

ELTHAM AND DISTRICT WINEMAKERS GUILD

ESTABLISHED 1969

APRIL 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 April 24th, 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

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

What a delight it was to have Tony join us and share his winemaking journey with Balgownie. He generously shared his winemaking tips – and some of his Balgownie wines – including some that are almost impossible to source.

April Guild Night | Annual Jo Ilian Preview Night | 2026 Rosé

This month Mike Wilson will lead us in an informal and interactive session focussed on the 2026 Jo Ilian class – Rosé.

I've noticed in the Slack forums that (as is usual) more members have had a go at making a rosé this year. This session is an opportunity to discuss what makes a great Rosé, the different methods, processes, techniques – and the tricks and traps to watch for when making them.

This is the session where you can ask your questions and share your knowledge.

With the night all about rosés – we ask you to bring along a bottle to share.

2026 Guild Nights | Country Wines

Along with the Frankston Guild, this year there will be an emphasis on encouraging members to learn about, and have a go at making, *Country Wines*. Over the year we will look at some of the different Country Wine classes, and what making wines in those classes entails.

Both Guilds were founded on Country Wines but, over the years, the emphasis has slowly drifted towards grape wines. This year both Presidents have decided to encourage members to take a small sideways step and have a go at making something different. And we're hoping that will mean the Country Wine classes in our Wine Shows will become a new arena for friendly rivalry.

The good thing about Country Wines is that you don't have to wait, and madly do everything at a particular harvest time. MANY can be made throughout the year using frozen fruits, vegetables, leaves and herbs – and mead can be made whenever you want to grab some honey!

You don't need a PhD in Rocket Science to make a Country Wine – borrow a book from the library or do an internet search and decide on one.

OR

You can do either the Introduction to Meadmaking Course (**starts on May 9** ▼) or Introduction to Winemaking Course (next term) – where you make Country Wines!

If you make grape wine – and have a kitchen – you'll already have everything you need ... so what's stopping you?

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

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 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.

We already have several enrolled, and the cut-off date is fast approaching – so make sure you get signed up ... bring along a friend to share in the fun!

Vintage 2026 | Grape Harvest

This vintage has been a case of ... are we there yet? Have YOU finished yet? Wayne and I bit the bullet and *finally* picked our Shiraz yesterday, and were surprised at how great it tasted – given the smaller berries and the amount of withered fruit that was scattered throughout the vineyard (partly due to the earlier crazy weather we had, along with the vines deciding it was time to shut down and take their annual nap). It was with great relief that we found no signs of mildew (especially seeing we took a gamble and didn't spray at all this vintage because the winds have been so INSANE).

How were the grapes you purchased this year? We noticed a significant difference in berry size that saw a drop in the quantity of juice we extracted (as low as 50% our usual yield) – it will be interesting to see if this is a year of *low yield but great quality* wines (we certainly hope so!).

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 – so don't delay getting on to them!

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



Newsletter | In search of a new Editor

I'm a tad concerned that we are STILL in search of a Newsletter Editor. This is the last issue I can manage to put out – and I'm very much hoping that it won't be the Guild's last issue.

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

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, 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 (Lallemant, 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><i>AGM</i> 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><i>Tasting: Mulled wine</i> 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><i>TBA: Blind Tasting of ALTERNATIVE VARIETY wines</i> 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><i>Tasting: Alternative Variety wines</i> 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><i>Focus on our Wine Show Judges: Their journey with wine</i> We will have a Panel of our Wine Show Judges who will share their journeys with wine – making/selling/judging.</p> <p><i>Tasting: Judges' and members' wines</i> Wines to share and discuss.</p>
<p>Friday, October 30th</p>	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u></p> <p><i>Country Wine Making Challenge Taste-Off</i> 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><i>Tasting: Members' country wines</i> Wines to share and discuss.</p>
<p>Friday, November 27th</p>	<p><u>Monthly Guild Night:</u> Eltham LLC + ZOOM*</p> <p><i>Wine Show Review</i> The Final meeting of the year & Chief Judge's review of the 2026 Wine Show.</p> <p><i>Tasting: EDWG Wine Show Medal Wines</i> 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
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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 **

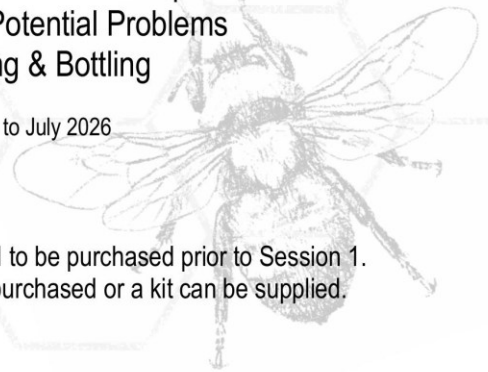
Session 2: Saturday 23rd May – Monitoring the Ferment, Potential Problems

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

Richard Webb: Richard's Recapitulations ...

Wine producers celebrate Prosecco naming 'win', as EU trade deal to boost prospects for Aussie exporters

Amorim Cork, *Winetitles Media*, March 25, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/ProseccoNamingWin>

Here is some background to the Australian Prosecco story.



Treasury Wines faces 'elevated risk' of bankruptcy

Tom Richardson, *The Nightly*, April 1, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/TreasuryWines>

Penfolds not going broke just yet.



Less spraying and better climate resistance with five new grape varieties in Languedoc

Per Karlsson, *BKWine Magazine*, April 3, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/ClimateResistantGrapes>

New varieties of wine grapes are on trial in the south of France. They hope to adapt to a warming climate while needing less spraying.

Love Aged Pinot Noir? How About 600 Years Old?

Rachel Shanker, *Wine Spectator*, April 2, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/AgedPinot>

Would you like a 2000 year-old Pinot Noir?
New research confirms that the variety has been around for that long



Australian winemakers can use Prosecco under EU agreement

Anthony Madigan, *Wine Business Magazine*, March 24, 2026.

<https://tinyurl.com/EUProseccoAgreement>

More detail on the Prosecco deal with the EU.



What's Happening in the Vineyard

John Leenaerts: *April 2026*

Well finally the vines had done their job through what has turned out to be a roller coaster of a season. In summary, there was unprecedented frost through bud burst and fruit set, a perfect dry hot growing period followed by a difficult cold and wet ripening period.

The challenge was to be patient enough to wait for the fruit to ripen before the onset of colder wet and possibly frosty weather, which would shut the vines down as the leaves cease to provide nourishment to the fruit. This prevents the fruit from ripening, and the fruit begins to rot and leads to the onset of disease (mainly botrytis). There are sprays available for the prevention of botrytis, but hardly worth the battle as the quality of the fruit diminishes and not worth picking for wine. As the saying goes – the quality of the wine is from the quality of the fruit. Bad grapes = bad wine!

My daily vine walks watched closely for signs of spray residue and any signs of disease. The last spray application was before I placed the nets on the vines in early February. I have never had to spray the vines after this as this is normally the last application before harvest. It would be difficult to spray the vines through the netting and fortunately this wasn't required.

Finally, the decision was made to pick the grapes on Saturday 11th April. The future weather outlook after this was very bleak, with rain and cold days well into April. This would certainly halt any further fruit ripening. The forecast for the day was clear in the morning, but storms and lots of rain in the afternoon, so it was an early start to pick the grapes before the rain, which we successfully did. This had been the latest season on record for my harvest.

The 2026 Picking Crew



Cab Sav grapes



Shiraz grapes about to be picked



Commencement of net removal from the vines



Nets removed from the vines



Picking Cab Sav



Dana picking Shiraz



Shiraz harvest

My refractometer readings were 12.5 – 12.8 Bé for my Shiraz and 13.2 - 13.5 Bé for the Cab Sav. The baumé readings after crushing were higher, which was pleasing, with the Shiraz at 13.0 Bé and the Cab Sav at 14.0 Bé. This is my 13th season and the first season ever that I have had the Cab Sav riper than the Shiraz.

Pressing the Shiraz



The 2026 Crushing & Pressing Team

With the resultant fruit, the decision was made to produce a straight Cabernet Sauvignon (which I haven't been able to do since 2018) and a straight Rosé from the Shiraz. As I write, these have both just completed fermentation and are looking really good. A submersible heater was required to assist the ferment of the Cab Sav. The Rosé was cold fermented at 15°C.

Con Carnovale : *The Digital Cellar Hand: Elevating the Craft of Home Winemaking with AI*

For many of us in the Eltham Winemaker Guild, the joy of winemaking lies in the balance between the science of the lab and the soul of the cellar. We rely on our senses and our trusted notebooks, but this season I've introduced a new partner into my process that has proven to be an invaluable *digital cellar hand*. By utilising AI, specifically Google's *Gemini*, I have found a way to bridge the gap between intuition and technical precision, turning my fermentation logs into a living, breathing resource.

The true value of AI in a home cellar isn't about replacing the winemaker's palate but rather validating the critical decisions we make during the height of the crush. Throughout this vintage, I've used it as a technical sounding board to cross-reference the tolerances of my yeast strains and malolactic bacteria, ensuring that complex processes like co-inoculation are executed with confidence. Whether I am calculating nutrient dosages or researching the specific properties of a new additive, having a 24/7 technical resource allows me to spend less time second-guessing the chemistry and more time focusing on the quality of the fruit.

Beyond simple calculations, AI has transformed how I use my data. By digitising my handwritten logs, I can now effortlessly compare this year's fermentation curves against previous vintages. This historical perspective is a gamechanger; being able to see exactly how a Melbourne heatwave impacted a past ferment versus the current mild autumn temperatures allows for a level of proactive temperature management that was previously difficult to visualise. It has turned my *notebook* from a static record into a predictive tool that helps me plan my next steps, from the ideal moment to press at the perfect Baumé, to the best way to integrate oak for that subtle hint of spice.

Ultimately, integrating AI into the winemaking process is about adding a layer of certainty to our craft. It provides a modern way to *Share, Learn and Enjoy*, offering a sophisticated tool that supports our traditional methods. For any member looking to sharpen their focus and reduce *vintage anxiety*, bringing a digital assistant into the cellar might just be the most significant additive you use this year.

How to get started with AI in your winemaking:

- Validate your *what-ifs*: "If my pH is 3.4 and I'm using EC-1118 yeast, what is my risk of a stuck ferment at 18°C?"
- Digitise your logs, analysis and compare and validate assumptions.
- Deep dive into additives: Ask for the specific temperature and pH tolerances of your chosen commercial yeast.



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
2029 (Grape)	Best Alternative Variety Red	TBA
2028 (All)	Best Sparkling	TBA
2027 (Country)	Best Mead	TBA
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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18 Panther Place, Eltham 3095

Ph: 0468 300 764
E: office@nillumbiku3a.org.au
<https://nillumbiku3a.org.au>



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Local Food Connect

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.
