

# Through the Bottom of My Glass

## Quarterly Newsletter

### Bellvale wines - July 2016

#### Where we've been

The Cote d'Azur in the South of France is just spectacular in Spring and Summer. So after 3 months of serious toil, and with harvest under my belt for another year, I made a quick visit to present my wines to the French restaurant glitterati. Results were very promising, compliments were thick on the ground and the thrill of my first pallet landing in Marseille was a personal highlight. Australian wines really have been accepted for their true worth in France.

#### What we've seen and learned

I took the opportunity to be immersed in a live-in, intensive French language course in Villefranche-sur-Mer, attempting to better converse via Athena's mother-tongue. I didn't realise how it would clarify so much for me, when the French are discussing my wines. Understanding the nuances is what it's all about. I've missed so much 'til now... very exciting times.

Wine lists were interesting, in that they usually only mention a 'district' or appellation, but often there's no year, nor winemaker, nor even a vintage date mentioned, putting you totally in the hands of the restaurateur and his knowledge of the wines. Regardless, I tasted some amazing and very reasonably priced wines, with the surprise of the trip, an absolutely delicious Puligny-Montrachet.

#### Back home at last

Back in Gippsland and despite so many years flying the big jets, the jetlag hits me worse than ever, but after a foggy week it's back to reality, with leaf fall finally complete, the serious pruning begins across the next six weeks.

Also excited to see that the 2013 Stony Block and Quercus Pinot Noirs and the 2013 Athena's Vineyard Chardonnay have blossomed into something beautiful after a few years cellaring. The International Wine and Spirit Comp is looming, so fingers crossed.

#### Our wines this year

The lack of rain earlier in the year made it an unusual one – I even thought I might lose the Chardonnay at one point (because I don't irrigate down here), it seemed to have come to a halt for a few weeks, but mother nature came to my rescue and 30mls, saw it come back to life, with the fruit showing lovely ripe flavours and 13% alc. It reminded me again – when in doubt – wait.

Interestingly I just read in Le Point Magazine about a Bordeaux winemaker, Stephane Bonnasse, who experienced an identical last vintage (the French don't irrigate either). He said the timing of the rain was perfect, unexpectedly bringing the grapes out of semi-dormancy. It's all reassuring.

Enjoy the winter everyone... . *John*