

# WINETALK

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WINE CONNOISSEURS CLUB OF HAMILTON

Apr 2019

## Coming Functions

Apr 14	Spade Oak tasting
May 12	AGM ( Mother's Day )
June 9	3 Miners Tasting
July 14	RED wines from the Cellar
Aug 11	Linden Estate tasting

This is the busiest time of the year for winemakers - it's [harvest time](#). The vines are laden and bunches of grapes have been swelling and begging to be picked. The excitement of a new year of hopefully great wines is ahead and the tension and excitement in the vineyards is vibrant.

A progress report on the 2019 vintage is looking very positive. Harvest in New Zealand in some areas has been earlier than usual. In mid-February weather forecasts indicated that Cyclone Oma threatened to dump rain in the upper North Island. When we were up north in mid-February the grapes were looking fat and gorgeous so winemakers were thinking of starting their harvest that week, especially in the Chardonnay blocks. A little rain around Christmas had resulted in a small growth spurt, however fortunately the Cyclone veered off to Australia. So many winemakers up there and nervous Waiheke Island producers and Kumeu River had finished their harvest much earlier than normal.



Bob Campbell in 'The Real Review' has visited several vineyards who report it will be a good year with some varieties better than usual and some similar to 2018 vintage. Forrest Estate in Marlborough have reported lower than average yields and some parts of Central Otago have experienced wetter, cooler conditions which had slowed ripening. Bob visited Moana Park in Hawkes Bay and John Hancock had picked some Chardonnay with the crop being a little lighter thanks to frost during flowering and the very warm conditions that created a bit of disease pressure, but quality looked OK and is on track to be similar to the 2018 vintage.

Talking to [Vilagrad](#) out at Ngahinapouri, they are only now bringing in the grapes, a little later than usual. There has been such a long, hot, dry summer up here and they are very excited about the vintage. The Pinot Gris grapes, big, heavy and juicy were the first to be picked and they are especially excited about this wine. They will be picking their Chardonnay this week. So let's get ready to enjoy the first of the 2019 vintage.

## SO HOW IS THE GRAPE HARVEST CELEBRATED IN AUTUMN AROUND THE WORLD?

FRANCE of course goes all out in September and the large different wine regions celebrate with music and dance, food and wine in their particular region. Bordeaux wine tasting centers around 50 Chateaux whilst you run, yes run, [a 42 kilometer marathon](#) stopping at each chateau. There you partake in tasting plates of cheese, oysters, and steak and have a wine tasting. Then you run to the next one. Over 8000 runners participate in this historical famous event along a magnificent route with amazing scenery. Can you see any of us getting past the first chateaux?? Great, only 49 to go.

ITALY in all regions has days of music, wine, cheeses with an almost religious fervour with processions, medieval costumes and cathedrals taking part in celebrating the mighty grape. I talked about the Glera grape festivals in last WineTalk. There is always food, music, classes and wine tastings at these festivals. In [Tuscany](#)

the wineries assemble to celebrate Vendemmia (harvest festival) with the [Chianti festival](#), tasting and sampling, with historical lectures about the Chianti. Towns, villages and whole neighbourhoods are decorated to honour the Roman God Bacchus. Apparently competition is fierce and the winner of the best decorations receives the Bacchus Goblet which launches days of celebrations.

CZECH REPUBLIC (which apparently has amazing wines with a grape growing history going on since the 10th century) celebrates the harvest in grand style. Prague Castle has tastings accompanied by folk dancing demonstrations, crafts, historic parades and would you believe fencing demonstrations (of the sword type). Be very careful here if you have had a few wines. Would love to be able to taste some of those central European wines. Hungarian wines are also making their mark on the wine world as well. So if anyone has tasted them let me know your opinion.

GERMANY, [SPAIN](#) and CROATIA celebrate with a lot of dancing, foot stomping, lederhosen, grape crushing, wine tastings and apparently the bulls get involved in Spain. Can't imagine how, but the Europeans are really into Festivals. Their histories of grape growing have been around since medieval times and before and have been incorporated mainly with church festivities as the church owned most of the land then, so there are Harvest Masses and celebrations with processions etc.etc.

ARGENTINA have one of the biggest wine festivals in the world at [Mendoza](#) where they celebrate the grape



that they seriously love - their Malbec. This celebration is almost as big as the famous Rio festival. They have parades, beauty contests, crown Miss Malbec and famous bands with processions, sports, events and celebrations that go on for days.

[AUSTRALIA](#) has long lunches in vineyards and of course with their melting pot of cultures, each vineyard celebrates the various cultures that have made up the Australian wine industry.

Here in NEW ZEALAND we have the Clyde Wine and Food Festival celebrating wines from our most southerly region and the cuisines of the area. Lots of music, dance and food. Marlborough has its wine and food festival close to harvest and the Hawkes Bay and Wairarapa have their celebrations in similar manner.

The best Harvest Festival closer to home we have been to is the [Croatian Harvest Festival, BERBA](#), held at Soljans Winery in Kumeu every Easter. It is free entry to the winery and they have a good restaurant there for lunch. There is grape stomping on the lawn which was fun ( you have to sing a song of joy while you stomp). To see men with their trousers rolled up and the women holding their skirts singing as grape juice oozes through their toes as a tribute to the grape is an experience. They also have free wine tasting and tours of the winery led by Tony Soljan the owner, and he has some wonderful stories of Croatian settlement in West Auckland and the establishment of the wine industry in New Zealand. We ate traditional Croatian Easter biscuits that 'Mama' had made with a Dalmatian Folk Dancing Group entertaining us. The food was beautiful and the wine good. Great way to celebrate the Harvest Festival. There are quite a few Kumeu wineries who have open days over this period where you can taste wines and walk around the vineyard. Coopers Creek also has jazz every Sunday afternoon in the summer. You can take a picnic and sit under big shady trees, drink their wine and listen to the music.

## WHAT DO WE DRINK BETWEEN SEASONS?

At the end of our Indian summer, are we able to say goodbye to some of the beautiful Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blancs, and bubbles that we have enjoyed in the heat of the long summer? Perhaps not just yet and there will always be an occasion for bubbles, but we can do a gradual change over to the lighter reds (although the Rosés are still appealing). Talking to Chris Barclay at The Hamilton Wine and Beer Company (which incidentally is now at 413 Anglesea Street in bigger, brighter premises), he suggests we don't quite say 'goodbye dear friends' to the whites. "There is no big change in drinking habits when the weather cools down and seasonal drinking is not as marked as you would think. Customers are drinking Rosés and Chardonnays all year round now. There is a small rise in lighter Italian wines with Sauvignon Blancs dipping a bit, but it isn't like it used to be in the past where there were marked changes." He suggests a Tempranillo, big buttery Chardonnays or a Viognier as a change but as in all things, you drink what you like no matter the weather! You just might like a bit more spice in your wines at this time.

## WHAT'S IN THE CUPBOARD?

At the last tasting of the club, where we tried wines we wouldn't normally look at when buying wine, the white that stood out for me was the Alsace Schlumberger Petit Blanc from the Princes Abbes range. It was a perfect Autumn white I thought with a hint of spice, fruity and citrus with a good comfortable finish. The Breidecker and the Osteiner were quite different as well and well worth another visit. Two of the three reds were good also. I think we need a bit of spice in wines in the autumn and these wines fitted the bill exactly. This is what is so good about our Wine Club. You get to try all sorts of wines from around the world and make a judgement on whether they are for you.



In the reds the lighter Grenache, Dolcettas and Rhone reds are lovely at the moment. Also discovered, by accident, a Sicilian SUPERbio Nero D'Avola Syrah which was only \$11 at Pak 'n Save. I buy cheaper reds for my Bolognese so while tossing in the meat sauce, I naturally had a glass and it was surprisingly good. So that was worthwhile for the dinner and the drink accompanying it. It was light and very drinkable with the minerality of an organic wine. Great find and a lesson in how to drink and eat a bottle of wine in one hit!

So we don't have to say goodbye to the whites we love just yet, however, the lighter, spicier reds are beckoning.

Cheers to Autumn and a great harvest.

*Gay Main*