



Diggers Bluff Wines

Digger's Note Book

Issue# 7

Digger's Season 2009

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by Tim O'Callaghan

G'day,

Tim from Digger's Bluff Wines here just to give you a quick update on what's happening in our beautiful part of the world.

I would like to tell you about the current state of the vineyards, the progression of the wines and the possibility of a new idea of having in-home tastings and sales for groups of 15-30 people in your own home, with yours truly.

For more information please read on.

2009 Season

Well so far so good. As most of us know we have had hard, dry weather for the last couple of years. Fortunately we have had some good winter rains this year and the vines are responding accordingly. It was fantastic to be out in the wet weather gear pruning through good hard and steady soaking rains, in the winter a bit of hail never goes astray. The rivers were flowing after the dams had filled and during the sunny bursts the Barossa glowed with green cover crops, rainbows and glistening gum trees. The rains have continued into spring and with luck will keep coming for a while yet. As usual we have hand pruned our vines with short fruiting canes which will ensure even growth and nice big bunches of ripe fruit. This leaves us with less yield but that is worth it for the quality. Our vineyard manager Dan Rowe has trained up some new pruners this year which is gratifying to have the skills passed on as it is difficult to find good pruners with traditional skills. Once we finish the rod and spur pruning we moved onto bush vines which is a tad more back breaking than your trellis vines because they are low to the ground. Their tiny stature gives them giant strength in hard hot conditions which is always possible in a Barossa summer. With bud burst came a frenzy of tractors throughout the Barossa, slashing crops and turning soil. In our case we use what is called a dodger plough to work under the vine, this replaces herbicides. It is also known as a silly plough, it takes hours of intense concentration and can leave you with a sensation of sea legs with spotty vision. I was lucky DAD helped do this while I was on the road. The upside is no weeds are immune to dodging and the worms live too work the sub soil for us. So it looks like we are on the way to a good season, but you never know, so fingers crossed.

Moving on now to the wines we have.

09' Lap Dog

The Lap Dog consists of 65% Semillon, 30% Chenin Blanc and 5% Alicante Bouchet. It is not too sweet with a cheerful salmon colour. Great drinking for the oncoming warmer months. Rose style wines have never been my favourite but I find this wine to be more of a white wine in its characteristics. Semillon is a variety that grows well in the Barossa and can have a strong flavour but with the Chenin Blanc combination I have really created a refreshing easy drinker.

06' Stray Dog

The Stray Dog is 60% Grenache, 25% Shiraz, 15% Mataro. I am really impressed with this wine; it has begun to age beautifully. This wine was originally made to be a simple wine good for the barby and of course affordable. To my delight it has developed into a complex wine which I am now sure will continue to grow for some years to come. A good way to see how long a wine may last is to open a bottle and try it over a few days. The last time I tried this on the Stray Dog I got a good 3 days out of it, this would indicate probably another 5 – 6 years life at least. I put a lot of this longevity to the fact that the Grenache came off some 60 year old bush vines which produce great natural acid balance. Natural acid balance is the best preserving component you can have but it's hard to achieve.

07' Sly Dog

This is the second innings of the Sly Dog in the Diggers line up and still holding true to its debut. The thing I love about Barossa Cabernet is it can easily be confused with Shiraz because of its dark colour and huge fruit flavours. Fruit flavour is something I talk about a lot, not because it is a trendy phrase, but because it is what I achieve in my style of winemaking. Barossa Cabernet is an under appreciated variety in the Barossa, with your help it can re-claim it's true place as one of Barossa's esteemed varieties.

03' Watch Dog

The original of the Diggers Bluff line up and in my opinion still the best. It is truly a pleasure and an honour to be able to have a 6 year old wine on offer. This wine will always be made to the traditional blend of 2/3 Cabernet, 1/3 Shiraz. This combination fits the fruit provided to us in the Barossa and is a wine I love to make. I use a combination of different vineyards keeping each parcel separate through the entire 2 year process. I then take each separate barrel and make the blend by experimenting with all the different characteristics of each barrel. All of these barrels are of different ages (1 – 8 years old), also from different forest and countries (French, American, Hungarian). The end result is a kaleidoscope of flavour with a wonderful lasting finish and is drinking so well now! Enjoy!

06' Top Dog

This big Barossa Shiraz is another happy story. This wine is made from vines that are near 100 years old and were lovingly rebuilt by Dan and myself, this process took 3 years before we received any real return. It was only a 2 acre block which means there is very little of this wine available. As with all our wines it was hand picked and delicately crushed, leaving many whole berries in the ferment. After a 5 day fermentation it was pressed in the old press by hand, nice and slow. On some occasions I will press for up to 30 hours. The slow pressing process is one of the reasons this Shiraz can be so big but still soft, with this and a combination of some of the best barrels available I have achieved a great wine.

In Home Tastings

Diggers Bluff is a very small wine business this means I'm shut out of about 80% of the wine market which it's controlled by just a few giant retail and wholesale operations.

The great advantage that I have is that I can sell my wine directly to people who can share in the fun and drama of making a small wine business work.

I have done this with a percentage of my wine from the very beginning. Like many winemakers I was courted by exporters and wholesalers during the boom. This pressure meant that more of my wine went in that direction than I would have liked. Although this moved a large volume it did not give me or the people I was dealing with the pleasure and loyalty that personal tasting and direct sales do.

I've seen the light, so from now on a smaller percentage will be sold through a few independent retailers, selected restaurants and export. This will give me more time and stock to build on the solid base that my loyal direct mail customers have given me.

To help this happen, I would like to put a proposal to you.

I would like to bring my little piece of the Barossa to your home. If you gather your wine loving friends together, I would bring my wine, myself, with up to date gossip and information directly from the source. This kind of tasting can be done in many ways, a tasting with a bit of bread and cheese, a casual BBQ, or as a part of a more elaborate dinner.

I know how well this works because when I was a young lad of 13 or 14 years, my father took me to Melbourne when he was doing private tastings at the very start of Rockford. Most of these customers and their children are still with Rockford, he also met some lifetime friends at these tastings.

Because Diggers is just me and the dog, I'm very flexible, so give me a call. I'm sure we can do something that will make it very special and rewarding for both of us.

I thank everyone for the support you have shown me so far and look forward to your feed back.

All the best.



 DIGGERS BLUFF

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