

SNOW ON WINE

Down Under DOWNUNDER

By Dr. Jeff Snow

G'day Mates – I was asked to share a “wine report” of our trip to Australia – so here goes: After three wonderful weeks in Australia Julie and I arrived home Monday, March 23rd (having scrambled a bit to find flights). Often called “the land downunder,” we spent our first 5 days down under (or south of) Australia itself in Tasmania, an island (about the size of Washington State) where a Yank can learn a thing or two. For starters, a Pademelon is not a cantaloupe-like fruit but a tiny cousin to a kangaroo, wombats are marsupials, but their pouch is upside down, and excellent wine is actually produced there. Dicky Austin gave me a tip that he once had a great sparkling wine from Tasmania. Everyone knows Australia produces great wine, but neither I or any of my other “wine friends” had knowledge of any wine from Tasmania.

Within an hour of reaching our hotel in Hobart, Tasmania (a Spokane size city with an ocean port) I had found “Cool Wine,” a shop with a wine savvy owner -- very “VINO” like. Around the shop’s perimeter were arrayed wines of the world’s appellations. In the center was a “shrine like” double-sided rack 5 x 7 feet devoted to the 72 Tasmanian wineries. With a cool marine climate, this island is all about Pinot noir, which isn’t grown elsewhere in Ausi-land, due to the dry, hot climate on the main continent. The rest of Tasman grapes are Pinot Gris and Chardonnay.

After listening to detailed, mouthwatering descriptions of wines from Tasmania’s four appellations, I left “Cool Wine” with a bottle of P. Gris, and 3 of P. Noir (all appellations covered) and headed back to share with Julie. From the East Coast wine trail, **Devil’s Corner 2018 Resolution Pinot Noir** – intense flavors, cherry, red berry and spicy earth. Along the Southern wine trail, **Derwent Estate’s 2017 Lime Kiln P. Noir** – a rose scented nose and fresh berry fruit with firm smooth tannin and good acidity. Out of the Northern Tamar Valley, **Tamar Ridge Cellar 2018 P. Noir**. – aromas and flavor of ripe dark cherry, with spicy, savory character with fine balance and soft silky tannins. Oh, and that bottle of **P. Gris** – fragrant white stone fruit nose, with tastes of peach, mango, and spice, excellent balance and mouth freshening acid. With wallaby spring rolls and meat pies, nothing is better. All of the wines we tasted were priced between \$20 & \$30 Australian (\$1 Aus. = \$.65 USA). We also drank a **Tamar Ridge sparkler** – a blanc de blanc of Chardonnay and Pinot, made by the method traditional which they call “Methode Tasmanoise” – exquisite! – could easily have been from Epernay.

On day 6 we flew to Melbourne. Then to Alice Springs, on to Uluru, up to Cairns and Great Barrier Reef, and finally to Sydney. All wonderful places and with good wine. On this jaunt around continental Australia we had excellent wines: Shiraz, Bordeaux varietals as well as S. blancs and Chardonnays, but rarely did we see Pinot Noir, and even then only ones from Tasmania or another continent. Without fear of contradiction I say that Shiraz is at it’s best with a Kangaroo steak grilled medium rare!

THE LOWDOWN ON DOWNUNDER - What a gem we found in Tasmanian wine, but really to experience it one must be in Tasmania as little is exported. Between meals and tastings we delighted in their Pinot noir (5 of em), Pinot gris (2 of em) and sparkling wine made of Pinot noir and Chardonnay by the same method as Champagne. Sure, we drank Shiraz, and Cab. blends after we got onto the Continent of Australia, but as Pinot lovers we found Tasmania near heaven, and the wine there the best we experienced on this visit. And we discovered that Wallaby, which is delicious, goes well with the P. Gris.



Toast at sunset at Uluru with
Tasmanian champagne



Feeding a Pademelon (didn't eat these)



COOL WINES, TASMANIA

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