

# Tête A Tête

The newsletter of the **Domaine A / Stoney Vineyard**

PO Box 137 Campania 7026 TAS

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## VINTAGE REPORT 2008

It's not often you can use both the words 'quality' and 'quantity' to describe a successful vintage in a cool climate wine region like Tasmania.

At least, not in the same sentence.

But that's how the new wines of 2008 are shaping up now as we reflect on one of the toughest growing and ripening seasons that we have experienced here at Domaine A Stoney Vineyard, since we first purchased the property from George and Priscilla Park back in 1989.

The thorough records that George left us helped chart the couple's 15 year-history in the Coal River Valley. They also indicated that the region's low natural rainfall would be a double-edged sword for us to grapple with as we pursued our goal of becoming producers of premium quality, European-styled wines.

Over the past decade, we have seen average rainfall on the property reduced to around 400mm-500mm a year. That contrasts markedly with the rainfall experienced in Hobart - around 620mm annually - the nation's second driest capital city. We're often aware that it can rain nearby at Brown Mountain, Campania, and Richmond, yet still remain dry and parched on our vineyard.

Low rainfall can be a real advantage to the vigneron when it helps de-vigour vines, limit crop yields, and suppress disease across a vineyard site. But in 2007-2008, the task of growing and maintaining healthy and efficient leaf canopies was seriously challenged by the adverse effects of prolonged drought and warmer than average temperatures.

Spring 2007 began with the drier than average month of September and finished with one of the driest and warmest Novembers on record

in Tasmania. As a result, our vineyard experienced a good even budburst across all varieties on the property. The vines continued to make steady progress through flowering and fruit-set during the latter part of the year, but struggled to achieve what we would consider normal leaf canopies.

We used our property's supplementary drip irrigation sparingly throughout the growing season. We feel it is far preferable to see mature vines sending their roots down deep into the earth in search of moisture than to allow them to be force-fed artificially, encouraging the undesirable formation of large bunches and/or large berries.

Even so, generous crops characterised the year's fruit set across all of Tasmania's seven key winegrowing regions. At Domaine A Stoney Vineyard, we cut off almost 50 percent of bunches in our Pinot Noir vineyard to prevent overcropping, and to allow a natural concentration of fruit aromas and flavours to take place in the remaining berries. Heart-breaking work, of course, but something that must be done if we are to attain the quality of wine we demand for our premium Domaine A label.

A smaller amount of fruit - immature bunches still showing green berries after veraison - was trimmed from our family of red Bordeaux grape varieties as well.

Harvest began on the property around the same time as usual this year. Our Pinot Noir crop was the first to be picked, during the last week of March. Bunch and berry sizes were slightly above average, but nowhere near the exceptionally large harvests experienced in 2004. Our pickers were pleased to report that there was no sign of damage due to birds or disease.

Vintage progressed smoothly from

one variety to the next in 2008. We have made two very good wines from our Sauvignon Blanc plantings. In particular, our barrel-fermented Lady A wine has the potential to be the best yet. Despite the warm season, it has excellent ripe fruit character and near perfect acidity and low pH: the ideal building blocks for the creation of a superb food wine.

Across the property's red grape varieties, there is a tremendous consistency in wine quality at this early stage of their development.

The 2008 Pinot Noir is a big wine - very big - with lots of rich extract to balance the high acidity of the year. Once again, our Merlot vines have performed well in the vineyard, and we have the makings of an excellent single varietal wine, as well as some good ripe blending material that will find its way into our Cabernet Sauvignon. The latter variety can find it somewhat uncomfortable in warm, dry years, but in 2008 we appear to have picked among the best Cabernet Sauvignon of the decade.

Stoney Vineyard wines will be few and far between as a result of this year's vintage on the property. Indeed, while it is still too early to tell, there is a strong likelihood that in future we will only be able to offer Domaine A wines for sale from our 2008 red wine vintage. That will suit us well, given the strong demand for those wines among our customers.

Nature has played her part in their making. We shall see what the future holds.

## Liquid Assets

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Drawing the cork on an old bottle is like a good piece of theatre. It can evoke a whole range of complex emotions, from anxiety and suspense to elation and disappointment. But once the wine is in the glass and tasted, the protracted process of cellaring wine all hinges on a single question – have the years of patient care been worth the expense and effort?

If you're skilful and you have a little luck on your side – mainly in the form of a bottle with an effective closure that can prevent premature oxidation – the results of your cellaring will beg the question.

Sadly, no-one gets it right every time.

'There's many a slip twixt cup and lip,' as they say. Even the most highly experienced wine lover can err in their judgements. So why entertain such financial and emotional risks?

To begin with, having a wine collection is like having a well-stocked pantry. It means that

when it comes to putting on a special function, you already have a mixture of young and old favourites to draw upon. Matching foods and wines is far easier when you can bring to hand exactly what you need. And besides, it's good to have a small supply of wines put aside for impromptu calls by special visitors.

Ageing wines allows you to buy bottles while they are young and relatively inexpensive, side-stepping issues of inflation and increases in value if and when they are made available as mature releases. And if you've ever tried buying wine at the last minute for a special birth year or anniversary, you'll know the results are rarely exciting or affordable.

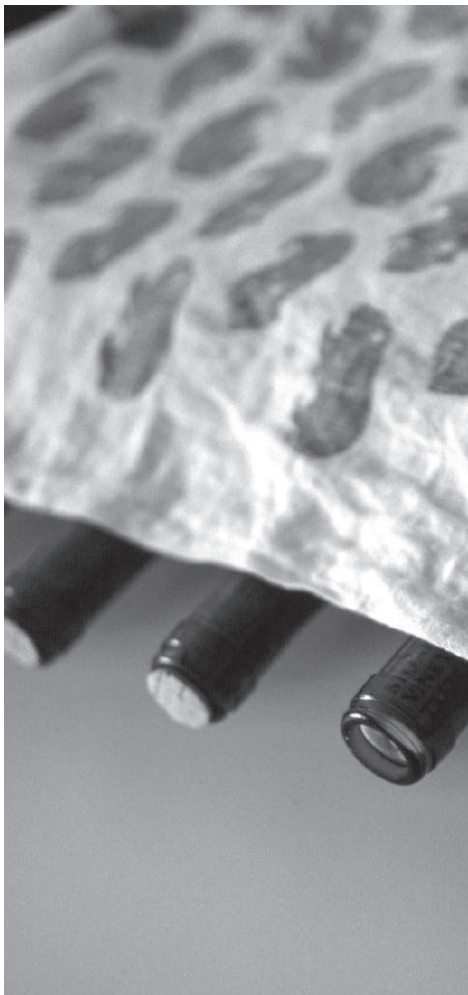
Wines you store yourself are much likely to be kept more carefully and correctly than those subjected to wide-ranging temperature fluctuations in bottleshops and warehouses. That can be especially true for white wines that otherwise might be forced to live under extended refrigeration, causing loss of aroma and flavour.

Finally, wines from certain makers, vintages or regions often appreciate in value when bought wisely and stored carefully. That can be a bonus if ever – heaven forbid – you decide to sell your liquid assets.

Ageing wines is always instructive. At worst, you learn to swallow your pride, if not your mistakes. At best, the experience provides encouragement to try again.

Remember: wine collections are works in progress. Keeping a cellar is a bit like maintaining a nice garden. You always have weeds that need despatching and flowers you can pick and give to friends or use to cheer up a dull table.

All things in moderation. Start with a few good purchases. Buy wines you enjoy rather than according to the recommendations of others. The best red candidates for ageing have good depth and fruit concentration, with balancing acidity and tannin. After all, if a wine doesn't taste great when it's young, it'll never taste great when it's old.



### Storing wine

Wine kept for more than a few weeks needs proper storage conditions. It can be hard to achieve these in many homes and some wine lovers use commercial cellars or storage facilities for their fine wines and long-term storage. However, much can be done to make even the most unpromising apartment wine friendly. The main needs for wine storage are: temperature, darkness, cleanliness, humidity, ventilation. Freedom from vibration also plays an important factor.

#### Temperature.

The ideal is a constant, low temperature. The range can be 5-18°C (41-64°F) but somewhere in the middle of this range, around 10-12°C (50-55°F) is the optimum. More important than the actual temperature is the range through which it fluctuates and more important still is the short-term fluctuation. If the cellar slowly moves from 12°C in winter to 20°C in summer, no great harm will be done but if it fluctuates by this amount every day or week then there will be problems. The wine in the bottles will expand and contract, the cork

will suffer and eventually the wine will begin to weep around the cork leaving a sticky deposit around the capsule.

Temperature for serving wine. More wine is ruined by being too warm than too cold. A wine that is served cool can be warmed: the atmosphere of the room and even the drinker's hands cupped round the glass will rapidly heat it. It should be noted that room temperature in the 'old days' was never above 18-20°C. The only place it was warmer was in front of the fire. A wine which is warm when poured is hard to chill and it may well have passed the point of pleasure.

The rule 'white wines at refrigerator temperature, red wines at room temperature' is only partly true. Different styles of white wine demand different serving temperatures and many, if not most, reds are best served cooler than the dining room's ambient temperature. No red wine should be served above 20°C.

## Water... or not?



### To water or not to water?

That's the question on many winegrowers' lips these days. And who can blame them for asking it when Tasmania has experienced its warmest and driest decade in history?

Water is critical to the well-being of any plant system. The problem for the winegrower is knowing just how much water is required by a vine during particular stages of its growing and fruit ripening cycles, and when to respond appropriately.

Big juicy grapes might be eye-catching on a fresh fruit platter, but in truth a vineyard manager's attention is much more likely to be captured by a vine carrying a modest crop of small, evenly-sized berries.

The reason? The key elements of flavour, aroma and colour that come into play when grapes are crushed

and fermented into wine are largely concentrated in and around the skin of the grape. Its fleshy pulp more or less adds the wetness to the wine.

Winegrowers in pursuit of quality – rather than quantity – use all manner of viticultural practices to arrive at what they believe will be the correct water and nutrient balance in the vineyard. Some methods can be quite precise, others are more seat-of-the-pants.

It hardly matters whether we resort to using moisture meters located among vineyard rows, or simply note the behaviour of vine leaves and canopies through careful observation, the balancing acts required are ultimately designed to achieve the same goals – to encourage fruitful rather than vegetative plants on one hand, and to maintain control over berry size on the other.

Seen those kilometres of polytube that run through our vineyard? That irrigation isn't there to pump vines and berries full of water in search of bumper crops. It's there to help us manipulate the amount of liquid nourishment our plants receive during our long, tough growing seasons.

The game plan is to deliberately stress our vines by providing just enough water for them to survive, while at the same time leaving them feeling uncomfortable and wanting more.

As veraison or colour change approaches, the balancing act becomes more critical as each day passes. Veraison marks the point at which the vine shifts its energies from growing foliage and producing juvenile bunches to beginning the ripening process of the mouth-puckering berries that will one day become wine.

Tasmanian winegrowers will be keeping a watchful eye over how much water their vines take up during the coming days of summer and autumn. Too much water – from either Mother Nature or from a vineyard irrigation line – will see ripening delayed. Continued leaf growth shades fruit, preventing dappled sunlight from carrying out its valuable role. Any wine produced from these circumstances will be thin and flavourless, and lacking in structure and texture.

Indeed, excess water – especially after a long dry spell – can ultimately cause a vineyard's smallest and most prized berries to swell and crack open, rendering them not only useless for winemaking purposes, but also exposing the remaining sound fruit to the threat of disease, or bird and insect damage.

Erring on the side of caution can be just as dangerous. If water is cut off much too soon, a vine will start to shed its leaves, hampering the plant's ability to produce the grape sugars needed to ripen fruit for winemaking, and exposing berries to damage from the harsh rays of summer sunlight.

To water or not to water? Next question, please.

## Cabernet Sauvignon 2003 – new release



No Domaine A Cabernet was made in 2002 so we have waited patiently for this wine and it has been truly worth waiting for! This is an outstanding wine and one of our very best released from the property. Deep red in colour, with youthful purple highlights, this wine is characterized by a marvellous bouquet of earthy dark fruit, ripe, red berry fruits and excellent tannin and oak integration. It shows perfect balance between fruit, alcohol, tannin and acidity. It can be enjoyed now, but will develop great complexity during extended cellaring of 10 years or more. Only half of the 2000 and 2001 production.



## Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 2000

The only Tasmanian listing in Neil Becketts '1001 wines you must drink before you die'!



We are so very proud to have been included in Neil Beckett's book and so humbled to be in the company of the vigneronns included in this book. Huon Hooke has written the preface with excellent reasoning and debate which is perhaps what this 'tome' is about. 'I wonder that there should be space in this kind of book for an Australian Verdelho. There is balance, though, in the inclusion of such extreme cool-climate reds as Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon from Tasmania alongside polar opposites like Grant Burge Meshach and d'Arenberg the Dead Arm, both big ripe south Australian Shirazes of body-slammer dimensions.'

Neil Beckett muses that 'comparing and contrasting can be as fascinating with wine as with anything else. And where our preference changes with almost every eager sip. Even with two wines - still more the three, four, five or six that may be competing for our favour at extravagant fine-wine dinners nowadays - the danger is that one of the wines will emerge 'the winner'. The others, sadly and unfairly, will be the losers. How apt the French saying 'the best is the enemy of the good' So do not let the other thousand wines here blind you to the one you have, or might have, in your glass. To talk even of one wine is

too general. As the old French saying reminds us 'there are no great wines, only great bottles of wine'.

And that is what is best about the 'only great bottles' dictum: it captures the existential thrill of wine. For some its fleeting nature reduces its value. For others of us, its immediacy is part of its magic. A great wine is the result of attention to 1001 details from grape to glass. The details of viticulture and winemaking are not here for their own sake but to help explain why the wine is as it is. If there is reference to altitude, soil type, or yield or yeast, it is because these determine in some way the smell and taste of the wine.

Neil Beckett goes on to say 'as with any such selection, even one running to 1001, there are gaps that may seem inexplicable to some. We will all be conscious of producers, wines, vintages, even whole countries or regions that are not represented. But filling the gaps should be almost as much fun as filling the glass.

All of the wines in this book will please, tease or thrill, and one way or another, will be worth not only drinking but more importantly sharing... the most important thing of all.

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## Distance is never an enemy – Peter Atlhaus and Maria from Domaine A team up with John Spence and the Karma/Royal Group

The friendships which develop through the exchange of a glass of wine seem to be a guarantee of friendship for many years to come. Even when the two drinkers don't even meet. So many wonderful people trek to the cellar door for one reason or another, either travelling to or living in Tasmania. It is through this journey that a passion for 'Savage Pinot Noir' has developed between the incredible John Spence and Peter Atlhaus and the Pinot Noir of Domaine A. John's company, Karma has been creating luxury lifestyle experiences since 1993. As one of Asia's leading developers of boutique resorts, Karma owns and manages numerous properties throughout the region, including Koh Samui, Phuket and Chiang Mai in Thailand, Goa in Southern India, Palawan in the Philippines, Bali and Lombok in Indonesia and Margaret

River, Australia. A number of the Karma properties are members of the prestigious Leading Hotels of the World group.

As one of Asia's leading developers, Karma has been creating luxury lifestyle experiences since 1993. Any one who knows John Spence well, knows how passionate he is about wines from small producers around the world - in particular 'Savage Pinot'! John's passion follows through in everything his hand touches, particularly the attention to detail in all of his resorts. John has asked us to come along on the journey with Karma to help curate a series of wonderful food and wine events. We will also be working to assist the Karma team to source these wonderful wines.

Maria will be working with many of our friends around the world, sommeliers and chefs, and with John and his team at Karma to bring all of their passions together for the guests who will come and stay and hopefully drink the odd glass of wine.

The first visit has taken place with the amazing palette of Tim Stock - the promise of John's private list of Pinot is going to be thrilling.

I look forward to letting you all know about the coming events at Karma. I do believe we will also be discussing a barrel selection release. There are going to be some adventures for sure from the single vineyards of the world.

Now that glass will be really worth sharing!

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## Some thoughts for your cellar ...

### To decant or not to decant that is the question:

Have you ever poured the last few drops of a good bottle of red wine only to find pieces of something floating around in your wine glass? For some, it can be an unattractive scene. But here's the good news. Typically, it's not bottling negligence or some other winery faux pas. It's simply sediment, a matter settling to the bottom of a liquid.

The need for decanting began long before the modern winery filtration and bottling process. Wine was typically bottled straight from the wine barrel rather than receiving any type of filtering to remove debris. Now, a process known as fining ensures a more clarified, stabilised wine. Fining is basically the modern day version of decanting on a much larger scale. (It's important to note since red wine is aged more often in the bottle than white wine, decanting is usually reserved for reds only.)

Decanting a bottle of wine is a simple ritual ensuring a pleasurable drinking experience.

So what is decanting? Decanting is a process of carefully moving (pouring) wine from its vessel (typically the bottle) into a decanter. A decanter can be a glass pitcher or carafe. Many wine masters believe the best decanter has a long neck and wide bottom surface area, almost the opposite of a wine bottle. These features better allow oxygen to reach the wine for a smoother, mellow finish.

First, what types of wines are appropriate for decanting? Mature wines, anywhere from six to eight years old, may or may not contain sediment. The need for decanting will largely depend on how the wine has been stored, whether straight up or lying on its side, and the age. On the other hand, it's perfectly acceptable to decant a young, less mature wine for the purpose of aerating, or breathing, to soften harsh tannins. If you are choosing to decant a bottle of wine for this purpose, there's no need to complete the following steps.

You should first assemble a clean glass decanter, a candle and the bottle of wine for decanting. (Note:

For optimum results, allow the bottle of wine to stand upright for at least 24 hours prior to decanting. This will allow any sediment to settle to the bottom of the bottle.

- Remove the foil and cork from the wine. Carefully clean the neck and mouth areas of the bottle with a damp paper towel. Be careful not to allow any dirt or debris to fall into the bottle. The entire neck should be exposed and free from covering. If your wine is very mature, take great ease and caution when extracting the cork. The cork may be very brittle and dry, causing it to split or break. But if you've properly stored your bottle in a dark, cool cellar, you should be fine.
- Light the candle (a long taper works best) and secure in a candleholder. You can then stand up, holding the wine bottle in one hand and the decanter in the other.
- Carefully holding the neck close enough to the candle flame to see through the neck, begin very slowly pouring the wine into the decanter. (Don't pour too slowly or you'll heat the wine.) As you pour, carefully watch for any particles of sediment or debris, or a cloudy presence. Should either of these two become present, stop pouring immediately.

The end result will be a perfect decanter of wine. For most bottles requiring decanting, you should have about half an inch to an inch worth of wine remaining in the

bottle. It will all depend on the maturity and storage history of the wine.

I hope you will take the time to discover the age-old ritual of decanting wine. Sure, you could purchase a fine mesh strainer and remove any sediment less formally, but the delicate art of decanting a bottle of wine will be an exquisite task to include in your entertaining arsenal.

On a personal note, the love for wine remains in my family today. It is something I have passed on to my children and look forward to teaching my grandson Benjamin this wonderful ritual. However, thanks to advanced winery processing and filtration, it's not often we must decant a bottle of wine. While I continue to make the wines at Domaine A I will continue to use the 'Old World' techniques for making long term cellaring wines.

But you can often find us enjoying a good bottle of wine while reminiscing about old wine labels and decanting days gone by.

Interesting words by Emile Peynaud:

"The art of drinking, like the art of eating, is thus part of the art of living. If I had to define the art of drinking I would say that it conforms to two rules: moderation and good taste, which can be summed up in two simple formulas: "Drink little, but drink well" or "else drink little so that you can continue to drink for a long time".

How civilised Monsieur Peynaud.



## Awards

### Stoney Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 1999

WINPAC 2000 Hong Kong, 2000  
Bronze Medal

### Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1994

International Wine and Spirit  
Competition, London, 1996, Bronze Medal

### Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1994

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 1997, Bronze Medal

### Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1995

WINPAC 2000 Hong Kong, 2000, Silver Medal

### Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1995

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 1997, Gold Medal

### Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1998

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2000, Bronze Medal

### Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1999

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2001, Bronze Medal

### Stoney Vineyard Reserve Pinot Noir 2004

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2004, Bronze Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1993

Weltcabernetprobe Köln, 1998, Bronze Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1993

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 1996, Silver Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1994

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 1997, Silver Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1994

Expovina Zürich, 1997, Silver Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1995

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 1998, Silver Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1997

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2000, Silver Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1998

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2001 and 2002

Silver and Bronze Medal

Silver Medal Munich Mundis Vini

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1999

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2002, Bronze Medal

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 2000

First Tasmanian red wine to make  
the Langton's Classification

### Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2008, Best in class, Silver

### Domaine A Lady A 2001

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2002, Silver Medal

### Domaine A Pinot Noir 1994

Welt Pinot Noir Festival Zürich, 1996  
Gold Medal

### Domaine A Pinot Noir 1995

Mondial du Pinot Noir Vinea Sierre, 1999,  
Silver Medal

### Domaine A Pinot Noir 1997

CH 2000 Concours International des Vins,  
Switzerland, 2000, Silver Medal

### Domaine A Pinot Noir 1998

WINPAC 2000 Hong Kong, 2000, Gold Medal

### Domaine A Pinot Noir 1998

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2000, Bronze Medal

### Domaine A Pinot Noir 1999\*

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2001, Bronze Medal

\*The only Australian Pinot to win an  
award at the IWSC 2001.

### Domaine A Pinot Noir 2000

International Wine and Spirit Competition,  
London, 2002 and 2008, Bronze Medal

### Great wines of the world

#### Five Gold Stars in Robin Bradley's Gold Book

Millennium Edition

De Bortoli, 'Noble one' Botrytis  
Semillon

#### Domaine A, Pinot Noir

Henschke Hill of Grace, Shiraz  
Hunt Away, Merlot Cabernet

Jim Barry, Armagah Shiraz

Lakes Folly, Cabernet Sauvignon

Leeuwin Estate, Chardonnay

Mount Mary Quintet, Cabernet  
Sauvignon

Mount Mary, Pinot Noir, Mount  
Pleasant

Maurice O Shea, Shiraz

Mount Pleasant Rosehill, Shiraz

Mount Pleasant Lovedale, Semillon

Nicholson River, Chardonnay

Parker Estate Terra Rossa, First  
Growth

Penfolds, Grange

Petaluma, Chardonnay

Wynns Coonawarra Estate, John  
Riddoch

Cabernet Sauvignon

Wynns Coonawarra Estate, Michael,  
Shiraz

**Domaine A is one of the great  
Australian wineries to have a five  
star rating from James Halliday.**

## Last but certainly not least



We are absolutely delighted  
with the latest release  
of the **Stoney Vineyard  
Cabernet Sauvignon 2004**.

This is a fascinating wine.

The vintage was long  
and hard – the longest in  
20 years here at Stoney  
Vineyard. The vintage was  
31/2 months long and the  
last Cabernet was picked  
on the 6th June, and may  
I add it certainly was ripe.

We waited as one must wait in the  
longer harvests in Bordeaux. The  
fruit is deeply perfumed with a  
classic cool climate Cabernet nose as  
one would find in the great wines of  
St Emillion. Delicious cassis, deep  
purple fruit, long balanced tannins.  
I believe incredible value for your  
cellar. It is, to my mind a 'little A' as  
it has been just two years in barrel.

Salut and remember that one of the  
best things about wine is to 'share  
a glass with someone' – this year I  
think we all need a drink!

**For the individual collector...**

**Domaine A Merlot 2004. 2nd release  
of bottles...**



I am very proud of  
this wine. It's the first  
commercial release  
available to our customers.  
2750 bottles were made  
and I have now released  
the second batch of bottles  
from the cellar. This  
wine has been grown  
in cracking black clay at  
Stoney vineyard. It should  
laid down and not touched  
for 10 years minimum.

**We deliver wines all over the world  
don't forget to call the cellar door on**

+61 03 62604174 or email  
[Lurighi@domaine-a.com.au](mailto:Lurighi@domaine-a.com.au)

**A new edition to our gift service –  
we have beautiful individual black  
boxes for single bottles. Just call  
for your gift service delivery or  
corporate order.**

Salut  
Ruth and Peter Althaus