

# MENTELLE NOTES

The newsletter of Cape Mentelle, Margaret River, Australia | ISSN: 2207-6964



*A sheltered cove on Margaret River's captivating coastline.*

## Sauvignon by the Sea

*Cape Mentelle was named after a French geographer, a legacy definitively expressed by Cape Mentelle's signature white wine, Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon.*

Unlike the Bordeaux region, Margaret River boasts just one river that meets the Indian Ocean at Surfers Point, north of Prevelly Beach where renowned waves break upon the rugged West Australian shoreline that extends from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin.

Those waves and the associated maritime influences are pivotal, not just to Margaret River's evolution as a wine region, but also to the creation of its classic Sauvignon Blanc Semillon white blends, unashamedly inspired by Bordeaux's 'Entre-Deux-Mers' crisp whites.

We can thank viticultural scientist Dr John Gladstones for showing the way forward. His original research, published in the mid-1960s, unquestionably put Margaret River on the world wine map, *'Being virtually frost-free, and having a much lower ripening period, cloudiness, rainfall and hail risk than Manjimup and Mount Barker, it has distinct advantages over both those areas, and indeed over all other Australian vine districts with comparable temperature summations.*

*Not only should excellent quality be*

*obtainable with choice grape varieties, but the district might also be very suitable because of its equable climate for higher-yielding, but still good quality varieties, such as shiraz and semillon.'*

*'Margaret River has distinct advantages over all other Australian vine districts...'* DR JOHN GLADSTONES

Founder David Hohnen took his cue from Gladstones and in the mid-1970s planted both semillon and sauvignon blanc on the original 16-hectare Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe vineyard adjacent to the winery. The first white blend was made in 1980, predominantly semillon and chenin blanc. Back then Hohnen described it as 'the red drinker's white'. By 1983 he was adding sauvignon blanc, co-fermenting and ageing two months in new French oak – and edging ever closer to the classic Bordeaux Entre-Deux-Mers style.

Roll forward 31 years to the new release *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2014* a timeless classic blend that is now 62% old vine sauvignon blanc and 38% semillon. Think rockmelon, dried figs, pink grapefruit, crusty sourdough and an appealing briny flintiness...Add three years bottle age to conjure balance and complexity, then chill and relish this wine's finesse, the legacy of three decades of winemaking.

The predecessor 2013 vintage was rated 96 Points by James Halliday who wrote: 'A power of flavour and scorching length.

An emphatic release, sophisticated and simply delicious'.

Halliday's praise endorses Estate Director Cameron Murphy's belief that 30-plus years have combined to create Cape Mentelle's renowned classic white blend – internationally synonymous with Margaret River *and* Cape Mentelle.

Margaret River doesn't have an appellation scheme but if it did this wine would surely be worthy of the citation 'Margaret River Superieur'. *Bien sûr...*

## New Releases



Each issue of *Mentelle Notes* features the latest releases available to members of the Cape Mentelle Wine Club – and at the Cellar Door. If you have any queries about these wines, please contact the helpful and knowledgeable Cape Mentelle staff.

T: 08 9757 0888 or

E: [info@capementelle.com.au](mailto:info@capementelle.com.au)

### CAPE MENTELLE WALLCLIFFE SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2014

A timeless blend taking inspiration from the great whites of Bordeaux...

‘Very light hay with green hues. Classic nose yet already intense and complex with notes of cassis, rockmelon, dried figs and moist leaves with notable flintiness. The generous palate reveals delicate crusty bread characters supported by pink grapefruit, which carries through to the long, lingering finish. The natural fresh acidity, balanced by the wine’s tactile texture and complexity, will conjure even more complexity with additional ageing.’

### CAPE MENTELLE WALLCLIFFE CABERNET CABERNET FRANC 2014

Not produced every vintage – but worth waiting for! This red blend is made predominantly from Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc (with 5% portions of Shiraz and Merlot) from the original Wallcliffe Vineyard, another wine that draws comparisons with Bordeaux tradition.

‘Top notes of juicy cranberries and red fruit compete from selected parcels of old vine Cabernet Franc marry with comforting warm spices and hints of apple-wood smoke from

the Cabernet. Deep and dark, this medium-bodied red transports you from plum pudding and nutmeg to a smoky, silky balanced mid-palate, a legacy of the excellent 2014 vintage. Generous and round, intense with notes of dried flowers, chocolate, coffee and pipe tobacco. Gentle oak frames the wine without austerity, leading to a long velvety finish.’

### CAPE MENTELLE ZINFANDEL 2015

One of the icons of the Cape Mentelle portfolio – with Californian origins. Planted in 1974, these mature low-yielding over 40-year-old vines produce intense wines displaying great depth and balance.

‘Deeply coloured with highlight tints of youthful garnet. The appealing rich texture is amplified by bright red ripe fruit flavours that lead to an opulent balanced, big rich smooth palate with long silky, chocolatey tannins. The finish draws on persistent notes of coffee and spiced pannacotta.’

## Wine Club News

If you are not yet a member of the **Cape Mentelle Wine Club** this is your opportunity to join! Don’t waste this *Mentelle Notes* reminder to review the benefits of the Club’s very appealing membership offer.

Twice yearly members receive a **Winemaker’s Selection Six-Pack** with accompanying Tasting Notes, sent freight free to a nominated Australian address. This **Mentelle Club Collection** is available now and will include two exceptional history charting Cape Mentelle Cabernets. How else could you access two esteemed vintages of *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon* – namely 2005 and 1999?

All Club members will also receive priority allocation tickets to the prestigious 2017 Cape Mentelle International Cabernet Tasting, which this November welcomes back global wine doyenne, Jancis Robinson MW.

Other membership benefits include two complimentary tickets to a Cape Mentelle Food & Wine Pairing Experience (Value \$170), and exclusive invitations to other headland events. Additional generous 15% savings apply when purchasing other Cape Mentelle wines or merchandise.

The annual joining fee is \$800 (inc GST) Details: [www.capementelle.com.au/Wine-Club](http://www.capementelle.com.au/Wine-Club)



*Cape Mentelle Cabs on taste.*

## Musts

### MARGARET RIVER WINE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

*Hosted by Margaret River Wine*

*Details: T: 08 9757 9330*

#### SINGAPORE 30 – 31 AUGUST

*Anniversary Dinner, SALT Grill & Sky Bar  
Anniversary Tasting, Equinox,  
Swissotel The Stamford*

#### MELBOURNE 4 – 5 SEPTEMBER

*Anniversary Dinner, Vue de Monde  
Anniversary Tasting, Mural Hall*

#### SYDNEY 6 – 7 SEPTEMBER

*Anniversary Dinner, Bentley Restaurant  
Anniversary Tasting, Simmer on the Bay*

### BEAUVINE FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

#### 20 – 22 OCTOBER

*Birdwood Square, Mt Lawley  
60-plus wineries including Cape Mentelle  
[www.beauvine.com.au](http://www.beauvine.com.au)*

### GOOD FOOD & WINE SHOW

#### 27 – 29 OCTOBER

*Brisbane Convention Centre  
Visit the Cape Mentelle VIP Lounge!  
<http://goodfoodshow.com.au/tickets/vip-tickets/>*

### GREAT WINES OF THE WORLD

#### 2 – 3 NOVEMBER

*Four Seasons Hotel, Hong Kong  
[www.jamessuckling.com](http://www.jamessuckling.com)*

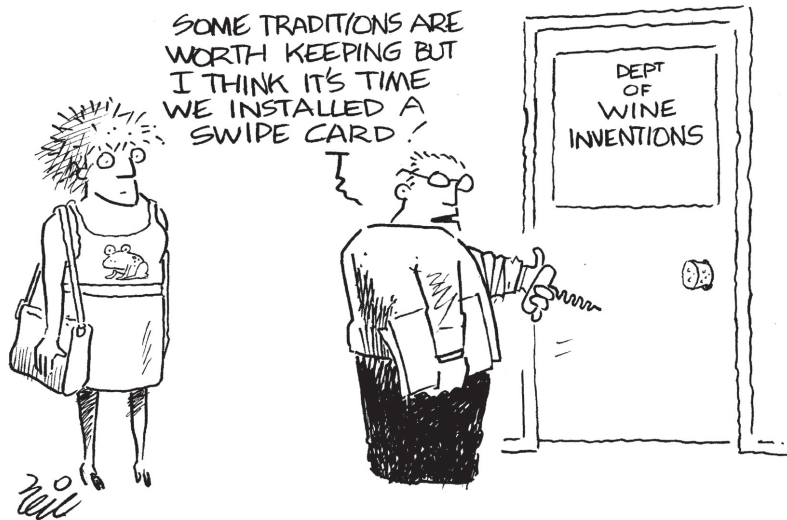
### CAPE MENTELLE INTERNATIONAL CABERNET TASTING 2017

#### FRIDAY 17 NOVEMBER

*Taste the world’s best Cabernet Sauvignons followed by a long lunch!  
Enquiries: T: 08 9757 0888*

# Myths and Marvels

*ABC Radio's science guru Robyn Williams pulls the cork on early scientific discoveries and Australia's capacity for invention.*



I was in Chiantishire, just north of Sienna, where the classic Italian red is said to have been invented. Baron Bettino Ricasoli worked on its composition for 30 years and, in 1872, settled on a formula that we now know as Chianti Classico. If you climb the battlements of his great castle at Brolio you can look down on the divine vista of vineyards stretching to the hills of a sublime Tuscan landscape.

## *'Oenological innovation is something we are good at'*

We were staying at Borgo San Felice close by, an entire exquisite medieval village transformed into a hotel-resort with its own wines and cellar. Great barrels stood in the silence and we spoke in hushed voices. Our guide, a young Italian woman who had worked in wineries in Australia, pointed to the top of the barrels and asked, 'Who d'you think invented those glass devices up there, keeping air out but balancing the gas pressures?'

Some questions warrant a clever-sticks guess so I offered 'Leonardo!' 'Yes,' she exclaimed 'Leonardo da Vinci hundreds of years ago'. Since then I've asked the odd expert to confirm the legend and some have nodded vaguely and agreed.

Next I asked Dr Google and found, eventually, a piece by Laura Gray *The Truth about Airlocks* saying – not so. The technology was thought up in 1827 (the year Beethoven died) and published in a Tuscan agricultural journal.

For this and many other reasons I've always been uneasy about oenological facts. What I do know, is that two Vice Chancellors in Australia are deeply knowledgeable

about wine: Peter Hoj from University of Queensland and Nobel Laureate Brian Schmidt from ANU. The latter has his own pinot noir plantation near Canberra.

Of course, they know that alcohol is produced by yeasts that consume the sugars in fruit. And also that we owe our taste for wine to apes. According to the cover story of *National Geographic* (Birth of Booze, 2017) some of our ape ancestors developed a taste for fermented fruit found on the forest floor and enjoyed its nutritional, antiseptic and mind-massaging qualities. Author Nathaniel Dominy says we owe those apes big-time, for we are 'pre-adapted for consuming alcohol'.

And that adaptation started a long time ago. A kind of wine was produced in China

9000 years ago and the wine grape itself is thought to have originated from Georgia, near the Caucasus. The Romans loved a drop and other Europeans favoured wines and other alcoholic drinks, not least because they were safer than water, which often carried vile disease.

Enter Governor Phillip who brought vine cuttings to Australia on the First Fleet in 1788. They flourished from the Hunter to the Barossa to establish Australia's wine industry. Nowadays climate change and global warming is forcing re-evaluation of these historic areas, with some vineyards relocating to Tasmania. Just one case of lateral thinking and oenological innovation, something we are good at.

Australia has led the way when it comes to wine inventions. Just look at the list on the Australian Wine Research Institute website: stainless steel receiving vats (1948); Bag-in-the-box packaging patent (1956) launched into wine shops (1965); first botrytis sweetened Australian semillon (1962); drip irrigation (1970s); first DNA cloning experiments (1973); screw caps (out in the 1980s, back in the 1990s). Now the Institute is experimenting with yeasts, enzymes, grafting, energy-saving techniques, watering and harvesting technologies.

We may have been relatively late starters (the Romans experimented with barrels 2000 years ago) in the scientific innovation stakes, but we have surely made our vinous mark.

One puzzle, though, that's beyond me. Why is the shape of the glass so important? And why am I now supposed to reject flutes for champagne? OK, so a bigger glass is now recommended by schnozzle scientists and sommeliers. That, wine friends, is simply perfection beyond my competence.

One last piece of technological brilliance shows how sophisticated Australian science has become. Tanya Monro, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) at the University South Australia, has developed a photonic sniffer that can assess the constitution of fuel in a jet plane tank and the safety of baby foods in containers. It has now been adapted to test wines, by insinuating tiny tubes into the bottle or barrel without opening them and spoiling the wine. Not Leonardo, but close.

*Robyn Williams presents the ABC Science Show. He holds several honorary doctorates and is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Science. His love of wine has never veiled his pursuit of scientific discovery.*



# CELLARING NOTES

*This year the cellar door crew has taken on the task of reviewing the past eight vintages of selected cellar-worthy Cape Mentelle wines. These notes represent their unexpurgated frank assessments of four flagship Cape Mentelle wines – two whites, two reds – intended to guide you in the careful management of your Cape Mentelle collection.*

*Your favourite wine may have scored a lower rating than you expect. Rest assured we do open extra bottles if a wine seems not to be showing as we expect, but ultimately these notes are a fearless assessment of each wine in the glass on the day. No ratings are based on prior tastings or reputation – meaning we are tough and true markers! We hope you find these Cellaring Notes useful in maintaining your precious cellar.*

Our Star System ★★★★★ Outstanding ★★★★★ Excellent ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Moderate ★ OK

VINTAGE		RATING	CELLARING TERM
	<b>Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon</b>		
2007	Juniper berries. Soft silty minerals. Herby, earthy, with hints of mown grass. Nice acidity, clean finish.	★★★★	Drink Now
2008	Earthy, lemony, nuances of wet limestone, tight palate with notes of fresh green grass and apple. Good acid frame. Oceanic resonances. Will continue to develop.	★★★	2019 – 2022
2009	A complex amalgam of blackcurrant leaf, herbs, orange zest and subtle spice. Nicely perfumed with a creamy balanced palate, lovely linear acidity and complexing oak undertones.	★★★★★	Now – 2020
2010	Hint of lime rind and honeysuckle complemented by gun smoke and talc. A touch of savoury oak balanced by a chalky natural acidity. Creamy texture with ginger and lemon flavours. Long finish.	★★★★★	Now – 2022
2011	Lemon rind, orange blossom and savoury spice in harmony. Bright and concentrated flavours balanced by a tight mineral structure. Beautiful length.	★★★★	Now – 2024
2012	Tight and juicy with blackcurrant and lime complemented by a complex textural pithy palate. Creamy oak. Mineral structure. Long, intense finish carrying flavours of lemon rind and subtle spice.	★★★★★	Now – 2025
2013	Opens with malt and nut aromas with hints of spice and herbs. Beautiful mix of lemon rind, orange zest and vanilla flavour. A light and dry palate, savoury and textured.	★★★★	Now – 2026
2014	A slightly saline start accompanied by notes of melon and lemon. Ample mouth-feel with biscuit characters supported by pink grapefruit notes. Fresh acidity balanced by a tactile texture. Great length.	★★★★★	Now – 2028
	<b>Chardonnay</b>		
2008	Rockmelon and pear on the nose, merging to honey with hints of blackcurrant leaf. Thread of minerality carries through to a slightly earthy finish.	★★★★	Drink now
2009	Opens with nectarine and cashew aromas. Gentle oak integration, creaminess and refreshing soft acidity. Grilled peaches. Harmonious balance.	★★★★	Drink now
2010	Whiffs of smoked cheese. Mild oak influence, toastiness and spice. Lingering ripe pineapple acidity, richness. Caramelised Beurre Bosch pears on mid-palate. Subtle creamy texture.	★★★★	Now – 2019
2011	Grapefruit and pineapple aromas balanced by toasty oak and marzipan. Lemon curd and pear flavours persist and lead to a long and chalky, bright finish.	★★★★	Now – 2020
2012	Lime, pear and grapefruit complemented by hints of gunflint and marzipan. Chalky acidity leading to a great flavour persistence. A fruit-driven elegant wine.	★★★★	Now – 2023
2013	Intense and powerful with flavours of peach and pineapple balanced by subtle spicy vanillin oak. Creamy texture carrying the fruit flavours to a long, bright and lingering finish.	★★★★	Now – 2023
2014	Expressive nose with apple and pear compote aromas, cinnamon toast and roasted fig. Flavours of crusty bread, apple crisps, grapefruit, almond and pecan. Very long-lasting finish.	★★★★★	Now – 2026
2015	Intense characters of watermelon, ripe peach and apricot over notes of vanilla and biscotti. Rich generous palate amplified by stone fruits, dried apricots, frangipani and brioche. Cashew nuts and toasty oak on the finish balanced by preserved lemon notes.	★★★★★	Now – 2026

**Recommended Cellaring Duration** *Regular Cape Mentelle cellar-hands will note that the team has offered suggested 'use-by' periods. Rest assured there is no haste for some of the younger wines, which have a projected lifespan extending to 2040!*

VINTAGE		RATING	CELLARING TERM
	<b>Shiraz</b>		
2007	Spicy ripe fruit bouquet. Rich and smooth palate with mulberries and blackberries. Savoury oak. Closes with structural chalky tannins and a long finish.	★★★★★	Drink now
2008	Appealing sweet spice nose – cardamom, cinnamon, and cloves combined with hints of blueberry. Grippy tannins. Freshly cracked black pepper, boysenberries. Nice acidity extension.	★★★★★	Now – 2019
2009	Pepper, cumin and thyme. Soft flavours of smoky bacon. Starts very smoothly and increases in intensity. Vanilla pod influence from the American oak. Licorice, aniseed, and tomato leaf on the finish. Distinct delicate elegant aromas.	★★★★★	Now – 2025
2010	Red cherries and raspberries balanced by vanilla bean, with smoky nuances. Hints of leather. Smells young and fresh. Appealing meaty tannins. Glazed cherries. Lingers. Soft tobacco. Yum!	★★★★★	Now – 2025
2011	Rich blueberry fruit and black pepper. Great depth with mulberries and a hint of dark chocolate and licorice. Firm and savoury structure, balanced by a long spicy finish.	★★★★★	Now – 2028
2012	Plush and rich, juicy notes of plum and mulberry, complemented by hints of spice. Palate displays crushed dry leaf and earth. Very smooth velvety mouth-feel. Sweet and savoury impact. Long and spicy.	★★★★★	Now – 2030
2013	Greeted by blueberry, red berries and violets, supported by complex cured meat notes and hints of black pepper. Intense mouthful of red fruits, dark pepper and cardamom. Long, mellow savoury finish.	★★★★★	Now – 2030
2014	Vibrant fresh plum and blackberry aromas and flavours, supported by good structure and smoky tannins. Youthful and peppery, full-bodied throughout. Framed by oak tannins and very good length.	★★★★★	Now – 2032

*“I love everything that’s old; old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wines.”* OLIVER GOLDSMITH

	<b>Cabernet Sauvignon</b>		
2007	Vanilla bean, rose petal, rosemary and violet aromas with hints of oak. Limestoney. Oaky but gentle mouth-feel. Very refined tannins. Nice heirloom tomato acidity. Lifted and fragrant. Delicate.	★★★★★	Now – 2035
2008	Fruity yet earthy nose. Paprika, cayenne pepper, smoked red capsicum aromas. Full-bodied, blackcurrant, blueberry highlights and mellow. Great complexity. Smoky and spicy. Shows vivacity.	★★★★★	Now – 2037
2009	Opens with blackcurrant, blackberries, and fresh red capsicum. Ripe red fruit on the palate. Fine complexity. Very pleasing long finish. A fine, elegant well-integrated wine.	★★★★★	Now – 2037
2010	Very expressive evoking the warm vintage: red currants, lifted rose petals, crushed tomatoes. Savoury palate with bay leaf, smoked red capsicum, refined tannins. An elegant, leaner younger Cabernet.	★★★★★	Now – 2038
2011	Complex melange of blackcurrant, thyme and aniseed backed by subtle oak. Rich palate with great drive and intensity combining a vibrant mix of dark berries, hints of wet slate. Velvety tannins lead to a long, cool mineral finish.	★★★★★	Now – 2035
2012	Complex deep nose with aromas of blackcurrant, violets, wet slate, cacao, wild thyme and licorice. Powerful, intense concentrated wine. Structural tannins frame the fruit perfectly and balance the minerality.	★★★★★	Now – 2040
2013	Bay leaf and thyme on the nose, opening to intense ripe cassis, black pepper and smoky notes. The attack explodes with red currants, hints of clove and juniper berry. A mineral backbone leads to a fresh finish. Savoury fine tannins.	★★★★★	Now – 2038
2014	Abundant red jam notes supported by blond caramel and cocoa nibs. Hints of dried herbs and forest floor. Caramelized red and black cherry complemented by focused tannins melding into warm supple cocoa bean mocha notes.	★★★★★	Now – 2040

Pic: Tobias Tullberg



Pic: Catherine Ord, Elements



Cape Mentelle winemakers Frederique Perrin (left) and Coralie Lewis (right).

## French Connection

*Introducing two integral members of the Cape Mentelle winemaking team.*

Since its inception Cape Mentelle has had French connections. The company name for a start, which originates from the Baudin Expedition of 1801. That voyage was charted by the Mentelle brothers who lived in Paris – one a geographer, the other a cartographer. They left their mark.

Roll forward to 2014 when winemaker Frederique Perrin was appointed Cape Mentelle’s Technical Director. Born in France and with a Degree in Agricultural Engineering and Masters in Oenology from Montpellier, Frederique previously helped put the elegant bubbles into Krug Champagne. But she always hankered for the southwest of WA, back since her very first overseas vintage there in 1999.

Numerous years later after stints at Terrazas de los Andes and California’s Newton Vineyard, the opportunity arose to lead the Cape Mentelle team, where she is responsible for both viticulture and winemaking.

Her passion is Chardonnay, and the latest release *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay* is a definitive expression of her affinity for the variety.

Frederique is assisted by Associate Winemaker, Coralie Lewis. She too was trained in France, studying in Bordeaux and working at Chateaux Cheval Blanc and Beychevelle. So no guesses – Coralie’s passion is Cabernet Sauvignon. Next year will be her fourth vintage at Cape Mentelle, but tenth in the region, where she lives with her Australian husband and young family.

These two talented winemakers were till recently supported by Assistant Viticulturist Pauline Castagnie, whose work at Cape

Mentelle focused on the potential of exceptional intra-block terroir for Cabernet Sauvignon reported in the previous MN issue. Accomplished vintners all.

Yet there is nothing especially new about women in wine. Just think back to Madame Clicquot, and her bubbly neighbour, Madame Lily Bollinger, whose passions were summed up in that famous quote about drinking Champagne.

It’s an exhortation that savvy marketers could cheekily modify to read... ‘I drink Cape Mentelle when I’m happy and when I’m sad...’ These famous trail-blazing, sparkling women, mesdames Clicquot and Bollinger would surely agree.

## Eat In with Anna Gare

Local West Australian TV chef Anna Gare has chosen a hearty winter dish featuring local produce to match the new *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Cabernet Cabernet Franc 2014*. First pour a glass for the cook...

As a lover of fresh local produce I support the “Buy West Eat Best” campaign, a no-brainer for me. Buying West supports WA farmers and producers, helps our economy, has a lower carbon footprint and delivers seasonal fresh food.

This stunning aromatic hot pot is simple, delicious and features Mount Barker chicken, Linley Valley pork, Lake Deborah salt and locally grown spices from Whittington’s.

## AROMATIC CHICKEN & PORK HOT POT

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 750g chicken thighs, cut in half
- 750g pork belly pieces, cut in half
- 500mls chicken stock
- ½ cup salt-reduced soy sauce
- ½ cup rice vinegar
- ½ cup water
- 1 tbs brown sugar
- 6 spring onions, sliced
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled, thinly sliced
- 2cm nob ginger, peeled, thinly sliced
- 1 to 2 red chilli, sliced
- 1 tsp whole black peppercorns
- 1 tsp whole white peppercorns
- pinch of salt
- 2 to 3 star anise
- 1 stick cinnamon
- 4 medium potatoes, sliced into 2cm pieces
- 1 bunch baby carrots, peeled
- ½ small savoy cabbage, cut into wedges
- fresh coriander for serving

### Method

**PREHEAT** oven to 180°C.

**PLACE** chicken and pork pieces into a 4-litre heavy-based casserole.

**POUR** over the stock, soy, vinegar and water.

**ADD** brown sugar, spring onions, garlic, ginger, chilli and spices.

**SCATTER** potatoes over the top.

**COVER** with baking paper and the lid and bake for 1 hour.

**REMOVE FROM OVEN** add the carrots and a topper layer of cabbage. Cover and bake a further 30 mins or until the vegies are just cooked.

**SERVE** in bowls, evenly distributing all the vegetables, spooning over the chicken, pork and broth. Scatter with fresh coriander leaves. Leftovers are delicious the next day.



Pic: Rob Palmer.

## National Heroes

The London Australia Day Tasting is a long-standing tradition started by the nation's global marketers at Wine Australia. It is an unashamedly nationalistic celebration of the very best of Australian wine, held with considerable fanfare.

This flagship event has been held for many years and is a pivotal showcase for Australia's prestige wines and their makers. This year over 1100 wines from 230 wineries were poured. Not an event for faint-hearted palates.

Among the exhibitors was Cape Mentelle, represented by Estate Director Cameron Murphy, who poured the latest releases for an enthusiastic throng of British wine trade and wine media.

According to Wine Australia's Laura Jewell MW the tasting really 'highlights the diversity of Australian wine and reinforces

the country's reputation as a premium wine producer'. And too, we trust, the reputation of the mighty wines from Margaret River.

A similar Wine Australia showcase rolled into Dallas, Chicago and New York recently, monickered 'Australia Up Close' and Cameron Murphy was there again, putting Cape Mentelle's best bottles forward.

He reports renewed US interest in Margaret River wines and growing awareness of regionality. Masterclasses and focused varietal tastings highlighted the breadth and depth of what Australian wine regions can offer.

Over the last three years US imports of Cape Mentelle have quadrupled to become our largest overseas market. And that cheeky white classic blend *Cape Mentelle Sauvignon Blanc Semillon* is one ambassador keenly leading the charge.



Spot Cameron! He's talking to the Wine Detective Sarah Ahmed, also a panellist for Decanter.

## Croatian Claim

It hasn't caused an international crisis – yet. But there may be rumblings if the Croatian wine sector has its way and insists that the variety otherwise known fondly as Zinfandel or Primitivo, is renamed Tribidrag.

According to the proud Croats, Tribidrag is an almost forgotten indigenous grape

variety that was re-discovered when American scientists decided to probe the DNA of Zinfandel. Their research took them to vineyards in Dalmatia and Montenegro and the agriculture department at Zagreb University.

Genetic analyses have shown close links between Tribidrag, Plavac Mali, Primitivo and the original Zin, a variety that the Croats claim dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Dalmatia.

At a recent international conference called to ponder the conundrum, Jancis Robinson MW decreed that 'priority rights' should rule – that is, the oldest variety name should prevail. Such viticultural nomenclature changes usually take time to evolve, so in the meantime Cape Mentelle Zin stays as it is. Out there and proud of its European lineage dating back six centuries.



To be or not to be – Cape Mentelle Zinfandel lines up in Croatia.

Pic: Damir Fabijanic



## Milestone Year

Those with a penchant for anniversaries may be aware that 2017 marks the 50th Anniversary of the foundation of the Margaret River wine region. The earliest vineyards were mostly established by enterprising doctors, men who chose to cultivate grazing land and plant vines.

Cape Mentelle was founded in 1970 but that interval does not prevent our celebration of the district's long and illustrious history. Various activities are planned by the Margaret River Wine Association, including the '50 Years in the Making' Decade Tastings (16 November) which will feature comprehensive masterclass reviews of the region's champion varieties – Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.

The Margaret River Collaborative Cabernet Cuvée Gala Dinner and Auction (18 November), one of the headline events of the 2017 Gourmet Escape program, will be prepared by five local chefs featuring local produce. One Auction highlight will be the Collaborative Cabernet Cuvée, a single hero wine from collective parcels of top quality cabernet grapes. Vintage 2017 Cabernet En Primeur lots will also be offered.

Join in the celebrations! More information: [amanda@margaretriver.wine](mailto:amanda@margaretriver.wine)

*'Margaret River is as close to paradise as I have been on my wine travels'*

JANCIS ROBINSON, MW

# Mountain High

The Mentelle Ambassador program re-launched late last year. Already it has drawn several captivating photo entries from Cape Mentelle fans who have packed a bottle in their luggage or spotted Cape Mentelle wines in far flung places – then taken a selfie and posted on social media or submitted to the winery for consideration.

Every issue of *Mentelle Notes* publishes the winning ambassadorial photo – an image that best captures the essence of this global roaming program.

To get readers into the swing of the happy-snap program we decided to introduce you to Wenping who popped her bottle of *Cape Mentelle Zinfandel* on the parapet at the world's highest winery, Ao Yun near Shangri-La in Yunnan Province, China, where she works.

Ao Yun means 'flying above the clouds' and Wenping literally does because the winery sits at 2,200 metres on the lower slopes of the Tibetan Himalayas, under Meili Snow Mountain.

For your chance to be appointed an official Mentelle Ambassador, all you need to do is take a photo of yourself, colleagues, family or friends enjoying Cape Mentelle wine in exotic or unusual places. Then post using #capementelle or #mentelleambassador or link directly to [www.facebook.com/capementelle](https://www.facebook.com/capementelle) You can also email photos to: [info@capementelle.com.au](mailto:info@capementelle.com.au) Ensure your image quality is at least one megabyte.

All photos will be reviewed and a winning image chosen each month. The prize is a **Six-Pack Selection** of current releases sent via Australia Post Wine Service to your nominated Australian address.

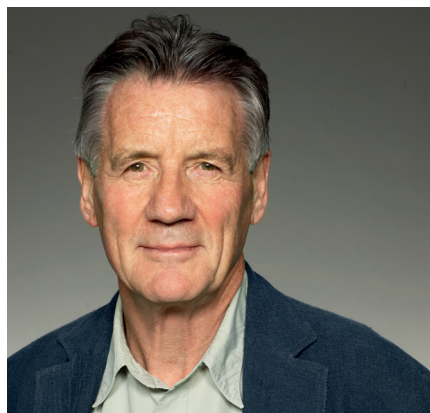


Wenping flying high with Cape Mentelle Zin in Yunnan Province, China.

# BACK VINTAGE Monty Returns

Star-billing at the recent Margaret River Writers' Festival went to globetrotter author Michael Palin, a man of refined pen and palate. His visit caused some ruffling through the *Mentelle Notes* archives, back in fact to July 1998, when Michael Palin was MN's cover boy.

We know he is still an avowed chardonnay fan and we are sure he won't mind this revival of his original bon mots, largely directed at wine waiters.



*'Wine is all about mental notes. They're what you mean to scribble down, and never do, as a particularly noteworthy bottle is whisked away from the table.'*

*'One of the things I like least about restaurant wine service is the tendency to keep the identity of the bottle you've chosen a closely guarded secret. The wine list is wrenched from your grasp as soon as the choice has been made and the bottle is either wrapped in a napkin (old-fashioned but still a feature of posh places) or grasped so firmly by the waiter you need to prise fingers apart to catch a glimpse of the label.'*

*'I think it's time to redress the balance. Time to take a Blair-ite Third Way-ist approach and devolve power from the sommelier back to the customer. So waiters, no hiding bottles away, no cork sniffing, none of those baskets that make the bottle look as if it's a sick dog on the way to the vet...'*

Nearly 20 years later Blair's Third-Way has evolved to Mrs May's Brexit exit and other unexpected outcomes. Wine waiters are now credentialed sommeliers that 'curate' lists, and those wicker baskets have long gone to the school fete. But good chardonnay still rules the world. Just ask Michael Palin.

# Latest Drops

## CAPE MENTELLE WALLCLIFFE CABERNET & CABERNET FRANC 2014

*'Great perfume of dried roses, aniseed and crushed leaf, red- and blackcurrant, cocoa and cedar oak in support. Medium-bodied, fresh and energetic, small red berries and aniseed, fine chalk dust tannin, cool acidity, and a clean long finish. Terrific.'*

95 POINTS Gary Walsh, WINEFRONT

*'... Very cabernet, ripe and clean and attractive, with a sheen of classy oak... It's full-bodied and ripe; rich black fruits rather than red; powerful and fleshy, with high extract. An absolute ripper of a cabernet.'*

96 POINTS Huon Hooke, REAL REVIEW

## CAPE MENTELLE CHARDONNAY 2015

*'A fuller, more powerful iteration... Peach, melon, fig, gingernut biscuits, cashew and toast... Finish comes up with lime, grapefruit and toasted oak spices... A bit more 'Rolls Royce' in style for Cape Mentelle, but certainly hits the spot.'*

94 POINTS Gary Walsh, WINEFRONT

## CAPE MENTELLE SHIRAZ 2014

*'An excellent shiraz, it grows in the glass beautifully. It hasn't been pushed too hard, it's not in your face, it almost sneaks up on you, and yet the flavour is all there. Tastes of plums and peppercorns, wood smoke and black cherries. Satiny throughout and yet the curl of tannin is there... Textbook in all ways.'*

94 POINTS Campbell Mattinson, WINEFRONT

## CAPE MENTELLE CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2014

*'... A serious wine all-round. Full-bodied and very concentrated, profoundly flavoured and structured, masses of tannin and a terrifically long finish. Powerfully built cabernet of outstanding potential. A great wine – possibly the best yet from Cape Mentelle.'*

98 POINTS Huon Hooke, THE REAL REVIEW

*'Blackberry and blueberry aromas with wet earth and bark. Sandalwood undertones. Full body, velvety tannins and a juicy finish. Very agile at the same time. Energy. What a wine for the cellar.'*

96 POINTS, [www.jamessuckling.com](http://www.jamessuckling.com)