds it was the two Penfolds 389's, their classic and much sought after Cabernet Shiraz wine, that were favoured at our table. Opinion differed as to which was the best but to me it was the 2001. A deep colour and very concentrated, it showed the benefits of keeping this wine for almost two decades. Alan explained that Bin 389 is often referred to as 'Poor Man's Grange' or 'Baby Grange', because the wine is said to be matured in the same barrels that held the previous vintage of Grange. Interestingly the 2001 was under cork while the 2011 had a screw cap. Alan gave us the latest thinking on screw caps where there has been some disappointing results for cellared wines: the sulfur dioxide levels can be too high and produce rotten egg aromas. Some producers are returning to cork now that they can get guaranteed taint-free products like the Diam. The majority of Penfolds' top-end red wines are now 100 per cent cork-sealed. They are also looking into the use of glass closures. Alan's tip on removing that

sulphur rotten egg smell: dip a cooper penny into the wine and it will convert it to odourless copper sulphide!

This meeting was a highlight of our 40th Anniversary year and was a good opportunity to taste older cellared wines. A huge thanks goes to Alan who indicated he is happy to do a similar tasting at some stage in the future.

*Author - Terry Friel*

Did you catch the article in the Independent Herald:

# Cellar club celebration

By Gerald Rillstone

What better way to celebrate four decades of tasting great wine than to have Wellington's best known champion of the grape present a special selection from his own cellar.

And that's what they did to celebrate the 40th birthday of the Cellar Club in Johnsonville with Alan Evans presenting a range of wines from his own collection.

It was, some say, one of the most prestigious tastings in the 40 years of the club's existence.

Alan joined the club in 1987 and has held the roles of Editor 10 years and President 8 years and was made a life member in 2010 and still attends the dinners and the occasional tasting.

He is also a Past President of the Magnum Society that was a Wellington-based wine group founded in 1972. "We buy wines that we will be drinking in about ten years time or whatever the drinking window is he says which is a lot of fun and a bit of a gamble too," Alan says.

"We have tastings going up to around 2034."

He is also the cellar master for the Tinakori branch of the International Beef Steak and Burgundy Club.



**Lover of wine Alan Evans with one of his favourites a bottle of 1997 Chateau Troplong Mondot.**

Alan's love of wine was a natural progression, he says, from an interest in ciders in the 1960s to the wines of Henderson in the mid-1970s. He has an extensive temperature-controlled cellar and over the years has developed a love of European wines which he augments with premium NZ and Australian varieties.

He says these days he has the luxury of having access to plethora of on-line reviews so he has a

fair idea of what a wine is going to be like before he tastes it.

"I do a lot of reading about what's new and what to expect from the wine and I am not as surprised as I used to be but there are still surprises," he says.

Alan says the Troplong Mondot they were tasting for the celebration, according to reviews, is best consumed around 2020 to 2022 and he has tried it and it is perfect.

*THIS MONTH - 14<sup>th</sup> October*

This month we have Saint Clair Family Estate from Marlborough with Alison Downs presenting.

# SAINT CLAIR FAMILY ESTATE

Saint Clair Family Estate was established by Neal and Judy Ibbotson in 1994, having been viticulture pioneers in Marlborough since 1978. From their first vintage, when all their wines won medals, including a gold, the name Saint Clair has been synonymous with quality and its award winning record continues today.

Saint Clair is 100% family owned, with the next generation also involved in the day-to-day running of the company.

Daughters Sarina and Julie both work within the business in sales and marketing after studying wine business marketing at Adelaide and have a vast knowledge of the wine industry. Son Tony is responsible for the design of all Saint Clair's packaging, promotional material and advertising. He owns a design consultancy business, the Creative Method, in Sydney. Tony designed the original Saint Clair labels back in 1994, when he was a student, and has been refining and expanding the range of Saint Clair labels ever since.

Our mission is to create world-class wines that exceed their customers' every expectation.

## **Starter Wine**

- Saint Clair Origin Pinot Gris Rosé 2019

## **Wine Tasting**

1. Saint Clair Pioneer Block 28 Pinot Blanc 2018
2. Saint Clair Origin Hawke's Bay Viognier 2019
3. Saint Clair Wairau Reserve Sauvignon Blanc 2019
4. Saint Clair James Sinclair Chardonnay 2019
5. Saint Clair Pioneer Block 22 Pioneer Block Pinot Noir 2018
6. Saint Clair Origin Hawke's Bay Merlot 2017

**Tasting:** 14<sup>th</sup> October, starts 8pm J'ville Community Centre – look out for our sign outside

**Door prices:** \$14 for members \$18 for guests



## LOOKING FORWARD:

- **November 18<sup>th</sup> - - Our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner at Bellamy's (run by Logan Brown) at the Beehive**

*The first Club meeting was held in the month of November. To recognise that historic milestone, a celebratory dinner has been arranged, to be held at Bellamy's by Logan Brown at their restaurant in the Beehive. **This is set down for Wednesday 18 November**, so check your diaries for availability.*

*Details will be sent out shortly, asking for your registration and to make your selection from the accompanying menu. As for any such venue, there will be a limit on numbers which means you should register quickly to secure your place.*

*The food promises to be of very high quality. So, book your place and go dig around in your wine stocks to find the special bottle (or two) that you think will go best with your selection to bring with you.*

*Your Committee is excited about this event and is sure you will be too.*

- December 9<sup>th</sup> –A Fun evening with CoLab, Simon Bell
- **January:** BBQ at Derek's
- **February:** Coney's for the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2021 – our postponed 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary outing to the Wairarapa [to include visits to Palliser and Grave/Alana]
- **March:** Hawkesridge Winery (Hawkes Bay)
- **April:** Del Mundo – Seaview - tbc
- **May:** AGM
- **June:** Mahi Wines (Marlborough) -tbc
- **August:** Aussie evening - tbc
- **September:** Gordon Russell of Esk Valley
- **October:** Sherwood from Waipara - tbc.

## GLASSES ROSTER

Thank you to all those who have volunteered to be part of the Glasses Roster.

## SCREWCAPS

Screwcaps are still very welcome, please bring these along to any Club meeting and leave them with Anne, remembering that the cause that benefits from this collection is Kidney Kids NZ and their families.

## WINE NEWS

### New Zealand wine mogul gave nearly \$400,000 to Trump:

*Stuff June 2020*

New Zealanders may be surprised to know that the backer of many of their favourite wine brands is a Trump supporter, commentators say.

Bill Foley is an American billionaire whose Foley Family Wines Holdings has the majority stake in Foley Wines, which owns wine brands including Mt Difficulty, Te Kairanga, Vavasour, Roaring Meg, Dashwood, Russian Jack and Boatshed Bay as well as Lighthouse Gin.

A report by the *San Francisco Chronicle* said Foley had donated US\$255,600 (NZ\$393,939) to US President Donald Trump between 2016 and 2020.

It was the second-largest donation by a California vintner or winery executive to the Trump campaign, the paper said.

The biggest was from Tom Barrack at Happy Canyon Vineyard, worth US\$360,600.

Foley Wines has been approached for comment.

David Cormack, who runs PR firm Draper Cormack, said the donations could put New Zealanders off the products.

“Many New Zealanders would be deeply disappointed if they learned that some of their favourite so-called Kiwi brands were owned by a Trump-supporting American.”

But Bodo Lang, head of marketing at the University of Auckland, said he thought it unlikely to make a difference.

“There are two reasons for this. Firstly, most wine drinkers are unlikely to be aware of Foley’s political ideology and secondly, even if they are, New Zealand is a relatively apolitical country, meaning that our involvement with politics is relatively low. However, this could change depending on future actions of Trump and how vocal Foley is in his support of Trump.”

Another marketing commentator, Ben Goodale, said the donations would be a corporate decision made in the United States, rather than anything to do with local winemakers and specific brands.

"It would be a shame to vilify great Kiwi wines because the parent company donate to the worst US president in history."

In 2010, Foley and two other parties bought the South Wairarapa luxury lodge Wharekauhau. At the time, the property was estimated to be worth \$24 million.

## **Just in Case You're Planning Travel over Spring/Summer in NZ**

### **West Auckland's wines are produced close to the city but their origins are a world away, writes *Maggie Wicks***

Dalmatian history is everywhere in West Auckland. You can see it as you drive. As central Auckland falls away, it gives way to suburbs, then motorways, then the low-lying industry of car yards and forklift hires. Finally, the paddocks and tractors and fruit trees of the countryside, only 25 minutes from town.

As the landscape changes, so does the language. Viksich. Vitasovich. Yukich and Fistonich. The history is written directly on to the street signs and the businesses.

And then there is wine. Award-winning, experimental, modern and traditional. It's all here.

Kumeu is one of New Zealand's most historic wine regions. Babich, one of the region's best-known wineries, has been producing wine for 100 years. Josip Babich was just 14 years old when he left his home in Dalmatia, and set sail for New Zealand. He was alone - he never saw his parents again. He was here to dig kauri gum with his four brothers - he ended up establishing one of New Zealand's most historic vineyards.

Down the road at Kumeu River, history is in the making. The Brajkovich family left Croatia for New Zealand in the 1930s, and have gone on to be internationally recognised as setting a benchmark for non-Burgundy chardonnays.

### **A world-leading chardonnay**

In 2014, a very special blind tasting took place. London wine distributors Farr Vintners brought together a room of world-leading wine experts, critics and writers. Each of Kumeu River's four chardonnays were tasted against white burgundies (chardonnay grown and produced in the French region of Burgundy) from the finest French producers. And the result? Kumeu triumphed over the top white burgundies in every category except one - where it came first-equal.

Kumeu River was started by Mate and Melba Brajkovich, and the company is now run by their four children. Between them there is a Master of Wine, a hospitality expert, a chemical engineer and a marketing professional - they really couldn't have planned it better.

Rather than pitch into the juice with commercially cultivated yeast, they use a natural fermentation, leaving it to the ravages of the wild yeasts in the atmosphere. The result is nothing short of gorgeous. This August they'll release the 2019 Hunting Hill chardonnay, which they say it's their best ever - do not miss out.

This is beautiful country to drive through, but you may not recognise any of it past Swanson, which is the last passenger stop on the line. These days the lines further out carry only stock, no passengers, which is a crying shame. A train would be a handy and safe way to get home after a day of wine tasting.

In the Ararimu Valley, Westbrook is named after an old station, between Waikomiti and Glen Eden, which closed in the 80s. The winery was owned by the Ivisovich family for 85 years, until they sold to another local family just a few years ago. Here they offer not just a wine tasting, but an education in wine and food matching.

### **An education in wine pairing**

Order the cheese and wine platter, and you'll find a surprise on there - an outstanding bad match, which the server will delight in watching you discover for yourself. It's a great lesson, and they'll make sure you end on something delicious.

As you drive through Kumeu, you'll realise that they're experimental out here. Whereas Marlborough specialises in sauvignon blanc, in Kumeu they're always testing and adjusting, trying new grapes, old grapes, fashionable styles and unheard of ones. Albarino is popular at the moment - it's the chardonnay drinker's sauv, and you'll find it at many of the Kumeu cellar doors.

At the Hunting Lodge you'll find an orange wine, a love-it or loathe-it drip that is fermented with the skins on. They've most recently released the Chardy Jack - bourbon-barrel-fermented chardonnay that could have happily come home with me.

### **An historic Auckland homestead**

Once a private country estate, the historic 19th-century lodge has been hosting Aucklanders' boozy lunches for five decades. This is also the site of New Zealand's first sauvignon blanc. Now, more than 70 per cent of wine produced in New Zealand is sauv, and the Hunting Lodge still bottles its Homeblock sauvignon from 40-year-old vines.

At the lodge, guests can choose a pizza to nibble at the lawn bar, play petanque in the family area, visit the cellar door for a tasting (free if you buy a bottle), or take a table in the airy all-white conservatory, where the windows run from floor to ceiling.

The restaurant has taken chef Des Harris from Clooney and put him in charge of this beautiful dining area, where he works with a permaculturalist to create a sustainable farm-to-table experience.

We entered starving, we left stuffed. There was homegrown roasted beetroot served with ricotta and huge wedges of focaccia, a painterly pumpkin soup splattered with oils and petals and seeds, followed by lamb shoulder with fricelli pasta. After that, passionfruit and rosemary jellies with salted caramel fudge, and finally a glass of amaretto on ice appeared. Monsieur, it is only wafer thin...

Sated, satisfied, and a bit fuzzy around the edges, we walked out into the cold night, where a taxi was waiting. It was a dreamy 35 minutes back to Auckland along the dark and empty roads. An easy end to an easy, and excellent, day out.

### **Where to visit on a wine tour of Kumeu**

#### **Where to go:**

- **Babich Wines** - For a history lesson and great hospitality, plus the terrace is the perfect place on a sunny day. [babichwines.com](http://babichwines.com)
- **Soljans** - Soljan's was established in 1937 by Bartul Soljan, and is one of the oldest wineries in the country. It remains a proud family-owned and operated vineyard, and visitors can take a tour with a member of the family. Visit the cellar door for a wine flight, from the sparkling moscato to the tawny port, then stay for lunch. [soljans.co.nz](http://soljans.co.nz)
- **Kumeu River** - A cellar door only. Stop by for a tasting of those famous chardonnays, and to learn about the history of this family-run business. [Kumeuriver.co.nz](http://Kumeuriver.co.nz)

- **Coopers Creek** - A friendly cosy atmosphere by the fireside in winter, and gigs and picnics on the lawn in summer. [cooperscreek.co.nz](http://cooperscreek.co.nz)
- **Westbrook** - Beautiful dining area overlooking manicured lawns. Explore the grounds and experience the wine and cheese pairing. [Westbrook.co.nz](http://Westbrook.co.nz)
- **The Hunting Lodge** - The perfect place to finish, from pizza to fine dining, and some unique bottlings. [Thehuntinglodge.com](http://Thehuntinglodge.com)

### How to do it:

It's a only short drive, but if everyone wants to wine taste, arrange a driver.

Both NZ Wine Pro ([nzwinepro.co.nz](http://nzwinepro.co.nz)) and Fine Wine Tours ([finewinetours.co.nz](http://finewinetours.co.nz)) offer door-to-door service with an expert on hand to introduce you to the history, the winemakers and the wines you taste, plus lunch included.

### *AND Something to make you cry:*

#### **'It hurts': 50,000 litres of wine flood Spanish winery**

A viral video has shown the moment a massive tank of red wine exploded, flooding a Spanish winery with 50,000 litres of booze.

Footage showed the wine spraying out of a tall metal vat at the Bodegas Vitivinos winery in Villamalea in Albacete in central Spain, flooding the nearby area.

As torrents of vino pour from the tank, the surrounding pebbled area was soaked in what could have been a delicious Spanish drop. The wine flowed out around tractors and cars, and into a nearby field.

According to local reports, the spill was caused by a break in one of the tanks.

Bodegas Vitivinos was founded in 1969 and produces up to six million kilos of grapes a year. The winery uses grape varieties including bobal and tempranillo to create a an "intense dark cherry colour", according to their website.

A video of the spill went viral on Twitter and has been viewed more than 8.2 million times.





Numerous commenters compared the video to the haunting scene in Stanley Kubrick's thriller The Shining, where blood flows from the elevator doors.

Others simply thought it was a tragic scene.

"I see it and it hurts," one person commented on the post.

"What else do you want from us 2020," another asked. "And how does anyone go with a bucket, glass, whatever."

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