



WHISKEY GULLY WINES
FINE WINES FROM QUEENSLAND'S GRANITE BELT

PLUCKERS' PLANET

Fine men, wine men, music while we dine men



Dearest Pleasant Pluckers

The season got off to a great start with just under 100 mm of rain (four inches in old money); worth its weight in gold after several dry months.

That first drenching was a treat - drops rebounding off the parched ground, puffing up dust that smelt of pure earth, the wonderful mineral aromas we enjoy so much in wine.



Budburst in the chardonnay

We returned to this from our European trip, where it had been dry, though seasonally arid; mid-harvest for them. John tossed and turned through sleepless jet-lagged nights worrying about how to catch up on the vineyard and property work that needed to be done.

Thanks largely to a couple of swiftly hired French backpackers - Romain and Melissa - everything is now in fine shape with even the chaotic veggie gardens ordered for production. The house gardens are another matter but we'll get there.



Romain in the vineyard. At home in France he's a farmer

It's a great time of year: the new season's tender shoots are perfectly formed on 5,000 vines. The challenge ahead is to keep them that way. We have seen lots of young bunches emerging and, if we get a good flowering, it may be a bumper season.

It's been a hectic few weeks with a new release wine, as you will read in this edition, and we've been busy in the cellar door with tastings and functions. There is little rest for the wicked.

What's in the Pluckers' Spring Six Pack

2010 Bright Eyes Sparkling Colombard

Seven years on lees and finished finally late last year, Bright Eyes is wonderfully yeasty and has a bright sparkling palate. Enjoy a road test then take advantage of Club rates to stock up for Christmas. **Club special: buy six or more in November/December and get 15% off**

Entente Cordiale

A wine-based aperitif: red wine, lightly fortified and flavoured with sweet and sour extras. It is a reinvention of a concoction first used to persuade French legionnaires to take their medicine. Read more about it over the page.

2004 OR 2009 Opera House Chardonnay

We didn't have enough of either of these museum wines for our burgeoning membership so we split them.

We tasted the 2004 recently at a Wine Guild of Australia lunch. It drank beautifully alongside the current list 2014 Beverley Chardonnay. In selecting those wines, John also tasted the 2009 Opera House and was impressed with its smooth creaminess. Both wines have integrated beautifully with age. More about these wines in John's Wine & Travel Blog in this edition.

2015 Reserve Chardonnay

To contrast the "unwooded" chardonnay also in the pack, we've included this robust Montrachet-style wine. Fig, toffee, honey notes, balanced by excellent oak. Lovely buttery finish. Drinking perfectly.

2016 Parliamentary Blend

Our first shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, malbec blend. It is proving popular with wine show judges and consumers. So far it has picked up a trophy, two silver medals and a bronze. Spice from the shiraz, juicy berry fruit from the cabernet, dark cherry and raspberry fragrances from the malbec. It hits the spot and is drinking beautifully already.

2016 Black Rod Shiraz

This is just getting into the luscious zone. Big and ripe, complex and textured; the nose exhibits spice, liquorice, raspberry and perfumed cedary oak. Hints of earth and fine-grained tannins. It has years of cellaring potential.

There's lots of value here (retail value around \$191 allowing \$35 for the museum wine) so please enjoy.

Cheers

John & Denice

What's on Sunday Schmoozic Fixtures

In association with musician friends in Warwick we have reformed the Sunday Schmoozic Music Club, held on alternate months at Whiskey Gully Wines, Severnlea, and Kompound Art Zone in Warwick.

Listeners and performers are welcomed alike and the afternoons have been great fun. A highlight of the November event at Whiskey Gully was young Joel Anthony, who recently returned from two years busking around Britain.

He's a fabulous finger pick'n guitarist with a great voice and a talent for songwriting.

Generally Schmoozic afternoons are held on the second Sunday of each month and if you'd like to keep up to date, let Denice know and she'll put you on our mailing list for alerts: denice@whiskeygullywines.com.au.



New Release - Entente Cordiale

John's mum loved an aperitif which combined red wine, spices and quinine. It was first used by the French Foreign Legion to protect its troops against malaria but became popular in its own right.

It is hard to find a wine like that these days. So, we reinvented it!

Entente Cordiale is a play on words with the wine, which has a certain cordial quality, and the famous expression, coined in 1904, by the French to describe improved relations with Britain.

The palate dances between the sour of the quinine and the sweetness of the wine and its infusions. Drink it straight or take it with ice, gin and/or soda. It's lovely as a cocktail with sparkling wine too.



*Entente Cordiale retails for \$25.00
(500 mL bottle)*

Animal News

It was wonderful to reunite with Shirley and Scruffy, our two Border Collies. Scruffy is irresistibly cute and, in between chewing towels tugged from the Hills hoist and anything else he can get paws and jaws on, he thoroughly enjoys training sessions and shows every sign of being a well behaved dog at some time in the future.

He sits and stays; he comes when called usually; and, when food is served, despite contrary animal instinct, he sits until he hears the word "okay" - only a drool of saliva revealing his true desire - before demolishing a plate of sausage, biscuits and bones that would feed several sailors for a week.

Best of all, Scruffy now looks us straight in the eye while tiny head movements indicate that, somewhere in that fluffy head, a light is on, trying to work out what the heck is going on.

Shirley, in motherhood, is more gentle and serene than ever. She was rested up in the Hound Dog Hilton for a fortnight, following a little op. to ensure she never again needs endure the huge effort of whelping pups.

News from around the traps is that all her offspring are well and happy in their respective roles as shepherds, cattle hustlers, playmates, friends and child amusement devices.



Scruffy & Shirley - what a pair. Oh, and we have four new chooks and lots of fresh eggs each day!



John's Wine & Travel Blog

Never a fan of completely un-oaked chardonnays, I wasn't expecting too much of an overnight stay at Chablis, the northern outpost of Burgundy, during our recent trip.

Unlike the robust wines of Montrachet, over a hundred kilometres to the south, the chardonnays of Chablis are spare with subdued, often sublime fruit. Traditionally, few ever get near a barrel unless it is ancient (and thus, as a flavour enhancer, pointless).

In a picturesque medieval region built with ancient oak, the only noticeably wooded wines we found were Grands Crus - grapes selected exclusively from plots in the Chablis AOC area considered to be the best of the best.

Our first surprise was how much Denise and I enjoyed the wines from Premier Crus (second best) vineyards immediately surrounding the Grand Crus areas. They were delicate, yet, through balanced acidity, also steely (picture the perfect bride at a springtime wedding). Significantly, most had little detectable oak.

By contrast, of two Grands Crus we tasted, one had resided 11 months in two year old barrels, the other in five year old barrels for a handful of months. In both cases, we found the oak an intrusion which smothered the subtlety we experienced in wines from so-called lesser vineyards.

Chablis must be a fearsome place to grow grapes. Being so far north they are prone to frosts in spring. In olden times they lit wood stoves in the vineyards to fend off the cold. These days overhead sprinklers do the job.

Chablis has seven Grand Crus vineyards. We tasted an Albert Bichot from Bugros and a Jean-Marc Brocard, which I think was from Les Clos. This latter, a 2014 wine, was lovely but we preferred their 2016 Premier Crus from Vau de Vey, which had little or no oak treatment.

Another favourite was Domain Pinson Freres 2016 Premier Crus Vaugiraut. which spent nine months in four and five year old barrels.

So, I must change my mantra that every totally un-oaked chardonnay is an abomination before God. Chablis clearly merits grace in heaven.

Members may have noticed that chardonnay is well represented in our six-pack. All to a purpose. I picked museum wines that were nominally un-oaked - chardonnays from 2004 and 2009 (distributed 50/50 among members, necessary due to our growing membership!)

They are WGW's Chablis proxies. Granite Belt fruit insinuates itself; therefore, we need some vestige of oak to tighten the back palate. Chablis winemakers clearly don't.

We also included the 2015 Reserve Chardonnay and, if



Above: Grand Crus vineyards on a misty morning in Chablis. Below: The south gate of the walled town



Two wines we really liked.

you choose to taste it alongside the Chablis style, you'll get a great appreciation of the differences in weight and nuance between them.

Better still, if you happen to have a fair dinkum Chablis hanging around, try that too. Sigh! I love wine.

Note: When you open the museum wine in your pack, I recommend decanting it out of, then back into the bottle and let it breathe for at least one hour before consumption.