



The Cape Wine

# Master Copy



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## In this issue...

As 2012 races on to the festive season we can reflect on all the excitement in our industry during the past year.

A very successful Cape Wine 2012 brought many Masters of Wine to the Western Cape and the ICWM showcased many of the wine producing regions in a well attended tasting and dinner at the Cullinan Hotel. Bennie Howard presented "Pinotage: Then and Now" and Lynne Sheriff also participated in a panel.

In this issue Dave Hughes reports on a once-in-lifetime dinner, and Andy Roediger regales us with his travel stories from Argentina.

Enjoy the festive season safely and celebrate with the best from the Winelands!

*Winifred Bowman*



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## Master Dinner at the Bag O'Nails



**Dave Hughes**

Many will remember David Nathan Maister the previous owner of the Devon Valley Hotel where he established a magnificent collection of whiskies from around the world and was particularly good with very hard to find Scotch. He also established himself as an international authority on Absinthe. He moved to Britain but established his business in France. He helped the French Government to remove the ban on absinthe and also bought the original Pernod Distillery and had restored it back to being a fully functional distillery producing genuine absinthe. The New York Times refers to him as the world's foremost authority on Absinthe !

His core business, however, is dealing in veteran alcoholic beverages. He always lays on a very fine meal with appropriate beverages when I meet with him. The night before the IWSC Awards Banquet at Guildhall in London, David and his business partner gave a dinner at the now fully restored Bag O' Nails in Kingly Street, Soho. It was "the" music place in the 60's where all manner of famous bands and artists performed including Jimi Hendrix and where Paul McCartney and Neil Aspinall would go to eat after recording sessions. McCartney met his future wife, Linda Eastman, there on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1967.

Eight people all involved in buying very expensive alcoholic beverages were at the dinner. It so happens that David's partner owns the venue and it was closed for the

**Members:** Chris Bargman, Margie Barker, Berenice Barker, Rolene Bauer, Francis (Duimpie) Bayly, Paul Benade, Kristina Beuthner, Duane Blaauw, Tom Blok, Winifred Bowman, Cathy Brewer, Marietjie Brown, Sue Brown, Marilyn Cooper, Henry Davel, Dick Davidson, Greg de Bruyn, Ginette de Fleuriot, Chris de Klerk, Heidi Rosenthal Duminy, Stephan du Toit, Pieter Esbach, Margie Fallon, Mary-Lyn Foxcroft, Margaret Fry, Vashti Galpin, Peter Grebler, Brad Gold, Penny Gold, Karen Green, Jeff Grier, Bennie Howard, Dave Johnson, Val Kartsounis, Peter Koff, Hymli Krige, Michael Lee, Danielle le Roux, Hennie Loubser, Gerald Ludwinski, Andy Mitchell, Gerda Mouton, Alan Mullins, Boets Nel, Carel Nel, Sarah Newton, Elsie Pells, Jenny Ratcliffe-Wright, Andy Roediger, Christine Rudman, Andras Salamon, Lynn Sheriff, Caroline Snyman, De Bruyn Steenkamp, Clive Torr, Eftyhia Vardas, Junel Vermeulen, Irina von Holdt, Meryl Weaver, Cathy White, Lyn Woodward

**Honorary Members:** Colin Frith, Phyllis Hands, Dave Hughes

night to accommodate the dinner party ! An Italian dinner was served and magnificent dish after dish appeared before the guests.

The opening wine while everyone congregated was Dom Perignon 1985.

Then a Chateau Montrose 1888. Imperial Tokai 1917. 1830 Malmsey. Moyet Cognac 1813. MacCullan 1897.

In between were various vintages of Amarone from various producers!! Below are some of my memorable tasting notes:

### **CHATEAU MONTROSE 1888**

Remarkable colour. Still has a youthful brightness at the core with healthy glow radiating to light brick rim. Immediate impression on the nose was of a faultless wine. Fragrance of dark rose with ripe, strawberry jam backing. Soft and full in the mouth with absolute velvet flow and great depth of texture. Ever developing nose and flavours. Hints of tea and cedar on the nose with gentle nudge of chocolate. Rich spice develops with some time in the glass while the deep rose fragrance is continually in the background.

Amazing condition for a wine of that age.

### **TOKAY 1917**

Bright amber core with deep yellow rim. Incredibly complex nose. Hints of caramelised apple, sultanas, treacle and raisins. All carries through to the mouth. Genteel flow across the palate leaving a deeply imbedded character that follows the nose with addition of dark berries, spice and touch of truffle. All highlighted by keen acidic tingle and edged by richness rather than sweetness. After taste continues forever.

### **MALMSEY 1830**

Amber, glowing, gold with green tinged edge. Deep concentration on the nose with curious combination of dried citrus peel. Lime, lemon and mandarin. Backed by dried spice with hints of ginger, anise and vanilla. Deep, rich mouth with dense texture and richness without being sweet. Great acidic balance with caramelly notes some butterscotch. Slow flow across the palate gives great distribution of flavour to every corner of the palate. An aftertaste that lasts forever.

### **COGNAC MOYET 1813**

Deep gold with fading, amber rim. Nose leads with old prune, some butterscotch, toffee and vanilla. Gentle introduction to the mouth with light, yet firm flow. Fine texture while being dense and rich. Deeply concentrated with hints of hazelnut and old fruit cake. Absolute epitome of mellowness that can only come from great maturity in oak. Oak is there but in support yet not in anyway dominant as some very old brandies can be. Intensity develops all the time in the mouth with delicate harmony and long, lingering flavours. Firm, spice driven finish.

**Dave Hughes, Honorary CWM**

## **Master in Argentina**



**Andy Roediger**

Although I have travelled wine growing regions of the world extensively, Southern America has thus far eluded me. Only Argentina and Chile to go, so during September this year Argentina was the destination. Having heard so much about the beef, affordable leather goods, and expanding wine business it was a must. Malaysian airline no longer flies to Buenos Aires, so there are limited alternatives such as an in direct SAA flight via Johannesburg.

Landed in Buenos Aires, there is nothing affordable in leather goods, clothing is expensive, and the meat good, but Hussar's Grill will give them a go any day. I decided to drive from Buenos Aires to Mendoza which is 1150km. Don't do it, as there is nothing outside the Pampas and then it is flat with water pans and desert. Imagine Cape Flats for 800km with almost no vegetation like the outback, Nullarbor plains come into mind. Driving in Argentina is okay, they all wear seat belts and drive with head lights on but those solid white lines don't really mean much.

Mendoza is where it all is at, lots of plastic rubble, dry with no skyscrapers and a modern InterContinental Hotel is situated in almost the poorest area. Make winery appointments ahead of time and you will be well received.

General impressions, the wine export is booming and the local consumption is good, 30L per person/annum. Export has quadrupled from 2005 to 2012 to 75 million litres. Export to US is surpassing that of Chile, but one wonders how long as the official inflation is 10.2% but locals and wine makers are estimating 30%, which does not bode well for exports especially as the flight from local currency to dollars is causing an exchange rate problem. Don't we know about that? Also Argentina is trying to impose that you can export the wines against an equal financial import allocation. The grape production yields good quality wine, because Argentina is a desert with poor soils. Imagine Beaufort West as a wine growing area? But altitude brings down the temperatures and the diurnal range is enormous. Altitude also brings more ultraviolet light to assist the ripening of the grapes. The factor is water, but not only the quantity but the purity of it. Molten snow is good pure water with lack of other chemicals such as metals and sulphates. Most of the vines are on own root stocks.



Water is a problem with rainfall being during October to January and being about 200-250mm/annum, and an allocation system exists and one is allowed to water 3 days a week. This can vary dependant on the drought and can be restricted even more severally. This is controlled by a regional person actually opening your valve or locking it. Over and above the allocation system, a bore hole can be sunk but this expensive about \$30 000 – 40 000 for a 180 metre deep system.

With Malbec being king and the taste profile being dark fruits with tannins and good acidity and high anthocyanins. Nicolas Catena isolated four clones of this grape and uses these exclusively in his high altitude vineyards. The clones are: 95, 96, 74, and 75. Most other wineries such as Vistalba, when questioned about clones, have a confused look on their face. All they can say, it is not the same as Cot which is planted in France, as they have tried this. Malbec constitutes about 42% of exports and is four times higher than Cabernet Sauvignon (11%). Other varietals are Chardonnay, Syrah, and Torrontés. Export markets are principally the US (50%), Canada, UK, Brazil, and to a lesser degree Netherlands. The Cabernet is good and pure with very little greenness or methoxy pyrazines. The Chardonnay provides good rich pure fruit, the Syrah (although third largest plantings in the world) is very warm climate. Warm climate, when grown in San Juan? It is desert and water there is scarce. Torrontés makes the most beautiful fragrant Muscat, but again there are three clones, each giving a distinct taste. It remains best from Salta, although grown in Mendoza as well.

Styles of Malbec: The grapes like to hang long and then a bit longer with the highest anthocyanins available. There are three classes of this category, unripe like Achával-Ferrer, ripe like Catena Zapata and overripe like Viña Cobus 15-16% ABV. The wines are all clinical pure and

often VA can be detected because of this. The winemakers don't worry about VA, a little is good they say.

Achával-Ferrer is or was a joint venture between a Santiago Achával architect and an economist. The latter having sold out his share to the Russians this year. The wines are harvested early and thus have a low alcohol. The top three are single vineyards, Finca (Vineyard) Altamira, Finca Bella Vista, and Finca Mirador. Parker scores are 96-98 and be prepared to spend \$140. Although Peso is the currency, every likes to (but is not allowed to) quote in US dollars. Try duty free and it is only dollars and not cheap at all, in fact more expensive than locally.



Catena Zapata was the highlight of the tour. A private tasting for the two of us with the assistant winemaker Pablo Sánchez (the winemaker was aboard) was arranged and it took a jovial three hours. As all or many large wineries, wines come in different categories. Grapes are harvested, protected with 50ppm sulphur and cold soaked at 5-6°C for a period of 4 days. Fermentation takes 5-6 days with pump overs twice daily. Racking occurs after three months and blending generally after twelve months. Filtration occurs through 5 micron sieves. The most spectacular thing is that vineyard mapping according to soil type is being carried out to understand the flavour profile versus soil. This winery is one of the few that only uses stainless steel and no concrete vats.

Wine tiers:

Catena Alta: 2-4t/ha, 28-31 days maceration and 18 months 80% new wood

Catena Zapata Nicasia vineyard: 1.5-3.5t/ha, 32 days maceration and 18mths new wood

Nicolas Catena Zapata: 65% CS and 35% MB manually destemmed, fermented in 225L French oak with maximum 28°C and 35days maceration. 100% Malolactic followed

by 24 months 100% new oak. 500 cases made. These have been put against first growths and has beaten most. Of the 200 wines tasted in Argentina, my favourite and would (in my opinion) give South Africa's a best a good go. Cost R1500. 2007 Robert Parker 98.



Alta Vista: I had two hours of discussion with the wine maker, Philippe Rolet. Owned by the d'Aulan family of Pieper Heideseck origin, they established this vineyard in 1998, a brave move considering economic stability and political stability only was achieved in 2001. 270ha are managed with another 20% of grapes are bought in. Production is 80% bulk wine and the rest is bottled wine. 35% of total production is exported, which is above the average norm for Argentina. Main export markets are USA, Brazil, UK, France, Canada and Russia. Grapes are harvested by aerial photography and rather than multiple harvests, the harvest occurs on a single date but quality is sorted and placed in different colour boxes, green, white, and blue. Yields are highly differentiated, in the 50-90 \$ bracket a bottle of wine is achieved from three plants, 30-40\$ 2 plants, 18\$ bracket one plant and 12\$ 2 bottles per plant are averaged. And the smallest portion with greatest attention is given to the premium wine. The quality levels are decided in the vineyard and winemaking adapted. Top end wines are 30% bleed, after undergoing three different sorting stations. Fermentation occurs mainly in cubic concrete vats because of cooling efficiency. Electricity outages are as common as the worst case scenario in South Africa, but no generators were visible. The concrete Vats are the most energy efficient and despite being cheaper in initial capital costs is the same cost as stainless steel over a 20 year period.

No reverse osmosis is used in Mendoza so alcohol levels are high and yeast strains are selected to go up to 17% alcohol, the average alcohol is around 15% in this winery. This is to conserve cost and time. Wood regime is from barrel (1000 at Alta Vista) to staves and chips at

the lower end. In the cellar the winemaking is differentiated into three categories and the smallest portion with greatest attention is given to the premium wine. The quality levels are decided in the vineyard and winemaking adapted. Top end wines are 30% bleed, after undergoing three different sorting stations. Fermentation occurs mainly in cubic concrete vats because of cooling efficiency. Electricity outages are as common as the worst case scenario in South Africa, but no generators were visible. The concrete Vats are the most energy efficient and despite being cheaper initially, capital costs are the same as stainless steel over a 20 year period.



Chandon has a strong presence in Argentina, as they do have in Brazil and California. In Argentina, their bottom end volume is made by the Charmat method with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Chenin Blanc.

In summary, the country has political problems, inflation is high, and most of the wines are consumed locally with US taking 50% of export. Terroir is stunning. Malbec at low end is drinkable, mid-level is voluptuous and at the high end awesome. Torrentés from Cafayate earns respect. People are friendly, humble, and time is of no essence. Prices are expensive, flights and hotels have a two tier system, price for locals and price for tourists. Wine mark-up in restaurants is less than 50%, so what a pleasure to increase local consumption!

