

# ELTHAM AND DISTRICT WINEMAKERS GUILD

ESTABLISHED 1969

**JULY 2020**

*The Guild encourages the responsible consumption of alcohol*

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

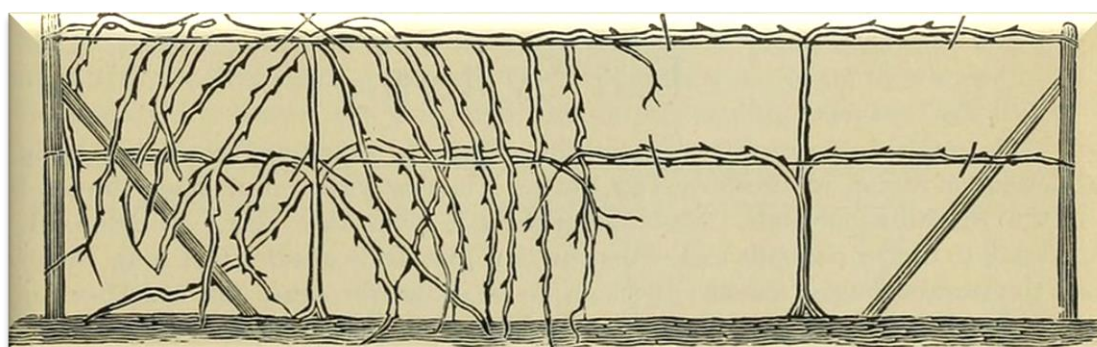
***at the Eltham Living & Learning Centre at 7.45 pm***

***Next meeting: Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2020***

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

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C. Mitzky & Co, [Our native grape. Grapes and their culture. Also descriptive list of old and new varieties](#), 1893, p34.

### Guild Nights

Once again, we will be presenting our Guild Night in July via ZOOM Meetings. This month we have Marianne Smith, an award winning cidemaker from Langwarrin. Join the meeting and get tips on cidemaking for your entries in the 2020 Eltham Wine Show.

The official part of the meeting kicks off at 8pm on 31st of July, however we will open the meeting for a general chat between members at 7:30pm. Meeting connection details will be on Samepage the day before.

If you have any ideas about anything you would like discussed at our guild nights please let me or any other committee member know! I'm particularly interested in finding something to accompany our AGM in August – traditionally a night for mulled wine, but in these abnormal times we can try anything!

### EDWG 2020 Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held at the August Guild Night, with the official AGM proceedings kept to a minimum. I would like to encourage anyone who is interested in contributing to the running of the Wine Show and the Guild in general to nominate for the committee. These days committee meetings are held online, so you don't even have to leave the comfort of home on these miserable winter nights. No driving – but do remember to drink responsibly!

### Eltham Wine Show 2020

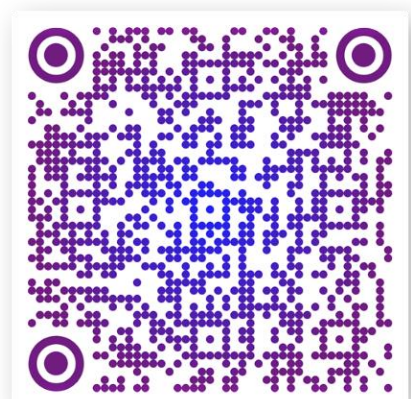
The Wine Show Committee are committed to presenting a wine show in 2020 – if possible. While we may not be able to have a Public Open Day with tastings, presentations and be joined by our sponsors, we are looking at some creative alternatives so that the judges can assess your wines and you will be recognised for your winemaking achievements. Remember, there is still time to start a batch of Cider, Kombucha or Mead and make some adjustments to those grape wines that have been sitting in the shed or cellar over the cold winter months.

### Vintage 2021

It's not too early to start planning for vintage 2021. Think about having a break away from your normal Shiraz & Chardonnay and try something 'alternative'. Check out Danny and Glen's piece below, and the lively discussion at the Grape Purchase Team on Samepage.

### Wayne Harridge – President

1. Point your phone's camera at the QR code.
2. You should see a notification asking if you want to go to the website where the QR code is pointing.
3. Tap on it to open the link and go where the QR code wants to send you.



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## 2020 Committee & Committee Meeting Dates

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<b>President</b>	Wayne Harridge	<b>General</b>	Trevor Sleep
<b>Vice President</b>	Danny Cappellani	<b>Committee</b>	Bill Loughlin
<b>Secretary</b>	Mario Anders		Graham Scott
<b>Webmaster &amp; Treasurer</b>	Mario Anders		Angela Harridge
<b>Assistant Treasurer</b>	Bill Bussau		Trevor Roberts
<b>Past President</b>	Mario Fantin		David Chambers
<b>Wine Show Chief Judge</b>	Sandrine Gimon		
<b>Wine Show Director</b>	Mario Fantin		
<b>Membership Co-ordinator</b>	David Chambers		
<b>Newsletter</b>	Angela Harridge		

Members elected to positions on the Guild Management Committee meet every month. Meetings alternate between General Guild and Wine Show business.

### **Committee Members**

Wayne Harridge, Mario Anders, Danny Cappellani, Trevor Sleep, Bill Bussau, Mario Fantin, Bill Loughlin, Graham Scott, Angela Harridge, Trevor Roberts, David Chambers.

### **Guild Business Meetings**

Agenda: Guild Night Program, Membership, Winemaking Education Initiatives, Social Events, Financial, Website, Guild Promotion.

Meeting Dates (Wednesdays): 12 August, 14 October

### **Wine Show Meetings**

Agenda: Marketing, Logistics, Sponsorship, IT, Judging, Financial, Governance  
Committee Members plus Sandrine Gimon (Chief Judge) attend these meetings.

Meeting Dates (Wednesdays): 16 September, 11 November

### **Visitors Welcome**

Members are welcome to attend committee meetings as visitors. New ideas and suggestions for improvement are most welcome. If you would like to attend, please contact the President or Secretary.

## Forward Program for Guild Events



Planned activities have had to be Cancelled or Postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. We will keep you updated as to what we are able to do via Samepage and the [Website](#).

The Committee are investigating presenting Guild Nights online ... so keep  ...

\*More information to come \*

DATE	ACTIVITY
Friday July 31 <sup>st</sup> * 	<b><u>Monthly Guild Night</u></b> <b><i>Making Cider</i></b> Marianne Smith, an award winning cidemaker from Langwarrin will discuss tips on cidemaking for your entries in the 2020 Eltham Wine Show. Keep an eye on Samepage for more details.
Friday August 28 <sup>th</sup> * 	<b><u>Monthly Guild Night</u></b> <b><i>AGM</i></b> – traditionally a night for mulled wine ... so grab your own and settle down to <i>mull</i> over the candidates for the Committee positions.
Friday September 25 <sup>th</sup> *  ?	<b><u>Monthly Guild Night</u></b> <b><i>Members' Wine Entry Tasting for the Eltham Wine Show</i></b> (entries close October 24 <sup>th</sup> ) Bring along any wines you are considering entering in the Eltham show: any vintage – any class. We'll taste, discuss and offer ideas for last minute tweaks.
October 17 <sup>th</sup> or 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>Nillumbik Open Cellars Lunch</u></b> Choose your own Open Cellars to visit then meet up at a Winery (TBA) for lunch and info sharing.
Saturday October 24 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>Closing Date: Eltham Wine Show Entries</u></b>
Friday October 30 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>Monthly Guild Night</u></b> TBA
November 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>Final delivery date:</u></b> Eltham Wine Show
Saturday November 21 <sup>st</sup>	<b><u>Eltham Wine Show:</u></b> Judging Day
Sunday November 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b><u>Eltham Wine Show:</u></b> <i>Public Open Day</i> 12pm – 4pm
Friday November 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b><u>Monthly Guild Night</u></b> Final meeting of the year and Wine Show debrief.

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## The Grape Group

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Danny Cappellani & Glen van Neuren



Years ago (2006), at the suggestion of Richard Neagle, four of us (Danny Cappellani, Geoff Neagle, Bill Bussau and Zenon Kolacz) travelled to Houston in NSW to explore the Chalmers' 'Italian Connection'. The Chalmers Vineyard had 36 experimental varieties of grapes of Mediterranean, mostly Italian, origin. Our group returned from there with several different varieties of grapes – this led to the formation of *The Grape Group*.

Over the previous ten years, Bruce Chalmers had established his 'dream' nursery and vineyard following numerous overseas trips, quarantine periods and enormous financial input. Bruce and the Chalmers family have built a nursery that supplies Australia and New Zealand grape growers with precious rootlings of different, alternative varieties. The Chalmers have two vineyards at Merbein and Heathcote, where grapes of 56 alternative varieties are grown and made available to winemakers throughout Australia. Chalmers also have their own brand of wines – *The Murray-Darling Basin Collection*, which are available online.

In the Guild's last vintage (2020), fifteen Guild members participated in the *Grape Group* process. This proved to be useful, particularly as the local grape season ended unsatisfactorily due to a lack of ripening.

*The Grape Group* event is on again this year! You are all invited to participate!

There are four varieties of grapes on the *suggested* list. These are Barbera, Montepulciano, Marzemino and Teroldego. Of the four, only two will be chosen, by a majority vote.

Members must express their interest by the **31<sup>st</sup> of July at the latest**, as we must put in our order by then. At the end of November, those members that expressed interest will be asked to commit to taking the grapes. Collecting the grapes will occur roughly in mid-March, given normal weather conditions. This, of course, is as subject to change as is the weather!

We are hoping that members will keep taking up this exciting opportunity to explore the wonderful world of grape wines.

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### **Want to join in? This is what you have to do ...**

There are 2 actions to complete:

1. Please provide your preference of red wine variety by numbering all from 1 to 4 as your preferred choice e.g. 1 is your most preferred, 4 is your least preferred.
  - Barbera =
  - Montepulciano =
  - Marzemino =
  - Teroldego=
2. Provide the quantity required OR your preference to join the barrel group (collectively - the barrel group will make wine together in an oak barrel).

Please reply via the Samepage *Grape Purchase Group* or email Danny at [grapegroup@amateurwine.org.au](mailto:grapegroup@amateurwine.org.au)



## Barbera

... a variety that was Danny's family 'work horse' in their vineyards in Istra. The role that Barbera plays in Italian winemaking is as important as Cab Sauv's in Australian winemaking. In Italy it is the third most planted variety behind Sangiovese and Montepulciano.

A good grower, with good yields and good resistance to infections.

Its main feature is its high acidity, which allows longer periods on the vines for better colour and maturity.

*Wine notes:*

Deeply coloured wine with notes of dark cherries, blackberries, black mulberries and ripe raspberries. Also high on anthocyanins.

Danny recommends this variety as it will play a big role in your winemaking, especially being a good blender.

Recommendation #1

## Montepulciano

... the second most planted variety in Italy, named after the town and mountain in Tuscany. Grown widely throughout Italy but strangely not much in the region it was named after. Not to be confused with *Montepulciano Nobile* wine which is made mostly from Sangiovese. The grape is often mistaken for Sangiovese.

Suspected origin from ancient Greece after the fall of Troy.

*Winemaking characteristics:* a light and non-tannic wine can be achieved by truncating the maceration early, and a full-bodied wine will result from well-ripened fruit with a long maceration early, and a full-bodied wine will result from well-ripened fruit with a long maceration. Like our beloved Shiraz, Montepulciano must not be picked unripe as it will deliver the dreaded grassy character that we all fear.

*Wine notes:*

Plummy, pink cherries, raspberries, white pepper and medium to soft tannins when fully macerated.

Much treasured in Italy. Delizioso!

Recommendation #4

## Marzemino

... a variety that is strangely grown mostly in the cooler regions of Northern Italy, including the Trentino Valley (3000m above sea level) considering it has a long and late ripening season.

The grape and wine appearance are similar to Ruby Shiraz, and so are the wine notes.

*Wine notes:*

Plummy, light red fruits, white pepper and spices.

Like our Shiraz, it is often blended with Barbera or Colorino. Said to be a cousin of Refosco del Penduncolo. Famous for being in the opera *Don Giovanni* where Don Giovanni asks for a glass of Marzemino just before his deliverance to Hell. That's handy to know!

Recommendation #3

## Teroldego

... mostly grown in the Tirol region of far Northern Italy, thought to share the same parents with Shiraz (Dureza). Also likened to Primitivo/Zinfandel.

*Wine notes:*

A deep coloured wine with lavish alcohol, fresh berries and white peppers.

Great for ageing and drinking fresh. Very high on Anthocyanins.

Recommendation #2

## *Pruning Workshop 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020 ... you should have been there!*

*Graham Scott*

To start off this was not just about sharp secateurs and chopping into vines. The focus was on canopy management and how pruning is only the first step in a full canopy management program.

We met at Margot and David Pope's vineyard at Coldstream. What a piece of paradise! Shangri La comes to viticulture. Margot gave us an outline of what they have been doing in the vineyard. See the attached notes she gave out. The group then checked out some vines which the Papes had pruned up to the point of making the last decisions.

Question to the group: What should we do to finish these off?

Answers: ?? ? What? You want us to make decisions? Help!!!



But the group got into it and the discussions were the best part of the day. We had to take into account this particular vine, how it had developed to this point, what was needed to fill out the space now, and what that would mean for the developing canopy in three months' time.

After that it was into the pruning of our own vines, under the watchful direction of David and Margot. And it was then that we saw how the experts went about it. To see and hear David crank up his electric pruning saw and attack vines made us realise he wasn't joking when he said that vines are forgiving things. They can take a lot of beating (reforming was the Pope's way of putting it!). Even Danny, who had dropped in to get some bottles was fascinated.

All the prunings from each vine were neatly packed up and taken back to the house for the next part of the workshop. The problem was that everyone wanted to check out David's cellar. This is modelled on a small Hobbit's out house, but amazingly everyone disappeared into it. Graham went looking for the tribe and found them deep underground, deep into wine glasses and deep into bibulous discussion. It almost took a cattle prod to get them up into sunlight, but they all came, clutching their glasses and muttering oenological obscenities.

Then the surprise. It appeared that David had had a fall and needed help to finish the pruning. All eyes turned to look at this cherubic picture of rude health who moments before had been plying them with the best of his cellar. Was he really crook? Nevertheless, the Guild members, being such a supportive cohort, agreed to help – but first they had to know more about the vineyard. How vigorous was it? What level of buds could it support? Would they need cane or spur pruning to get the right balance? And this is where the bunches of prunings became important. Weigh them, count the nodes, count the lengths of the canes, and then do the sums.

Bewilderment settled on the group.

When was the last time you did long division by hand?

Isn't there an app on the phone for this?

Crikey, what does this figure mean?

All would be revealed after the break.

But the break became another distraction.

Tea and coffee were going to be the basis for some serious discussion. That notion went out the window when the Harridges plonked down a bottle of their own, David brought in some of the bottles that had already been tasted in the Hobbit house, and we discovered that Danny had left a glorious platter of salami, black olives and a breadstick. The party was starting to take shape. Not to be outdone, Angela had cheeses and biscuits and pomace jelly, Graham added to that and Margot produced her lemonade scones. To cap it all off David suddenly appeared with a freshly smoked trout – and we were just one course from an all-out orgy!



Getting them to discuss their findings on the health of the vineyard took real effort. The focus was elsewhere but it did happen, and the Popes were delighted to find that their vineyard was rated in good shape, moderate in vigour and could stand pruning for a higher than usual crop. The talk then was on how to manage the future canopy so that sunlight and air could penetrate. Notes were passed around looking not only at different pruning techniques but also at trellis designs.

So, what did we learn?

- Firstly, that Margot and David are consummate hosts. They made us more than welcome and shared their knowledge and ideas freely. Huge thank you and admiration.
- Secondly, that pruning can and must be flexible. You can change from spur to cane pruning if the need is there.
- Thirdly, that a pruner always has to keep thinking: What will this look like when the canopy grows? That is what guides your pruning decisions.
- And lastly – we now know why David has won so much praise for his wines for so long. He controls the process right from the vine to the bottle. There is a big lesson in that for all of us.

The Popes have marked the vines we pruned and will call us in spring after bud burst so that – hopefully, with fingers crossed – we will be asked back to see the effects of our handiwork.



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## *My Vintage Year ...*

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*An interview series where we interview your fellow EDWG members.*

*Was this their vintage year?*

*by David Chambers*

Today it's Karen Coulston

I must confess to not knowing Karen, only having met her at her place a couple of years ago for a test of my first Cabernet Sauvignon that I produced ever. My first impression was how helpful and welcoming she was. My obvious lack of knowledge was an embarrassment to me, but she was patient and thoughtful and walked me through the rudiments of where I was at with my wine making. It occurs to me now that, looking back to that time two years ago, you think you know a lot about red wine and then you don't.

Karen produced a chart for red wine. She laboured through the process of recording daily my hydrometer reading and explained the curve to the point all the sugar would be converted and, like magic, wine remains. To me this was only notionally understood.

I expect, over the years, a considerable number of people trod the path to her lab and, very diligently and carefully, Karen has tracked the process in her mind to the member clutching the wine sample. David Hart tells me he has fond memories of the time he first met Karen at a Northern TAFE College. She has impressed David with her white wine making skills, and he seems unusually excited by her Airbag Wine Press. He also acknowledged her many attendances and judging at Amateur Wine Shows over the years. She is a Life Member of the EDWG for good reason. A glimpse of her very interesting wine-making life appears below.

*Dave: Karen, did you ever drink anything other than wine in your early years?*

Karen: I liked still dry cider when I lived in England and couldn't afford good wine.

*Dave: Have you ever thought that the path you have been on could have had a different outcome? Or to put it another way, what would you have done differently?*

Karen: The evolution of my career through research chemistry, through winemaking then around to wine chemistry was wonderful, but I do wish I'd fitted in architecture as well. If we hadn't bought the property at Yarrambat I'd probably have stayed a wine drinking scientist with an artistic bent, but then the architecture interest played out here too

*Dave: What is your first experience that you remember that led to an interest in wine?*

Karen: Being introduced to Coonawarra reds when being wined and dined by affluent young men who were trying to impress me in the heady Canberra 70s

*Dave: Did this lead to making your way in the Wine World and eventually lead to the hobby of making wine?*

Karen: No, this started when my non-affluent husband (who loved red wine too) and I made fruit and kit wine fermented by the gas fire in gallon jars when we lived in poverty in London. The lead into real winemaking came when we bought the Yarrambat property with a small rundown hobby vineyard on it, and I had to learn to do something with it. Many courses and a degree in wine science later the Wine World had me hooked.

*Dave: What is an interesting unknown fact about you that members may find interesting?*

Karen: I was Miss Barwon Heads beach girl 1969. What a floosy!

*Dave: Can you tell us about the wildest party you attended? Probably in your youth but maybe not?*

*Karen: It has to be a Monash friend's 21st birthday party on election night 1972. I remember the political hype, the mauve flared pants suit and it was dry!*

*Dave: What are you making now?*

*Karen: The Pink Bastard, a rosé made from my U3A wine appreciation friends' backyard grapes (plus purchased Pinot Noir from Shaw's Road this year). The unknown grape provenance and help with pressing and bottling by the gang lead to its name and the pride we all have in it. Back to hobby scale (130L) is more difficult than commercial scale!*

*A Guest question: David Hart*

*David: Karen, we know you are very good at white wine making. Have you ever had an interesting red wine experience while travelling around with your Airbag Press?*

*Karen: I usually loved pressing reds in my airbag press – great smells, no grape stickiness, 2 tonnes plus in each batch, skins like paper at the end. This was a Shiraz press near Geelong. The Shiraz had been on skins about 3 weeks and was totally dry. We must pumped it into the axial feed of the press with lots of lifting of the skins in the open fermenter. The advantage of this is you fill the press quickly as it drains while you're filling. This time the skins were so disintegrated that they blocked the slots in the stainless steel drum and, even with rotation of the drum, we were being showered with red wine (very good red wine, what a waste!) throughout the fill and press cycle. Anyone could see I'd pressed red wine that day. It wouldn't have happened with Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinot Noir, but soft skinned Shiraz was a challenge. Great yield in the end.*

*Dave: You have educated yourself with regards to your career in wine. Where did you pick up your wine making skills?*

*Karen: I didn't pick up the skills – Charles Sturt's sound education (B App Sc (Wine Science)) and years of experience with my and clients' wines taught me a thing or two about winemaking. Teaching wine chemistry taught me even more.*

*Dave: This is probably a silly question given the technical interest you have in wine. Are you into the intellectual part of the discussion about wine? Wine can be so many things to so many people. But what does it bring to you?*

*Karen: I love the whole experience of drinking good wine. I rarely drank my own wines, preferring to drink better, and now I spend a lot of money on fine wine and nearly as much on fine food to match it. I don't even share the exceptional bottle – I'll savour it over 2 nights so over-indulgence doesn't spoil the ecstasy. I do like to philosophize about the happy balance of art and science in winemaking.*

*Dave: Are you a pedantic, fussy winemaker or do you prefer to feel your way along steady-as-she-goes-it-will-work-out-in-the-end?*

*Karen: I follow the guidelines (not rules) but think a good winemaker should read the grapes by tasting and smelling and being experimental – if experience suggests you can make a more interesting wine by a little deviance.*

*Dave: What is wine making to you? I suspect it is not just another hobby but a consuming passion that excites you. Is this true?*

*Karen: These days it's not the winemaking but the quality of drinking that I'm passionate about. I'm still in awe of the top winemakers who add a touch of magic to the grape product.*

- Dave: What are you excited about for the future of home wine making?*
- Karen: The quality improvement in the wines submitted to the wine shows is remarkable. What particularly impresses me is the improvement in traditional (European) wine styles as younger generations apply some understanding to the wines their grandfathers made, often with faults, earlier.
- Dave: What inspires you to make better wine? Have you ever entered the Eltham Wine Show? Is it the Gold medals or the knowledge that you are ever improving on your skills?*
- Karen: Experience and understanding count for heaps. I have 2 (I think) best of show awards from the Eltham Wine Show but I expect better of my winemaking each year. Perhaps not now that I am back to hobby scale, my sophisticated equipment and good purchased grapes certainly helped when I was commercial.
- Dave: Who or what has been your biggest influence in wine making?*
- Karen: Winemakers like David Lance, Clare Halloran, Kathleen Quealy, Steve Morris and CSU lecturers were great mentors.
- Dave: I think you are a Life Member of the EDWG. How long have you been a member of EDWG?*
- Karen: I think I joined EDWG in about 1987 after meeting 2 members at a short course in winemaking run by a TAFE. The course was pretty terrible, but I learned heaps from my new friends.
- Dave: What have been the positive surprises of your membership of EDWG?*
- Karen: The shared experience of the old timers and the enthusiasm of the youngsters (under 40s).
- Dave: What were you drinking in your twenties?*
- Karen: Outside of dining in restaurants like The Lobby in Canberra or Leondas in Melbourne, it was flagon red.
- Dave: If you could tell the young Karen about life, what advice would you give?*
- Karen: Be experimental, take a few risks, especially in wine drinking.
- Dave: Enlighten us with a couple of your favourites wine tweaks?*
- Karen: Acid and tannin trials. It's amazing what 0.5g/L tartaric acid or 0.1g/L grape seed tannin can do to make a good wine better (or worse, that's why you trial).
- Dave: I have heard in my short time with the guild some complete disasters while making wine. What is your biggest disaster you can share with us?*
- Karen: In my own cellar it was ignoring a full 200L SS drum of Riesling. It was full and had its regular dose of SO<sub>2</sub> and I forgot it. Next check near bottling it was aldehydic and I couldn't get it back. I turned some of it into a mediocre Fino (sherry that we can't say anymore).
- Dave: I suspect I know the answer to this question, however, is making wine ever a financial consideration for you?*
- Karen: My husband used to say he worked to support my folly. *Hills of Plenty* was always only a token expression of my winemaking, though the press service paid for the air bag press purchase easily, and the hospitality of clients made the provision of service a pleasure above what I charged for consultancy. I was a hopeless salesperson and gave away as much *Hills of Plenty* wine as I sold.

*And finally ...*



**Dave:** *You are going to a desert island to spend some chill time. You are taking with you one piece of music, one bottle of wine, a book and food. What will be placed in your suitcase?*

**Karen:** The music would have to be an album by Leonard Cohen.  
The bottle of wine a Burgundy grand cru from Nuits St George, with mushrooms, truffles, olives and tomatoes on sourdough. Can I have duck pate as well?  
And the book? *Oscar and Lucinda* by Peter Carey.  
All together? May be overload of the senses!!



In the Hills of Plenty  
vineyard



Boots under the press



The press in action  
Squishing grapes



### **Richard Webb : 2019 Lagrein – a tale of three barrels**

#### **The story begins**

It all came out of our Street Drinks one week in 2018. My neighbour Frank opined that the only good red I ever made was a 2008 Lagrein. So, I asked my mate Ian to ask his mate to look around for some Lagrein for next year (his mate has a huge vineyard near Mildura). Ian promptly forgot. I didn't, and pestered him, but nothing seemed to come of it.

Meanwhile I heard about Danny organising a grape buy and ordered some Lagrein from Chalmers. Maybe 200kg they said. I figured that would be better than nothing if Mildura fizzled out.

Christmas came and went. My mate Ian holidayed with Sam on his Mildura vineyard and when he returned to Hawthorn announced that Sam had found half a tonne of Lagrein and was I still interested? Yes - fortunately, another neighbour Denis enters the action: he, Ian and I will share the barrel of Lagrein.

#### **Grapes arrive**

The Chalmers Lagrein duly appears in February, 140 kg. Fermenting, it doesn't smell like I remember Lagrein, but we have a busy vintage with 300 litres of sparkling and some Yarra Sav Blanc all requiring whole bunch pressing. (If you have never done this it's tedious in the extreme.) And half a tonne more Lagrein coming.

Time passes. I set up the garage with a borrowed 1000 litre vat – better be sure than sorry – and a “torpedo”. Mildura has 40 consecutive days of +40C, surely the Lagrein is imminent – but all I hear from the grower is “Lagrein no good, you should have got “Saperavi”. Finally comes the 'phone call: they are machine harvesting Lagrein Monday, so we tee-up Pickering's Transport for a half tonne of Lagrein on a pallet, and a trailer to pick it up from their Melbourne Depot. What could go wrong?

#### **Half a tonne – Not**

Come Monday morning, the phone call: Lagrein all picked and transported to Pickering's Mildura Depot, went really well. Oh, and by the way, there is One Tonne. Bugger.

We didn't have a trailer strong enough nor a suitable car to tow One Tonne. So, Nick – did I say that Nick is another partner in this operation? – rounds up suitable transport at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour and we head out to West Footscray to the Pickering's depot rather late in the day. Interesting drive home in peak hour traffic with a tonne of grapes on board. Dark by the time we get to my place and the problem of getting the trailer of grapes into my garage via our narrow bluestone cobbled back lane. Yet another neighbour steps into the breach and the five of us struggle the trailer into the garage. Fortunately, it fits. Now we have to empty the 1 tonne Pallecon into the fermentation vat. With buckets of course.

Denis – remember Denis? – steps up, strips to jocks, and jumps into the Pallecon like a true champion to empty the bottom half. Now it's time for the laboratory work. Baume is 11.7, pH 4.0. Oh. Bugger.

#### **The Cold Soak**

The fruit was well sulphured in the Pallecon so we left it overnight, the Baume always comes up overnight and with all that hot weather there will be some raisins.

The Baume didn't come up overnight. So, allowing for one baume from the raisins, we sugared the must for an extra ½ % alcohol and went in with the good Clos yeast and seemingly vast amounts of tartaric acid.

## **The Ferment**

It was a wonderful ferment, I have to say. After a good pump over the Lagrein aroma filled the garage. DAP went in – ½ on day two and another ½ at 6 Baume – and every time I pumped it over it smelt good. We got to 30C and it smelt divine. Came time to press off and Nick brought his press over, so we had two on the job. So much fun. We pressed hard to ensure that the raisins all were squeezed out. The Chalmers Lagrein went in too and, with pumping over, the blend also smelt like proper Lagrein. The Laffort bacteria zipped through the malolactic fermentation in no time at all.

Another friend loaned us a barrel so that was One. Then Nick emptied two of his barrels so there were Three (just).

## **The Trials ...**

Then we got the % alcohol analysis back from the lab. 12.4%. Didn't seem like enough, and the wine tasted pretty thin. Should have added more C.S.R. Bugger. So much for the raisins.

There was also the matter of the 3.9 pH. Oh, and I forgot to mention the insipid colour.

So here began the saga of trying to get more body into the wine so that, as well as smelling like proper Lagrein, it might also taste like the real thing, and also doing something about the awful pH and lack of colour.

The acid addition trial showed that even 0.05 g/l extra tartaric acid made the wine taste too sour.

The alcohol addition trial (using a very clean, neutral grappa) had interesting results: it improved the wine's body, mouthfeel and overall balance, but totally overwhelmed the Lagrein character. We could have a nice wine if we didn't want it to taste like a Lagrein it seemed. What to do?

## **... Travels ...**

I had to go to Europe, so the wine went into wood. When I came back home, with the time in wood, the wine had become darker and tasted better. So much that come the 2019 Wine Show we had One Barrel that tasted almost like real Lagrein, so we entered it with great hope and the “normal” amount of SO<sub>2</sub> for a Show sample.

## **...Tribulations ...**

Remember that pH? Mr Rankine suggests that a wine of pH 3.6 needs 50 ppm free SO<sub>2</sub> to prevent spoilage. Our wine was pH 3.9: we entered it with insufficient SO<sub>2</sub>. By the time it came before the judges it was oxidised: they gave it a raspberry.

Having learnt this lesson, we bottled that barrel with significantly more SO<sub>2</sub>. It kept well but didn't taste like Lagrein to me. However, it did pay back all the kind people who loaned vats, barrels and torpedos, thanked the grower and the grappa man, and became a down payment for Nick, Ian and Denis. They all seemed happy with the wine. I got two dozen I think out of the 24 dozen, but there were still Two Barrels, one for me and one for Nick.

## **... and Tannin**

Nick is a tannin freak, so we explored the wonders of packet tannin. Lagrein is notorious for its tannin, so they say, but at that stage ours certainly wasn't. So, yet another tasting trial, this time for the best of three tannins.

Can you believe we did five tasting trials with this wine trying to get it to taste like proper Lagrein? Acid adjustment, alcohol adjustment, another acid adjustment, another alcohol adjustment and finally a tannin trial.

Have we succeeded? Hopefully, you can try it yourself at the 2020 Wine Show and see what you think.

I'm still not happy with the wine. It does not taste like I remember Lagrein tasting.

## **Real Lagrein**

Shortly after Vintage my wife and I headed over to Europe to see our son who was in Zurich for one semester of study for his Masters. So, amongst other things we slipped over the border into Italy and went Lagrein tasting in the Alto Adige. Those wines had 14.5% alcohol, deep colour, strong varietal characteristics, and big tannin. All the nice ones were four years old.

Does the strong varietal character only emerge after time in the bottle?

I hope. And, as My Barrel of Lagrein ages in my cellar, it does seem to be slowly getting darker and richer. There is enough for some to be left at 4 years of age. See it at the 2023 Show!

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## Jo Illian Awards – Forward Thinking

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Keep an eye on the Jo Illian Awards beyond this year and the next few years. The 2020 Jo Illian is for Previous Vintage Chardonnay – so have a taste of your 2019 and earlier Chardonnays to see if you think you have a winner! And, if you haven't already, try to source some luscious fruit and start making Raspberry Wines for 2021.

<b>Show Year</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>Winner</b>
2022 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Less Common Variety Red – other variety (RLP)	TBA
2021 (Country)	Best Berry Wine	TBA
2020 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Chardonnay (WCP)	TBA
2019 (Country)	Best Stone Fruit Wine (CST, Any vintage, Any Style, Includes CSP)	Noel Legg
2018 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Cabernet Sauvignon	Geoff Neagle
2017 (Country)	Best Mead Wine (CME, includes JAO)	Trevor Roberts
2016 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Pinot Noir (RPP)	David Hart
2015 (Country)	Best Country Wine (excludes Hybrid, Sparkling, Liqueur)	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 Current 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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