

“CABERNET  
IS THE WISEST  
OF WISE OLD  
BULLS IN  
THE HERD”

CAPE  
MENTELLE

MARGARET RIVER

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2011

# RAMBLINGS FROM THE WINEMAKER

## “A VINTAGE TO REMEMBER”

ROBERT MANN



It has been a difficult year for wine producers in the Eastern States of Australia with record rainfall, floods and cool temperatures but the same cannot be said for the South West of Western Australia. We have just completed the driest and earliest vintages since the record early 2007 vintage as much of the South West remains stricken by drought. This is not great if you are an inland grain producer but it is fantastic if you are a grape grower.

When all is said and done we have just completed a stellar vintage (particularly for reds) continuing an excellent run for Margaret River - one which has seen the region confidently lay claim to being the most reliable wine-producing region in Australia, Australia's greatest region for Bordeaux red and white varieties and amongst Australia's top Chardonnay producing regions! This is a great achievement in a little over

40 years of grape growing and true testament to the visionary few who first highlighted and subsequently supported the development of vineyards in Margaret River. As part of the next generation of winemakers I see an even brighter future for Margaret River. The quality and consistency of our wines is paramount to our success. Margaret River is a remote region, not easily accessible to visit, so our wines have to stand out in markets around the world.

Perhaps the most exciting variety from the vintage is Cabernet Sauvignon, our regional icon. Beautiful, plush and elegant, it has the potential to rank as one of the very best in Australia. The season played an important part but it is also the result of dedicated hard work by the team at Cape Mentelle to focus on this variety and its siblings from Bordeaux. Over the last four years we have removed all of our Marsanne, Roussanne, Viognier

(other than a tiny block used to make our sticky) Mourvedre and Sangiovese at significant cost to replant to improved selections of Bordeaux red and white varieties and we will continue to do so. It is not that these varieties did not make good wine; they simply did not make great wine. The Bordeaux family of varieties are perfectly suited to Margaret River and have the potential to make consistently excellent wine worthy of the Cape Mentelle label.

We have had another great vintage and we should be telling the world about it. I hope you will see lots of positive talk from other producers in Margaret River and Western Australia who all enjoyed the favourable ripening conditions. Cheers

Robert Mann  
Senior Winemaker & Estate Director  
Cape Mentelle Vineyards

# FROM THE CELLAR DOOR STICKY PICK



## SUCCESSFUL INAUGURAL MITV SEASON DRAWS TO A CLOSE

We'd like to thank everyone associated with the wonderful feast of visual entertainment, fine food and wine that was 'Movies in the Vineyard' 2011. Over 10,000 visitors enjoyed outdoor movies in the Cape Mentelle winery gardens from December through to March 2011. The involvement and support of the local community was much appreciated and we look forward to doing it all again next summer.

## CAPE MENTELLE CELLAR SELECTIONS

Cellaring wines is widely considered to increase their complexity, allowing the aromas, flavours and textures of the wines to evolve. As wine ages, the fresh, vibrant flavours and firm textural qualities of its youth give way to deep, savoury characters and a smooth, voluptuous mouth feel can make for a more contemplative and rewarding drinking experience.

Each year our winemakers approve a selection of two to three bottle-aged vintages for a special cellar release. These represent tremendous value and are available for sale at the cellar door and to mail order customers only.

## iPad App

Cape Mentelle has now introduced an iPad to the Cellar Door allowing visitors to sign up for our newsletter and learn more about the wines available for tasting. They may also view a video that gives them a virtual experience of our vineyards and winery and a walk through of our 'Behind the Scenes' tour, taste and degustation experience on offer three days a week.

A bright, crisp autumn morning saw all of the winery staff at Cape Mentelle head out to the Chapman Brook Vineyard for the last hand pick of the 2011 vintage, the Botrytis Viognier. The vineyard team were out early to remove the dew laden bird nets before we arrived en mass with children and dogs in tow. Everyone pitched in to help pick the 1100 kilos, a particularly small yield of sweet, sticky botrytis-affected fruit.



Margaret River has just experienced its driest summer on record and the warm season has produced concentrated berries very high in sugar. We will only see about two barrels of this delicious wine, a special treat for visitors to the winery.

The buzz of conversation got louder towards morning tea with the anticipation of the inaugural cake competition, so many would-be judges! A big table in the vineyard set with chocolate almond cake, lime and raspberry cake, golden syrup muffins and the winning chocolate Guinness cake - Charlotte and 7 year old Archie taking the winner's trophy for the first time. The picking was considerably slower post taste testing as everyone went back to work in the sun with very full tummies!

The 2010 Botrytis Viognier can be tasted and bought at our Cellar Door.

# DRINK LOCAL, THINK GLOBAL

BY NICK STOCK



WINE WRITER NICK STOCK  
TELLS US WHY MARGARET RIVER  
CABERNET IS A WORLD FORCE TO  
BE RECKONED WITH.

Overseas travel is a wonderful thing, not only for the immersion in places, people and culture far from home, but also for the new eyes with which you see familiar things on your return. Coming home is one of my favourite parts of the travel experience.

Having spent time this year in various parts of France and in Central London, I am reminded of just how pivotal cabernet sauvignon is to the world of fine wine. It's the essence of much of the world's greatest, most collected and revered bottles.

Our Antipodean island is so awash with shiraz in all its many guises that we sometimes overlook the global importance of cabernet, both past and present, yet in most parts of the world it sits at the top of the rankings, the number one seed.

But the recent quality of the cabernet-based reds of Cape Mentelle's home turf of Margaret River is leading a cabernet campaign that is impossible to resist. Unlike the hype, manoeuvring and manipulation of the most recent Bordeaux en primeur campaign, this is a campaign fought and won on the merits of the wines that are currently stocked and available for you to buy.

As much as we might like to reward differences and praise the efforts of all our various cabernet-growing places, it's fair to say that Margaret River has become the bastion of Australia's best cabernet wines. And en primeur campaigns aside, the region is often flattered with comparison to Bordeaux in climatic, geographic and vinous terms.

The difference in wine style from the north of the region to the south charts a similar diagram to that of Bordeaux's left bank, although stood on its head in the southern hemisphere.

Wines from the north of the region are prettier reds, silky, more mid-weight and offer smooth and fine tannins, akin to St. Julien. To the south around Wallcliffe, the heartland of Mentelle, and the tannins gather weight and size, there's a power surge here that conjurs the grinning snarl of the great St. Estephe.

Consistency in wine is very much a matter of pedigree and Margaret River is a region that delivers impressive geographic consistency, making the overlay of vintage character a fascinating one. Based on their location, the wines maintain relative differentiation from each other, sliding in formation along the spectrum of vintage conditions.

Cellaring these wines therefore builds a reliably engaging essay of wines to taste. If you collect you want to taste the difference year in and year out, yet still appreciate the family resemblance.

Assuming there's a solid pool of talent in both vineyard and winery, older vines help fortify consistent wine style; the memory of each vintage written into their DNA. They tell a richer story and give you greater rewards as a collector.

And now is a terrific time to be collecting Margaret River cabernet. Recent vintages, since the virtual non-summer of 2006 (which delivered fantastic whites but robbed us of notable reds), have seen the region surge to the front of the peloton and make a meal of the competition.

The warmth, richness, power and generosity of the 2007 cabernets really set the bar very high, only to be followed by the precise and faultlessly balanced 2008 wines – a classic year.

The wines from 2009, mostly on the cusp of release, are more akin to those of 2007. It's a warmer year that has built flesh and shape around cabernet's reliable structural bones. The pattern continues with 2010 sidling up against the classic balance and articulation of 2008 and 2011, whilst a challenge for whites, is back on the warmer end of the spectrum, where harvest of red grapes was extended, allowing precise ripeness to be targeted.

With this two-handed rhythm of warm year then classic year, the inevitable preferences will be discussed and debated, but I'd suggest they are all well worth allocating space in the cellar for.

It's an intriguing time for Margaret River reds, undoubtedly the best wines are those being made in the last five harvests and it's fascinating to track the wine styles back through time and you often see an ebb and flow pattern emerge.

The 1970's, the very early years of Margaret River's cabernet legacy, delivered wines that were quite big, quite ripe, but lower (relatively) in alcohol. The 1980's bore a fascination with lower pH and wines from that decade are largely leaner, picked earlier and carry the region's herbal streak on their sleeves.

The 1990's, as many of you will still be experiencing via your collections, was a decade driven by a global embrace of all things hedonistic in red wine. Prominent U.S. critics drove alcohols up and acidity down. Oh well.

And most recently, the noughties was a decade of growing up for Australian wine and that's been very much the case in Margaret River. No longer interested in reacting to what's happening elsewhere, it's been a time of understanding the importance of sticking to your knitting, of standing on distinctive, site-driven character and confidently so.

It's been a decade in which many cabernets have pulled back from the ledge of ripeness, honing in on their essence and building an elegant expression that is driven by precision and clarity. Alcohols are being wound back as the best viticulture delivers ripe tannins earlier in the season and cabernet's innate varietal fortitude and structure is embraced as a trusted ally.

Detailed texture is being built in the vineyard and insightfully realised by winemakers attuned to this new move to wines of precision. Bordeaux has taught us many things about cabernet, most recently that it can be seriously charming stuff.

There's no doubt that it's a stayer, one of the greatest distance runners, but it can be as seductive as it is convincing and impressive in its youth. The great modern cabernets will be immensely enjoyable as older wines, but need not be aged to be enjoyed. Good times I reckon.

There's also global interest, driven by a newer generation of well-travelled and widely-tasted wine drinkers, that thirsts for red wines that are juicy, vital and fresh – younger reds all round. At the extreme, this has created a surge in Beaujolais-like reds that are all about instant gratification, wines to drink fast and young, often on a spectacular but short trajectory of life expectancy.

Cabernet will never be that kind of wine. Instead, it will be the wine that reminds us all that the greatest reward a wine can give is the ability to improve with time. For cabernet is the wisest of wise old bulls in the herd.

2008 Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon: Impressive poise from the outset with a swathe of ripe bright cassis and cherry fruits, a wealth of ripe dark roasting herbs here too, fresh-laid concrete, wet slate aromas and beautifully integrated French oak. The palate carries such impeccable balance as to appear effortless and airy; flavours are in the dark cherry and cassis spectrum with hazelnut oak flavour layered through the latter stages, tannins sweep through and build creeping length and intensity through the finish. A superb, world-class cabernet.

Nick Stock

Author, Presenter & Freelance Wine Writer  
Best Drinks Journalist – 2007  
Le Cordon Bleu WORLD FOOD MEDIA AWARDS

# THE HUMBLE PIE



It was one of those perfect Margaret River autumn late afternoons. Not a breath of wind. The burnt orange sun was gently slipping behind the distant eucalypts, the clouds were an array of hues from dusky greys through pale vermilion to deep burgundy. Colourful enough for you?

At a heavily-grassed property dotted with sheep, and outside an old weatherboard cottage, sat a mob of assorted food and wine-loving neighbours, drinking beers, and gazing into a large camp fire.

It was one of those relaxed occasions which this passionate consumer decided he would use to conduct a focus group.

My challenge would be simple: for the group to put down their beers and to decide what food or foods would best accompany the Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 2008.

I thought I'd canvas the view of my companions rather than trust my own judgment because I'd have been happy just sitting by the burning logs taking in – as the wine notes have it – “the nose of classic

blackcurrant, bay leaf and tar with hints of lavender bush, and black mulberries”, and experiencing on the palate flavours “finely textured, full flavoured and abundant with blackcurrants, hints of cocoa and graphite.”

A few samples were handed out, sniffed and slurped and the answers were soon forthcoming: “Beef”, “lamb,” beef”, “beef”, “lamb”, “beef”, “goose” (goose?... there's always one in a focus group, isn't there?)

The clear impression was that red meat was the go and nothing too exotic or over-spiced. A roast rack of lamb or beef would be perfect, as would, I believe, my steak and kidney pie.

It's a pie that's so simple that it's hardly a pie at all. The pastry is cooked separately and the whole thing assembled before serving. For those for whom offal is a no-go zone, kidneys may be omitted and a few more mushrooms included instead.

Give it a try and enjoy it and your favourite focus group... and a glass or two of Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon.

## SIMPLE STEAK AND KIDNEY PIE

I use dried mushrooms for their texture, but fresh ones could be used.

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 1 large onion
- 750g braising steak
- 1 heaped Tbsp plain flour
- 1 cup (300ml) beer
- Sprig of Thyme (or 1/2 tsp dried thyme)
- 2 bay leaves
- 3-4 juniper berries, crushed
- 3 or 4 dried mushrooms, quartered
- 150g lamb kidneys (optional), cleaned and diced
- 3 pieces rolled, rich puff pastry (bought ready made)

500ml chicken stock

2 Tbsp peanut or canola oil

Salt and pepper to taste

1 egg, gently beaten, for glaze

Cut onion in quarters then eighths and sauté in a pan with the oil until softened.

Dice the steak, discard any fat, then stir in with the onion over a good heat. Sprinkle over the plain flour. Toss with the meat and onion.

Add the beer, stock, bay leaves, thyme and crushed juniper berries. Allow to reduce by a third over medium heat.

Add the mushrooms and the pieces of kidney and allow mixture to simmer until meat is tender (around an hour and a half). Once cooked, season to taste and allow to stand over very low heat.

Cut large pieces of ready made puff pastry into four. Sandwich one piece on top of another and repeat until you have six doubled-up pieces. Place on a non-stick baking tray (or non-stick paper on baking tray).

Brush with beaten egg and cook for about 10min at 190C, until puffy and golden brown.

Cut open the pie crust, and fill with mixture. Serve with good mashed potatoes and peas.

## MENTELLE AMBASSADOR



Alan Rogers from Westleigh in NSW will now be well and truly ensconced in the Mentelle Ambassador's hall of fame as this is his second visit – which is a first for us! Alan made his debut 10 years ago in our July 2001 edition after a trip to the Galapagos Islands and a photo with two of the world's rarest Albatross.

This time around Alan, a keen ornithologist, visited Bering Island during a “Ring of Fire” cruise along the Kuril Islands and Kamchatka (Russia). On a morning ashore in Nikolskoye, the only village in the group, he came across the memorial to Vitus Bering, hence the photo! Vitus Bering was born in Denmark in 1681 but served for many years in the Russian Navy achieving the rank of commander. It now seems that the memorial is in fact based on an image of his uncle. A few years ago Bering was exhumed from the site of the wreck where he died and a computer facial image reconstruction

has come up with a far more rugged and good looking fellow! In this truly remote location Alan said a bottle of Cape Mentelle Sauvignon Blanc Semillon was a worthy accompaniment. Maybe Alan and his wife Liz will take one of their winning bottles of Cape Mentelle to their next exciting location and make it a Mentelle Notes hat-trick!

Anyone can be part of Cape Mentelle's diplomatic efforts. Next time you are in a remote or exciting location keep your eyes peeled for that unique photo opportunity – of you or someone you love with your favourite drop of Cape Mentelle! Send that photo (hi resolution please) in to our Editor. Email entries to charlotte.dowden@capementelle.com.au.

We will publish the best and most intriguing photo and the winning Mentelle Ambassador will receive a FREE mixed case of Cape Mentelle wine (within Australia). All entrants will receive a CM T-shirt.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

2011 sees the Cape Mentelle International Cabernet Tasting visiting Sydney. Held at Simmer on the Bay at Dawes Point on Friday October 21, the event will commence with a tasting of 20 esteemed cabernets from the 2008 vintage followed by lunch. The Cape Mentelle winemaking and viticulture team will of course be flying over to host the event and hope to see some familiar faces! This year's tasting will once again showcase wines from the world's finest cabernet producing regions with favourites such as Château Cos d'Estournel and Château La Mission Haut Brion from Bordeaux alongside the best of the Napa Valley, Tuscany and Australia.



On Thursday August 25 The Hyatt in Perth will be holding a Cape Mentelle Museum Cabernet Tasting. With only 30 tickets up for grabs the exclusive event represents a fantastic opportunity to taste 10 vintages of Cape Mentelle Cabernets with the famed 1983 Jimmy Watson winner leading the way.

This year will see the 50th presentation of the Jimmy Watson Trophy at The Royal Melbourne Wine Show. The Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria is putting together an online gallery of all the past winners so Cape Mentelle will be well represented having had the honour twice. As a number of you are no doubt well aware Cape Mentelle helped to put Margaret River (and WA!) on the map taking home the trophy in both 1983 and 1984 for the 1982 and 1983 Cabernets.

This newsletter is now available via email. Some of you will have received your first email version with this edition. To opt for email only in future, or to sign-up for an email version in addition to your mailed copy, please contact Charlotte on the details below.

For further information on any of the above, or to book tickets to Cape Mentelle events, please contact Charlotte at the winery on 08 9757 0817 or charlotte.dowden@capementelle.com.au

# NEW RELEASES

Old man Winter has settled in and put his feet up. As usual, he will overstay his welcome but at least he brings with him the 2008 Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon and with it, a bunch of other new releases sure to see us through his stay.

An outstanding vintage and stringent individual berry sorting has contributed to the 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon being amongst the most sophisticated released to date – befitting the resplendent new label for our flagship wine. The 2008 Cabernet seeks to express all that the original Estate Vineyard has to say – both in the vibrancy of fruit and the velvety tannin structure whilst maintaining elegance and refinement at 13.5% alcohol.

The 2009 ‘Trinders’ Cabernet Merlot is a stylish interpretation of a serious Bordeaux blend. We have worked tirelessly to achieve the right fruit expression, density and vibrancy, and this vintage sees the dense and structured core of cabernet produced in 2009 benefiting from the extra softness and plush fruit of the merlot. Cabernet franc and petit verdot complete the blend adding subtle lifted aromatics and a refined finish.



Sourced from some of the region’s oldest plantings of the variety, our Shiraz seeks to promote the clarity of fruit characters particular to Margaret River. We’ve welcomed some slatey firm structural tannins to drive the length of flavour and deliver a uniquely Cape Mentelle example from an excellent vintage.

The classically elegant 2008 vintage produced a dense and textural ‘Zin’ in keeping with the variety’s natural tendencies and the 36-year-old bush vine’s ability to produce only 343 dozen bottles at a yield of 3.8 T/ha. We want a wine that delivers for its long term supporters but also offers a desirable combination of vibrant fruit and savoury texture for future converts to our Zinfandel.

Sadly, 2009 will be the last release of our Sangiovese. Enjoy this Tuscan style fruit driven wine, rich in redcurrant and dark liqueur cherry, perfect with a bowl of fresh porcini mushroom ravioli and rich tomato sauce.

It’s also time for the new vintages of Marmaduke Shiraz [2009] and Georgiana Sauvignon Blanc [2011]. Both wines deliver their characteristic bright, fresh flavours and smooth, clean finish.

All new release wines are available from the winery along with some cellar door only wines such as 2009 Sangiovese and the 2010 Botrytis Viognier.

# REVIEWS



## CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2007

Nick Stock,  
Good Wine Guide 2011  
Best Cabernet Sauvignon 97 points

“Another 2007 from Margaret River that will be remembered as one of the greatest Cape Mentelle cabernets of all time. Power and poise fused with conviction and stunning value when you look around the globe at comparative cabernet quality.

A much-anticipated vintage of this leading Margaret River cabernet, and not an ounce of disappointment. With smells of bright cassia and juniper, fragrant and subtly floral, the cedary spicy oak adds a layer of class to this standout wine. The palate’s unthinkably poised: perfectly proportioned tannins carry deeply ripe, sweet fruit with impressive power and impeccable grace. Like an angel, this sits right at the top of the tree.”



## SHIRAZ 2009

Campbell Mattinson,  
WineFront, June 2011  
95 points

“I’d think this 2009 version is right up there with the best shiraz the estate has yet released. This 2009 shiraz came over all voluptuous and oak-driven at first but twenty or so minutes later it had transformed itself. So much so that I looked at it and said, You’ve changed. It carries a beautiful swagger of fine, grainy, earthen tannin and while sure, it delivers a healthy dose of aniseedy, blackberried, plum-like fruit flavour – and sweet cedary oak – it still makes a solid attempt to be firm and dry. As a young wine you will need to be tolerant of fresh, new, high quality oak flavour. But this is a crackerjack shiraz from all angles.”



## SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2010

James Halliday,  
Top 100 Wines, November 2010,  
96 points

“... Light straw-green, it has an extra measure of intensity and drive, with an array of flavours ranging from grassy pea pod to citrus, and ultimately a touch of tropical fruit; the length is a given, likewise the balance.”



## ZINFANDEL 2008

Jeremy Oliver,  
Wine Annual 2011,  
95 points

“A brilliant modern zin – an artful reflection of the more perfumed and fine-grained Margaret River reds from 2008.”

“Long and supple, with tight-fisted layers of red and blue fruits, it builds in strength and density towards its lingering and finely astringent finish.”