



BANNOCKBURN

Over a barrel...

newsletter of Bannockburn Vineyards

The first wine to be released from the exceptional 2009 vintage is our Sauvignon Blanc. Drought conditions experienced during the growing season of the 2009 vintage led to our harvest tonnage being down by two thirds. We consider ourselves fortunate that we did not have to contend with additional problems associated with frost damage, bushfires and smoke taint as suffered by many wineries around Victoria. Despite the ridiculously low yields, below average temperatures leading up to harvest has resulted in some very exciting fruit intensity across all varieties.

The **2009 Bannockburn Sauvignon Blanc** was fermented in 50% new puncheons by wild yeasts and remained on lees for a year. It has a clear, bright straw colour. The nose is rich and intense with smoky, chalky, mineral characters backed up by ripe melon fruit. The rich fruit carries to the palate which is full and intense. The lush fruit is supported by good acidity which also provides good length and persistence. Without a doubt, one of the best Sauvignon Blancs made by Bannockburn.

The **2008 Bannockburn Riesling** continues to be made in the Germanic style that began in 2006 and has proved to be so popular. This vintage has been bottled under screw cap to retain freshness. If you like this style we suggest that you buy up stocks as there was no 2009 or 2010 Riesling produced at Bannockburn.

It has a youthful straw colour with a green tinge. The nose is very restrained with sherbet, chalk and mineral aromas combining with some subtle citrus characters. The palate is very reminiscent of a young Mosel with a lovely balance of sugar and acid. Loads of flavour, yet low alcohol, creating a sensation of brightness on the palate. Only 80 dozen made.

We have held on to a small amount of the **2006 Bannockburn Chardonnay** for mailing list customers who may have missed out on this release. The 2006 is the first of the "new style" Bannockburn Chardonnays which are tighter, leaner and more textural than the earlier offerings. The 2006 vintage was close to perfect, and is the sort of season we always hope for – dry, mild, warm and without incident. The 2006 Chardonnay was fermented with wild yeast and spent 2 years on lees in a combination of 1/3 new barriques and stainless steel tanks.

It has a clear bright appearance with a yellow straw colour. There are hints of grapefruit, ginger, figs, roasted nuts and mineral undertones. An amazing complexity of characters and aromas. The palate is beautifully balanced with all components well integrated and a finish that goes on and on.



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The winemaking for the **2007 Bannockburn Chardonnay** was very similar to the 2006. However the season was very different – drought and hot temperatures resulted in our yields being down by 2/3rds. As a consequence, the 2007 wines are all displaying great fruit intensity and richness.

The 2007 Chardonnay is clear and bright with a yellow straw colour. The nose is quite complex yet still restrained. There are almond meal characters as well as citrus, mineral and rockmelon notes. There is a lot of depth. The palate is very full and rich in the mid-palate. Some good acidity keeps the weight in check and provides length. The wine goes on and on with excellent persistence. The palate is quite seamless.

Like the 2007 Chardonnay, we only produced a small quantity of this current release **2007 Bannockburn Pinot Noir**. This wine is an excellent result from a difficult, hot, dry season. The use of 50% whole bunches was critical in retaining perfume and finesse in a season that was all about muscle and power. The 2007 Pinot Noir has a ruby red colour with great brilliance and clarity. It has a lifted nose with earthy, forest notes, rhubarb, five-spice and toasty oak. The nose carries to the palate which is of medium weight – fresh, light and ethereal yet with really good intensity. There is lovely balance and mouthfeel. A deceptively easy wine to drink!

Finally, a new release of Stuart Pinot! There was no 2007 made so it has been a long wait for people who were in love with the hugely successful 2006.

Like the 2006, the **2008 Bannockburn Stuart Pinot** also uses 100% whole bunches in the winemaking. Apart from that similarity, it is a very different beast from the 2006. In short, it is mad! The 2008 Stuart has a clear, bright dark red colour with brick-red hue. The nose is very complex with lots of leaf litter, forest floor and savoury mushroom characters. The aromas are more savoury, and less “primary fruit”. There is spice and perfume from the whole bunches but very high notes behind the savoury characters. The palate is rich and dark with plenty of structure. There is abundant fine tannin and some real presence. Quite a bold Bannockburn Pinot Noir. Only 100 dozen made.

Introducing my new “concept album” wine..... **2006 Bannockburn Bruce**. This first Bruce is a blend of Cabernet, Merlot, Shiraz and a smidgeon of Pinot Noir, the Cabernet component was left on skins for 3 months! In short, Bruce shakes off the conservative constraints imposed upon us and heads into uncharted territory, see the article at the end of this newsletter for a detailed explanation.

The 2006 Bruce is a dark red colour with a red hue. It has a lifted savoury nose of olives, dark cherry



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and leathery characters. The palate is also full, rich and savoury. There is a certain mid-palate sweetness which is balanced by very long fine “Italiante” tannins that drive right through the wine. This wine is all about texture, structure, expression and complexity, rather than simple varietal fruit flavour.

We have kept the best for last! release of **2006 Bannockburn SRH Chardonnay**. Named in recognition of Bannockburn founder, Stuart Reginald Hooper, this is the name given to 12 rows of Chardonnay vines halfway up the slope of Olive Tree Hill Vineyard. These rows produce quite different flavours from the Chardonnay grown in our Winery Vineyard and are quite different from Chardonnay grown 20 metres further up the slope. The vineyard is dry-grown and now 32 yrs old. I suspect that its roots are nicely embedded in the ancient marine sediments that form the bedrock in the area. SRH best displays the mineral, oyster shell characters that surely reflect the marine environment here in the early Miocene. The shoreline of this ancient sea is believed to be about 1 km from the vineyard.

The 2006 SRH was fermented “wild” in 1/3 new barriques and remained on gross lees for a full 2 years. It has a clear, bright appearance with trademark “Bannockburn green” tinges. There are creamy aromas with almond meal and crème brulee, also ripe varietal fruit aromas – grapefruit, lemon and melon. The nose is attractive but restrained. Restraint carries to the palate which is long, lean and tight. There is plenty of power driving right through the palate. The power is harnessed by the wine’s structure. An awesome wine that needs plenty of time in the cellar to uncoil. Only 100 dozen made.

After the great success of our 1997 Museum Release Pinot Noir, we are pleased to be able to offer you our **1997 Bannockburn Museum Release Shiraz**. On several occasions we have shown this wine to visitors in a blind tasting alongside a 1997 Alain Graillot Crozes-Hermitage. The Bannockburn handles itself very well.

It is dark red in colour with a brick-red hue indicating some bottle development. A very complex nose of rich fruits, black and white pepper and some savoury, meaty Rhone-like characters. The palate is surprisingly rich with a sweetness in the mid-palate – betraying its sunny Australian heritage. Make sure you stand for a few hours before decanting for maximum enjoyment.



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Bannockburn Bruce

My first trip to Italy was in 2002 and I had the very good fortune to work for Saverio Petrilli in Tuscany, Bruno De Conciliis in Campania and Alessandro Dettori in Sardinia, all winemakers of great passion and importantly, great philosophy. Despite differing varieties, soils and climates, all three men had in common an almost devout love of their land and an equally intense desire to make wines that spoke of their terrain with individuality and integrity. Each was desperate that their wine would not follow or defer to anything else.

I returned from Italy inspired to one day make something that was original and not simply a 'style', something that ignored the blinkered 'New World' winemaking rules and boundaries of what we can and cannot do.....I wanted to make a wine that demanded to be judged on its own terms and not how well it would perform in Class 42 of one of our wine shows..... I wanted to make a wine that drew on original ideas and apply them to the grapes at hand with the sole purpose of making something that uniquely reflects, first and foremost, the dirt from whence it came.

The opportunity to explore the aforementioned philosophy arose when in my first vintage in 2006 I was faced with how I was going to make Bannockburn Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot. Tasting it from various vintages going back 15 years it was apparent that the wine could be quite tannic when young and the flavours were prone to being quite leafy. The wine certainly required a good 8 -10 years in the cellar to tame some of its savage youth. It was as if the wine had been made year in and year out with the traditional 'Bordeaux' model as the solitary frame of reference when in fact the wine desperately needed to evolve beyond this European template and head in its own direction.

So what to do with our mature, dry-grown and low yielding Cabernet Sauvignon if we accept that the Moorabool Valley is not the Medoc? What if I start by picking the cabernet a bit riper than 12.5 Be? Then leave it on skins for 3 months to polymerise the hard blocky tannins? Maybe blend some Shiraz and Merlot in, to help with generosity and flesh out the mid palate? What if I gave the wine a little lick of whole bunch Pinot Noir to provide some perfume and charm? Then mature it in 125 litre barrels for two years to allow it to integrate and soften? Finally, like removing a straightjacket, let's remove the infantile varietal nomenclature off the label and give it a different name. A name that will perhaps change with the blend from one vintage to the next. Let's call it something that reflects both Australia and Bannockburn.....like 'Bruce'. So drawing from the final scene in 'Braveheart' when hero William Wallace is being disembowelled by the reigning powers, I cry out with my last breath: **"FREEDOM!"**