

“.....WINE  
IS A WORLD  
THAT FINDS  
ITS OWN”

CAPE  
MENTELLE

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MARGARET RIVER

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2012

# RAMBLINGS FROM THE WINEMAKER

“DON’T WORRY  
BE HAPPY”



The 2012 harvest is looking very good, though we had reason for concern late in 2011. It was a challenging few days in late November with warm north easterly winds fanning a devastating fire along the immediate coastal area of the Margaret River region. Many houses were lost, including the historic Wallcliffe House built in 1857 on the banks of the Margaret River, but many hundreds of houses were saved, no serious injuries resulted and less than 1.5% of the region, which extends some 100km from Cape Leeuwin in the south to Cape Naturalist in the north, was impacted directly by the fire.

The images of billowing smoke and flames on TV caused many people from all over the world to contact us regarding our safety, with justifiable concern. When the smoke had cleared and the danger subsided, the impact on the developing

fruit on the vine was the concern. Thankfully only a few hectares of Margaret River vineyard were burnt and the threat of smoke tainting the region's grapes was avoided due to the offshore winds and restricted nature of the fire to the immediate coastal area where few vineyards are planted.

We are experiencing a very warm and dry summer and harvest will likely be early, with the first of our chardonnay being harvested as I write (some 2 weeks earlier than average). This will be the earliest start to vintage in the seven harvests I have completed at Cape Mentelle.

The encouraging sign (if history is any example) is that the warm vintages of 2007, 2009 and 2011 are among the best for the region's hero Cabernet Sauvignon and the family of red Bordeaux varieties in which Cape Mentelle specialises.

We have much to be grateful for and

even more to look forward to with the great potential of this year's harvest and the quality of recent vintages ensuring fantastic wines for future release. The local community and particularly the many hundreds of fire fighters and volunteers did an amazing job under an extreme threat. The bush will recover and the houses will be rebuilt but the important message from the winemakers of this remarkable region is that the quality of the wines has not been impacted and, although a little scarred by the fire, our region needs the support of visitors and consumers more than ever. Let's drink to that.

Robert Mann  
Senior Winemaker & Estate Director  
Cape Mentelle Vineyards

# CAPE MENTELLE GOES BACK TO THE FUTURE

In 1976 brothers David and Mark Hohnen constructed the Cape Mentelle winery with its pioneering rammed earth wall design. Large wooden vats made from French oak were installed for wine storage. These vats served a dual purpose acting as both fermentation and maturation vessels for wine created from the cabernet sauvignon grapes harvested from the Estate Vineyard. With Rob Mann joining the team as senior winemaker in 2005, the winery made a focused effort to restore and revive the vats, bringing them back to a useable state.

The original winery cellar is now home to a lovely array of various sized oak vats and casks. The old vats now provide a distinctive style to reds, in particular Shiraz and Zinfandel, imparting enhanced fruit and tannin profiles with structures similar to the wines coming from the northern Rhône region of France.

With the 2012 vintage around the corner, Cape Mentelle is going back to the future – thank you Mc Fly! Three newly hand crafted French oak vats are on their way from Cognac in time for the Cabernet Sauvignon harvest. The vats have been specially selected for use during fermentation. With soft methods of extraction and digital temperature control, the vats will be used to further enhance the elegant and refined red wine style of Cape Mentelle.

These French oak vats are gaining huge popularity not only with the top growth châteaux of Bordeaux but rival Cabernet producing regions, the Napa Valley, Rioja and Tuscany. I recently visited Château Angélus, one of the top producers in Saint-Emillion on the right bank of Bordeaux. There, owner Hubert de Bouard prefers to vinify the older merlot and cabernet franc vines in oak vats, imparting more structure into the wine than stainless steel and concrete vats. Hubert's aim is to achieve a much more subtle and soft vinification, resulting in a richer and more elegant wine. Here at Cape Mentelle, we are all excited about rich, refined and elegant Cabernets to come from vintage 2012.

Evan Thompson  
Operations Winemaker  
Cape Mentelle Vineyards



# PEOPLE WHO SPEND THEIR LIVES IN PURSUIT OF BEAUTY AND GRACE IN A GLASS ARE MY KIND OF PEOPLE

At the time of writing it's been four days since I brushed my teeth.

Not that I'm bragging, mind you.

I'm only marginally less appalled by the thought than you are, but the pungent reality is I'm doing it for my own good.

Everyone within a ten foot radius might have to suffer for a few days but unless I want to be eating my steaks as soup for the rest of my life there's not a lot of choice.

That's because I drink for a living, writing about wine for a whole bunch of people who seem to like it enough to pay me.

While there is an immodest amount of long lunching, vineyard lurking and plain old intemperance going on, there's actually some pretty hard work involved too.

Like the masochism of judging in wine shows. I've spent the last week at the Sydney Royal Wine Show, a four day sensory slug-fest in which my liver suddenly thinks it's Bear Grylls and my teeth look like I've just eaten a fountain pen.

Now to most sensible people the idea of standing around in a large hall, wearing an ill-fitting white coat and swirling, sniffing and spitting 160 wines every day for a week would seem a ridiculous way to occupy one's time.

They'd be right.

Facing a line up of 90 young cabernets at 8.30 in the morning is about as appealing as a Julia Roberts movie marathon.

Knowing that's how your day will begin will make your heart sink as soon as you wake each morning of a wine show week.

If you rolled over in bed and found Courtney Love beside you, you'd still hit the snooze button and snuggle for 15 minutes just to delay the even greater horror that awaits.



If doing it on Day One is hard, those that follow are even more traumatic because you're doing it hideously hungover. As if this motley collection of winemakers, wine writers and sommeliers don't get enough of it during the day, each evening at a wine show is taken up with official dinners that make Caligula's Rome look like a Methodist health retreat.

Trying to focus an addled mind on the merits of an overly oily pinot gris while a flock of confited ducks are trying to fly south through your digestive system is nobody's idea of a good time.

Of course there are always going to be people suffering under greater duress.

I'm not meaning to overshadow the hardship faced by those who fight wars, police the streets, strip at bucks shows or work with Kyle Sandilands.

I'm doing this so all those people who snidely offer to swap places with me have some understanding that being a professional drinker is not all beer and skittles. In fact there's almost no skittles at all.

For those of you who still reckon it might be a bit of a lark, consider this.

While you slept soundly in your beds this week I tossed and turned each and every night while the Battle of the Bulge raged in my stomach and my aesophagus had so many acid flashbacks it thought it was Syd Barrett.

While you were able to brush your teeth morning and night, I had to let mine get furrer than an eskimo's undie drawer just so they wouldn't dissolve right out of my mouth. It's all unpaid, keeps you away from what you should be doing for most of a week and can get pretty tiresome standing there on your feet all day.

But I still do it five or six times a year. Because I actually love it.

Sure it's arduous sometimes but it can also be a lot of fun. The vigorous debates that rage over the merits of a particular wine- or their absence- is always stimulating, the insights from your fellow judges always helping to deepen your own.

The process helps sharpen your sensory faculties, the rigid focus on all those wines, all day, every day really helps to make everyone involved better at what they do in the real world, whether they be winemakers, sommeliers or scruffy hacks like me.

But it's the camaraderie among the judges that really makes it all worthwhile. Drawn together for a week of hard work and even harder socialising, judging at a wine show always reinforces the idea that wine is a world that finds its own, that the people who spend their lives in pursuit of beauty and grace in a glass are my kind of people, my brethren, my kin, a bunch of my fellow masochists in stained white coats with blackened smiles.

Nick Ryan  
Freelance Wine Writer



# GREAT BALLS OF FIRE, THAI STYLE



By Ian Parmenter

Once upon a time, in my youth, I had a physique. I was an athlete. Seriously. I threw things for my school: javelins and discuses (disci?). I was captain of fencing – the sword kind. And I was reasonably nimble around the fives court in the UK and on the squash court in Australia. I just loved hitting that little black ball at a wall and then trying to avoid it on its rebound.

Why am I telling you this? Because, nowadays, I don't have a physique worth emailing home about. However, I am reminded of my squashing days every time I visit a Thai restaurant where fish cakes are served.

Although they usually are lighter in colour - and often hotter than the black rubber sports ball in play – Thai restaurant fishcakes often possess a similar texture: firm and bouncy. And yet it's not so hard to produce a light, chilli hot, tasty, elegant fish cake, and to serve it with a beautiful sweet and sour cucumber relish as detailed below.

You don't have to be an athlete to cook and enjoy these with a glass or two of Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2009...

Try these. I guarantee you won't produce bouncers.

## Fish Cakes with Cucumber Relish

Serves 4 as entrée, 8 as appetizer

### Fish cake ingredients

1 chilli, seeded (or 1 tsp minced chilli)  
1 tsp chopped lemon grass stem (optional)  
2 cloves of garlic, minced or finely chopped  
1 lime leaf (finely chopped)  
2 tsp fish sauce  
1 large egg  
300g white fish fillets  
10 or so stringless beans, finely chopped  
1 Tbsp cornflour  
Oil for frying

Process chilli, garlic, lemongrass, lime leaf with fish sauce either in a food processor or by grinding in a mortar.

Mix in the egg.

Pat fish dry, check for bones and remove if necessary. Finely chop fish and add to mixture. Stir in stringless beans and cornflour.

Set aside for an hour or so.

Shape fish cakes into patty-like shapes and fry in a little oil on both sides, four or five minutes each side.

Note: do not overcook.

Serve with cucumber relish.

### Cucumber relish ingredients

4 Tbsp rice vinegar (or good white wine vinegar)  
1 Tbsp water  
1 heaped Tbsp caster sugar  
1 Lebanese cucumber, peeled, seeds removed and finely chopped  
1 chilli, seeded (or 1 tsp minced chilli)  
2 Tbsp roasted peanuts, chopped  
1 Tbsp chopped coriander leaves

Put vinegar, sugar and water in a pan that will not react with acid (such as stainless steel) and heat to dissolve sugar. Taste for sweetness. If the mixture tastes too acidic, add more sugar. Allow to cool.

Add other ingredients.

# MENTELLE AMBASSADOR



While Australia can thank France for much inspiration when it comes to winemaking, the nation also deserves our thanks for exporting to Australia studious countrymen such as Jean-Michel Le Floch.

Jean-Michel arrived in Australia in 2003 as a student, stayed on to do his PhD, was awarded a fellowship from the Australian Research Council and now works at The University of Western Australia in Physics!

Jean-Michel first discovered Cape Mentelle during the Margaret River Wine Festival and now visits the winery once a month with his wife Angelique to have a picnic and play a few games of Petanque.

In June 2011 Jean-Michel and Angelique welcomed baby Clemence into their family and promptly took off to France to proudly introduce their new arrival to family and friends – with some Cape Mentelle packed in their luggage of course.

Jean-Michel didn't miss the opportunity to take a snap when in Perth, Champnétery, Limousin with the Mentelle Ambassador competition in mind.

We think that is a stellar effort and our adopted citizen deserves to take the prize.

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](mailto: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 six bottles of Cape Mentelle wine (within Australia).

All entrants will receive a limited edition leather Cape Mentelle notebook.

## WINERY NEWS

### SAVE THE DATE

The Cape Mentelle International Cabernet Tasting will once again be held at the winery in 2012, showcasing 20 of the world's best cabernet sauvignons from the 2009 vintage followed by a long lunch in our beautiful gardens.

The date will be Saturday 10th November and if you would like to pre-register please contact [charlotte.dowden@capementelle.com.au](mailto:charlotte.dowden@capementelle.com.au). Further details will follow in our next newsletter.

### E-NEWSLETTER

In support of our sustainability policy we have commenced an email version of our newsletter, which many of you received with our last edition. We had a great response to this as for the first time our readers were able to order directly online.

If you are happy to receive only an email version in future or you didn't receive the email copy and would like to please let Charlotte know, we may need to update your address.

### MITV

'Movies In The Vineyard' is into its second successful year at Cape Mentelle with the four month season on track to double last year's attendance figures and achieve 20,000 visitors to the winery - a resounding success with locals and visitors to the region. The outdoor cinema's film programme reads like the 2012 Academy Awards nominations and, along with a glittering array of cinematic gems, features *The Artist*, the film which won 5 Oscars at this year's Academy Awards.

There have been several new innovations this year with the introduction of Mentelle Mondays, a range of MITV merchandise and a special case purchase promotion which includes free delivery to anywhere in Australia and a complimentary 13th bottle to enjoy on the night. Mentelle Mondays offers an inclusive package of a movie ticket, food and a glass of wine for \$25. New onsite food providers Little Wiener Catering got off to a flying start in January with an exciting new menu featuring the tasty flavours of Austria.

# NEW RELEASES

Happy New Year from the Cape Mentelle team! Introducing our first new releases of 2012...

The 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon hails from a very good vintage characterized by warm and dry conditions, early ripening and modest yields which ultimately produced outstanding red wines. Only 774 cases were made, exclusively from our Estate Vineyard.

From the same vintage we are pleased to bring you our Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon and our Wilyabrup Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Cabernet Franc. Both of these wines express why Margaret River Bordeaux varietals are so suited to our region. Combine this natural affinity with subtle sub-regional differences and the individuality of single vineyard origins and we hope you can see why we bottle these as unique wines. The Wallcliffe sub-region is slightly cooler, a touch wetter and a little more cloudy than Wilyabrup with grapes tending to ripen up to two weeks later.

The 2009 Wallcliffe is a touch fuller and richer than usual with the trademark wet slate and tight structure balancing the rich fruit characters and complexity derived from 100% barrel fermentation. We make the wine to best express the unique character of our Estate Vineyard and the Wallcliffe sub-region from which it is sourced.

The 2009 Wilyabrup is a great representation of what the Wilyabrup sub-region and the Kyella vineyard, from which 100% of the fruit was sourced, can produce. With only 41% cabernet, the strength of the merlot (39%) and cabernet franc (20%) are evident in the plush rich fruit character, lifted fragrance and velvety tannins so characteristic of Wilyabrup.

The dry and mild 2010 vintage was another strong one for Margaret River, continuing an excellent run, and the wines are very much in the classical style for the region - bright expressive and elegant with great structure. Both our Trinders Cabernet Merlot and our Shiraz benefit from berry sorting and an uncomplicated winemaking philosophy aimed at delivering fruit forward wines with great clarity of flavour and defined regional traits which we believe we have captured well from the 2010 vintage.

Exclusively to our newsletter and Cellar Door customers we also have a limited release of our 2006 Chardonnay. This wine is a multiple gold and trophy winning wine, most recently receiving a gold at the 2011 and 2010 MR wine show in the museum class in addition to the trophy for best museum wine in 2010.

# REVIEWS



## Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 2009

Tyson Stelzer

Wine Taste 17 Feb 2012 98 points

There is an understated effortless about this wine that will, time permitting, define it among the greatest Cape Mentelles of all. Every molecule of complexity and detail have been intricately assembled, with each nuance of young Margaret River cabernet character methodically ticked off, yet it upholds an astonishing approachability and an alcohol reading of just 13.5%. Fine, textural, gravelly tannins are impeccably poised and the length is mind-blowing. This is one of the top six Australian wines I have tasted in the past year – and it's the cheapest. In an age of mesospheric Bordeaux pricing, with a production of just 774 cases, it's an absolute bargain.



## Wilyabrup 2009

Ray Jordan

West Weekend January 2012 95 points

This is a blend of 41 per cent cabernet sauvignon, with the rest a mix of merlot and cabernet franc, all from the Wilyabrup sub-region. Glorious lifted fragrances on the nose, while on the palate the plummy blackcurrant flavours are augmented by a lavish cedary oak. The tannin structure is outstanding and really makes the wine stand up. This is an alternative take for Margaret River and works so well.



## Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2009

Jeremy Oliver

Australian Wine Annual 2012 95 points

Top 4 SBS

Long, savoury and briny, this complex, nutty and mineral blend has a spicy perfume of dried flowers, lychees, gooseberries and fresh, lightly toasted vanilla oak with undertones and nuances of sherbet and wet stones. It's smooth, round and finely focussed, with excellent length, shape and freshness. Very classy indeed.



## Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2011

Ray Jordan

West Australian Wine Guide 2012 94 points

With all the focus on Cape Mentelle's big guns, it's easy to overlook how good they are with this standard Margaret River Fare. This is beautiful. It's precise, fresh and crisp with a fine lingering palate packed with flavour intensity.