



Over a barrel...

newsletter of Bannockburn Vineyards

2013 accompanies the seasons of 2010 and 2012 as being very good, perhaps even great. I think they are all contenders for 'best ever' vintage here at Bannockburn.

The growing conditions throughout the 2013 season were very stable with nothing too out of the ordinary. Not too hot and not too dry... just right! Flavours were a little slow to arrive so some of the alcohols were a little higher than other years as we waited an extra week or so to get the flavours that we were after. The wines may be a little less 'mineral' than previous years but make up for it with a little more mid palate grunt and presence.

The various single vineyards of pinot noir from 2013 are frightening. They are weapons and I cannot wait to unleash them onto the unsuspecting wine landscape in 2 or 3 years time... probably on a full moon. They are what I like to call 'undeniable'. The character of the 2013 vintage seems to be that of great richness, weight, presence and power. The reds have great colours and tannins as well as great seductive mouth feel. The season was quite masculine but there is enough juicy plump fruit to make them accessible... at least for now. The single vineyard beasties are still at least a year away from bottling so there is still plenty of evolving to do.

As for the whites... the new **2013 Riesling** was made along fairly similar lines to the previous year with wild fermentation, full solids and old oak puncheons all being employed to explore phenolics, flavour and texture. This 2013 version is considerably leaner than the 2012 with an alcohol of 11.5% as opposed to the much higher 13.5% in 2012. This was a deliberate move as I felt we were right on the cusp with the alcohol in 2012 and although the wine was received extremely well I could not help but feel that the alcohol was perhaps a smidgeon too high.

The wine has a bit more colour than some would expect from a young Riesling but this reflects its winemaking history with the use of wood and also a much delayed addition of SO₂. In fact it received no SO₂ until October! This allows extra flavour and textural evolution to occur... indeed it allows the wine to be more 'expressive'.

The nose of the wine is at first quite varietal with plenty of lean citrus fruits whirling around but as you come back to it you will find more and more characters. It is quite multi-faceted and complex for a young Riesling. There are creamy lees notes as well as some stony mineral elements.

The palate has good natural acidity and plenty of texture. It is not a heavy, big boned wine. I think the lower alcohol keeps the wine in a more 'ethereal' state meaning it is quite light on the palate. Don't be fooled into thinking it is thin or dilute... there is plenty there just in a light frame.

I suspect that, like many low alcohol wines, this will get better and better with time.

The **2013 Sauvignon Blanc** shows much more of the 2013 season characters than the Riesling.



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It swaggers in with 13.5% alcohol and you really cannot miss it in a crowd or a line up. I am always excited by new releases but I really think that this could be the best Sauvignon Blanc that I have made. The winemaking is similar to the last few years with the use of wild ferments, solids, skin fermentation and both French Oak and Italian Acacia puncheons being employed. This year the mystery addition of Riesling was 6% but no Chardonnay was added... I simply did not have enough Chardonnay to spare.

The straw – yellow colour of the wine is appropriate for a wine that has spent almost a year in wood without SO₂. It certainly does NOT look like a tank fermented example of Sauvignon from Marlborough... why should it? The nose is striking and is probably the most accessible that I have made. There is immediately a smoky, savoury aroma with hints of bacon fat and charcuterie. There are also some subtle 'gravel' characters... it really is very complex and quite beguiling. The palate has real presence. There is great mid palate fruit weight and lots of texture. It is a real mouthful.

This is VERY serious sauvignon blanc!

Next up is a wine from another 'star' season... the **2012 '1314 a.d.' pinot noir**. The first ever release of this wine was with the 2011 whereby due to the unusual season we declassified about 10,000 L of pinot noir from the Bannockburn label and released it as a 'second label' at about half of the price. It has proven to be a BIG hit and has opened the doors to many drinkers who wouldn't normally contemplate buying a serious Bannockburn pinot. It is important to note that the fruit that goes into the 1314 a.d. is from our youngest wide spaced pinot noir vineyard called 'Ann's Block'. In low yielding years like 2007, 2009 and 2010 this fruit went into the Bannockburn. In higher yielding years like 2006, 2008 and 2011 it was declassified. This fruit is still handled as if it was going into the Bannockburn blend, meaning it is still dry grown and full of whole bunches in the winemaking. The 2012 fruit was good enough to be in the Bannockburn blend but pressures from the trade to continue the supply have meant that this 2012 1314 a.d. is a stunning wine at a ridiculous price. It will knock over pinots at twice the price with ease. It also carries its 100% whole bunches with immaculate ease and is a great illustration as to just what all the fuss is with regard to stems and pinot.

It has beautiful aromatics... in fact you can smell this wine from at least a foot away. It has a very complex nose incorporating all manner of descriptors including spice, chocolate, rose and red currant. It is lovely. The nose carries to the palate which has an attractive balanced mouth feel. It is quite long and is not at all heavy. There are lots of different flavours going on. It is very multi-dimensional. All in all, it offers up a really interesting, engaging and enjoyable drink.

The 2011 growing season was unusual for Bannockburn due to the relatively gentle growing conditions compared to some previous years. With slightly higher than average rainfall and slightly cooler temperatures, our yields came in about 1/3 higher than normal. Across the range the wines show good varietal fruit character along with freshness, lift and charm. I regard the wines as being more classically varietal and more restrained than the typical Bannockburn power, texture and "attitude".



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The fruit for the **2011 Chardonnay** was whole bunch pressed before being transferred without settling to French oak puncheons of which 1/3 were new. Nothing was added... no enzymes, yeast or acid. Following fermentation by wild yeasts, the wine was allowed to go through a full malo-lactic fermentation in the following Spring. The wine remained on lees for 2 years before being prepared for bottling.

This 2011 Chardonnay captures the Bannockburn "seashell" characters, there is also fresh lemongrass and ginger, roasted nuts and crème brulee flavours all beautifully integrated. Another classic Bannockburn Chardonnay.

Next in the line-up we have Bannockburn **2011 Stuart Pinot**.

As always, this wine is made from the best parcels of fruit from our oldest Pinot Noir vines and Stuart Pinot prides itself on its individuality.

With the cooler and slightly higher rainfall conditions of 2011, much consideration was given as to the use of whole bunches in a season that is going to naturally produce lighter, elegant, perfumed and more "feminine" style of Pinot Noir. The 2011 season here at Bannockburn although far drier was not dissimilar to an average growing season in Burgundy. Drawing on the experience of producers of great Burgundy we decided the Stuart fruit could handle the 100% whole bunches but the fruit was picked much riper than usual to assist with mid palate weight. It has proved to be very successful and we have opened yet another door of secrets in the use of whole bunches.

Unlike the previous vintages of Stuart which did benefit from a few years of taming in the bottle, this 2011 is more approachable as a young wine with fragrance and charm and the slightly higher alcohol which has resulted in more generosity on the palate... a wine ready to drink and enjoy now.

This is the second release from our De La Terre vineyard, close-planted at 10000 vines/hectare. Although still a young vineyard, the ridiculously low yields of 500g/vine have already resulted in some amazing results. De La Terre is situated close beside our Serre' plot and seems to produce an inkier, wilder, spicy and more masculine expression of Pinot Noir compared with the elegant, fragrant and more reserved Serre'. This could be due to the gentle slope on which it is grown with north-south row orientation as opposed to Serre's east-west rows on a level site. Or maybe the selection of clone 777 whereas Serre' is planted with the MV6.

In 2011, 75% whole bunches were used in the winemaking and the wine spent 12 months in 1/3 new barriques followed by a second year in 5 year old barriques.

2011 De La Terre has amazing complexity... cherries, rhubarb, leaf compost and meaty savouriness... its all there and more!

Introducing the first release of our new close-planted Shiraz vineyard... **2011 De La Roche**. Dry-grown and planted (at a density of 10000 vines per hectare) using cuttings derived from the



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pedigree vineyards of Bests and Tahbilk. The fruit was fully destemmed and fermented using natural yeasts. It spent 12 months in 1/3 new French puncheons followed by a second year in 5 year old barriques. The result is an elegant expression of cool-climate Shiraz, fragrant with black cherries, liquorice and a touch of exotic spice, a medium bodied palate and fine tannin finish.

The 2010 vintage was a great season for most wine-growing regions of Australia and at Bannockburn it will be regarded as one of the best ever! Across the range the Bannockburn wines show power, richness and length as well as a good measure of "attitude". Bannockburn Pinot Noir is our most contentious and polarising wine. In many ways it is our most unique and most demanding of the drinker. Pinot Noir reflects the growing season far more than our other varieties, placing pressure on the winemaking decisions that need to be dynamic and adaptable. You need to be able to abandon all pre-vintage winemaking plans, respond to conditions and "ride the wave" of harvest.

Bannockburn Pinot Noir is a wine to be savoured and discussed and enjoyed. The **2010 Bannockburn Pinot Noir** is no exception. 100% whole bunches, a natural yeast fermentation and no additions were used in the winemaking. After 4 weeks of being daily pigeaged, the wine was transferred to 1/3 new French barriques for 12 months maturation.

This is a savoury style of Pinot with dark fruits, charcuterie, cinnamon spice and leaf mulch complexity. A perfect wine to drink with cassoulet.

Another brand new release from this star vintage is the **2010 Douglas**. I have to say that I really never expected the Douglas to be so successful. Since its initial inception as the 2006 Bruce it has gone from strength to strength and found supporters from people who know next to nothing about wine right through to winemakers who are intrigued by the winemaking philosophy behind it. We have always tried to make a unique and serious wine that reflects Bannockburn. Couple that with an attractive 'buy in' price and away it goes. People love it and can afford to love it!

The 2010 Douglas blend is 47% cabernet sauvignon, 20% shiraz, 9% merlot, 6% malbec and the secret ingredient... 18% pinot noir! After the more structural 2009 Douglas, this 2010 beastie is a little more elegant and accessible. Having said that, it will benefit from a good decant and a splash to open it up a bit. It is 47% cabernet after all.

The wine has a bright and clear appearance with a red, brick, mahogany colour. The nose is very complex, quite tertiary in style with savoury meat and charcuterie notes dominating. After a decent splash around in a bendy decanter some varietal cabernet characters start to show up with leafy, tobacco and chocolate notes. The palate is surprisingly quite soft and well balanced which is where the 18% pinot noir addition has helped immeasurably. There is very good line and length and good fruit presence. It is a lovely wine that will get better and better in both the cellar and the glass.

Lots of good things to drink and / or to cellar.