

ELTHAM AND DISTRICT WINEMAKERS GUILD

ESTABLISHED 1969

MARCH 2026

The Guild encourages the responsible consumption of alcohol

The Guild meets on the last Friday of each month *(except December)*

**** at the Eltham Living & Learning Centre ****

8 pm start

Next meeting: Friday March 27th, 2026

Guests who are interested in finding out more about the Guild are welcome to attend any of our regular Guild meetings

 Contact info@amateurwine.org.au for meeting details

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Angela Harridge

February Guild Night | Annual Open That Bottle Night

Our annual *Open That Bottle Night* was its usual success – with some fabulous stories and bottles to share. I think the story of the night came from Trevor Roberts ... he brought along one of several unlabelled bottles found in a garden bed!

The story goes ... It was back in the days when he was crushing large volumes. He had too much wine on hand, so put some of the decent Shiraz into 1.5L bottles. He simply left them in a garden bed – for 15 years! He had planned to throw them out at some point – but never got around to it. When *Open That Bottle Night* came around, he was at a loss as to what to bring – so he pulled the cork on one of those bottles – only to find it was in a remarkable condition considering it had been exposed to the elements for 15 years. He recorked it (!) and brought it to Guild Night. It was delicious! There are still some of the bottles in the garden bed – he plans to put them into 750ml bottles.

The challenge now goes out to members to top that story at our *2027 Open That Bottle Night*.

March Guild Night | Tony Winspear: Head Wine Consultant – Balgownie

This month Tony joins us to share with us his winemaking journey with Balgownie (from vineyard/cellar hand to Chief Winemaker) – his tips related to vintage (assessing ripeness, ways to vintage fruit, how to approach different varieties ...) – and some of his wines.

2026 Guild Nights | Country Wines

If you cast an eye over the Guild Night program, you will note that our emphasis this year is on encouraging members to learn about, and have a go at making, *Country Wines*. We will look at some of the different Country Wine classes, and what making wines in those classes entails.

Our Guild was founded on Country Wines, and, over the years, the emphasis has slowly drifted towards grape wines. This year we revisit our roots (pun intended) and encourage members to take a small sideways step and have a go at making something different.

2026 Introduction to Meadmaking Course | 3 sessions: May 9 – May 23 – June 6

It's been 2 years since Wayne and I ran our last *Introduction to Meadmaking* course. Commencing Saturday 9th May, the course will look into the origin and history of this honey-based beverage, the different types of mead styles, and how to make it.

Hands-on, it will focus on participants making, step-by-step, a batch of *Joe's Ancient Orange* mead – a classic mead that is not only delicious but practically guaranteed to succeed. The course is open to both Guild members and the public.

The last time we ran this course it reached capacity (10) very quickly. We have a number of people who missed out at the time and registered their interest in the next course – they will have first access to places – so make sure you sign up early to avoid disappointment.

Vintage 2026 | Grape Harvest

This vintage continues to present challenges for growers and winemakers alike. Intense, and flooding, rainfall coupled with hot and humid weather has led to more crop damage and loss, as well as unpredictable picking times.

Our bulk fruit purchase group organisers continue to be in close contact with numerous growers – with changes in timing and availability being shared on an almost daily basis. Our sincere thanks go to them for the stellar job they are doing.

With availability updates, new suppliers and varieties being shared and discussed, make sure you keep an eye on the [#edwg-bulk-fruit-purchase](#) channel on Slack.

Wine Testing | Sentia

A reminder that as your winemaking goes through its various stages, it's important to keep a close eye on your SO₂ additions and the progress of Malolactic fermentation. Both SO₂ and Malic Acid tests are accessible through the Guild.

For inquiries or assistance, please contact Vince Conserva via the [#sentia-booking](#) channel – or Direct Message him – on Slack.

2026 Wine Show | Chief Judge: Elita Vezis

We recently received news from Luca Barbon, our 2025 Chief Judge, that he had made the decision to relocate interstate to pursue a new adventure in the wine industry. While we are regretful that he will no longer continue in that role, we are also excited to see where this new adventure takes him.

We are pleased to announce that Elita Vezis has agreed to take on the role as our new Chief Judge. Elita has also been involved as a judge in our Wine Show for several years, and has extensive experience in the Yarra Valley wine industry, and wine show operations and logistics.

We welcome Elita to our Wine Show Team and look forward to working with her.

Newsletter | In search of a new Editor

It is both sad and exciting to say farewell to Glen Van Neuren from our Committee and as Newsletter Editor. After returning to the Committee last AGM - and stepping up to take over as Newsletter Editor - Glen has moved into a 'new stage' of his family and work life where time constraints simply don't allow for extra Guild matters. We thank Glen for his support and ideas and will miss his input and help.

This means that we are, once again, in search of a Newsletter Editor. There are still not enough hours for me to take it back on along with my other Guild responsibilities. It is vital that we do not rely on a single person to undertake many roles – plus, it's good to get a new set of eyes and ideas.

As a guild, we rely on the newsletter to share current information, activities and ideas with fellow members and the wider community. So please – let me know ASAP if you are willing to take over the reins.

Cheers,

Angela

Committee & Committee Meeting Dates

President	Angela Harridge	General Committee	Trevor Sleep
Vice President	Richard Martignetti		Mario Fantin
Secretary	Mike Wilson		John Leenaerts
Treasurer	Trevor Roberts		
Past President	Richard Martignetti		
Wine Show Chief Judge	Elita Vezis	Newsletter Editor	TBA
Wine Show Director	Wayne Harridge	Fruit Purchase Co-ord	Trevor Roberts
IT Director	Adam Dumicich		

Members elected to positions on the Guild Management Committee meet at 8pm on the second Tuesday of each month, via ZOOM.

Guild Committee Meetings

Agenda items relate to General Guild Business and/or Eltham Wine Show Business, with the emphasis based on the requirements at the time. The Eltham Wine Show Chief Judge is invited to the meetings when the agenda requires their input.

Agenda items will normally relate to: Guild Night Program, Membership, Education Initiatives, Finance & Governance, Social Events, Promotion & Marketing and Sponsorship.
Additional agenda items relevant to the Eltham Wine Show: Judging, Logistics and IT.

Meeting Dates

April 14th | May 12th | June 9th | July 14th | August 11th | September 8th | October 13th | November 10th

Member Participation

All members are encouraged to raise any issues, new initiatives, and suggestions with a committee member for discussion at meetings. Members are welcome to attend committee meetings as visitors and should contact the President or Secretary a few days prior to the meeting date.

Guild Contacts

President	president@amateurwine.org.au
Secretary	info@amateurwine.org.au
Wine Show	cheers@amateurwine.org.au
Newsletter	newsletter@amateurwine.org.au

Forward Program for Guild Events

We will keep you updated on the final details via SLACK and the [Website](#)

... so keep  ...

DATE	ACTIVITY
Friday, March 27 th	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u> <i>Tony Winspear: Winemaker Balgownie</i> Tony will share his journey as a winemaker, approach to winemaking and practices. <i>Tasting: Balgownie + Members' wines</i> Wines to share and discuss.</p>
Friday, April 24 th	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u> <i>Mike Wilson: Annual Jo Ilian Preview Night 2026 Rosé</i> An informal and interactive session focussed on the 2026 class – Rosé. An opportunity to discuss what makes a great Rosé, the methods, process, techniques, and the tricks and traps to watch for when making. Ask your questions and share your knowledge. <i>Tasting: Members' Rosé</i> Bring your Rosé to share – even better if it's a wine show medal winner!</p>
Saturday May 9 th	<p><u>Introduction to Meadmaking: Session 1</u> Learning about Mead, and getting started</p>
Saturday May 23 rd	<p><u>Introduction to Meadmaking Course: Session 2</u> Monitoring the ferment, potential problems</p>
Friday, May 29 th	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u> <i>Speaker TBA: Winemaking Supplier (TBA)</i> A representative from one of the main winemaking suppliers (Lallemand, WineCheck, Laffort etc) will come and share with us their range of additives/ what they do etc). <i>Tasting: Members' wines</i> Wines to share and discuss.</p>
Saturday June 6 th	<p><u>Introduction to Meadmaking Course: Session 3</u> Racking, tasting, finalising and bottling</p>
Friday, June 26 th	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u> <i>TBA: How to make Country Wines Fortifieds</i> We will harness the expertise of some of our award-winning Country Wine: Fortifieds winemakers to chat about the different types of fortified wines that can be made, and the process of doing so. <i>Tasting: Members' Fortified wines</i> Bring along examples of your fortified wines to share and discuss.</p>

<p>Friday, July 31st</p>	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u> Eltham LLC + ZOOM*</p> <p>AGM A time to review the year that was for the EDWG. Let the President or Secretary know if you're interested in joining the Committee.</p> <p>Tasting: Mulled wine As is traditional for the AGM, have your <i>Mulled Wine</i> on hand to enjoy as we go through the AGM formalities – we can share and discuss each at the LLC, or enjoy in the comfort of your home.</p>
<p>Friday, August 28th</p>	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u></p> <p>TBA: Blind Tasting of ALTERNATIVE VARIETY wines With the emphasis of our bulk purchase grapes being Alternative Varieties, we thought we'd challenge our knowledge with a blind tasting. Come along and test your palate as we learn about, and try to match years, winemakers, regions and pick which are the commercial and member wines.</p> <p>Tasting: Alternative Variety wines Bring along an alternative variety wine (your own or commercial) to add to the tasting list – don't show anyone – take it straight to the front table so we can hide it in a paper bag!</p>
<p>Friday, September 25th</p>	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u></p> <p>Focus on our Wine Show Judges: Their journey with wine We will have a Panel of our Wine Show Judges who will share their journeys with wine – making/selling/judging.</p> <p>Tasting: Judges' and members' wines Wines to share and discuss.</p>
<p>Friday, October 30th</p>	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u></p> <p>Country Wine Making Challenge Taste-Off Challenge to members to make a small batch of any COUNTRY WINE that you wouldn't otherwise make. Mead Kombucha Fruit wine Herb wine Flower wine etc</p> <p>Tasting: Members' country wines Wines to share and discuss.</p>
<p>Friday, November 27th</p>	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u> Eltham LLC + ZOOM*</p> <p>Wine Show Review The Final meeting of the year & Chief Judge's review of the 2026 Wine Show.</p> <p>Tasting: EDWG Wine Show Medal Wines Bring along your wines that won a <i>Medal</i> to share.</p>

Venue – Old Eltham Courthouse
Enrol by – May 1st



Introduction to Meadmaking 2026

ELTHAM AND DISTRICT
WINEMAKERS GUILD

ESTABLISHED 1969

Always wanted to learn to make your own Mead?

- * Learn about mead, its origin and history
- * Learn about the different types of meads
- * Learn & Make – *Joe's Ancient Orange Mead*

Step-by-step we make a mead together

Members of the Guild will be available to answer any questions

Techniques taught can be applied to many types of mead & winemaking

Saturday Mornings 10am -12pm

Session 1: Saturday 9th May – Getting Started ** 3hr session 9am – 12pm **

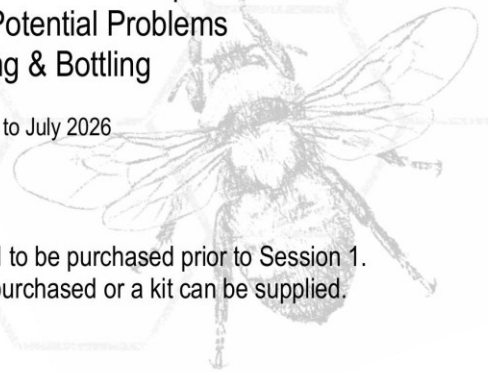
Session 2: Saturday 23rd May – Monitoring the Ferment, Potential Problems

Session 3: Saturday 6th June – Racking, Tasting, Finalising & Bottling

Course Fee: Non-members – \$50 * Includes Guild Membership to July 2026

EDWG Members – FREE

+ Participants will be given a list of ingredients and utensils which will need to be purchased prior to Session 1. Cost is expected to be around \$80. We will advise where items can be purchased or a kit can be supplied. Note that equipment can be reused for future mead & wine making.



For further information & to enrol: amateurwine.org.au/courses

Wayne Harridge

Chief Judge

Our chief Judge for the 2025 show is moving to Queensland, so won't be available to be involved in our 2026 show. Luca will be missed. He was very thorough and professional in his role as Chief Judge, and a great bloke to work with. We wish Luca all the success he deserves in his new adventure in the wine industry.

Luca's final task with EDWG was to recommend his replacement – we are very pleased to announce Elita Vezis as our Chief Judge for 2026.

Elita has extensive experience in the Yarra Valley wine industry in management and marketing and has a long-standing involvement in wine show operations and logistics as the Chief Steward of the Yarra Valley Wine Show, James Halliday Chardonnay and Cabernet Challenge and the Australian Chardonnay Symposium, and Assistant Chief Steward at the Royal Melbourne Wine Show. Elita has been involved as a judge in our Wine Show for several years, as well as the Frankston Wine Show and the Royal Melbourne Wine Show.

We welcome Elita to our Wine Show Team and look forward to working with her in 2026.

Eltham Wine Show

This year's *Jo Ilian* trophy is for the Best Rosé wine (any vintage). I hope you kept this in mind with your grape purchases this year – but you may also have some gems in your cellar – I don't, it all seems to get consumed in the vintage year!

For the April Guild Night we have Mike Wilson facilitating a discussion on Rosé – don't miss it, there is much to learn from the gathered knowledge of our members.

Chief Steward

It has been a few years since we have had anyone in the Chief Steward role. This role entails being involved in planning and managing the logistics of setting up the Wine Show venue for judging, ensuring the smooth running of judging, re-setting the venue for the Public Open Day and bump out at the end.

Please contact me if you are interested in taking on this role – you don't have to be an elected committee member but will need to attend Committee meetings (via Zoom) when Wine Show business is on the agenda.

If you have any ideas for any additions or changes to the wine show for 2026, please contact any Committee member or post your ideas on Slack.

Vintage 2026

Whilst we are in the midst of vintage 2026 it is important to keep in mind that now is the time to ensure your wines are set up for success at the Wine Show – better to make any corrections early rather than later.

For example:

- Ensure alcoholic fermentation is complete with no residual sugar.
- Ensure malolactic fermentation is complete for wines which need it.
- Make your initial SO₂ addition ASAP after fermentation (and Malo if applicable).
- Perform an acid trial to ensure your wines start out with a good acid balance.
- Think about oak treatment – don't skimp on this, it sets your wines up for maturation.

All this applies to grape and country wines alike.

Cheers,

Wayne

Richard Webb: Richard's Recapitulations ...

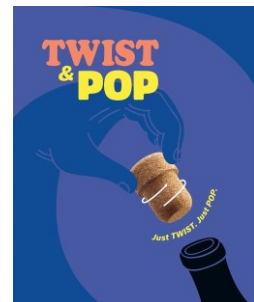
Helix, Amorim Cork's Revolutionary Cork Stopper, Gains Greater Versatility and Convenience

Amorim Cork, *Winebusiness*, January 27, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/AmronCorkHelix>

New Amorim cork product *Helix*.

The ergonomically disruptive natural cork closure that combines the convenience of twist opening with the authenticity, ritual, and sustainability of traditional cork.



6 Underrated White Wines From Historically Red-Centric Regions

Stephen Bradley, *VinePair*, February 5, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/UnderratedWhiteWines>

Underrated white wines.

When you think of winemaking regions Bordeaux and Burgundy, you're likely to picture a glass of red. Red-centric zones are often gold mines for some of the world's greatest white varieties, offering a counterpart to heavier reds with moments of light fruit.

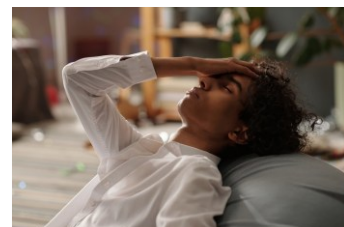


The Science Is In: What Really Causes Wine Headaches

Deborah Parker Wong, *The Alcohol Professor*, March 6, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/WhatCausesWineHeadaches>

What causes wine headaches? We all know that excessive drinking is one answer. But what about those headaches after only one or two glasses?



How one French winegrower pruned his vines from a kayak to overcome torrential rainfall

Vitisphere, *Vitisphere*, March 17, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/KayakPruning>

Bringing you the latest from France: Kayak pruning.

Heavy rainfall over the winter across France has illustrated the wine industry's ability to adapt, whatever the conditions



John Leenaerts: March 2026

The skills of a vigneron can incorporate many things – one I never imagined was sewing! When applying the bird nets, all the holes from the previous season are revealed and require a needle and thread to arduously sew all of these up.

Net hole before sewing



Net hole after sewing

Possums and rabbits are the biggest culprits for these. So far so good this season as my nets are all still intact.

Then there was rain ...

Previously I had mentioned that (other than the frosty start to the season) I was experiencing the perfect vintage with weather. Well, mother nature certainly had other ideas. Yes, we needed rain, but not all at once! The 60 - 70mm of rain we had over 2 days in late Feb – followed by the 6-day cold snap – certainly halted ripening of the grapes. Heavy rain or overwatering can cause rapid berry expansion and ruptures the skins. The split skin can then lead to mould or rot which would be season ending! Fortunately, my vines are on a slope, so the drainage prevented any overwatering of my vines, and I certainly ensured that the irrigation system was switched off.

Over the ripening period I become very acquainted with my old friend the *refractometer*.

This is used weekly to test and monitor the sugar levels of the grapes (the Baumé).

Usually, the Baumé increases by 1.0 Bé per week – which it was, up until the rain and cold snap. The ripening just stopped at around 10.5 Bé.

I also taste the berries for sweetness and inspect the seed colour, which is starting to turn from green to yellow. These will be brown when the fruit is ripe.



Residue from the spraying application before the nets were applied was still visible, so the leaves so the vines are still protected from disease – which is good.

Shiraz grapes & spray residue on leaves



Cab Sav grapes & spray residue on leaves



I had previously predicted that harvest was looking to be the 1st or 2nd weekend of March – now it looks more like being over Easter or the weekend after. Currently (22/03/2026) the Bé is averaging at 11.6 (Target 13.5). I just need a few more weeks of good weather (PLEASE!).

Also, oddly with this season, is that my Cab Sav is also averaging at 11.6 Bé. These are usually about 2 weeks behind my Shiraz. It looks like I will be harvesting both at the same time, which has never occurred. It is certainly true that no two seasons are the same!

My Cab Sav is very hit and miss over the seasons with respect to yield. Not like Shiraz, which is always very dependable. Well, it looks like being a very good year for my Cab Sav. The yield will certainly be up there as one of my best years and the quality of the fruit looks very good. I just need to be patient for this to ripen ... hopefully.

Jo Ilian Awards – Forward Thinking

Keep an eye on the Jo Ilian Awards beyond this year and the next few years.

Show Year	Class	Winner
2026 (Grape)	Best Rosé	TBA
2025 (Grape)	Other Variety & Blended Whites, Any Vintage	Fantin O’Callaghan
2024 (Country)	Best Liqueur	Richard Martignetti
2023 (Grape)	Best Pinot Noir	Richard Martignetti
2022 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Less Common Variety Red	Steven Ney
2021 (Country)	Best Berry Wine	David Hart
2020 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Chardonnay	Danny Cappellani
2019 (Country)	Best Stone Fruit Wine	Noel Legg
2018 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Cabernet Sauvignon	Geoff Neagle
2017 (Country)	Best Mead Wine	Trevor Roberts
2016 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Pinot Noir	David Hart
2015 (Country)	Best Country Wine	Gary Campanella, Hamish Lucas
2014 (Grape)	Best Current Vintage Dry Grape White wine, Any non-sparkling style, Any Varietal	Danny Cappellani
2013 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Red Blend	Danny Cappellani
2012 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Shiraz	Gary Campanella, Jid Cosma
2011 (Country)	Best Hybrid	Neil Johannesen
2010 (Country)	Best Herb, Grain, Flower, Veg	Mario and Jean Anders
2009 (Grape)	Best Current Vintage Rose’	Peter Belec
2008 (Country)	Best Sparkling County Wine	David Wood
2007 (Grape)	Best Current Vintage Sauvignon Blanc	NHE Johannesen
2006 (Country)	Best Berry or Currant Wine	David Hart
2005 (Country)	Best Other Fruit Wine	Vinko Eterovic
2004 (Grape)	Best Shiraz	K. Furness, D. Markwell
2003 (Country)	Best Mead	Harry Gilham
2002 (Grape)	Best Riesling	Richard Skinner
2001 (Country)	Best Raspberry	Jacques Garnier
2000 (Grape)	Best Pinot Noir	Philip Hellard



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School terms only

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E: office@nillumbiku3a.org.au
<https://nillumbiku3a.org.au>

Eltham Central Pavilion
18 Panther Place, Eltham 3095



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make bigger things happen



Local Food Connect (LFC) is a not-for-profit, community group which connects local growers and eaters.

Operating across North East Melbourne, but mainly in the Nillumbik and Banyule areas, we encourage, support and promote events, actions and enterprises which help to put your food back into your control.

info@localfoodconnect.org
0416 203 067

<https://localfoodconnect.org.au>



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The Trading Barrel

Note: If you want a **FAST** response **Slack** is the best place to advertise ...
Slack is instant, whereas the newsletter is only published monthly!

The Trading Barrel is the place to list ...

- For Sale or Want to Buy items
- Sponsor special deals
- Member announcements – give-aways, winemaking Garage Sales etc
- Availability of wine-related produce – grapes, honey, apples etc

Donated Equipment | Member Only purchase by donation by March 29th Wayne Harridge

We have had a donation of equipment from Steve Jenkinson (ex Vinvicta).

Take a look at the list on the [#buy-swap-sell](#) channel on Slack and let me know what you would like to acquire.

No prices are specified – we're asking members to make a donation to EDWG.
