

The Cellar Club Inc



Established in 1980

August 2023 Newsletter

Babich Wines

presented by Antonia Romero

Sustainably Crafted New Zealand Wine – 100 years in the making

Wednesday 9th August, 8pm Start

Door Price: Members \$14 / Guests \$18



People thought Josip Babich was crazy back in 1912. Planting vines in West Auckland and then patiently making wine the difficult way – with great vision, graft, thoughtfulness, ingenuity, and true craft. That pioneering spirit is something that still runs deep in our veins today; and we'll keep 'paying it forward' for as long as we exist.

Over 20 years ago, we registered our first sustainable vineyard – a New Zealand first. But we're not content to simply look back, because what you've done is not who you are. We're more excited about our future than ever and applying 100 years and three generations of winemaking experience to sustainably craft the most drinkable wines from New Zealand to the world.

Sustainability is always better when shared.

Babich's iconic NZ wine regions: Marlborough home to some of the world's finest Sauvignon Blanc. And a second home to Babich since we established vineyards there in 1989. Hawkes Bay internationally renowned for its soil profile – perfect for supple, robust and sophisticated reds.

Wines for the evening will be:

- 🍷 Family Estates Marlborough Organic Rose
- 🍷 Family Estates Organic Albarino
- 🍷 Family Estates Organic Chardonnay
- 🍷 Irongate Gimblett Gravels Chardonnay
- 🍷 Black Label Pinot Noir
- 🍷 Classics Hawkes Bay Syrah
- 🍷 Irongate 2017 Cabernet Merlot Franc

Let's Look Out for Each Other

As always, please if you are feeling unwell, do not attend the evening's presentation. Thanks

Looking Back – Mid-Winter Club Dinner at Le Marche Français

The evening was a success, as usual with 36 happy diners.

On arrival complimentary petite onion tarts were handed out with Club's bubbles, followed by miniature croque-monsieur, before we sat down to start our meal.

The tables were set up for lots of mingling, wine sharing and chatting.

As a reminder, our menu for the evening was:

Entrée	3 mini entrees served to each person: (Quiche Lorraine, petite French onion soup, mini goat cheese salad)
Mains	Beef Bourguignon Monkfish with Saffron Sauce Chicken Provençal
Dessert	3 mini desserts in the style of petite fours

Sadly, local fish supplies were unable to provide the monkfish, so Chef Vero replaced that with Blue Warehou, which was equally enjoyable.

The evening finished with a nice surprise when Chef Vero served us with 5 petite fours to finish off the night, all entirely delicious!

Committee Musings

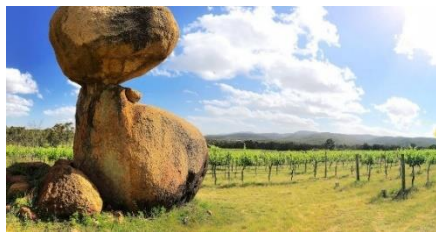
1. **Reminder** At the August Monthly Meeting, for the first 10 minutes, we will hold a SGM to discuss and pass some small changes to the Club's Constitution. Please ensure you are up to date with the contents of an earlier email sent on 21 July in relation to these changes.
2. It was great to have everyone help with the tables and chairs at previous meetings and taking the same down at the end. Also taking the spittoons/water jugs/cracker plates back to the kitchen. Could we please continue this new routine.

PLEASE NOTE: *We can't arrive to do the setting up activities any earlier than 7:30pm as we interrupt the cleaner(s) schedule, the cleaners are in the hall until 7:30pm.*

Looking Ahead:

- Y **September** – Clearview, Hawkes Bay
- Y **October** - Maison Vauron, Auckland
- Y **November** – Bubbles Evening, tbc

Wine News – ‘Australian Holidays: This Tiny Queensland Wine Region Remains a Big Secret’ – NZ Herald by Caroline Gladstone



If you've never heard of Queensland's Granite Belt, you're not on your own. This little-known wine region has been kept closely under wraps. With epic scenery and delicious drops, no wonder Queenslanders don't want us to know about it, writes Caroline Gladstone.

Balancing Heart Vineyard occupies a prime position in the shadow of Girraween National Park – a 117sq km expanse of forests and creeks dominated by spectacular granite outcrops, arches and bizarrely shaped lumps of stone sitting precariously atop lofty peaks.

This is the Granite Belt region of southern Queensland, home to more than 50 vineyards, wineries and cellar doors.

Balancing Heart takes its name from a heart-shaped chunk of granite that rolled down the mountain eons ago and has pride of place among the vineyard's premium shiraz vines.

With altitudes between 800m and 1500m, the Granite Belt is Australia's highest wine region, which took root, so to speak, 15km away at Ballandean Estate. There, in 1968, Angelo Puglisi produced the first shiraz on a vineyard his grandfather had bought 30 years earlier to grow table grapes.

Five decades on and shiraz and its cool-climate cousins, - chardonnay, cabernet, and merlot - are still the region's mainstays, however, a growing number of Mediterranean varieties including fiano, petit verdot and nebbiolo and an Eastern European wine, saperavi, are gaining notoriety.

Yet, despite high praise from wine writers, the region - three hours from Brisbane and an hour from the New South Wales border - is relatively unknown. Mention it to a sophisticated Sydneysider or Melburnian and you'll likely draw quizzical looks. It seems this 305ha pocket, on the eastern spine of the Great Dividing Range, is still very much a Queensland secret.

And Queenslanders love it, flocking there in record numbers during the Covid border closures to sample the fruits of the vine and stock up on gourmet produce and snuggle into guesthouses during winter, fondly known as brass monkey season.

At its centre is Stanthorpe, Queensland's coldest town, which proudly displays its chilly temperatures on a giant thermometer outside the visitors' centre.

The town (population 5500) and a clutch of northern Granite Belt villages have a long agricultural history. Decades before commercial vines were planted, they grew apples, pears, berries and stonefruit. Today the region's one million apple trees produce around 20 per cent of Australia's crop, while fruit and vegetables are still very much part of the economy. Growers such as Nicoletti Orchards and Eastern Colour open their farms to the public for apple and strawberry picking and the hottest ticket at the biennial Grape & Apple Harvest Festival, a fixture on the calendar since 1966, is the public grape crush where bare-footed folk squish as many grapes as they can to be crowned Queensland's grape-crushing champion.

With such a bounty of good food and wine, a Granite Belt trip deserves at least a two-night stay and an escorted winery tour to remove the angst of drink-driving. Mini-van day tours visit five wineries and include lunch, while new ways to explore the vineyards include self-guided or group cycling tours that travel on e-bikes.



Accommodation choices run from the cosy to the curated with many guesthouses, bushland cottages and cabins set among the vines. One that has grabbed the headlines since its opening in October is Barrel View Luxury Cabins in Ballandean.

Designed like giant halved wine barrels with exterior timber cladding bound by metal hoops, each of the three cabins is the last word in decadence, with curved travertine walls, slick kitchens with the latest appliances and huge oval windows

bringing in the views of the grapevines and distant hills.

Another property embedded in a vineyard, with the added advantage of an onsite cellar door, is Ridgemill Estate. Comprising 12 studio cabins and a three-bedroom cottage, guests have several wine experiences at their fingertips from tastings, master classes and vineyard tours led by the winemaker.



Heading out from [Brisbane](#), a good place for a lunch break or even an overnight stay is Warwick, an historic town of impressive sandstone buildings and eclectic events including the annual rodeo and the Celtic Festival. Here the place to stay is the Abbey Boutique Hotel, an 1891-built Gothic-designed former convent and girls' boarding school. Each of the 12 individually themed rooms has a story, such as the sought-after Bavarian room, once the girls' dormitory and later the nuns' chapel, and the Mother Superior's room, created from four smaller nuns' cells, with a glorious, canopied bed and cosy fireplace.

A short detour to Allora, 25km north, would appeal to history lovers: it houses both the restored Glengallen homestead, considered the finest house in Queensland when built in 1864 by wealthy pastoralists, and Mary Poppins' House. The latter was the childhood home of author P.L. Travers, who as a 6-year-old girl moved there with her family in 1905. Guided tours tell the story of the girl, born Helen Lyndon Goff, who later adopted her father's first name of Travers, and changed Helen to Pamela, reportedly because she thought it was "pretty". She moved to England in 1924 and began writing her famous novel, the first of a series of eight ***Mary Poppins*** stories, 10 years later.

From Warwick it's an hour's drive to wine country and the first Granite Belt village of Cottonvale, home of Heritage Estate Wines. Another 50 wineries are located down country roads in the villages of Thulimbah, Applethorpe, Severnlea, Ballandean and Wyberba that lead off the New England Highway as it wends south towards Girraween National Park and the NSW border.

Each has something different to offer.

Heritage Estate Wines holds tastings, lunches and monthly five-course degustation dinners (complete with old movies) where guests dress to the nines in a huge mid-19th century cellar door that was once an apple barn. Owners Therese and Robert Fenwick love to entertain and their latest offering is a weekly Friday night progressive dinner that begins with hors d'oeuvres among the vines and culminates with dessert in the cellar door.

Ballandean Estate, the oldest winery in Queensland, offers daily tastings and grazing platters in the rustic barrel room amid century-old wine barrels, while Whiskey Gully Wines' cellar door occupies the 1880-built colonial homestead known as "Beverley", where owner and multi-instrumentalist musician John Aldridge entertains guests at Saturday night dinners with an array of tunes.

Robert Channon Wines offers guided wine tastings including their award-winning verdelho in a venue that overlooks beautiful Singing Lake, and weekend lunches in the Persian Poppy, the region's most exotic restaurant where dishes such as camel tajine grace the menu.

While locations and quirky features differ, what unites Granite Belt wineries are their “Strange Birds” – the wine varieties that represent less than 1 per cent of Australia’s vines, which include fiano, frontenac gris, malbec, gewurztraminer, marsanne, sylvaner, saperavi and nebbiolo. Visitors can pick up a Strange Bird Trail map and head out on a journey of discovery. One not to be missed is Bent Road Wines; owners Glen and Andrew provide tastings in an old timber church they bought on eBay, and show visitors the huge amphora vessels, known as qvevri, imported from Georgia (the former Soviet Republic) that has made saperavi, a robust red wine, for more than 8000 years. There’s a lot to discover on a Granite Belt visit; wine enthusiasts can also partake in a “Winemaker for the Weekend” course at the Queensland College of Wine Tourism, the only facility of its kind in the world, or book a “Wine Philosophy” course with Balancing Heart Vineyard’s winemaker and viticulturalist Mike Hayes.

Named 2017 Queensland Winemaker of the Year, Hayes leads a fun session of swirling, sniffing and tasting of five of the vineyards top drops, including the acclaimed Campfire Company Red, in a spectacular setting beneath the granite boulders of Girraween National Park.

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.

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