



Curly Flat

February 2011

No. 23

VINE To WINE

Releasing ...

2008 Curly Flat Pinot Noir & 2010 Curly Flat Pinot Gris

2008 Curly Flat Pinot Noir

We consider this to be the best Pinot Noir we have released to date. It has more pure Pinot Noir character, more complexity, more texture, more layers and good palate line and length. How long can we go on saying things like this? Well, the continuous improvement may be explained by a number of changes. The most obvious is vine age. The wine growers of Burgundy say Pinot Noir vines don't show real site expression and full varietal characters until they are 25 to 35 years old. Our Pinot vines only have an average age of 12 years, so a way to go. They are growing deeper into the superbly structured volcanic basalt soils of Curly Flat. Most Australian vineyards are on thin topsoil over undifferentiated clay soils; vines will not grow down into undifferentiated clay, they grow along it. That is not so at Curly Flat. Add to this our move to natural farming, or bio-dynamics. The first step was six years ago when we stopped using herbicides. Since then we have moved to applying the nine biodynamic preparations, and the vineyard has responded in many ways. The native grasses have taken over the previously bare herbicide strips and the vineyard floor has come alive, as has the multiplicity of beneficial insects, spiders and other species. These moves are starting to show in the wine quality.

Add to that our growing experience in the vineyard and in the winery. The Curly Flat Team now has a collective experience of decades with this site. That too is starting to show in the wine quality.

The 2008 is different from the 2007. It is easy to recognise that they are both part of the Curly Flat Pinot Noir family; the main difference is in appearance. The 2007 was both unfiltered and unfiltered, whereas the 2008 is unfiltered but filtered. It was filtered using the latest technology – cross flow filtration. This equipment is very expensive, but we had the opportunity to lease in the equipment for a short time. It is much less intrusive than traditional filtration. Further, it is inert, without any oxidation, and does not allow water near the wine. We are pleased with the result.



Our tasting note on 2008 Curly Flat Pinot Noir

Appearance: Full ruby, with transparency. Sparkling, bright and lively

Bouquet: A generous, complex and seductive bouquet, showing strong aromatics. There are both red and black fruits – red and black cherry, plums. Lots of secondary characters – dried flowers, chocolate, some white pepper and other

spices; earthy, toasty oak, hint of tobacco and cigar box

Palate: Speaks of Pinot Noir and place. Medium plus palate weight, with dancing acidity, lots of fine powdery tannins and savoury fruit. The complexity of the bouquet flows through into the palate, supported by integrated oak, to give a long, lingering finish

Overall Impression: A complex aromatic Pinot Noir with loads of primary and secondary layers. While drinking well now, the components are still integrating and developing further, thus will benefit from further time in bottle. A wine with fine acid, well suited to food

Cellaring: Eight to ten years, probably more.

2010 Curly Flat Pinot Gris

Gris or Grigio? We have written about this before, but it is a question that we are often asked. Pinot Gris and Pinot Grigio are made from the same grape variety – Pinot Gris; a mutation of Pinot Noir. Its skin colour is grey. 'Gris' means grey, in French, while 'grigio' means grey in Italian. The difference between Gris and Grigio is one of style – across a range that stretches from Grigio that is crisp and zesty while Gris is luscious and rich in texture. Our 2010 is labelled as Pinot Gris, reflecting the luscious and rich texture derived from the warm season. Our Pinot Gris/Grigio sells out rapidly, so if you are interested, don't wait too long. We are preparing more vineyard area to plant some more Pinot Gris/Grigio; it will be four years before the vines start producing.



The 2008 Season

As you may remember from our notes for the release of the 2008 Chardonnay, the 2008 Vintage was bizarre. Though, in light of recent events, we can also say that of Vintage 2011, but for different reasons – see more further on. Vintage 2008 was hot, very hot, and dry. Every month saw average maximum temperatures well above the long term averages. And rainfall was unseasonably low, with hail in December '07. Harvest started early, in mid March and continued for four weeks.

2008 Pinot low alcohol levels

A relatively low alcohol of 12.6% was achieved in a very hot year. Interestingly, when we did our group tasting, a couple of tasters noted evidence of high alcohol. This reflects the high aromatics of this wine, rather than alcohol. How did we achieved such a moderate alcohol in such a hot year? It could be our focus on acidity, rather than the normal approach of assessing sugar accumulation. More likely, it is our focus on biodynamic farming, which could be leading to the vines becoming self-regulating; moderating the accumulation of sugars, at the same time as holding back the break down of acids. It could be the impact of Lancefield/Romsey being the coolest sub-region on mainland Australia. It could be the impact of our deep volcanic basalt soils, allowing the vines to exploit a greater soil volume. Whatever the reason, we are delighted with the result.

Vintage 2011 - a wet start ...

Vintage 2011 is the most difficult season faced by the Australian wine industry, with the exception of Western Australia, in many decades. An oversupply of rains, with continual high humidity, brings continual mildew pressure, particularly downy mildew. It attacks green tissue, especially fresh young growth, and is most devastating if infection occurs prior to flowering. It decimates the tender bunch structure, and flowers, with the result that no berries form. Fortunately, at this juncture, Curly Flat is on top of the problem. Our Lyre trellis system, with the horizontal division of the canopy, means we don't have the crowded dense canopy that comes with the more common trellis systems. Further, the Lyre system allows good aeration and good spray penetration and coverage, as well as increased UV penetration which denatures the disease. A good trellis system is, however, only as good as the people who manage it, and our vineyard team must be congratulated for their dedication and diligence. Well Done! But there is still nine plus weeks to go until vintage, and disease and pests pressure remains high. There is light brown apple moth, powdery mildew, botrytis and more. We remain vigilant and we are hopeful of a good vintage.

The rain fall this vintage is right off the graph – 618mm to this point, against a long term average of 218mm. We had 210 mm in three days in January – the highest January rainfall since records started in 1873. And we had another 83mm early February.

Our tasting note on 2010 Curly Flat Pinot Gris

Appearance: Green Gold – sparkling clarity; bright and lively

Bouquet: A generous complex bouquet, showing Bosc Pear, fresh straw, ripe red apple, lychee, ginger, lemon drop and hints of orange blossom/honey suckle

Palate: Medium plus palate weight, with immediate varietal intensity, soft but ample acid, silky with soft tannins, complexing phenolics which lead to a good finish

Overall Impression: A complex aromatic full bodied Gris style well suited to food. Drinking well now but will benefit from time in bottle

Cellaring: Up to six years

Coming events ...

There are several dinners in association with the release of the 2008 Curly Flat Pinot Noir. The first of these are:

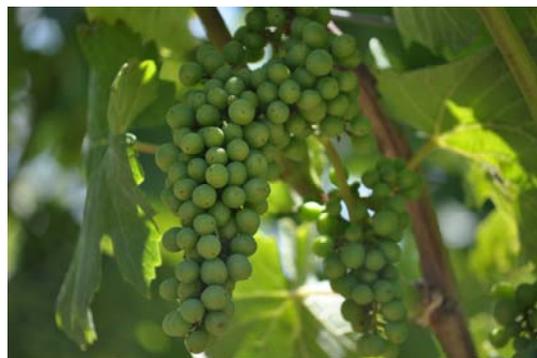
In Melbourne at Sosta Cucina, 12 Errol Street, North Melbourne (VIC) on Wednesday, 23rd March, 2011

A six course dinner featuring 5 vintages of Pinot Noir and also serving Chardonnay, Rosé and Grigio. Cost, both food and Wine \$125. Reservations direct to Sosta Cucina on (03) 9329-2882

In Sydney at bei amici, 2b Mona Road, Darling Point (NSW). Sunday, 20th March, 2011

Multi-course menu designed by food and travel writer and passionate cook Manuela Darling with Rosé, Pinot Grigio and multiple vintages of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Cost, both food and Wine \$125.

Reservations direct to bei amici on (02) 9328 0305



No mildew impact, nice healthy vines

A small rise in prices ...

The price of both the Pinot Gris and the Pinot Noir have risen by \$2 a bottle, to \$26 and \$48 respectively. This small change in price reflects an adjustment to recover some of the cost increases over recent years. To give this price change some historical perspective, when we first released the Pinot Gris, back in late 2004, it was priced at \$24, while it is almost ten years since we first released our Pinot Noir, and then it was priced at \$44. We remain committed to delivering wines that represent exceptional value at their price points. We trust you will appreciate that we have been reticent in our price changes and thank you for your understanding and support.



Partial Road Closure - Enter Collivers Road from Lancefield / Woodend Road



Collapsed bridge on Collivers Road

Due to the continual rains, starting back in July last year, the soil is saturated. So when the big rains hit us in the second week of January, the soil could not take any more. Our creek paddocks were flooded and the culvert bridge on Collivers Road, to the east of our entry, was underwashed and collapsed. So Collivers Road can only be entered from the west, that is, from the Lancefield/Woodend Road. So if you are visiting us, don't rely on your GPS system, as that will attempt to bring you in from the east, from the Melbourne/Lancefield road. It is

best to go into Lancefield and turn left onto C324 to Woodend. Collivers Road is approximately three kms out, on the left; the first left turn after you get well out into the 100kph zone. Should you come in on Collivers Road, from the east, you will be greeted by a ROAD CLOSED sign at the Parks Road intersection. Turn right and you will come to the Lancefield/Woodend Road, turn left, and Collivers Road, from the west, is the first road on your left.

Unfortunately for some people, they don't realise that you can go around and come in from the west. Hence we have people, visitors for tastings and supply delivery trucks, who park their vehicle at the washed out culvert and walk into Curly Flat. The delivery people carrying their packages in, while the tasting visitors walk out, along the driveway carrying their wine purchases.

It could be several months before the culvert bridge is repaired.



And the rains continued - January 2011



More work on Vintage Hall - our tasting room

Some of you may recall meeting our friend Kirby – the master bricklayer from the Gold Coast. Kirby did the renovation brick work on Vintage Hall, helped design and did the brick and block work on the winery, built the brick pillars for the entry gates and built the wood fired oven. Kirby is back again to do a rather massive paving job at Vintage Hall, which incorporates the fountain and fire pit. Kirby is ably assisted by his wife, Margot and our resident master builder, Robbo. Despite the wet weather, they are making great progress as the photograph attests.

There have been some significant changes to the homestead which is now Vintage Hall. The photo at the right was taken in 1989.

