

MENTELLE NOTES

THE NEWSLETTER OF CLOUDY BAY AND CAPE MENTELLE

Fizzy Business

Antipodean sparkling wines have come of age, or have they? Australian wine writer Tim White tackles this effervescent topic just in time to help you decide which cork to pop this festive season.

July 1995. Returning to Sydney from a 'Gastronomic Mission' in Spain. Back home - quite rightly - everyone's foaming at the mouth over Chirac's antics in the Pacific. In the business class cabin of Qantas I'm offered a pre take-off glass of bubbly. And it's French. Champagne. Pol Roger NV I seem to recall.

'F*** Chirac', was my first thought and then I pondered. Twenty-three hours back to Australia. That's a long way without a decent glass of sparkling wine. When I raised the question about the appropriateness of serving 'French Champagne' given the current situation, the cabin crew explained that they had not been instructed to stop pouring it. That made me feel less guilty. Sales of duty-free French perfume were prohibited though. Thank God for that! The alternative offered to the champagne was a Wolf Blass sparkler. I stuck with a gently foaming glass of Pol.

Now, had I been offered Pelorus - honestly - or Domaine Chandon, or Hanging Rock, or any premium 'methode' from the States such as Scharffenberger, Schramsberg, Roederer Estate, I would have declined the champagne and happily taken the 'new world' alternative.

All are wines of a 'business class' standard offering complexity, vitality, and balance: the prerequisites for quality champagne or methode - a good word, I think, for describing so-called methode champenoise sparkling wines. Certainly, it's a clear way of differentiating from the mass of 'transfer' sparkling wines and those made with the classic champagne grape varieties pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay, 'tiraged' in bottle, and left on yeast lees for at least a couple of years.

The quality of new world methode improved out of sight in the past decade. Not because there have been any huge strides taken on the production side of things, although there has been a fair exchange of handy hints from old world to new world and vice versa. No, sparkling wine technology has been in place for years, just the grapes haven't always been taken from where they should've been to make the best bubbly. There is more to great sparkling than just picking table wine grapes under-ripe and employing the methode champenoise.

Site, position, elevation, climate - terroir - are as significant, indeed equal, contributors to the champagne success story as the methode itself. And while the chilly hills of Champagne may yield grapes with scary looking 'numbers' - high acidity, low sugars - the grapes do get 'flavour ripe'. The long northern European days see to that. In a good year that is, when the sun shines through.

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“Think for a moment about the style of sparkling wine we like to drink, rather than the one we like to be seen drinking...”

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The new world methode makers are far more fortunate than their contemporaries at a great champagne house. They can choose which cool part of the country to plant their vines.



*The young Widow Clicquot (computer enhanced)
— creator of one of the world's most successful 'fizzy' businesses.*

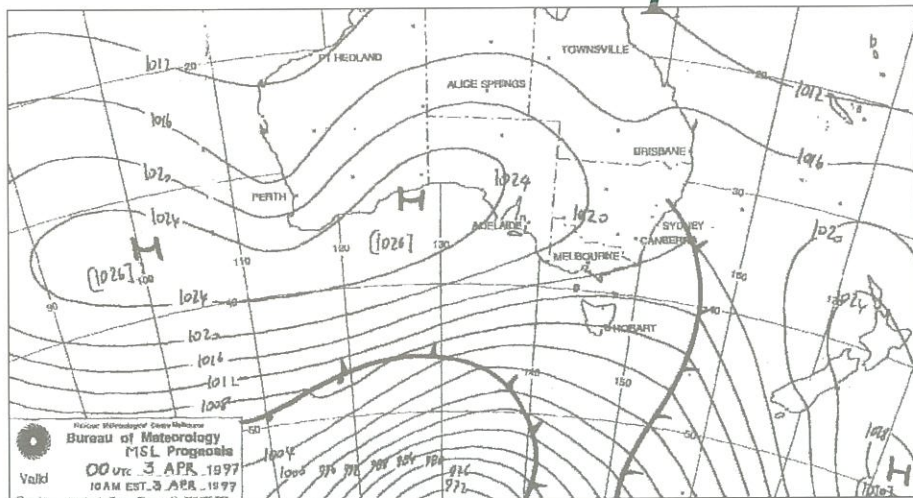
They can choose a spot which they understand to be nippy enough to allow grapes to flavour ripen while preserving good levels of natural acidity. They can choose whether they want to stick to one region or plant in several. And they can then decide how to trellis and manage those vineyards. In this way, the opportunity to make your methode as complex as possible begins in the vineyard. A notion every French vigneron would understand.

As the cool premium methode vineyards have matured so have the winemakers. They are no longer following a strict champagne recipe; after all, the fruit they are dealing with is not grown on the Montagne de Reims or the Côtes des Blancs. It will come from Marlborough, the Yarra Valley, from Tasmania, or the Anderson Valley in California.

continued over page

NEW
RELEASES

On the Map



This weather map tells all you'll ever need to know about the 1997 vintage in Marlborough, and Margaret River. To the uninitiated they might just look like a bunch of concentric wavy lines, but they're not. They are the saviours of the vintage.

Meteorologist and proprietor of Margaret River's Green Valley winery, Ed Green offers this interpretation:

"Two whopping great high pressure systems rescued both regions from potentially soggy rain-soaked vintages. More technically put, these highs, cone-shaped cells of descending air, circulate in an anti-clockwise direction and they warm as they subside, like a melting jelly."

Typically, the nett effect is warm weather and gentle easterly winds. Occasionally, intrusive low pressure troughs can squeeze under the isobars but not in 1997, when the two highs held off all invaders for 10 days, allowing the fruit to ripen fully on both sides of the Tasman.

Winemaker Kevin Judd is an avid map reader and plots the new 1997 release thus:

Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1997

"Pale straw in hue, Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1997 shows very ripe varietal aromas tending towards pineapple and mango, underpinned by typical herbal and guava characters. Rich and well-balanced, the palate sings with lingering lifted tropical flavours."

CLOUDY BAY



SAUVIGNON BLANC 1997

Pelorus 1993

This was the inclement year that made basket cases out of Marlborough winemakers. However, even damp cold challenging years have silver linings, especially for bubbly makers.

Typically, sparkling wine grapes are harvested early in the season at lower sugar levels than required for table wines. So in 1993, despite the weather, the pinot noir and chardonnay grapes destined for Pelorus achieved trouble-free ripeness.

The resulting wine is consistently complex and rich, and according to its overseer Harold Osborne, should definitely be served (like the vintage) well chilled:

"With the colour of ripe wheat and a fine bead, Pelorus 1993 has aromas of lemon and soy capped by a subtle savoury yeastiness. The palate is full but dry with creamy, bready flavours that leave an impression of enticing richness."

FIRST CAB

Where would we be without geneticists, those scientific Inspector Cluseaus who solve DNA mysteries, clone plants and catch real-life criminal suspects? Where indeed.

One geneticist of note, American Carole Meredith, professor of oenology and viticulture at University of California at Davis, has come up with a fascinating theory - cabernet sauvignon, the king of grapes, is actually a half caste. Meredith contends it is "150 trillion times" more likely that cabernet franc and sauvignon blanc were the Bordeaux based sires of cabernet sauvignon, first recorded in the late 17th century.

And if she's right, the lineage is pretty impressive. The most famous cabernet franc is Chateau Cheval-Blanc, its peer the white Chateau Haut-Brion, a sauvignon blanc. Could it be that cabernet's deep complex and brooding nature stems from a liaison of the cherry and spice essence of cabernet franc and sauvignon's bright herbal edge?



Fizzy Business continued

The fruit from these places tastes different and the wines will evolve accordingly. Some méthode winemakers have, for example, refined the period their wine spends on lees picking up autolysis characters. Even so, most premium producers in the new world age their wines far longer than the legally required minimum in Champagne. There are many champagnes out there which are less champagne-like in their méthode than the best from the new world.

This still doesn't appear to make much difference for some consumers though. The very name Champagne is enough to guarantee purchase, irrespective of what's in the bottle. While the majority of wine drinkers, at least in Australia, appear to be quite contented to order a Coonawarra cabernet over a Bordeaux, or suck on a glass of Marlborough sauvignon blanc instead of a Pouilly Fumé, champagne prejudice is still widespread. And following the cessation of nuclear testing, conspicuous champagne consumption is on the rise. It's cool again.

I wrote of Australian méthode upon my return from Europe in 1995, "...the only shame about our current drinking habits is that it has taken the threat of a nuclear holocaust to get us to switch to what we should be appreciating more anyway". And that if the tests should stop, "...that we think for a moment about the style of sparkling wine we like to drink, rather than the one we like to be seen drinking..."

Now, I am not suggesting for a moment that the new world is up there with the very finest champagne, but the best are certainly up there with the majority of NV champagnes. They are certainly of a business class standard and I can but wonder why Qantas still persists in the selection of champagne in its business class cabin when the table wines are Australian.

If our vineyards and winemakers are showing maturity in their méthode, then so should we, the consumers. Perhaps it was for this reason that I ordered Pelorus to accompany brunch at Andiamo on Jervis Rd in Auckland. Instead of champagne at just a few dollars more. My friends and I drank two bottles and felt all the better for the experience.

Tim White's wine column appears in the Saturday Australian Financial Review. Find him online at: www.winescape.com.au/~timwhite

MAGIC MOUNTAIN MIXTURE

We're not sure why, but it seems the world's most intrepid female explorers have discovered a special energy-giving elixir - Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc.

Sorrel Wilby, presenter on *Getaway*, who has walked, cycled and climbed just about every continent and mountain including a 6500km traverse of the Himalayas, and a 17000km cycle through Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China and Thailand, insists on three must-have things on every trip: thermal underwear, pen and paper, and a bottle of Cloudy Bay!

Fellow explorer, Englishwoman Caroline Hamilton, who recently led the first all-female expedition to the North Pole, also insists on Cloudy Bay in her ration pack. But we're not sure if she used it as her celebration polar quaff.



The Cellar Fellar

Australian humourist and children's author Morris Gleitzman tackles the challenges of establishing a suburban cellar.

The day red wine first touched my lips I was hooked, even though the the tasting conditions weren't ideal. For a start I was only 4. And I'd been eating ice cream. I didn't get a chance to find out if the red was a cabernet or a shiraz. I asked, but the auntie who was drinking it just gave her hanky another lick and wiped my mouth again.

I didn't care. It left my tastebuds tingling with wonderful berry and spice characters, a superb fruit/acid balance and a delightful touch of middle palate tannin. (Though Auntie Thelma was a big tea drinker, so the tannin could have been from her middle palate.)

After the first taste I was desperate for more. I spent much of my childhood hanging around hopefully with a sticky mouth. But our local bottle shop owners couldn't have had hankies because they just used to hose me down.

In my teens I begged to be included when a bottle of red was uncorked. "Sorry son," the adults would say, "you're not old enough yet," and they'd give me a small glass of white. I always drank it with tomato sauce, but it wasn't the same.

Then, from my eighteenth birthday, I was finally allowed to indulge my passion. Ah, the ecstasy of ripe fruit. The smoky sensuousness of oak. The pert seduction of a plastic tap when the cash was short. My friends viewed my passion with amusement, partly because they were beer drinkers and partly because of the way I dipped my hanky in the glass and sucked it.

I still didn't care. As the years passed I fell in love with every red grape variety and every red wine district. But it wasn't until I was a young parent in my mid-thirties that I finally encountered the most sublime wine drinking experience of all – an aged red.

"What is it?" I asked the friend who'd poured it. "Aged," he said, and pointed to the label. 1977. Ten years old. I struggled with the concept of keeping a bottle of red longer than the drive home from the shop. "Have you got a time machine?" I asked. "No," he said, "a cellar."

In an instant my life was changed forever. Suddenly I knew that I too must have a cellar. What joy, as I went about my cooking and cleaning and adding oak chips to the kids' cordial, to know that a couple of meters below my feet dozens of bottles of red would be slowly and magnificently maturing.

Unfortunately the bloke in the unit under me hated the idea. He wouldn't even let me keep a couple of dozen behind his sofa. So I moved to a house and started excavating. "Dad," yelled the kids, "stop, the walls are subsiding. Our Kurt Cobain poster's got a double chin."

I explained to them that excavating was the only way to have access to a cellar. "No it's not," they said. "Think lateral."

"What," I said, "you mean the bloke next door's cellar?"

"No," they said. "A cellar doesn't have to be underground. It can be any space where the storage conditions are suitable except our room."

They were right. I hugged them both and promised them Grange topping on their ice cream. Then I pulled the hanging racks out of my wardrobe and installed wine racks. OK, my shirts would get a bit crumpled, but it was either that or try and balance bottles on hangers.

I took out my life savings and bought Penfolds, Henschke and Mentelle. (Just some bottles, not the wineries.) After laying them down carefully in the wardrobe, I began my long vigil.

I knew the main enemies of maturation were temperature fluctuation, light and vibration. I got myself a maximum – minimum thermometer and, after a few months of nervous record-keeping, concluded that the temperature variation in my wardrobe wasn't excessive, as long as I kept the door closed and didn't go rummaging for socks immediately after handling frozen food.

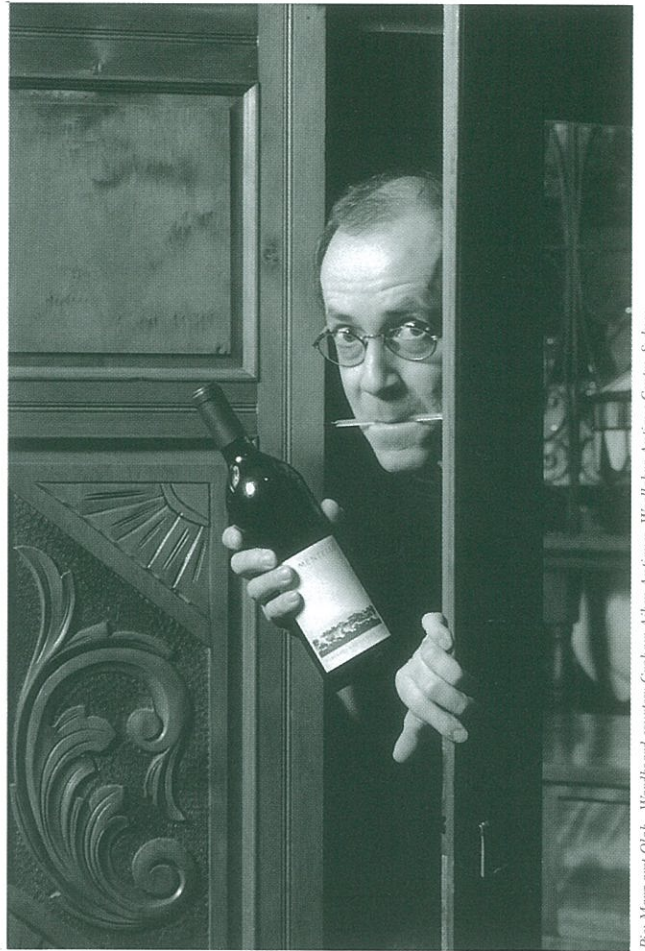
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"Ah, the ecstasy of ripe fruit.
The smoky sensuousness
of oak..."
—

Light wasn't a problem as all the lamps in my place were made from old red wine bottles and the sediment tended to keep the glare down.

The killer was vibration. If it wasn't the kids' music shuddering through the house, it was their friends forgetting to slide down the hall on their stomachs. I had to be really strict. For example, I had to completely ban the use of all vibrators in the bedroom, which wasn't a popular edict.

Even that didn't solve the problem. Our place is on an arterial road into the city and, as the years went by and smaller wineries were increasingly swallowed up by conglomerates, the wine trucks rumbling past got bigger and bigger. My wardrobe shook. I pleaded with Wolf Blass, but to no avail.

Salvation came from an unexpected quarter. I'd bought shares in a company developing instant red



Morris Gleitzman, the closet drinker.

wine in powder form, and when the company folded unexpectedly, I found myself with a pile of worthless share certificates. Imagine my delight when I found that, shredded, they made wonderful vibration-absorbing nests for my precious bottles.

I started my cellar ten years ago. Ten years of loving care and nurturing. Tonight, for the first time, I'm going to open one of the bottles. A beautiful mature Mentelle Cabernet. Just the thought of it brings tears to my eyes. Could someone lend me a hanky?

Morris Gleitzman is a children's author and a sophisticated adult columnist. His favourite drinks are mature cool-climate cabernet and orange cordial. His grown-ups' column appears regularly in the Sydney Morning Herald.

MUSTS

Cloudy Bay Dinner

Tuesday 4 November, 1997

French Café, Auckland

Bookings: Connie Clarkson

PH (09) 377 1911

FAX (09) 377 3823

Langton's Great WA Estates Wine Auction

Saturday 22 November, 1997

Cape Mentelle Winery

Details: Robin Birch PH (618) 9757 3266

Marlborough Wine & Food Festival

Saturday 14 February, 1998

Brancott Vineyard, Blenheim

Details: PH (03) 577 8977

FAX (03) 577 8966

Bacchus, I have sinned...

Wine education is a good thing. Australian Journalist Richard Glover remembers why.

Here's a confession about those of us on the *Mentelle Notes* mailing list: we all started out as idiots about wine. Well, most of us anyway.

Looking back, the period between my 15th and my 25th birthday was a headlong attempt to destroy my palate. If I'd have kept tasting notes, the whole period could have been described as a "nuclear attack on the back palate, with collateral damage to the front and middle."

The level of ignorance was huge. Talk to me about cold climate wines, and I'd have thought you were advocating some sort of glüwein. Take me to a French restaurant, and I'd point to the menu and order something, which when translated, meant "Service Not Included."

I've mentioned this dark past to a few others now passionate about wine, and they all make the same confession. Among all, there is much headshaking and bewilderment at what we once drank.

We want our youths back. And not simply so we can make wiser choices about clothes, hair style and Billy Joel. We want those nights of tasting back.

As Len Evans has depressingly noted, there are a finite number of wine-drinking nights in one's life. Which means a finite number of bottles. Every stinker is a good one you've missed out on forever.

Can't we have back that decade we wasted scoffing flagon red? Or those nights, at 16 and 17, when we drank Smirnoff straight from the hip flask, and thought ourselves highly sophisticated. Right up to the point at which we collapsed into our parents' rose bushes.

Do the Gods of wine accept confession, along the Catholic model? Could I call in on Bacchus, sit humbly behind the screen, and admit all my transgressions against the world of wine?

I would begin with my worst offence - the one committed at the University dinners of the late 70s, at which we students would work as waiters. The wine was fairly poor early in the evening - the customers' choice of carafe white or red.

But how much worse, late in the night when we waiters would get sick of trundling around with half empty carafes of both colours, and would retire to the kitchen, there to produce our late night masterpiece: "University Rosé."

It was a pungent drop - especially on those nights when a craze for 'Fluffy Ducks' or 'Blue Lagoons' would grip our customers, and the dregs of these would also find their way into the mix.

A sommelier who happened to wander in might wonder why the 'University Rosé' that night was so coloured, so strongly red.

Or so strongly, white. Or indeed why it had a particular tinge of blue.

Or the foaming head.

Oh, Bacchus, I am sorry.

Or what of the craze for port, which hit the campus about two years later. We bought it in large plastic bags, a syndicate going in together, and would transfer it into bottles on the kitchen table - at least half the volume mysteriously disappearing during the bottling process.

How do we have any palates left? How did we develop any appreciation of wine?

"There are a finite number of wine-drinking nights in one's life..."

My personal breakthrough came, as often happens, through a member of the family - one of my wife's uncles, a wine lover whose immediate family didn't share his enthusiasm.

The result was a cellar full of terrific wine, and no one to drink them. Stepping manfully - and hastily - into the breach: yours truly.

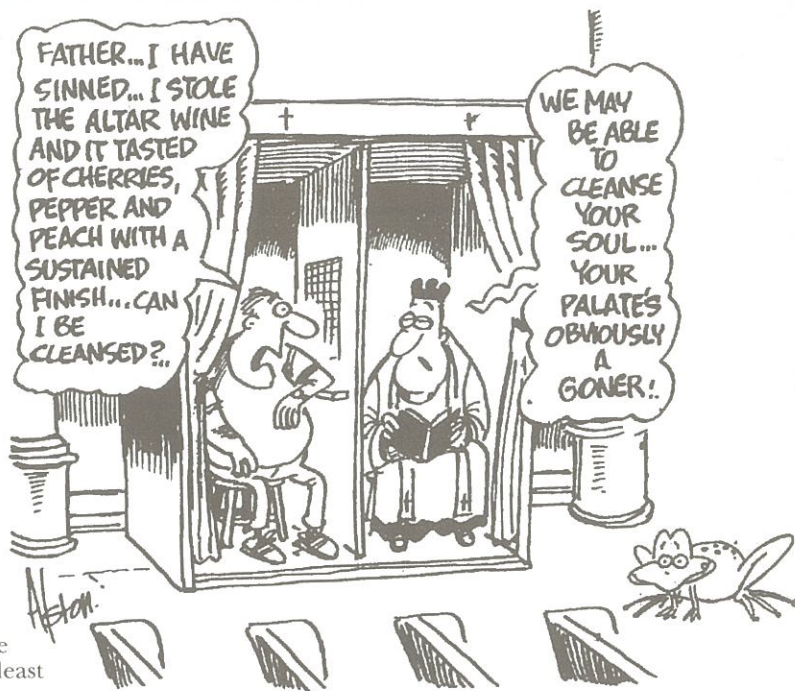
We shared some lovely bottles, the two of us, sitting under his house, with a corkscrew and some tasting glasses, him describing the taste and helping me to understand its subtleties.

But the best day came when I asked about wine that had gone off - what it tasted like; how to identify different problems. And my uncle's eyes lit up.

He had crates of the stuff. His wife's lack of interest in wine meant that for 30 years he had consistently over-stocked; consistently bought 12 bottles when 10 would have done. His cellar was full of wine that had gone off; wine for which he could find no use.

Until now.

We strode round the cellar, the two of us, with Uncle John gleefully reaching into dark corners, and whipping the cork out of bottles. "Taste this one son, by now this should be a real shocker." And then he'd explain why - teaching me to differentiate between all the faults that wine is heir to.



Upstairs my wife took tea with her auntie, both listening to our progress beneath the house - choking and laughing and spitting and shouting in taste-bud pain.

What was happening that day? I was drinking up my uncle's enthusiasm, along with his bad wine, and starting to learn about how to use the palate. I was being ushered into that wonderful and rich world beyond University Rosé.

And maybe something else. As I sipped yet another bottle of long-gone riesling, grimacing against the taste, I wondered if Bacchus had finally got his revenge.

Richard Glover can be heard on Sydney ABC Radio and read regularly in the Sydney Morning Herald. His cellar is modestly under-stocked.

Mentelle As Anything

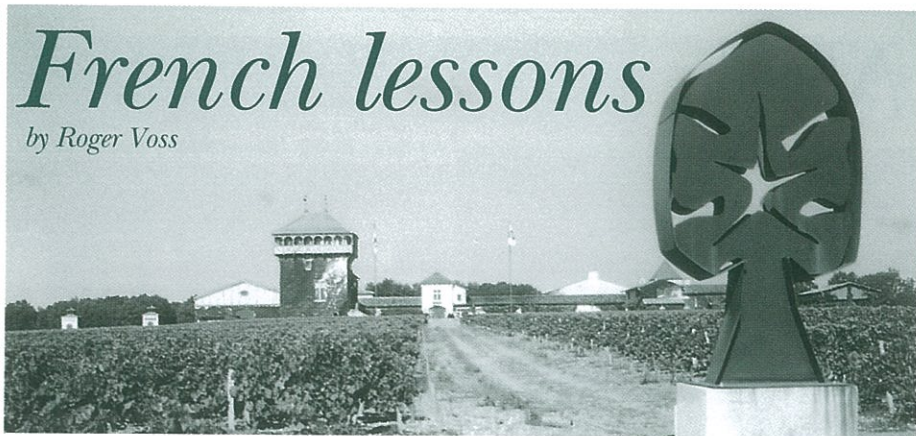
*"To read, or not to read,
That is the question.
Whether 'tis better to devour on sight
the Mentelle Notes
Or to delay reading them, and so
Prolong the pleasures of anticipation?
To wait: to linger on the rack of self-denial,
Which holds no pleasure oenological?
That one might tell temptation, begone!
No prey am I!
Nah, bugger it, give me the Notes or die!"*

*Allan Smith, Perth
after Shakespeare's Hamlet*

*Cloudy Bay and Cape Mentelle
wines are available from
your fine wine retailer*

French lessons

by Roger Voss



Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte in Graves, top producers of the classic Bordeaux semillon sauvignon blend. They also go in for rusty sculptures.

I know it is hard to imagine, but there is a group of Bordeaux wine producers you really should feel sorry for. They're the ones who make dry white Bordeaux. And the reason you should feel sorry for them is that, despite all their efforts and the new technology they've installed, nobody takes their wines seriously, or is prepared to pay a fair price.

Of course, I exaggerate. There are, in Bordeaux, some dry white wines that are as expensive as their red cousins. I'm thinking of Domaine de Chevalier, whose 800 cases of white production per year are as gold dust. I'm also thinking of some of the Sauternes estates who also make dry white wines with imaginative names like "Y" from Château d'Yquem and "R" from Château Rieussec.

But, on the whole, and in the neck of the vineyards of Bordeaux where I live (in the beautiful, rolling hills of Entre-deux-Mers), there's a lot of white wine around, and its price is only two-thirds that of basic red Bordeaux.

Let me tell you about these wines. The blend in dry white (and sweet white, come to that) wines from the Bordeaux region is semillon sauvignon blanc. (No, Australia didn't invent it!)

Some producers make 100% sauvignon blanc, or 100% semillon, but most blend the two. Together they combine the body and richness of the local semillon with the crispness and vivacity and tropical fruit flavours of local sauvignon blanc.

The 1996 wines are delicious. The vintage helped - the grapes were really ripe, the first time, in the case of semillon, since the frosts of 1991. They're well-made, modern in approach, but with just enough local character to set them apart from their equivalents in other world wine-producing regions. The herbaceous character you find in both grapes in New Zealand or in cooler climate Australia is missing. Instead, these are rounded, full-bodied wines which go elegantly with seafood and with any number of fish dishes you may care to throw their way. (Try them with snapper or yabbies).

I've watched the transformation of these wines from over-sulphured, over-oxidised wines back in the early 1970s to the super-fresh wines, sometimes with a balancing element of wood, that they are today.

The change was led by Peter Vinding Diers, a Dane, who both at Château Rahoul (once the pride of Australia's Len Evans) and later at his own Château Landiras, put in technology that was inspired by his sojourns to Australia.

Other producers, especially those in the Graves region just south of Bordeaux city, followed this example. The Graves producers (those in the northern part, anyway) had always made some serious white wines, with plenty of oak ageing. Now they go in for skin contact, yeast selection, maturation on lees and lees stirring - all the techniques that produce white wines with flavour as well as freshness.

Apart from Domaine de Chevalier, estates such as Château la Louvière, Château Carbonnieux and Château Smith-Haut-Lafitte in the northern Graves are all making what I could describe as serious, oak matured whites. As are a few estates further south, nearer to Sauternes such as the estate of Clos Floridene, which is owned by Denis Dubourdieu, professor of oenology at Bordeaux University, and Château du Seuil, whose white Graves keeps on winning prizes in French national competitions.

"The Cape Mentelle wine has come from an honourable lineage."

Out in the less prestigious regions of Bordeaux, wood is precious because it is expensive. Producers there only put a portion of their blend into wood, sometimes American or Russian because it is less expensive than French.

Technologically they are now as well equipped as the top estates of the Graves. I take great pleasure from drinking the wines of good quality estates in the Premières Côtes de Bordeaux: Château Carsin, whose winery was designed by Brian Croser of Petaluma, is an example.

In the Entre-deux-Mers, André Lurton, whose family seems to own half Bordeaux, makes a delicious white at Château Bonnet, while his near neighbour Château Thieuley makes one of those rare 100% Bordeaux sauvignons that really works.

Where I live, at Château Bauduc, owner David Thomas makes a wood fermented white he calls *Les Trois Hectares*, which is almost entirely semillon, full-bodied with delicious citrus flavours.

So, when you next uncork a bottle of *Cape Mentelle Semillon Sauvignon*, why not open, alongside it, a bottle of one of these modern dry white Bordeaux. By running a comparative tasting, you will see how the Cape Mentelle wine has come from an honourable lineage, and how the blend of the two varieties can work so well on both sides of the world. That way, too, you will be giving encouragement to those hard-pressed producers in France.

Roger Voss is a wine and food writer who lives in Bordeaux, and is a regular contributor to *Cuisine*.

BOLD ENDEAVOUR

Cloudy Bay owes a great deal to Captain Cook. For a start he discovered Australia, CBV's major export market. He also thought up the name for that evocative misty mountain label - well almost. In fact, it was Cook's bosun who daily scuttled up the rigging and reported that the waters of the tranquil Marlborough Sounds bay in which they were moored for maintenance, were cloudy (from the silt of the Wairau River). So Cook dubbed it Cloudy Bay and marked it on the map.

Over two hundred years later Endeavour II, the replica built in Western Australia by Alan Bond and others, sailed again into Cloudy Bay, this time under Captain Chris Blake and his trusty crew. Their modern day maintenance routine included a quick trip to the Cloudy Bay winery for necessary ballast and a reciprocal Sounds 'ride' organised by Marlborough restaurateur Piero Rocco for Kevin Judd and awe-struck son, Kohen.

Nine months later, Endeavour II sailed up the Thames to the Tower Bridge and the Queen's royal welcome. And of course they toasted the end of the long voyage with a seaworthy glass or three of Cook's namesake!

Under sail on the new Endeavour...



Pic: Kevin Judd

Look at us Now

Some publications take pride in publishing 'before' and 'after' photos, you know the ones, where the style-shapers make all the bulges disappear and years fall off the victim's life. Well, here's an 'after' – the completely made-over Cape Mentelle cellar door, barrel hall and administration building, the brand new rammed earth and corrugated iron structure set to carry Cape Mentelle into the next century.



THE GARDEN GROWS...

The company's Chapman Valley development south of Margaret River township, primarily planted to white grapes, is now well advanced, its virgin crop harvested in March this year. Even so, the grape-counters have decided that still more acreage is needed, for red varieties.

The hunt for prime vineyard land commenced in late 1995 and for months, proved fruitless. It's surprising just how little of Margaret River's arcadian landscape meets all the criteria for a select site red vineyard.

As it turned out, the ideal parcel of land lay right under our noses - 62 hectares of prime land adjoining the southern edge of Witchcliffe, a small town south of Margaret River.

It was owned by the Fox family, a name long associated with "Witchy", and before that, George Shervington, the original partner in Witchcliffe's famous Darnell's General Store.

Over the next three years, 45 hectares will be planted with cabernet sauvignon, merlot, shiraz, zinfandel and a clutch of other red varieties. In a future issue of MN, vineyard manager Brenton Air will reveal his plans for the new site which he has dubbed, Foxcliffe.



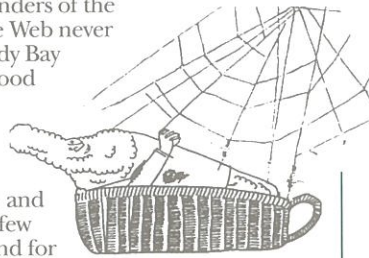
The first hopper of sauvignon blanc from CMV's Chapman Valley vineyard.

PARAMOUNT PICK

The wonders of the World Wide Web never cease. Cloudy Bay fan, Hollywood producer Michael Piller,

creator of Star Treks 1 and 2, invited a few friends round for dinner recently. He rummaged round his cellar and selected five wines - a Californian Chardonnay, a Brunello di Montalcino Riserva, Gran Rioja, La Mission Haut Brion 1978, and representing the land of long white clouds - Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1994. But he didn't have any tasting notes. His secretary searched the Internet, found the CBV site, and notes were emailed in cyber-seconds.

You don't have to be a Star Trek tech-head to find the Cloudy Bay site. The address is: <http://www.nzwine.com>



DANTE'S PEAK

Mendoza, Argentina's wine capital nestled in the shadow of the giant extinct volcano Tupungato and the Andes, recently hosted the most important comparative tasting of international wines ever held in Argentina. Titled *Jornada de Vinos* it included a tutored tasting by English wine writer, Harold Heckle.

The truly global line-up included new style whites from Bordeaux, chardonnays from Padthaway and Margaret River (including Cape Mentelle), some towering Chilean whites and reds, seductive barrel matured merlots and pinot noirs from Romania; Martinez Bujanda and Contino from Rioja; from France Chateau Beaucastel, L'Évêque-Barton and Côte de Nuits Vosne-Romanée, and Penfolds Bin 707.

The 160 tasters, most from the Argentine wine trade, kicked off the four hour sipping and spitting session with *Pelorus 1992*, then moved to sauvignon blancs, among them *Cloudy Bay 1996*. MN is told the Kiwi benchmark was one of the two maximum pointed wines, and voted the essence of New World style.

THE OTHER DAY

I was in Adelaide... My daughter is attending university there, which is one good reason to visit. Over a couple of evenings we had meals at some of Adelaide's better restaurants - the Universal, Botanic Dining Room and the Oxford.

I observed that Adelaide must be the only city in mainland Australia where a main course costs less than \$20. A price which got me thinking about what great experiences could still be had for less than \$20 - and my list is abysmally short.

My daughter tried to be helpful. She reckons \$20 is a huge night out at the Crown and Anchor on Thursdays. Coopers is on tap and during Happy Hour it's \$1 a glass. But I told her it's a long time since I rated a night on the booze as a great experience.

As I get older, over indulgence hits harder and the 'day after' lethargy, flatulence and low spirits puts prolonged, enthusiastic beer drinking low on the fun list. Frankie backed this up with the observation that the only significant difference between mature-age students and young punks, is that the former take three days to get over a hangover.

Twenty dollars will, however, buy 10 stubbies of Cascade Premium, which can be a source of delight for almost a week, if you don't have visitors.

My one sure-fire fallback for \$20 worth of pleasure used to be a bottle of Australian wine. Not just any wine. I'm talking red, regional, distinctive if not single varietal, and of exceptionally good quality.

But let's face it, most of Australia's wine icons are getting a little out of reach for the average Joe and Joelene Blow. For example, you'll need more than an abbott's prayer to get near a bottle of Henschke these days, and the price of going Mentelle is now around A\$22 for their Trinders.

This dismal situation was made alarmingly clear to me the last time I browsed the shelves of my local bottle shop.

So, in my own best interests, I have decided to publish the first and possibly last Bruce Lees Under \$20 wine recommendations. Remember the rules for inclusion (see above) and don't give the editor a tough time if I fail to mention your favourite Australian tippie.

Shiraz and shiraz dominant blends: Basedow, Bowen Estate, Coriole, Chapel Hill, Frankland 'Isolation Ridge', D'Arenberg 'Old Vine', Goundrey, Happts, Lehmann, Pikes, Leconfield, Seven Hills, Tim Adams and Waterwheel.

Cabernet and cabernet blends: Amberley, Bowen Estate, Goundrey, Hollick, Jim Barry, Lehmann, Richard Hamilton, St Hallett, Sandalford, St Huberts, Tim Adams, Wirra Wirra, Willespie and Zema Estate.

There, that's it. Twenty dollars worth, if you're quick. I'll bet in a year we can halve that list. Maybe we should lobby for a \$25 note, or even better, get your doctor to prescribe 2 or 3 glasses of fine red a day and claim it as a tax deduction.

Cheers, Bruce Lees

CHINA SYNDROME

Beijing's Hilton Hotel recently hosted a Master Class, an action-packed occasion that featured 15 wine and food seminars. Other activities included China's first-ever wine competition and a blind tasting of the world's finest - Torres, Georges Duboeuf, Bollinger, Mondavi, Kendall Jackson, Penfold - and that crisp clean Kiwi ambassador, Cloudy Bay.

Hilton sommelier Keith Edgar, who co-ordinated the event remarked, "I was surprised how sophisticated the wine market is in China." Perhaps the old adage, 'for all the tea in China...' is due for re-interpretation?



Next time you're in Marlborough and in the mood for a pamper-plus weekend, consider the discreet boutique Hotel d'Urville. Disguised as the historic Public Trust Building in downtown Blenheim, the hotel is run by hosts Julia and Chris Knowles and offers nine eclectically and stylishly decorated spacious rooms. Follow tradition by requesting the nautical room, in honour of the hotel's namesake, explorer Durmont d'Urville who sailed the Marlborough Sounds. Enquiries: PH (03) 577 9945 FAX (03) 577 9946

MOUSE TO MOUTH

We all know that man does not live by bread alone - he needs great and good glugging wines, a varied healthy diet, and increasingly, connection to the World Wide Web. How else does he know what to whip up for dinner?

MN's cyberspace cook has been cruising the electronic kitchen and can recommend the following foodie sites:

<http://www.epicurious.com>

The electronic equivalent of the *Larousse Gastronomique*, but better. You'll spend so long browsing this jam-packed larder of goodies, you'll end up ordering a dial-a-pizza! Includes 5000 recipes from *Bon Appetit* and *US Gourmet*.

<http://www/e-media.com/taste>
Where you look for cookbooks...

<http://www.cucina.iol.it>
Surf in here for all things yummy and Italian.

<http://soar.berkeley.edu/recipes/>
Offers no less than 37661 recipes, searchable by ingredient and ethnicity. Curiously, Australia's line-up includes kangaroo kebabs, possum and/or bandicoot soup and chilli beer damper, but no lamingtons.

<http://www.godiva.com/>
For those with deep, dark chocoholic tendencies. Decadent recipes, stockists and on-line ordering, but not deliverable Down Under.



<http://www.veg.org/veg/>
All you ever needed to know and more about healthy vegies and how to cook them. Plus a chat-line link with the world's bean-eaters...

<http://www.made-in-italy.com>
Italophiles do not pass this one. Marcella Hazan's 10 favourite restaurants plus regional info, recipes, lists of cookbooks, wines galore - cheaper than renting that Tuscan villa!

<http://www.veronafiere.it/slowines/info.html>
The entire Slowfood Guide to the world's best wines - including Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc.

<http://www.aoweb.com/grapezine/>
A gonzo ezine for grapeheads. Editor Michael Todd recently travelled to New Zealand and the current issue carries a comprehensive account of his Kiwi travels and tipples.

SANTA'S SIX PACK



A white bearded chap in a red Swandri popped in to the winery the other day to check on the gift wrapping of his specially selected Six Pack for all good *Mentelle Notes* readers. He and chauffeur Rudolph took time out to taste the current range and opted for a half case of Christmas cheer. It comprises three terrific wines - the just released *Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1997* (2 bottles), *Pelorus 1993* (2 bottles) and the maturing *Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot 1994* (2 bottles), which Stanley Harris of the Federation of NZ Wine and Food Societies likened to "a young Bordeaux top growth - but with an element of richness which makes for superb, luxurious drinking."

The 'Santa Six' Pack will surely tickle the palates of all discerning wine drinkers, especially at the festive price of **\$164.10**. Be sure to place your order early so the sleigh boys have time to fulfil your Xmas order!

CELLAR RAT

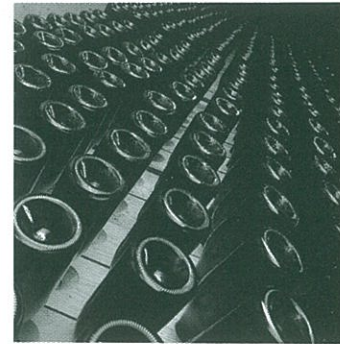
G'day. Just finished labelling the '93 Pelorus and from my point of view it looks much better labelled, wrapped and in a box, than lying down full of yeast lees in a wooden crate.

You see, for the past three vintages, the Rat has been the Riddler. (If you don't know what a riddler does, find out. I had to.) A dedicated professional hands on man, quick of wrist and wit. Riddling is an age old task invented by clever Champagne widows to keep cellar rats hands out of their pockets, at least that's my story. But I might have to change it.

The '93 Pelorus could be the last hand riddled bubbly to leave the winery. Yep, we're getting machines. They don't have the weekend off, stop for lunch, or whinge and moan about RSI.

Jancis Robinson in the *Oxford Companion to Wine* (which is a good read, and very handy for getting to the top shelf in my pantry) reckons that "modern alternative techniques may eventually render this cumbersome process (ie hand riddling) superfluous."

Hell, if my wrists weren't so sore, I'd applaud her. O.K. so I whinge. The only reason I got the job in the first place was because I was the only one on staff who could screw the cap off a Coopers sparkling ale.



It takes about 5 months to riddle a Pelorus vintage - 4 hours a day, all alone, turning bottles too many to name. Well, there was Brian, but we had a falling out, so I launched a boat with him.

When you're riddling you hit a rhythm where your concentration is centred on lining up those chalk marks - 7 o'clock to 10 o'clock, twist and turn, tick tock, tick tock... and only 8000 more bottles to go before a piping hot Renwick steak 'n' kidney pie.

Occasionally I'm visited by the odd tourist, very odd wine buff, extremely odd wine writer or someone who's just plain lost. Usually they leave much happier about their occupation.

Sometimes a film crew comes through with the intention of filming me riddling. They always leave with the producer saying, "Don't worry, we'll get that when we get to France..."

I've even had the MN editor give me a hand. Why anyone on holiday would want to spend several hours in a concrete warehouse with me and 40,000 bottles on a beautiful Marlborough day is beyond me!

After 3 months the dreaded night riddling kicks in. You do it in your sleep. Many a night I've been woken by a sharp blow to the head and discovered my wife clutching her breasts and looking extremely annoyed.

You're that tired from riddling and getting whacked, you don't want to face the real thing. O.K. O.K. so I do whinge. But I've got a lot of satisfaction, turning and twisting, and getting a completely clear wine at the end. And lets face it, fizz is such a wonderful drink!

So if you see a chalk mark on the bottom of the bubbly bottle you've just drained (which means the bottle washer wasn't working), spare a thought for the 200 years of RSI that got it there, and open another one.

Then call my boss and tell him to bring on those machines. I've seen the production forecasts for the Year 2000 and this Rat will jump ship if he has to hand riddle the lot of it.

Love, light and Pelorus.

Gerald

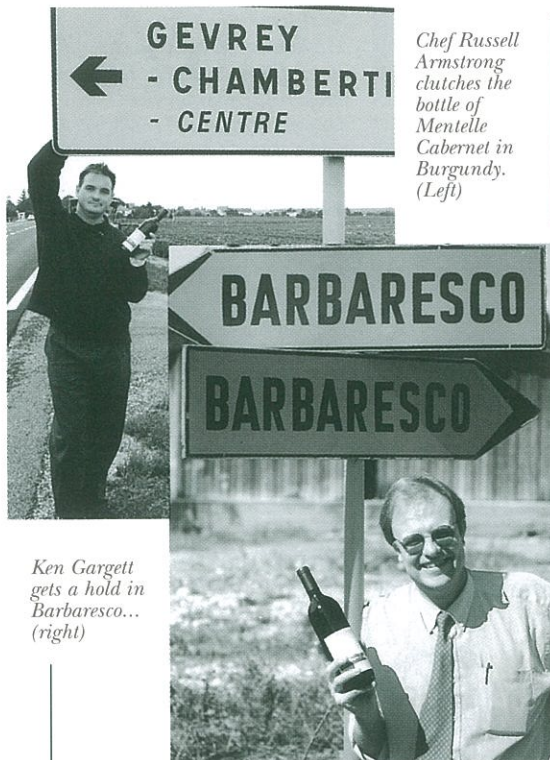
Grand Tourers

Take two besotted Brisbane wine lovers, give them a round-the-world in almost 80 days ticket and a bottle of *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 1987*, and Gulliver's travels pale into insignificance. Certainly, you have a couple of successful contenders for Mentelle Ambassador status.

Russell Armstrong, celebrated chef at Tables in Toowong, and his legal-eagle mate Ken Gargett, wine columnist for the *Brisbane News* set off on an odyssey that included Singapore, Malaysia, Guam, France, Monte Carlo, Italy, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong.

The CM Cab (thoughtfully drawn from Armstrong's cellar) went (and posed) with them everywhere - to Gevrey Chambertin, Pommery, Chianti, even to Italy's big red country, Barbaresco.

But it wasn't till Hong Kong they decided to make the final sacrifice, the ambassadorial bottle presented at dinner to host Jacques Boissier, chief executive of wine distributors, Olivier Asia. Obviously recognising a good drop when he sees one, Boissier lovingly despatched the Mentelle Cab to his private cellar, and the Brisbane boys drank French. There must be a moral there somewhere, but meanwhile MN applauds and awards the lads for their efforts.



Ken Gargett gets a hold in Barbaresco... (right)

Chef Russell Armstrong clutches the bottle of Mentelle Cabernet in Burgundy. (Left)

If you too wish to be part of CBV's export effort, keep your eyes peeled. Next time you're in some far flung corner of the globe and spot a bottle of Cloudy Bay or Cape Mentelle - on a wine list in Malta, in a nightclub in Norway or a winebar in Wisconsin, buy it and take a photo. Then send it to The Editor, Mentelle Notes. (Taking the bottle with you is highly commended but ideally MN ambassadors should buy an off-shore bottle.) MN will publish the best and most alluring photo and the winning Mentelle Ambassador will receive a FREE mixed case of CBV wine. All entrants receive a CB T-shirt.

DINKUM DELI

Often MN's editor has rued Blenheim's lack of a great taste-good delicious bistro deli - the sort of place visitors need to provide before and after wine trail sustenance and gourmet picnic hampers for the day's vineyard crawl. Well, finally, one has opened!

First Lane (the old and now unrecognisable Gino's) has just made its debut under the care of skilled local cook Deb Baxter.

The daily bill of fare will be what Deb does best - Italian style seasonal foods prepared wherever possible from local produce. So expect goodies like poached salmon, chicken pies, preserves and freshly baked cakes and breads. Eat in for breakfast, lunch or afternoon tea, take home or order up that hamper. BYO. Open 8.00am - 6.00pm Monday - Friday; Saturday mornings in summer. Enquiries: PH (03) 570 5550.

HERE'S XMAS CHEER...

It's that time of year again, when the Cloudy Bay courier 'santa's' a sleigh-load of great sipping to the northern hemisphere, a festive delivery ready to be stuffed into the stockings of your UK based family and friends. Make their Christmas Day with a case of Kiwi Christmas cheer! Just despatched to London are two great Kiwi ambassadors - *Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1997* - selected NZ's top sauvignon blanc by the *Penguin Good NZ Wine Guide 1997-98*, and *Pelorus 1993* (in six bottle packs).

Stocks are limited, so place your order (as indicated on the order form) soon, and definitely before MONDAY 1 DECEMBER so Rudolph can ensure pre-Christmas delivery. The listed case price (full cases only) includes VAT and delivery to mainland U.K.

If you would like to SEND 'EM MENTELLE at other times of the year, please telephone the winery on (03) 572 8914 or fax (03) 572 8065 for details.

A PENGUIN

You've heard of Oscars, Grammys and maybe even Logies (they're Australian TV awards.) And then of course there are Penguins - given to New Zealand's top wines by perspicacious palate Vic Williams. His 1997-98 *Good New Zealand Wine Guide* is just out and MN can report that *Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1996* has been selected 'Best' Sauvignon Blanc.

"Not again, I hear you cry," writes Williams. "But there's no denying it - when Kevin Judd and the team get it right (which is most of the time), they're hard to beat." He continues, "Immaculately clean, redolent of capsicums but never aggressive, this is the benchmark."

Williams also fancies *Cloudy Bay Chardonnay* - with good old roast chicken, and the *Cabernet Merlot* with a 'serious' steak sandwich.



Pelorus

"A deep gold rich wine that is as hard to find as a weak link in an All Black team.

This is the Jonah Lomu of the sparkling wine world.

Power, weight and class all in one." Richard Neill, DAILY TELEGRAPH, U.K.

"The best Champagne-method bubbly in the new world."

Gordon Stimmell, TORONTO SUN

Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1996

"A superb sauvignon blanc... Well crafted, it's steely dry but exuberant at the same time, with distinctive, bright passionfruit, nectarine and herb flavours that linger bracingly through the zingy finish. Delicious and ready to drink."

94 points, Spectorator Selection, WINE SPECTATOR, USA

"Cloudy Bay sets the standard for sauvignon blanc, with a wine that is smoky and complex with densely concentrated fruit and long, lingering flavours."

Anthony Dias Blue, SAN JOSE MERCURY

"A generous aroma of subtle herbs and ripe passionfruit... flavours are exotic and bright like a melange of tropical fruits accented with lime juice. Great structure and lovely mouth-feel."

Gerald Boyd, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

"Has one of the most powerful aromas of any wine I've sniffed... It is best to delay actually sipping, so as to breathe in the smells for as long as possible."

Pat McGrath MW, GQ

Cloudy Bay Chardonnay 1995

"It's big and bold but it also shows restraint and masterful winemaking... All the bells, lights and whistles are working on this wine."

4 1/2 glasses, PENGUIN GOOD AUSTRALIAN WINE GUIDE

Cloudy Bay Pinot Noir 1994

"Very ripe, succulent and forward, but lots of backbone and interest, with sweet beetroot notes edging up, yum. Super stuff, very easy to drink and enjoy."

GRAPEZINE

Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 1993

"Very deep red-purple; austere, but in the best possible varietal sense, and spotlessly clean bouquet. Beautifully articulated and perfectly ripened... with a wholly seductive blend of cassis and dark chocolate, finishing with soft but persistent tannins. The best Cape Mentelle cabernet made to date by some distance."

James Halliday, CLASSIC WINES

Cape Mentelle Cabernet Merlot 1994

"What a stonker! Brilliant red... full of sweet black fruit yet suffused with a farmyard pong. It will make fascinating, obsessive drinking any time during the next 10 years."

Oz Clarke, DAILY TELEGRAPH, U.K.

MENTELLE NOTES

is the publication of CLOUDYBAY & CAPE MENTELLE VINEYARDS For further information please contact the winery PO Box 376, Blenheim. Tel (03) 572 8914 Fax (03) 572 8065

A View from the Vineyard



*Al Stanbury
Production Manager
Cloudy Bay*

Pic: Kevin Judd

*“And Noah, he often said to his wife when he sat down to dine,
‘I don’t care where the water goes if it doesn’t get into the wine.’”*

G.K. CHESTERTON, WINE AND WATER



PRICE LIST & ORDER FORM

OCTOBER • 1997



Wine	Description	Price per Case	Price per Bottle	Amount Ordered	Cost
Pelorus 1993 [6 bottles]	Sparkalarkle this festive season! Ripe, rich and golden with lemon tinges and beautiful bakers yeast.	[6 pack] \$219.00	[2 pack] \$73.00		
Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1997	Zing along this summer with another benchmark sauvignon blanc. Mangoes, pineapple and guava go into this refreshing vinous fruit salad. A great summer sipper!	\$256.80	\$21.40		
Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot 1994	Garnet hue with berry fruit cassis aromas, earthy overtones and soft palate spiced with oak. A top drawer red to enjoy now or cellar.	\$289.80	\$24.15		
SANTA'S SIX PACK	2 x Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc '97 2 x Pelorus '93 2 x Cloudy Bay Cabernet Merlot '94	\$164.10	N/A		
T-SHIRT OFFER Black <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/>	Small <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Large <input type="checkbox"/> XL <input type="checkbox"/> XXL <input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	\$25.00 (inc. postage)		
APRON OFFER	Black, pull-through adjustable strap.	N/A	\$25.00 (inc. postage)		
U.K. DELIVERY Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc '97 Pelorus 1993	Please indicate your requirements below for delivery to the U.K. and include price in your total order. ORDER BEFORE 1 DECEMBER FOR XMAS DELIVERY	\$290.00 \$247.00	N/A		

ADD FREIGHT COSTS (SEE BELOW)

TOTAL \$
(INCLUDING GST)

SEND THEM MENTELLE IN THE U.K.

If you would like to surprise family and friends why not send them a gift case of Cloudy Bay wine.
(Prices include VAT and delivery within mainland U.K.)

Wine	Price per Case Delivered in U.K.	Amount Ordered
Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc 1997*	\$290.00	
Pelorus 1993 [6 bottle pack]*	\$247.00	
* Limited availability		Total \$

Address wines to be sent in U.K.
(Please print)

Name

Address

..... Post Code.....

Tel: ()



Name: (Mr/Mrs/Ms)
First Surname

Postal Address:

.....Postcode

Tel: () (Daytime)

Fax: ()

Is this your first order of Cloudy Bay wines? YES NO

Signature:

REMITTANCE DETAILS

Cheque Bankcard Visacard Mastercard American Express Diners

Credit Card Number.

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EXPIRY DATE /

DELIVERY ADDRESS & INSTRUCTIONS

Note any special delivery instructions below:

Delivery Address:

FREIGHT

Freight Charges All national deliveries	Per Case \$6.00
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Sign up – we'll send you Mentelle

If you or a friend within New Zealand would appreciate receiving a copy of *Mentelle Notes* please complete this coupon. Send to:
PO Box 376, Blenheim or Fax to: (03) 572 8065

Name: (Mr/Mrs/Ms)
First

.....
Surname

Address:

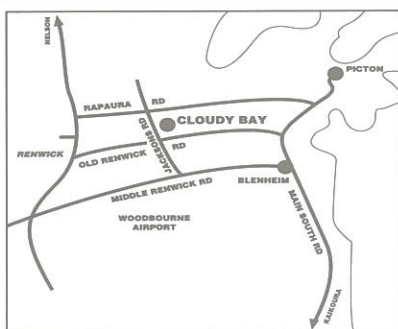
..... Postcode:

Tel: ()

Fax: ()

“Wine snob –
a man or woman
who drinks the label
and the price.”

OLOF WIJK



PLEASE NOTE

- Orders must be in full or half case lots.
- Feel free to make up your own mixed case using the bottle prices listed.
- All prices are G.S.T. inclusive
- This order form valid until publication of June '98 Mentelle Notes.
- Send order with payment to Cloudy Bay Vineyards Ltd,
P.O. Box 376 Blenheim, New Zealand or Facsimile (03) 57 28065
- Only persons aged 20 years or over may legally order wine.
- Deliveries can only be made to a street address-not a PO Box or RD number.
- Please allow 10 days for delivery.

Cellar Door Opening Times

CLOUDY BAY

Monday to Sunday - 10:00am - 4:30pm
It would be appreciated if groups would make a prior appointment



Cloudy Bay Vineyards Limited

P. O. Box 376 • Blenheim • New Zealand
Tel: (03) 572 8914 • Fax: (03) 572 8065