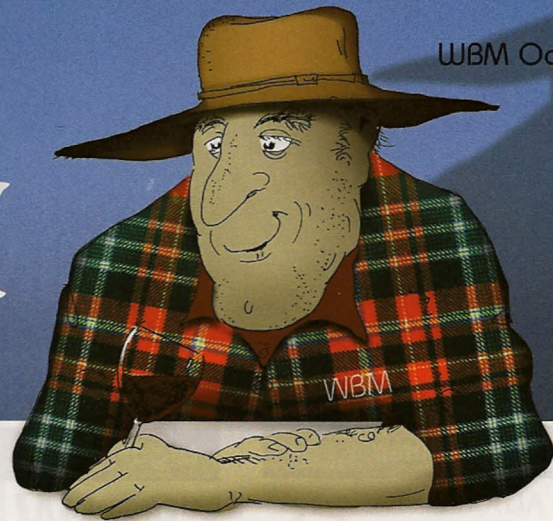


BUSBY'S BLOCK

UP AND DOWN THE VINE ROW



Ever the Optimiste

With all the current challenges facing the wine industry, is Optimiste the most aptly named new wine brand ever? It's the new venture of Steve and Sharlene Dadd who have been producing fruit from their Mudgee vineyards for years. There are three wines in the portfolio: '05 Cabernet (\$18), '06 Petit Verdot (\$18) and '06 Marquis (\$24). The Marquis is dedicated to the Dadds' young son, Marcus, whose inspiring struggle with deafness captures the spirit of hope and passion in the brand. The family's favourite quote is one from Helen Keller, "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence." This spirit has already been noticed with Optimiste selected to feature two wines at November's NSW Tourism Awards dinner.

Oldies but goodies

Old wine legends don't fade away, they just keep helping out wherever possible. Br John May is still very much involved at Sevenhill, even making cups of tea for staff every morning, and over in McLaren Vale we're sure we spotted d'Arenberg managing director d'Arry Osborn the other day mowing the lawns. Magic stuff.

Hang on a minute

David Dean of Dean Marketing attended the recent Hong Kong International Wine Fair as reported in the September *WBM*. We told you that David was involved with several McLaren Vale exhibitors at the fair. That was wrong. David's involvement was with Sorby Adams, Eden Valley; Farmer's Leap, Padthaway; Condo Wines, Swan Reach; Smythe Road, Barossa; and Angas Plains, Langhorne Creek. David says all five wineries were happy with the business that flowed from the expo. Meanwhile David is attending the FHC China event in Shanghai in December and will provide a wrap-up for *WBM*.

Message in a bottle

You've gotta love marketers. When I visited Redman Wines in Coonawarra recently Bruce Redman showed me a bottle that an Adelaide-based marketer had posted to him about 15 years ago. The bottle had an awful blue mocked-up label stuck on the front of it and there was an accompanying letter saying, "Hi, I visited your cellar door recently and your wines are outstanding. In fact they're the best wines I've ever tasted—but your labels are dreadful. Do you know that you could double sales if you had a decent label? See what you think of the new label I've designed for you." That bottle is now being used as a vase in Redman's tasting room and has a bright yellow plastic daffodil stuck in it.

Slow down and smell the vines

I hadn't been to Coonawarra for ages but it hasn't changed much. As I arrived in the region I made the mistake of slowing down to check out the vineyards—but before long an 22-wheeler was on my tail. It's amazing that the highway into Penola is still a 110 km zone. Most wine regions allow you to check out the cellar doors at a leisurely pace but not Coonawarra—looking for vineyards and where to turn off is a major stress. It should be an 80 km zone but the truckies would be up in arms because the stretch of road that goes past the vineyards is long. As reported in *The Week That Was*, Penola has traffic problems, exacerbated by the increase in trucks because of bluegum harvesting, and the council wants to build a bypass around the town which will destroy some vines. We'll keep you posted.

In a spin over Spinifex

Peter Forrestal provided some great answers for our Meet The Press column in this edition and we were loathe to cut any copy. But one thing we couldn't fit in was

his answer to the question: What's the best wine you've tasted in the past month? Well, the answer is '06 Spinifex Shiraz Viognier. Spinifex winemaker Pete Schell is in the zone having won the second annual Young Gun of Wine Award in Melbourne recently.

Nothing on Sunday 9 November?

Hey don't forget to get out and support the Portavin Touch Wine event happening in Adelaide on Sunday 9 November. Unfortunately I won't be competing myself—I strained a hammy bending down to plant some carrots in my veggie patch in the backyard—but I'm looking forward to having a few quiet ones and keeping my eyes peeled for that female stalker who added two big highlights to last year's event. I'll be there with a stubbie in my paw and binoculars around my neck.

Another Underarm victory

One of the highlights of my year is receiving the latest copy of the book *Taste Food & Wine* by Matthew Jukes and Tyson Stelzer because some of the wine descriptions are bloody funny. The boys describe the '06 Wild Rock The Underarm Hawkes Bay Syrah thus: "You might think Craggy Range would have researched this name a little more thoroughly, because while we are sure they are referring to a sneaky bowling manoeuvre, the majority of the world's thirsty drinkers will assume it's something to look out for on the nose of this wine. We have a different theory because, knowing wine overlord Steve Smith as we do, and bearing in mind that he's one of the tallest blokes on the planet, the name on the label refers to the view that we get when we stand next to him. With a brilliantly lifted white pepper nose and a cool, long, refreshing black fruit coulis palate, this is sensational Syrah with more than a nod to the French classics."