

tête à tête

VINTAGE 2000 Noughty but Nice

Well, despite what the pundits said that Y2K would have in store for us, we have entered this decade of 'the Noughties' with tremendous hope for the future success of our vineyard – and a cellar full of superb new wines from vintage 2000.

"It is not often that one can predict a long and auspicious life for wines that are yet to be taken from barrel, ..."

It is not often that one can predict a long and auspicious life for wines that are yet to be taken from barrel, but if ever there was a season from which one could expect keeping qualities of 20, 30 or 40 years and beyond, then the past vintage will have more chance of fulfilling those hopes than any other that has been experienced on the property during its quarter-century of wine production.

For those who still have some of the early Stoney Vineyard wines made by George Park hidden away, such news will seem not only plausible, but highly likely, given the near-perfect vintage conditions that led to harvest this year. For others who have become recent customers of our vineyard here in the Coal River Valley, such prophesies might require a good deal more faith – faith of the kind that first brought us here from the other side of the world.

Domaine A

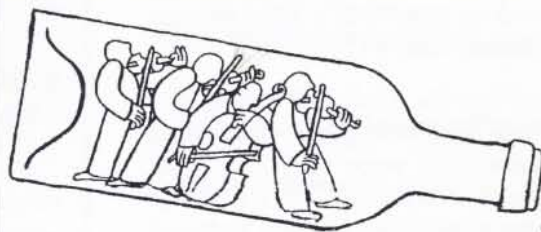
Stoney
Vineyard

ABN 20 621 725 167

H P Althaus
R Althaus

Campania
TASMANIA

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STOP PRESS

A Drop of Music

Join us as special guests of Stoney Vineyard and enjoy an evening with the music of Claude Debussy and Ludwig van Beethoven, performed by the Australian String Quartet.

Date: November 11th

Time: 4.30 for 5.00

Concert & aperitif \$40 inc GST

As above & 4 course dinner \$99 inc GST

Look out for our detailed invitation

For bookings, phone 6260 4174

Telephone 03 6260 4174 Fax 03 6260 4390 P.O. Box 137, Campania 7026 althaus@domaine-a.com.au

news from stoney vineyard tasmania

SPRING

2000

VINTAGE 2000

Vintage 2000 will enter the Stoney Vineyard honour roll as a very special year indeed, and as the fourth in a row of consistently high quality vintages.

Our valley's growing season proved to be near-perfect, providing an early bud-burst, and a long, dry, warm summer. A summer which continued on well into autumn, remaining disease-and-pest-free.

Indeed, only the lack of adequate natural rainfall and the presence of a few cool breezes and cold nights during flowering prevented us from experiencing the kind of vintage that vigneron only dream about.

Picking began earlier than usual and progressed smoothly. Mild weather and the absence of rain in early April did not threaten to spoil our parade of top quality fruit on its way to the winery, and harvesting was completed without interruption.

Like 1994, we have new wines with tremendous structures – dare we say, even better than '94?

Throughout the vineyard, and across all grape varieties, juice: skin ratios for the season were very low. This we have attributed to the near drought conditions and the reduced bunch numbers that followed the flowering of Bordeaux varieties at the end of 1999.

In the new wines made from our red grape varieties, the tannins are obvious enough, yet are ripe and fine-grained.

Lower acidities than normal will encourage early drinkability.

As ever, the wines will still have the potential for long-ageing.

We have been blessed with the gift of some truly special parcels of

Pinot Noir fruit from vintage 2000. For the first time, we have made a new super-premium wine. To be known as the *Reserve du Patron* Domaine A Pinot Noir, it will be a very rare wine indeed, with just 1700 bottles produced. If you visit the vineyard in a little over a year's time, you may be fortunate to try it.

As in the previous three vintages, there will not be a Pinot Noir bearing the standard Stoney Vineyard label. Such was the quality of our fruit this year that we directed it all into our rigorous Domaine A winemaking regime.

Our Bordeaux varieties in 2000 responded especially well to the warm conditions of the summer. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot all attained good even ripeness throughout the property.

VINTAGE 2000 SUMMARY

Superb quality wines.
A flavoursome white, ready soon.
Tremendous reds, to improve
for decades.
A rare vintage.

The bad news is that uneven flowering and poor fruit-set reduced our tonnages considerably. In the case of our Merlot plantings, crop levels were so low that they prevented the production of our highly-prized single barrel of this varietal wine. Instead, we have been able to utilise a very small proportion of our Cabernet Franc for the purpose, and we look forward to monitoring the progress that this single barrel of wine makes on its journey through time.

Our Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon from 2000 is sleeping soundly in its wood, and already looks set to rival its sibling from '94. It is a full-bodied wine that has plenty of round, smooth characters to provide some early drinkability as you wait for the Domaine A wines to soften.

We are confident that this new Stoney wine will become one of the bargains of the vintage. It should be ready for sale late in 2002.

Sauvignon Blanc from our property continues to show great promise for the future, and vintage 2000 produced fruit with structure and flavour ideally suited to our preferred barrel fermented style. Alas, poor vineyard yields could not

allow us to produce the volume of wine we need to make this classic style. Instead, we will have just a small quantity of unwooded Stoney wine for sale.

Fans of our *blanc de noir* Aurora will need to eke out their current stocks for some time to come. No 2000 Aurora was produced. The superb colour development of our red grapes this year made them quite unsuitable for making white wine. Lucky us!



news from stoney vineyard tasmania

VINTAGE '60s

"Four wine men from Adelaide were travelling by car to Sydney. Somewhere, either on the South Australian or the Victorian side of the border they stopped overnight at a small hotel. At dinner, they asked the waitress if they could have some red wine.

"Youse mean some port, doncha?" she responded.

"No, one of them explained, "we'd like some claret."

"Claret!" she exclaimed. "That's the red vinegar stuff!"

"Well, if that's the way it appeals to you. But have you a bottle of it?"

The girl went away, as sour as any vinegar, to see if she could find a bottle of what was obviously to her an abominable tippie. There were obscure rummagings somewhere out back, and in the end the girl came to the table with a bottle of dry red that looked as if it might be anything from twelve to fifteen years old. It had been lying, or sitting upright perhaps, in an odd corner for so long that it had been written off as a dead loss.

"This is the sort of red vinegar youse want?" she asked.

They nodded. Pursing her lips, as if the entire operation were hurting her, the girl pulled the cork, wrinkled her nose and put the bottle distastefully on the table.

As soon as they had savoured it, the four wise men knew they had struck it rich. It was a great wine. The clumsy girl had disturbed its crustings slightly, but it was still clear enough for easy drinking. As there was no vintage year on the label, they began to guess its age. One thought twelve years, one fourteen or fifteen, another sixteen and over.

"Well," said one of them at last, "let's settle this by having a look at the cork."

They called the girl over.

When they asked her for the cork, she almost fainted.

"The cork?" she asked. "The cork? Youse want the cork?"

When they nodded, she went off in anguish, crying out to her boss skulking in the background:

"Now they're goin' to eat the cork!"

Harry Cox, The Wines of Australia, Hodder and Stoughton, 1967

WET, WET, WET ...

The Swinging Sixties mentioned above are long gone, but only on July 1 this year did we leave behind a similarly out-moded era of Federal tax regulations. At last!

Alas, though, it seems, we have inherited in its place yet another cobbled together tax system – a system which every Australian knows revolves around the GST, but which really entails much more to small, premium wine producers like us.

Certainly, life would be simpler if we had only the GST to worry about.

Instead, Mr Costello and his Treasury friends have enrolled small businesses everywhere to act as their tax collectors. We wouldn't mind that so much if we were being paid to do it, or were less busy helping Australia's balance of payments.

Nowadays, we're more and more distracted from our vineyard and winery tasks, and forced to devote large amounts of time to paperwork – to see if our business accrues tax credits, or tax payments.

The departure of the old 41% wholesale sales tax on wine looks a worthy achievement, but in fact, you'll be paying more – not less – for our wines at retail level.

The reason? The new 29% Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) and the standard 10% GST – that together replace the old 41% WST – bring with them the multiplier effect of taxes to be paid on top of taxes!

When a customer buys a bottle of Stoney Vineyard wine from their local liquor shop, this is what usually happens:

Firstly, the wine is sold to a wholesaler. That sale usually earns us \$11 a bottle. Next, a wholesaler's mark-up of 40% is added, and the add-on WET follows. Our \$11 wine has suddenly become a \$20.27 item that a retailer can purchase.

Then, the retailer buys the wine and adds a mark-up, usually around 30%. On top of that, the customer must also pay 10% GST.

That chain of events brings the final customer sale figure to a staggering \$28.99 for one bottle, a price almost triple that given to the wine on leaving our cellars!

Here are the figures again:

\$11.00 total for us, from which we have to deduct our costs;

\$4.70 wholesaler mark-up;

\$6.08 retailer mark-up;

\$4.55 WET + \$2.63 GST

= \$7.18 of tax to the Treasury.

Do you know what we think of these new tax ideas from Mr Costello? WET! WET! WET!

"I think it is a great error to consider a heavy tax on wines as a tax on luxury. On the contrary, it is a tax on the health of our citizens."

Thomas Jefferson

FIND US ON THE NET

Did you know that you can find us and order our wines on the Net?

Perhaps you did if you've visited our website recently. It's at:

<http://www.domaine-a.com.au>

If you haven't visited us there for a while – and we first began our site in late 1996 – then it's time to take another look. At the click of a mouse button you can order our wines, or take a virtual tour of our vineyard, aided by a soundtrack containing spoken English and Mandarin Chinese.

To get the best results, you'll need Real Player 7. Log on for details.

It works better if you plug it in.

Sattinger's Law

HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLEY

Taking a virtual tour of a vineyard is a great idea if you're short of time or money, but it hardly compares with the real thing. And the real thing in our valley at the moment seems to be to plant a vine or two – or would you believe, a whole hillside?

The face of this part of the Coal Valley certainly has changed a lot since George Park set up Stoney in 1973. New vineyard plantings are springing up everywhere, like mushrooms – further confirmation of our vision of the valley's huge potential for world-class viticulture.

As the first in the region, our property also has the pride of place as the largest, with 11ha of vines. Several much larger vineyards are already under way in the area, so things won't remain that way for long.

Our new neighbours are keen to grow. Those new developing in the valley are a diverse lot, encompassing local investors, a well-known mainland wine company, and even a group of international investors.

Now is a good time to get hold of a copy of the Southern Wine Route and hit the road to do a little exploring. Who knows what you might discover?

Remember to drop in at Stoney and say hello! We are open for business each weekday from 9.00am until 5.00pm. If you are intending to visit on a weekend, please telephone for an appointment beforehand.

Come and look over our new developments – a 1.5ha block of Merlot at the bottom of our driveway. It'll be fully planted by the time October comes around, and ready to supply us with fruit for a single varietal wine in vintage 2003.

We are always happy to talk about our wines. Sadly – due to rising costs – we have had to levy a charge on tastings in recent months.

Tasting charges reflect the level of wine quality to be sampled. To taste the current range of Stoney Vineyards wines, a charge has been set at \$5 per person. For the rarer and more expensive Domaine A wines, our charge is \$7 per person.

As you would expect, our tasting charges are fully refunded on the purchase of wines at cellar door.

WINES FOR SALE

2000 Stoney Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc

A dry white wine which displays abundant ripe aromas and powerful tropical fruit flavours. Full-bodied and satisfying in the mouth, it is closer in style and quality to Bordeaux than to NZ.

1999 Stoney Vineyard Pinot Rosé

"A rose is a rose is a rose" goes the old saying, but this is no ordinary Rosé. Full-bodied and dry – like no other we have seen in Australia – it offers generous red berry flavours. The current fascination for blockbuster shiraz and grenache is sure to pass. Who can enjoy 15% alcohol with a light lunch? Set a new trend – try a 100% Pinot Noir Rosé.

1998 Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Always the bargain wine of the portfolio, our latest vintage release is no exception. Medium-bodied, and with a firm Bordeaux-like structure, it reflects the superb quality of the 1998 vintage. Destined to improve for many years, it can be enjoyed now with spring lamb.

1999 Domaine A Pinot Noir

We continue to be amazed by the improving fruit quality from our Pinot Noir plantings. This wine is a fine successor to our wonderful '98. Slightly lighter in body, it has similar black cherry characters, and a potential for medium-term improvement. Good now, but as with all these Pinot Noir wines, be prepared to wait for it!

AN INVITATION TO A DROP OF MUSIC

Following the great success of a concert performance provided by the Australian String Quartet at Stoney Vineyard during 1998, we would once again like to invite you to enjoy a Drop of Music at our premises on November 11th, starting 4.30pm for 5.00pm.

Yes, Remembrance Day. So mark your diaries – this will be a rare and special opportunity to hear the music of Australia's finest string ensemble, and enjoy a glass of wine or two . . . or a gourmet meal.

For details, contact 6260 4174.