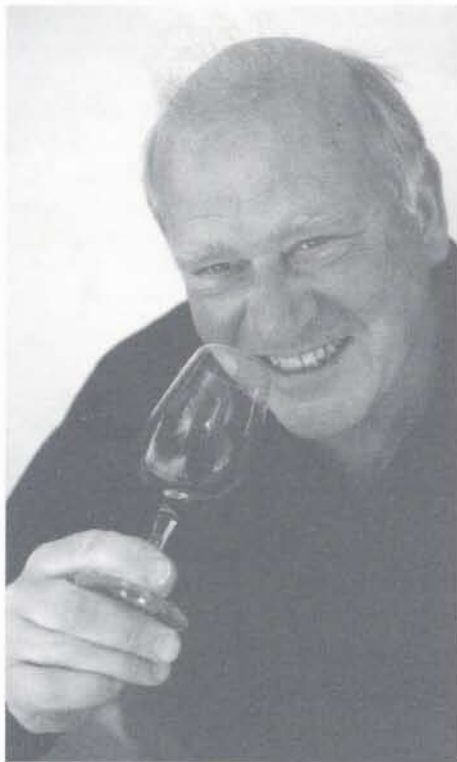


Tête A Tête

The newsletter of the Domaine A Vineyard

PO Box 137 Campania 7026

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Great Southern Land

Cycling Through Highs And Lows
Hindsight is a marvellous thing.

It's barely 30 years since Tasmania's Department of Agriculture made its first assessment of the State's potential for making table wines and concluded that the island's climate was too cool for grape-growing. Today, evidence to the contrary is everywhere to be seen, from award-winning Tasmanian wines to vineyard expansions that have taken the industry beyond 1,000 hectares.

Even so, Mother Nature can be full of surprises. Certainly no-one could have predicted that pickers at Stoney Vineyard would be harvesting bunches of ripe cabernet sauvignon before properties in Margaret River, for example. Or that we would be picking sauvignon blanc before much of the Adelaide Hills.

As it was, the year turned out to be something of a roller-coaster ride for producers across the country, with a variety of unusual weather peaks and troughs marking the journey.

Like everywhere else in Tasmania, spring 2005 was warm and wet at Stoney Vineyard. When you live on a property that receives an annual average rainfall of only 500mm, you're always pleased to build up good reserves of soil moisture during this part of the year.

We completed our usual winter program of pruning and tying down without major disruption from the weather. September brought us a good even budburst in our pinot noir. And when the early spring clouds finally parted over the vineyard, November's unusually warm weather allowed us to make good progress in establishing the kind of efficient vine canopies we need to see us safely through the season. Many Tasmanian producers reported having the best leaf canopies they'd ever seen in their years of production – green and healthy, yet without too much vigour.

December added wind to spring's equation of warm and occasionally inclement weather. Such conditions provide trying times for vineyard managers wishing to avoid powdery mildew and poor fruit set.

Though far from ideal, the indifferent weather didn't seem to adversely affect our vines, beyond reducing the crop level in our cabernet sauvignon. By the time January's heat arrived – including a handful of days around 30 degrees – our vines were really powering through the end of their growth cycle.

Tasmania's weather during February 2006 was very odd. We saw a cold snap that brought snow to the Highland; hot days followed by thunder; and a week when the weather in the west was very wet, but provided almost no rain at Campania.

March brought record low rainfall figures to many parts of southeast Tasmania. Our 4mm was less than that of Bushy Park, which had hop-growers reporting their lowest March rainfall in 133 years.

Prolonged dry weather – that often includes hot northerlies – is hard on vines but ripens grapes to perfection. The cool spell which followed helped vines to catch up in their ripening phases, to build the kind of ripe aromas and flavours needed to match the sugar ripeness being carried by berries.

We picked our first grapes – pinot noir – during the second week of March. Next came the sauvignon blanc a week later, and towards the middle of April, the cabernet sauvignon. The last of the season's fruit was picked immediately after Easter.
continued next page...

Peter

Great Southern Land continued...

Winemaking proceeded very smoothly during vintage. We're pleased with the results in our premium red wine range after all the hours of manual labour required during crushing, fermenting and plunging by hand. And while the final results are still too early to call, we look like having releases of 2006 Domaine A Pinot Noir and 2006 Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon.

The new wines now being raised in barrel have tremendous intensity of colour and aromas, with flavours and structures that are finer and more elegant than the powerhouse wines of 2005; a matter of being more like Margaux than Pauillac; Vosne Romanée not Chambertin, if we can borrow comparisons from the great vineyards of Europe.

I Would Like to Share Something With Dear Drinker.

A passage from "A Taste of Wine" by Peynaud written in 1983 and translated in 1989 by Michael Schuster.

"To the Amateur

You, dear drinker, are the most important link in the chain. You pay for the wine, you support the winegrowers, and you cheerfully help consume what we produce. Whether you are a seasoned toper, an occasional bibber, or, preferably, an enlightened amateur. If you are from a traditional wine-producing country you carry the responsibilities imposed by an established wine culture. You may, however, come from a country that has only recently been making wine: in either case you both reflect and influence the quality of your country's wines. In one sense you "fashion" that quality, for if there are bad wines it is because there are indiscriminate drinkers.

The wine you drink is the wine you deserve. It is up to consumers to discourage bad winemaking: the quality of wine will improve when they make up their minds to drink better wine and when they are also prepared to pay for that extra quality.

If you are French you are possibly an advocate of drinking in quantity with traditional Rabelaisian extravagance, but statistically you are not a connoisseur. Remember, 60 percent of the best French wines are exported. Your wines may be of international standing, but it is well known in the wine trade that as a Frenchman your general knowledge of wine is below average and that you are a provincial drinker. If you are one of those who drinks and extols the virtues from beyond the confines of

Vintage 2006 was also one of those marvellous years that favoured the production of good quantities of barrel-fermented sauvignon blanc. The attention this wine has received from people like James Halliday and Matthew Jukes over the years has made it hard for us to keep pace with the volume of orders we have received for it in the market place. That will change with the high quality 2006 vintage. This year we decided to devote all of our sauvignon blanc to Lady A production.

Throughout 2005-2006, we had the pleasure of having Tom Monro working with us. For the team at Stoney Vineyard, it was an invigorating experience to see someone else from the world of wine getting excited about what were are doing down here in Tasmania.

France, I take my hat off to you: We owe our reputation to our forefathers. Keep your own cellar stocked in turn and bequeath it to your children in the certain knowledge that our great wines are made with you in mind.

Knowing what to drink is based on knowing how to taste, and considered tasting teaches not only how to perceive with our senses but how to interpret those perceptions.

Good wine encourages drinking in moderation. Drinking should not be a solitary pleasure but a mutual one, if a wine is good say so in your own way. There are few pleasures which lend themselves so well to discussion as those shared sipping good wine, glass in hand. May your progress in this study be rapid!"

The wines I have made since 1990 are a reflection of the fruit of this land in the Coal River Valley, of hard labour by the team here at the vineyard and of myself. I have worked hard to make a fascinating and refined collection of wines. I have spent many years trying to understand the viticulture challenges here along with the most stringent cellar practice and endeavoured to build a brand which would make not only my family and friends proud but also to contribute in some small way to the quality of the wines produced in Australia.

I hope you enjoy our new offerings this year.
Peter Althaus

Absynthe

on the Gold Coast

I would like to make special mention of my friends Debbi and Meyjitte Boughenout and their wonderful restaurant Absynthe in the new Q1 building. I believe that this restaurant is worth sharing with you not only for the inspiring food by Meyjitte but also one of the finest wine lists in Australia.

A Note from Jancis to Domaine A on Some Back Vintages

Here are my notes for what they are worth. Many congratulations on having such a distinct (and arguably unfashionable but admirable) style. I really enjoyed tasting these wines.

Domaine A, Lady A Fume Blanc 2003
Tasmania 18 Drink 2005-09

Remarkably serious oaked Sauvignon nose with real depth and, surely, low yields. Some honeyed character and no excess of oak - indeed no trace of oak except for that depth of flavour. Notably high minerality and acidity. Absolutely nothing whatever to do with Marlborough style - a bit more like Graves than anything but without oiliness. Very clever and definitely, with that weight, for food rather than aperitif drinking.

Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 1995
Tasmania 17.5 Drink 2005-10

Very healthy ruby red with some evolution but no signs of age. Lovely mellow nose - very enveloping and complex (great contrast to the 60 Cabs 03-99 tasted yesterday!). Lovely freshness and, again, delicacy. Quite marked acidity but great confident balance. Bravo! This is subtle wine and proud of it. Quite a dry finish. I'd suggest drinking rather than holding. But there is real beauty here.

Domaine A Pinot Noir 1992
Tasmania 17 Drink now

Light, bright ruby. Reticent nose. Almost slightly sweaty. Certainly no trace of the character described in the 2000. Lovely delicacy on the palate again and very fine almost melted tannins. A good core of extremely fragile fruit with some mushroom/autumnal notes, but pretty low key. Certainly this couldn't be anything other than Pinot and is delightfully reserved, even a little suggestion of rose petals, but I would fear for it in a big line-up in which I suspect it would be completely ignored. Careful food matching needed with a wine this delicate. Pretty finish.

Gratefully,
Jancis
www.jancisrobinson.com

From Claude Gilois Vins du Monde, France

Domaine A In France,

Most people in France did not even know that Tasmania produces wines let alone quality wines.

When we introduced this wine to the market, the success was immediate especially with the top cuvee, which was sold out in a matter of weeks to such prestigious customers as Lavinia, Grande Caves de Clichy and Arpège a 3 star restaurant.

The attraction for the French sommeliers is that it is very difficult to locate where the wine comes from. It is not quite French but it is not Australian either. I guess somewhere in between with this wonderful maturity of grapes, it is soft luscious yet structured. The fruit is perfectly kept in check by the structure and the structure never dominates the fruit. A perfect example of what we like in wine and the kind of wine that comes from a terroir that a lot of people would envy. Well done Domaine A.



A Grape Escape... Salamanca, Tasmania

Paul Hopkins in Canada

3 days in Ontario

Late last year we received a call from our agents in Canada asking us to be part of a grand portfolio tasting that they were hosting in Ontario. The event promised to be a monumental occasion and given that the Liquor Board of Ontario is the world's single largest purchaser of beer, wines and spirits, how could we refuse? The event brought together 85 wineries representing 11 different countries from regions as diverse as Mendoza (Argentina), Niagara (Canada), Burgundy (France), Sicily (Italy) Paarl (South Africa), Sonoma (USA) and Tasmania.

Part one of the event required each winery to showcase 3 wines that represented the characteristic and style of their region and vineyard and after much debate we decided to take the 1999 Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon - a wine that has now been drinking beautifully for the last couple of years, the 2003 Domaine A Pinot Noir - a classic Domaine A Pinot

Noir and the youthful and powerful 2001 Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon.

The event was hosted at the prestigious National Club in Ontario and for 8 hours invited guest poured into the venue to analyse and taste 250 of the very best wines available in Canada. We received an incredible response to our wines with many of the co-exhibitors coming to our stand to taste - always a good sign. At the end of the day, with our throats all hoarse from explaining the subtleties of cool climate wines the only thing that Peter and I wanted to do was to drown a cool climate beer!

The second part of the event followed the next night. Halpern Enterprise our Canadian distributors orchestrated 25 separate dinners for 25 guests in 25 different locations in Ontario and Peter and I were to be the guest of honour along with Frank Grux of Olivier Leflaive at Mr Jeff Shaddick's home in downtown Ontario. As all of this was in the name of charity for the University Health

Network our scientist in tow was Dr Bruce Taylor, the Surgeon in chief of the organisation.

Seven delightful courses later, some amazing company including a world champion down hill skier and some fantastic wines the night ended with a wheel of stilton and a 1963 Croft vintage port.

The third and final part of the event featured a charity auction the next morning with many of the previous night guests turning up with a few headaches. There were 53 lots in total including a 9-litre bottle of Haut Brion as well as a private flight for 8 to have dinner with Robert Parker in New York at his favourite restaurant. As we boarded the flight to leave Toronto for Singapore both Peter and I reflected on 3 days of hard work with many enjoyable and memorable moments.

Paul Hopkins

Press

Jeremy Oliver

Perhaps extraordinarily for a Tasmanian vineyard its most consistent performer is its Cabernet Sauvignon which in years like 1991, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2001 has acquired the depth of flavour and structure one might expect from a good Bordeaux growth.

Domaine A Cabernet 2001
94 points

Domaine A Pinot 2003
90 points

Lady A 2003
91 points

James Halliday
Domaine A in the Australian Wine Companion 2007, 5 stars

Max Allen
Domaine A Cabernet 2000
94 points

Huon Hooke

Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon 2000 Stylish, elegant Tassie Cabernet with a complex array of raspberry, cedary oak, gunsmoke and cassis fragrances", with no greenness. Refined, seamless texture of great balance and persistence. A wine of great charm. 96 points

Check out the article written by Andrew Caillard MW at www.langtons.com.au about Domaine A.

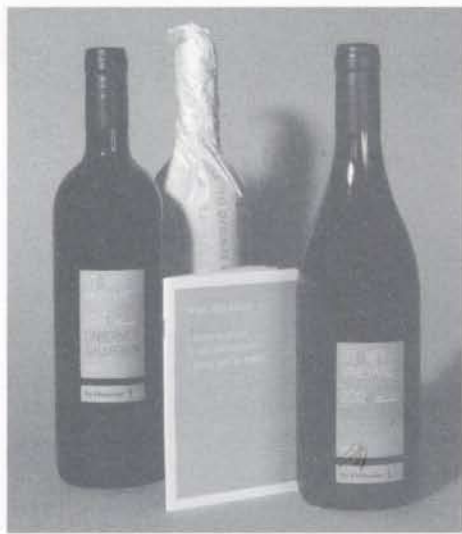
From Matthew Jukes in 2003

A 1995 Domaine A Merlot, which was made from 4-year-old vines and spent 18 months in new French oak, was one of the most amazing pure Merlots I have tasted in my life.

The 1998 Merlot was even better. It was darker and more powerful and would destroy any Californian Merlot I can think of.

Only a barrel or so of these wines were made, but if there was any way production could be increased it would surely put a spotlight on Tassie like never before.

Well here it is. Domaine A Merlot 2004 Peter.



Domaine A Merlot

Peter has been making a Domaine A Merlot since 1994! Produced in minute quantities in only the very best years for that variety (1994, 1995, 1997, 1998 & 2003, 2004, 2005), it is a wine with incredible structure, balance and intensity and is inspired by the great estates of Le Pin and Petrus in Pomerol. The wine demands time in the cellar to soften the fine grained tannins and drinks beautifully after 8-10 years.

For the very first time we are offering the Domaine A Merlot 2004 En Primeur to our private customers only. The Domaine A tradition of a complimentary bottle per \$1000 purchased will still remain.

Stoney Vineyard Wines

I would like to raise a glass to all the people that I love. To all the laughter, forgotten words and kisses, to all the stories and forgiving. To the late nights and early morning and to Sunday afternoons. To the memories, now at rest and happiness within. For these are all the moments which this glass holds, dear to my heart and far from home. When raw emotions sweep us up and dust us into a corner, life's fragile gestures reward us, with such thoughts of loving people. With this note, I raise my glass, to you and all your friends; for these are lives made to share; beautiful gifts wrapped, for the hearts of other people.
By Justy Phillips

Another Surprise En Primeur

For those of you who have met Peter Althaus you have come to understand perhaps part of what drives this man and his wine making. For those of you who have met the sales and marketing team while they still had a hair we have an offer from what will become known as the 'whims of a wine maker'. So Ladies and Gentlemen we proudly announce the HPA Wood Matured Chardonnay. Three barrels of wine (900 bottles) made with fruit from the Coal River Valley. This will become part of the story of Peter Althaus and the wines only his private customers tasted.

This wine is only available at cellar door. Get in early. It can be found on the order form.

The Last 100 Bottles of RDP Are Now Released

2000 Domaine A RDP Pinot Noir (réserve du patron) is made from 30-year-old vines and is extraordinarily rich and powerful. I suspect that if you chucked this into a Grand Cru Burgundy tasting in ten years time, it would amaze the panel. Just to prove that these wines do age, a 1992 Domaine A Pinot Noir looked calm, with wild strawberries and sous bois notes and some textbook browning at the edges.

It was a brilliant Pinot that showed that ten years is the target for the Pinots from this estate.

Matthew Jukes

I can never tell until the day of picking when a wine like this will appear. I think once a decade. Peter

Melbourne restaurants & wine merchants

- Asiana
- Bacash
- Brassiere – Philippe Mouchel
- Cicciolina
- Circa
- Così
- Dan Murphy's Fine Wine
- Donovans
- Estivo
- Ezard
- George Wine Room
- Il Bacaro
- Il Solito Posto
- Interlude Restaurant
- Japanese Teppan-yaki Inn
- JJ's at Crown
- Koko's at Crown
- Langton's Restaurant & Wine Bar
- Maisonette
- Mecca
- Melbourne Wine Room
- Middle Brighton Baths
- Momo
- Number 8
- O'Connells Hotel
- Orange
- Ping
- Prince Wine Store
- Pure South
- Sails On The Bay
- Syracuse Restaurant And Bar
- Tea House On Chinatown
- The Botanical
- Vue de Monde
- Vintage Cellars
- Walter's Wine Bar

Sydney restaurants & wine merchants

- Aria Restaurant
- Australian Wine Centre
- Bathers Pavilion
- Billson's
- Boathouse on Black wattle Bay
- CBD Cellars Shop
- Cruise Restaurant
- Est
- Flying Fish
- Forty One Restaurant
- GPO Cellars
- Guillaume @ Bennelong
- Icebergs Dining Room
- Manta
- Marque
- North Sydney Cellars
- Observatory Hotel
- Otto Ristorante
- Pier
- Prime/GPO Cellars
- Quay Restaurant
- Rockpool
- Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron
- Shangri-La
- Star City/Astral Room
- Tetsuya's
- Ultimo
- Wildfire
- Woolahra Hotel