

2010 NEWSLETTER

Release of 2008 vintage

Terroir of Taste

As it has been alluded to in previous newsletters, the rate limiting step in the next release has more often than not awaiting some inspirational deliverance. So it was reassuring to read the Dr Samuel Johnson, the great English writer and compiler of the first authoritative English Dictionary would agonise and procrastinate to the last moment before sitting down to write. Of course, that is where any similarity abruptly ends because from that point he would produce copious pages into the night, and without word spell. It prompted the search for the etymology of the word deadline wondering if it may have some hidden mordant meaning, but alas it appears to be related to some antiquated English printing jargon with regard to couple of lines at the end of a printing press.

The philosophy of Taste and Terroir, or should that be the terroir of taste! "Terroir" is one of those wonderful all encompassing, almost indefinable French words, which not only encompasses the physical earth, the micro climate but also the culture and philosophy of a specific place. Essentially, almost indefinable, without recourse to a bottle of wine- you have to drink a lot of wine to even begin to understand it. Another one of the great marketing ploys of the French wine industry!

Interestingly, although Dr Samuel Johnson was both an imbiber, and a teetotaller, at different stages of his life, it appears he has not defined "Terroir" in his dictionary. Does anyone actually have a copy of Dr Johnson's dictionary to confirm this?

Can you have Terroir without taste? And what and who defines it? Is taste just the specialised cells in our mouth and olfactory systems that give us a unanimous, unambiguous feedback to our perceptive taste centre in the brain? After sex, taste must be the next evolutionary drive (most would argue that it comes before sex- that's why we have a restaurant industry) and perhaps it is no coincidence that 's' and 't' are adjacent letters

in the alphabet! But it is quite obvious that taste, like Terroir, has cultural and philosophical nuances as well. Not convinced, well line up a tasting of French, Australian and Oregon pinots- and we should also add one or two New Zealand ones as well, just so they don't feel forgotten. At one extreme you can almost feel the enamel on the teeth dissolving and at the other you need a piece of toast to drink it! An exaggeration to be sure but it does illustrate that cultural effect on taste perception of wine, and so, almost by definition, the Terroir will have to shift.

But who defines what the cultural taste is? Well now this is a Pandora's Box. In a recent article in The Age Epicure Jeni Port interviewed the English wine writer, Andrew Jefford- Australia's first wine writer in residence at Adelaide Uni - who very bravely suggested that perhaps they shouldn't grow Shiraz in the Barossa Valley because essentially it didn't produce the wines that his culturally educated European palate appreciated. To be fair he did offer a more complicated explanation and is a very interesting writer; visit his website www.andrewjefford.com. However, if you visit the Barossa you will see that Robert Parker (American wine writer who can sell your entire vintage with one review, and who is now a brand himself) has, as rumour has it, had his name put before Pope Benedict by the vigneron of the Barossa Valley to become the next South Australian Saint, because he loves their Shiraz style. Shadows of the War of Independence still bloody the earth, or Terroir!

So how are we to make sense of all of this? Who do we believe? And does it really matter? Wine for some will be always just an enjoyable shared experience, for others it will become, like music, and evolving aesthetic experience (or should be anaesthetic) .Perhaps it is enough to celebrate, debate and enjoy the differences and buy the wine you like to drink.

As alluded to before, there is a time dimension implicit in its definition of Terroir embodied in the weather of that vintage. One definition of vintage is "time of origin". There are not many commodities that one consumes that relate to a specific place and time of origin. So perhaps one of the great attractions of wine is, like a metaphysical

2010 NEWSLETTER

umbilical cord, it links us subconsciously back to our own very beginnings, the Terroir!

Where is all this leading? Vintage variation and seasonal climate factors. All winemakers know in their hearts that they are not fully in control of the wines they make. The climatic seasonal patterns almost invariably, imprint the climatic variations of that year into the wine, of that particular vineyard, or Terroir. In essence, each vintage entraps a time and a place - a little bit of liquid history in a bottle. This of course leads us into the 2008 Vintage and what a vintage it was!

The 2008 Vintage and Wines

In the 20 vintages at Blackjack, the 2008 vintage was possibly the most difficult. To jog the memory, for most of Southern Australia it was characterised by a very hot spell in March (The Barossa Valley had something like 15 days over 35C in March which was unprecedented). It meant we had to use, beg and borrow every fermentation vessel we could find in an effort to get the grapes off the vine before they sugar levels went over the top or the grapes shrivelled on the vine. We picked continuously for 13 days. Contrast that to some vintages, especially back in the 90's, where we could pick over 6 or more weekends. In the end we managed it and in some ways, given the challenges, we are especially proud of the 2008 vintage. Please refer to tasting notes by Bendigo Sommelier Jon McIntosh on the back of the order form.

Some Bouquets

At the prestigious wine show presented by the French-Australian Chamber of Commerce **Le Concours des Vins du Victoria** the **2007 Blackjack Shiraz** won a gold medal and the **2007 Cabernet Merlot** a silver medal.

In addition the **2007 Blackjack Block 6** won a silver Medal and a place in the **top 50 best shirazes** for the second year in a row at the **Visy 2009 Great Australian Shiraz Challenge**.

Further afield, at the **International Wine & Spirit Competition 2009 in London**, the **2005 Blackjack Shiraz** won a silver and Best in Class and another silver medal went to **2005 Blackjack Block 6 Shiraz**.

Web Site and Wine Club

As this newsletter goes to press we are also in the final stages of refreshing our website and adding a Wine Club section which will enable, once operational, our mail list members to access a member's only section which will give ongoing member discounts and, from time to time, other promotional offers. As usual, this is taking a lot longer than we had hoped. But stay tuned, it is happening!

Melbourne Tasting

This has worked well for the past two years so we are doing it again. It has been terrific to catch up with many of you. The venue (same as last year) is a small wine bar called **JWOW 242 Little Lonsdale Street** (across the road from the State Library) on **Thursday 17th June 2010**. See enclosed INVITATION for time and date bring it along to go into a draw to win a mixed dozen of the 2008 Blackjack Vintage. The new releases will be on tasting from **SATURDAY June 19th** and we invite you to come and try the new vintage. We are open weekends from 11am to 5 pm. We look forward to meeting you. If you purchase directly from cellar door please let us know so we can keep our mail order records up to date and so you get your mail order discount. We again extend to our valued mail order customers the opportunity to have your order delivered freight free for orders received by **30 August 2010**. We are now using Australia Post to deliver wine. If not home they will leave a note for collection at your local Post Office or you can have it sent to a PO Box. Australia Post will not leave wine unless someone is at home to receive it or there are specific instructions fit to be left. Please ensure that it is a safe and secure area as Australia Post will **not accept responsibility for wine left under these circumstances**.

- ❖ From Galileo, who searched the heavens, made wine, and decided, presciently, **"wine is sunlight held together by water."**
- ❖ For those addicted to cyberspace have a look at www.reignofterroir.com