

MJ & AB WAUGH
VIGNERONS

Greenock Creek WINES

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Hello Friends,

It's lovely to be in contact with you all, and once again hard to believe that it's a year since our last newsletter!

And what a year it has been. The drought certainly broke here in the Barossa in early December, with quite a bit of local flooding and erosion. Our own driveway to the cellar door was washed away, along with major damage to many local roads. The Greenock Creek which runs through our property overflowed its banks and we suffered quite a bit of erosion in the vineyards.



Hand pickers in action during vintage

Having said all of that, this inconvenience is nothing compared to the devastating floods that were suffered down the eastern seaboard, and our hearts go out to everyone who was affected. Our small flooding event was a nuisance, but did give us a taste of what others endured on a major scale, and we can only be thankful that we were spared anything more significant. To anyone reading this newsletter that was affected, we send our sincere good wishes and trust that things are improving for you.

From a grapegrowing point of view the season was looking excellent. The weather was mild and we had good opening rains. In fact, as it turned out the weather stayed a bit too mild and it rained a little too much! Talk about going from one extreme to another. Looking back on previous newsletters we were lamenting the hot, dry conditions and small yields, then this vintage it was a complete turn-around.

Fortunately the western side of the Barossa didn't receive quite as much rain as the Valley floor or Eden Valley. Normally better gaugings around the district make us a bit jealous of our neighbours, but this year it was a saving grace. Many growers on the Valley floor and further afield suffered extensive losses from botrytis infection. Looking around the area now, with the vines bare of their leaves, it is all too evident how many grapes were left unpicked because they were too badly affected to be useful.

Although we had some minor botrytis infection, we managed to pick an average tonnage by using astute hand-pickers who discarded any unsound fruit. The crop would have been above average had the season been different, as the vines have certainly recovered quickly from the drought conditions. It just goes to show what a good bit of rain can do, and we saw many local trees and shrubs flowering like we haven't seen in years.

Now for the bad news! As the majority of the wines being released this year are from the 2009 vintage, we will once again need to impose some restrictions on quantities. The continued drought meant that quantities picked in 2009 were quite small; in fact less than half of what we would consider average. However with some careful allocating we hope that everyone will get to try most of the wines they require.

Last year we had a survey section at the bottom of our newsletter, asking for comments on the use of cork and screw cap. This was more of an interest thing than any real intention to move over to using screw caps at this stage, although there is always room for future consideration.

As far as the survey results were concerned, we are still none the wiser! As consumers you had mixed opinions on closure preferences, and it was probably 50/50 for cork and screw cap! This release we are staying with all corks, but will keep considering the options for the future. We have very few wines that are returned because of faulty corks, so are not in a hurry to adopt the screw cap closure.

In fact, even though we purchase only the best available quality, we still have all corks tested prior to bottling to ensure that only premium grade corks are used. Of course a rogue cork can always slip through the system, but to date our quality control measures have been well rewarded.

For all of you who can make it for a visit to cellar door, we are pleased to advise that the opening day this year will be **Saturday, 10th September at 11 am**. We will then be open every day except Tuesdays from 11 am to 5 pm until we have sold out. Occasionally we will close cellar door if we only have one or two wines available, as we feel it is hardly worth your while to visit for a taste of so few products.

Speaking of cellar door, in October last year our long time employee Joe Evans made the decision to leave us to embark on other interests. Many of you will have met Joe in cellar door, and been entertained by his knowledge and understanding of vineyards and wines from the local area. We wish Joe all the best with his personal pursuits.

Once again a big thank-you to those people who contacted us about staying at our bed and breakfast in Tanunda - Miriam's Cottage. We have had a busy year with a number of repeat customers who were here for the Vintage Festival, Gourmet Weekend and numerous weddings and functions held at local wineries and restaurants. Do give us a call on the winery number if you would like more details.

As usual our very biased opinion is that the new release wines are sensational. However it is you our loyal customers who will make the final decision, and we will be guided by your feedback as to how you rate the 2009 Greenock Creek wines and the 2006 Roennfeldt Roads.

Looking forward to seeing you soon, or at least making contact by telephone, fax or email, and wishing you good health and much happiness.

Kindest regards and best wishes,
Michael & Annabelle

The 2011 Releases

With thanks to Philip White for the following tasting notes and comments

Greenock Creek Cornerstone Grenache 2010

The magnificent disdain traditionally shown Grenache by Master Michael developed an encouraging crack with the bottling of this incredible wine: he actually called and told me proudly, if rather begrudgingly, that he liked it! So it was trembles and ginger anticipation that saw the cork withdrawn.

This wine doesn't give a fig whether you like it or not. It sniggers, daring you to presume the gastronomic sensitivity and intelligence required to appreciate its beauty. If you miss, it'll just walk on by. If you dig it, and submit, you're done for life. From a year when most Australian Grenache fried and perished, this is the pinnacle of Grenache, from any year. If you do dig it, it simply invades you, but it knocks its own hole in your ramparts, and seems to come in through a sensory breach you thought had been sealed when you were six or seven years of age. It brings back the marvel of youth.

The damn thing starts its assault with impossibly vibrant strawberry and raspberry aromas, like great Grenache. Cherries, too, like the cerise lambic beers of Belgium, which are steeped in old oak stuffed with bright red cherries. A tweak of Framboise liqueur gives a hint at the alcohol reading, but it's hardly dominant. It begins to smell chubby and fleshy, and develops a nice gloop of chocolate crème caramel and maybe the crisp toasty hint of crêpes suzette.

The flavours simply push these sensations to the max. On and on it goes. Tannin? Who cares? It's there, but you don't notice its soft velvet amongst all that Turkish delight. Acid? You want acid? I started to notice it after about eight hours' air, when some pepper canister aromas popped up.

So. The man who doesn't like Grenache innocently raises the bar by about six foot. This is probably the best Grenache I've had. Like Krug, I can swallow it by the tumbler. While it's brazen, and solidly confident, it cannot be dangerous. But, yep, now that I've finished the bottle, maybe I can detect some alcohol.

As this comes from the same old rocks as the Roennfeldt Road Shiraz and Cabernet, one can only tremble at the might and majesty we can expect from those 2010s! In the meantime, this stunner will hold you over. (16% alcohol; drink now – 2020; 96+++ points)

Greenock Creek Alices Shiraz 2009

Maybe it's simply the influence of drought, but this Alice's is, like the Apricot Block, a lot more willowy and lithe than other vintages. It smells meaty, like Mataro from Bandol, with a nostril-tickling edge of gun barrel blue and cordite, and acrid summer dust, like the edgy whiff of the Mintaro Slate quarry after a blast. (I'm sure this relates to the siltstone of the Yudnamutana sub-group geology of Alice's, which relates to that slate.) Fruit? Well, a moody twist of harness leather entwines with dark green hints of deadly nightshade and tomato leaf – the methoxypyrazines usually reserved for Cabernet – and then, welling from below, comes the whiff of beetroot, and even blacker voodoo, like the sinister miasma of old Chamberlain tractor gearbox oil.

After all that, the flavours are disarmingly lithe and supple: it's a more austere, slender, incredibly intense wine with a metallic, snaky lustre and more than a dusting of soft 6B pencil carbon, like the stuff I use to lubricate the tuning heads of my old guitars. On first pour, the wine seemed to slink off like a snake, leaving a lozenge of blackcurrant behind on the tongue. I hear swampy Ry Cooder slide. After a couple of days' air, it takes much longer to slither away, and that lolly gets bigger and sweeter, to balance that confident, steely acidity. Bracing, racy wine: all slimmed down for the drought. Give it a few years! (14% alcohol; drink 2013-2020; 93+++ points)

Greenock Creek Apricot Block Shiraz 2009

The Apricot Block was planted on the site of an old apricot orchard in 1994. Many earlier vintages of this fascinating vineyard had a surprising aroma of apricot, as if it had a little Viognier. Which it didn't, of course. Who knows whether this has any connection with the orchard – we will never know. But it's interesting that in Condrieu, where the best Rhone Viognier grows, there have been apricot orchards since Roman times, and some crusty locals say apricot ground is the best for Viognier. Maybe if certain soils enhance the aroma of apricots, they may do something similar, not only to Viognier, but also to Shiraz?

The vineyard is partly in recent creekline alluviums - deep red soil washed down in the last 10,000 years - but underlying this rich dirt and emerging on the slope at the vineyard's western extreme are 800 million year old rocks.

There's no apricot in the 2009. There's not a hint of Viognier, or anything like it. I suspect this has to do with the roots beginning to get into the rocks below that alluvium, so the vineyard's flavours are becoming increasingly influenced by those very old Yudnamutana and Burra Group rocks, with fewer of the more frivolous, stone fruit flavours the recent alluvium offers. So the Apricot Block's getting a lot more serious.

This is ravishing, supple, lithe wine. After a couple of days' air, it presents a cheeky tease of musk sugar and fluffy raspberry. Then, as the fennel, licorice, and aniseed topnotes tickle the nostrils, you could be forgiven for not noticing the deep fig, prune and olive aromas below. Rather, the whole thing seems to take on the atmosphere of the old Roennfeldt farm in summer, with rusty iron and hot red dusty ground and the dry, crunchy smell of walnuts.

The flavours have exquisite form: dense, but hyper-elegant, wrapped around a carbon-fibre whiprod of acidity and silky tannin. After a couple of ponderings, I noticed a lively hint of lavender and violets in my exhalation. One wallows in that long, tapering, lingering finish: that lovely, lashing, fine-grained tannin and sinewy acidity draw the flavours and satisfaction on for yonks. No names mentioned, but it reminds me a little of some of the very best Clare Shiraz, grown in similar geology. Stunning! (14% alcohol; drink now – 2025; 95+++ points)

Greenock Creek Seven Acre Block Shiraz 2009

The roots of the Seven Acre are now well into the siltstones of the era of Tapley's Hill Formation (750 million years back), and the deeper they creep, the more these wines reek of the acrid dust you can sniff in the summer, in the Willunga or Mintaro slate quarries.

This wine performs that trick with surly authority. Its fruit is like fruitcake currants to sniff: record heatwaves and drought like 2009 are perfect at producing the aromas of dusty quarries and dried currants. Dusty oak adds to the whole effect.

The palate and its afterbreath, however, still have a relieving waft of the pretty lavender and violet florals which this vineyard produced in its infancy: I was very lucky to revisit the first Seven Acre (1993) while tasting this 2009, and it still retained shadows of the outrageous floral shop bouquet it displayed as a babe, when the shallow roots were gorging themselves on the richer red dirt overlying the old rocks below.

The 2009 flavours also include berries much fresher than the dried currants which almost clog the wine's aroma: there's musky confectioner's sugar there amongst sweet fresh blackcurrants and redcurrants; even raspberry. It's sublimely elegant wine all up: lithe and snaky, perfectly acidic, with velvet tannins drying its long, tapering tail. At twenty years of age, it will simply ravage the patient cellarer: it will also blow most of the south of France and the Rhone clear into the wild blue yonder: its amazing red of truly scary potential. (14.5% alcohol; 95++++ points)

Greenock Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 2009

If it didn't have that tiny tell-tale wisp of minty eucalyptol and creekline fennel – aromas which generally betray Australian red – this astonishing Cabernet would convince many a master taster that it came from the Medoc in Bordeaux. Delicate violets light up its brilliant musky perfume; peppery dust, meaty blueberries and deep crème de cassis lie glowering quietly below.

At 12.5% alcohol, it is obviously one of the most elegant wines ever produced at Greenock Creek. But don't think that indicates a pushover: behind its willowy confection there's a rapier of natural acidity, a tight austerity and a severe concentration that most of Bordeaux simply never achieves. And the like of which the Barossa absolutely never achieves. This is the most un-Barossa red I've had since the near-perfect Cabernets Seppelts grew at nearby Dorrien in the seventies and early eighties. In a priceless vineyard which Foster's recently uprooted and replaced with a clone guaranteed to produce much higher tonnages!

Apart from all those structural aspects of the wine's form, it has a cheeky, sweet, blackberries, mulberries, blackcurrants-and-confectionery aftertaste that adds profound sensuality and gaiety to its rather humourless Masonic architecture.

While it will undoubtedly make a liar of me by reaching perfection long after I'm rotting in my pine overcoat, I would suggest that it will probably be sublime enough in about a decade, when I am only half-way through my life. By which I mean that I obviously lie about my age, where this wine will probably manage to remain youthful and vivacious a lot longer than I did.

It is eminently approachable now, but it will gradually mellow as its corners wear away, and it slowly realises I am no further threat to it. Miraculous. (12.5% alcohol; 94+++ points)

Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Shiraz 2006

Two days after I opened this wine, I showed a winemaking friend a glass. He took a sniff and agreed with me. It smelled totally oxidized and acetic, like ancient balsamic, and suggested that was because it had been opened for too long. Now, a full week later, I drink the last third of that same bottle, and you know what? It oozes luxurious coffee and mocha oak. It has the disarming top note of the prettiest-smelling lavenders (*angustifolia* and *intermedia*) with their underlying lanolins, mingled with confectioner's sugar and mint. In a sort of AC/DC flicker, these alternate with the sinister blackpowder and cordite whiffs of those ancient sunbaked stones on Hopeless Hill. It smells of Iberian ham, too, and lemons and cantaloupe, and the figs, dates, prunes, currants and nuts of pancetta. It has come to life.

Now. Put it in the laughing gear. Crrkth. It's like being shot in the mouth: I tasted salty blood and bone chips. There were definite indications of grapes there once I recovered from being shot, but that took a long time. There is a lot to learn here. I think next time I try it, I'll approach it like the vinous equivalent of Lagavulin 16 yo. Single Malt Islay Whisky, for that is close to its mighty austerity and concentration. And then it shape-changes again, and becomes a sort of XXX-rated adult dessert liqueur. It is virtually impossible to point, but I suspect this will become a much-discussed and mythologised glory by 2040. (17% alcohol; 35 years plus if the cork holds out; 95++++ points)

Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Cabernet Sauvignon 2006

For the first 36 hours after tasting, I thought this was worth about 75 points. No terrible faults; sound. Intense and dense. Not at all dangerous. A week later, it's got Henry VIII and whole damn Tudor court rabbling away in there. All that lavender and rose water! It has become a particularly bright Cabernet: a great king, if juvenile and a touch surly, if not plain indulgently delinquent. It's a movie.

It now reeks of musk, and ozone-sweet, electric violets and lavender. Its great oak adds fresh ginger and lemon. It has a smell reminiscent of starched linen. It smells of fresh blackberry conserve, with intact berries still surviving in the mush. It has beguiling pithy wisps of sliced dried apple.

Drink it. It makes the tongue weep. It is incredible in its density and complexity, and yet it exudes the blithe presumption of youth in every aspect. Its tannins are soft: those dried apple and lemon pith textures are about as gravelly as it gets. It is fresh, and supple, and yet it proudly shows a gunmetal glint, a flash of dagger in the dark. It has the taste of dagger, too, in its swarfy, metallic tail. But ten minutes after I swallow it I feel that my tongue is a puncheon of crème de cassis, and leading out the cellar door there's a trickle of it which I must follow. Riddles? Of course. There's a great deal going on in here. Perhaps the best Roennfeldt Cabernet yet: keep an eye on your wife, and yell "All hail King Harry!" before your head goes. (16% alcohol; drink 2020-2040+, cork willing; 96+++ points)