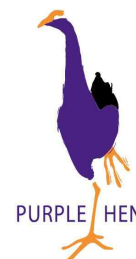


News from the Hen

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Just like the web site -only static



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New Web Site

Well it has finally happened – we have gone live with our new web site. The photo above is one that will greet you when you go to the site.

It has been an interesting process - taking a good deal longer than anticipated. I think our friendly web developers at Purple C were just about ready to throttle us for our procrastination and inertia. The site was meant to be live nearly a year ago, but we always seemed to have other things to do.

The main reasons for the redevelopment were:

- To have a site we could edit and maintain ourselves. The old site was written in Flash and we did not have the skills to change it. Hence it got progressively out of date and contradictory.
- To provide secure on-line purchasing.
- To allow access by iPhones. They don't access sites written in Flash.

There are a few losses, such as the 'Dancing Feet' (the feet are there but they don't dance) but we hope you will find the layout appealing and user friendly. We welcome your feedback – positive or negative.

We would also encourage those who can't get to the cellar door to give the on-line purchasing a go. The reality is that most of our wines will never be widely distributed through bottle shops. The vast majority of retail sales go through outlets owned by Woolworths and Coles – little wineries such as us have to find other ways to buyers of wine.

So purchasing over the web is another option. The same standard discounts (5% on half case 10% on case sales) are built into the system.

We will also continue to take phone, fax and email orders. If you are using email – we suggest that you do not send card details in the email. Better to do that over the phone.

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Cup Weekend Music

Saturday November 3rd

We thought last year's format worked pretty well, so we are planning to do the same again this year. The gist of it is:

- Music will start in the late afternoon and run until about 7:30.
- We plan to have a couple of bands (will advise you of the line-up in the Spring Newsletter).
- You are encouraged to bring your own food.
- For those who forget or can't organise their food, we will still do platters.
- Bring a rug/chair (and mossie repellent).
- There will be a small cover charge for adults.

New email system

We hope that this is the last email we will send out manually – cutting and pasting from our list of addresses into the bcc section of the email. This is prone to error (e.g. if they are pasted into cc they are accessible to all recipients) and runs foul of some spam filters.

As part of the new web site we are moving to Mail Chimp. Amongst other things, this service will allow you on-line access to change your email details including removing yourself from our mailing list. Our email list will reside on Mail Chimp's site, but is only accessible to us.

New freight system (& rates)

We have finally become clients of Australia Post's eParcel system. We have the advantage of easier lodging and processing. Buyers of our wine have the advantage of order tracking.

Moving to on-line sales and to the eParcel system has caused us to review our freight rates. This has resulted in some increases and some decreases by mailing zone.

The new web site will allow purchases as small as one bottle – but freight will still be charged at the half case rate. For Victoria the half case rate is the same as the case rate.

The reasons for this are:

- for each of its zones, eParcel has a fixed component for all parcel sizes and a per kilogram component. The latter is quite small for our shipments within Victoria – hence the one rate.
- We have to purchase special packaging for sales of 1 - 3 bottles.

See the web site for full freight rate details.

2012 Vintage

Another interesting vintage. Not as wet and cold as the 2011, but closer to that than the warm dry vintages of the previous years.

The photo on the last newsletter was of the vines after they had been trimmed by the Collard hedger machine. It paid for itself again in 2012 – plenty of trimming plus early and aggressive leaf plucking kept the canopy open and fruit well exposed. As a result we got through the wet weather well – with little problem from botrytis mould or powdery mildew.

For us, yields were well down on last year and on average. On the other side of the ledger, the quality of fruit was very good. The whites appear on a par with 2011 (a great year for whites in our books) and the reds better – particularly the Pinot Noir.

The 2012 Pinot Noir is looking like being a wonderful wine. At this point we rate it the best we have produced to date.

Of course, that is 'at this point' – we have a way to go yet. You don't want to jump to conclusions with Pinot Noir, its got a tendency

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to duck and weave. That's why we call it the Donald Rumsfeld of wines.

Remember Donald, he was the one that said,

"We do know of certain knowledge that he [Osama Bin Laden] is either in Afghanistan, or in some other country, or dead."

That's got nothing to do with Pinot Noir, but is very Donald. Another of his quotes is why we link his name with Pinot Noir. He once said:

"..... as we know, there are known knows; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns -- the ones we don't know we don't know."

You think you know where a young Pinot is heading and then it just heads in a different direction.

Witness our 2005. At this stage of its life, we were not much impressed and put part of the vintage to sparkling red. A few months later, it went in a different direction. By the time we released it – we loved it, it did well in wine shows and we wished we had more.

So we are hopeful for our 2012 Pinot Noir, but only time will tell. (No claims of 'shock and awe' at this point.)

However, one known known for this vintage is that alcohols will be agreeably low – similar to 2011, with reds in the 12.5 to 13 percent range. In 2012, the grapes reached taste and tannin ripeness at lower sugar levels. This is the way we would prefer it, but you don't get to choose.

Whites also looked good in 2012 – overall they were on a par with 2011. The Sauvignon Blanc

and Off Dry Riesling are both looking very good. The Riesling is the first with fruit off the new vineyard.

In the vineyard

Thanks to a sterling effort from Adam, with strong support from Pip (and no input at all from Rick who managed to be away on holidays at the critical time) the vineyard is looking very neat and pruned.

But its wet.

Boardwalk to the machinery shed



Cumulative rainfall for May, June and July was 50% higher than average. Other than being cold and wet in the vineyard, the high rainfall has not had a big impact to date as the vines are dormant.

However, as we come into budburst we are more than a little concerned that if the rain keeps up we may not be able to get tractor access to some of the vineyard. Getting the early sprays on to control Powdery Mildew is the main issue. So we are hoping for a bit of

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drier than average weather over the next couple of months. There's a change for you – after years of worrying about lack of rain.

Those visiting the vineyard will also have noticed some severely pruned (ie decapitated) vines near the cellar door. This is our original planting of Sauvignon Blanc. Over the last few years it cropped very poorly so we decided to replant with a new clone and on rootstock. We hope the other vines have taken note of the consequence of poor performance.

Now let that be a lesson to you



Wine comings & goings

Since the last newsletter the **2011 Pinot Gris** and the **2009 Sparkling (Blanc de Blanc)** have both finished. In the case of the Sparkling, we had some of the 2010 disgorged and ready to go. Quite similar in style to the 2009, just a touch drier.

We have been out of Pinot Gris for a few months, but recently bottled the 2012. We will release it next month. Unfortunately supply is less than last vintage so it will run out fairly quickly.

Another to be released in September is our first 'sticky', the **2011 Noble Riesling**. We think it's a cracker. It will be available in half bottles only.

Wines getting down to low levels of supply are the **2008 CS Pinot Noir** and the **2009 Merlot**. The CS Pinot is down to about 30 cases – this was a one off blend, so when it's gone that will be the end of the line.

Sparkling red

We continue to get a lot of feedback that people are missing the sparkling red and 'will you have one for Xmas?'

The answer is, we will do a small disgorge of the 2011 Sparkling Shiraz in November – we will have it available for Xmas.

Most of the 2011 will stay on lees and we won't disgorge before mid 2013. If you are interested in sparkling red for Xmas/New Year – be quick. We will take pre-orders if you wish.

Museum wines

Adam is building a proper storage system for our museum wines – the collection of all our earlier vintages. We can now access these wines without having to re-arrange the whole storage.

In transferring to the new system we have found some double ups in wines set aside. As a result we are able to offer a small amount of some of our back vintages. If you are interested, contact Rick (email or at cellar door).

A couple of wines that are available are the 2006 Chardonnay and 2006 Shiraz. Both multi medal winners.

Cheers from all at Purple Hen