STEELS CREEK ESTATE

NEWSLETTER

Steels Creek Estate

Winter 2016

Welcome



The days have at last become chilly signalling the arrival of winter. At Steels Creek we are busy getting ready for our annual **2016 Shortest Lunch festival on 18 & 19 June**. We have released 2 great new wines at cellar door this month, our 2014 Chardonnay followed closely by the 2013 Colombard. The last few days of autumn have been magnificent so we are now also getting stuck into the pruning.

The 2016 harvest concluded with another intriguing vintage - the weather gods are definitely trying to teach us the lesson of "expect the unexpected" and don't grow complacent. The winemaking is complete for another year and the wines are now all tucked up in their French oak barriques and have been placed in the barrel room to mature. Read about our challenges "In the Vineyard"

At the Cellar door

Two great new wines were released in May as the previous vintage of Chardonnay and Colombard sold out.

Our 2014 Chardonnay is already proving popular in its first couple of week's release. The 2014 Chardonnay was whole bunch pressed straight to a French oak barrique, barrel fermented with the wild yeast from the vineyard. Lean and crisp with a refreshing citrus overtone and lingering finish, well rounded on the palate with aromas of sweet oak, pear and white nectarine. Note we did say a barrique, 2014 was a very low cropping year so we do only have 300 bottles of this great wine.

This week we released the 2013 Colombard. James Halliday gave us **89 points** for this wine and said - "Has all the lemony acidity expected of the variety and has been well made in its overall context."

Colombard is not perceived as a prestige grape variety in the industry so it is difficult to get it taken seriously and achieve high scores. This is the highest rating and nicest comment that Mr Halliday has ever made about our easy drinking and refreshing Colombard. As the only Colombard producer in the Yarra Valley we know many of you love this fun wine, now we are proud to say it has a very credible rating too. (89 points are for wines on the cusp of a silver medal, so you can see why we are chuffed.)



We will be kicking winter off with the **Queen's birthday long weekend 11 till 13 June** and to make the most of the last official long weekend of the year we will have our 94 point 2013 Cabernet Franc on tasting.

Newsletter customers can enjoy our winter wine offer at cellar door - 1 bottle of 2013 Colombard for any 6 bottle purchase or 1 2013 Colombard plus 1 2011 Shiraz for any 12 bottle purchase.

Shortest Lunch

Winter signals it is time to get ready for the shortest lunch, in less than 2 weeks' time. We have 2 great new wines on tasting – see "At the Cellar Door". Many came looking for our **Cabernet Franc** last year – we

are pleased to say this year its back! We had enough fruit in 2013 to make just 290 bottles of this elusive wine so make sure you get your hands on a few of them.



Ben and his quirky retro caravan food truck **'One Pablo'** will be back for **2016 Shortest Lunch**. On Ben's mouth-watering menu will be a hearty beef and burgundy with baby onions, mushrooms garlic mash and fine herb salad. Perfect to warm your tummy on a winter day. Vegetarians will be treated to Roasted vegetarian lasagne with truffled pecorino, served with a rocket and almond salad. Ben will cooking One Pablo's famous hot Churros with cinnamon sugar and hot chocolate sauce for only $5 when you are ready for something sweet.

Don't miss the chance to experience our fine wines with delicious food and live music. Celebrate the weekend of the shortest day of the year on **June 18 and 19** with Steels Creek Estate. We look forward to seeing you at our place. For full details of this year's event go to www.shortestlunch.com.au

In the Vineyard

Mother Nature gave us another tricky harvest for 2016 reds. A very dry and warm autumn meant that the grapes reached sugar ripeness very quickly, the problem was that it was just sugar ripeness. None of the other signs of ripeness were there. Grape seeds turn a rich walnut colour when ripe, in under ripe grapes the seeds still have green patches. Under ripe fruit also has green flavours, for example Cabernet Sauvignon has capsicum flavours and if picked too early these will show up in the finished wine. Leaving the grapes on the vine longer would give us a big alcohol (hot) wine with none of the usual finesse of cool climate wines. Picking now would give us the alcohol level we wanted with disappointing flavour.

Neither option was appealing so we came up with a plan for a third option – try to trick Mother Nature by watering the vines. Our golden rule is to never water once ripening commences and we were breaking that rule. A real balancing act, too much water dilutes the sugars, that's good, slows the ripening, that's bad! Every 2nd night we gave the vines a small amount of water to replicate the occasional showers we normally have in autumn. Over a stressful 2 weeks we managed to stretch the time on vine allowing the flavours to develop without gaining too much more sugar. It was a relief to finally harvest and begin the wine making process. We saw a lot of vineyards pick early this year when fruit had only reached sugar ripeness, hopefully we will be rewarded for holding our nerve for the extra 2 weeks.



The vines are dormant now and the remaining leaves are awaiting the next blast of chilly winter winds to remove them. A couple of perfect days at the end of autumn/beginning of winter gave us wonderful blue sky days in our "office" to begin the pruning so we made the most of it.

In the Winery

The onset of winter means that the wines commence the maturation process. With 2016 chardonnay and the reds all in barrel they will require regular checking for development of the essential flavours and palate characteristics. The issue for the chardonnay is oak integration without being over bearing, so with one new barrel added this year we will be monitoring (tasting) regularly. The reds, having gone through the second fermentation, will be monitored for their flavour development. All wines in barrel will require regular topping up to prevent too much oxygen exposure. Our Colombard is in a stainless steel tank on its lees to develop flavour and textural complexity. This will be tasted regularly and then made ready for bottling before the end of spring.

The next significant winery operation will be deciding when to bottle the 2015 reds that have all but completed their maturation in oak. They will be made ready for bottling by racking the wine from the barrels to remove any remaining solids and ultimately put to stainless steel tanks just prior to bottling.

Opening times

We are now open Monday's giving you another day on which to visit us.

Our opening times are now Friday from 2pm till 6pm and on Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Public Holidays 10am till 6pm.

All our current wines may be ordered online at www.steelsckestate.com.au or you can simply call us to place your order. Remember, we offer discounts for six pack and twelve pack purchases and free freight to the Melbourne metro area and excellent freight rates, courtesy of Australia Post, elsewhere in Australia.

We hope you enjoy our "little" catch-up.

Cheers,

Simon and Joanne

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