

CHAMBERS

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QUIET ACHIEVER JUST DOES IT!

It is said that "when Parker (the man touted as the world's most powerful wine critic) spits, the world listens." His review of six of Bill's fortified wines in the latest issue of The Wine Advocate magazine just spat out two perfect scores of 100, a 95, a 96, a 98 and a 99!

Editor Robert Parker Junior, a lawyer by profession and the guru of American wine-writers, had, until this time, only bestowed 111 perfect scores since 1978. He gave the Rare Muscat and Rare Tokay these coveted tallies and heaped enthusiastic praise on these "sensational bargains" from Australia

Parker sees himself as an unbiased and unaligned commentator who tells it as it is to ordinary wine drinkers. He comments that "It's harder to write a straightforward, meaningful note that's simple, than it is to make up a lot of words and write a more elitist note." His no-nonsense, practical reviews can bring a wine from absolute obscurity to notoriety overnight.

As the recipient of the Legion of Honour, France's highest distinction, he has certainly established bona fides but maintains balance in his reviews. A recent one stating that "some serious egos must be at work behind the pricing" of some of the wines he sees, shows he is definitely not a wine snob!

Modestly priced wines (often less than \$10 a bottle) consistently rate well in his reviews. No doubt he'd feel right at home at Chambers Rosewood!

Bill has also been mentioned in dispatches after standing down from his position as Chairman of Judges at the Melbourne Wine Show after a reign of more than twenty years.

This Honorary and very responsible position has seen Bill orchestrating fifteen or so national and international judges into tasting panels.

These panels then taste the stupendous numbers of wines submitted and award points.

Once the wines have been assessed by the panels and awarded points to determine bronze, silver and gold medals, the top wines are then re-evaluated and various other awards, such as the famous Jimmy Watson Trophy, are decided.

This coveted award, named after a shining light and real character from the early days of wine retailing, recognises the best young red each year. Jimmy's mates got together to organise this trophy after he died to continue the ritual and keep his name alive. Tradition dictates that the victorious trophy winner treats the other contending winemakers to French champagne all afternoon.

Bill's illustrious wine judging career commenced in 1957 when he was a steward at the Royal Adelaide Wine Show. By 1959 he was associate wine judge at the Royal Melbourne Wine Show then only three years later, he was appointed judge. He has also judged at all capital city and most country wine shows.

Many a young winemaker, over the years, has looked to Bill for guidance and advice. His quick brain and even quicker retort of "well, what do you think?" would no doubt have set off some lively discussion and exploration of possibilities.

He and his contemporaries have faced and conquered more opportunities, obstacles and changes than we could imagine yet through it all he has remained approachable and unassuming.

In typical Bill style he says "it's time to give someone a bit younger a go" but he will keep his 'hand in' at regional and country shows as and when needed.

"My illness is due to my doctor's insistence that I drink milk, a whitish fluid they force down helpless babies." W.C.Fields

TRANSCRIPT OF ROBERT PARKER JR'S REVIEW

I have long believed that Australia remains an unheralded but extraordinary treasure trove for fortified Muscat and Tokay. It is amazing how many sensational efforts emerge from this country. With the exception of William Chambers, they have not received the accolades they deserve.

Anyone who has ever tasted his fortified Tokay or Muscat realizes the world's reference point for these wines begins and ends with Chambers. These luxurious offerings possess such extraordinary unctuousness, thickness, complexity, and richness that they must be tasted to be believed. They are not just big, thick sugar balls, because they have sound underlying acidity as well as remarkable complexity and freshness.

A spoonful or two of each wine is enough for most non-gluttons to appreciate the riveting heights these cuvées represent. Obviously, the Rare Muscat and Rare Tokay are surreal, but for the price, the \$15 cuvées of Muscat and Tokay are sensational bargains.

One could even argue that the Rare Muscat and rare Tokay, believed to be 50-70 years old from the solera system that Chambers has long maintained, are even spectacular bargains.

What do they taste like? The levels of intensity, perfume, and viscosity rise with each tier, from the regular cuvées, to the rare cuvées. All of the wines possess notes of smoke, roasted nuts, coffee, brown sugar, maple syrup, prunes, honey, fruitcake, overripe orange/apricots, and remarkable spicy characters.

The Muscats tend to be slightly more fruit-driven, with the Tokays more earthy and raisiny. However, these are all riveting examples of fortified dessert wines that I enthusiastically recommend. I use the Rosewood sweeties for many charitable meals/wine tastings I donate, and guests always go ga-ga over these rarities.

In summary, life is too short not to try one of the Muscats or Tokays from Chambers Rosewood... a true Australian treasure.

Importer: Old Bridge Cellars (Rob McDonald), Napa, CA; Tel (707) 258 9552.

Chambers Rosewood N/V Muscat	95/100
Chambers Rosewood N/V Rare Muscat	100/100
Chambers Rosewood N/V Rare Tokay	100/100
Chambers Rosewood N/V Special Muscat	98/100
Chambers Rosewood N/V Special Tokay	99/100
Chambers Rosewood N/V Tokay	96/100

Parker's Scoring System

- 96-100:** An extraordinary wine of profound and complex character displaying all the attributes expected of a classic wine of its variety.
- 90-95:** An outstanding wine of exceptional complexity and character.
- 80-89:** A barely above average to very good wine displaying various degrees of finesse and flavour as well as character with no noticeable flaws.
- 70-79:** An average wine with little distinction except that it is soundly made. In short, a straightforward, innocuous wine.
- 60-69:** A below average wine containing noticeable deficiencies, such as excessive acidity or tannin, an absence of flavour, or possibly, dirty aromas or flavours.

Are you a good taster?

Many of us feel self-conscious when tasting wine, but, as you will see from Robert Parker's straightforward notes, tasting does not have to be intimidating.

Even in carefully controlled tests, complete novices have consistently beaten professionally trained and very experienced tasters so there is no need to feel daunted. You must however, have a plan of attack if you wish to improve and learn. Below you will find some tips that may be useful.

Make the most of every opportunity to get together with other interested people and taste wine as often as you can. Keep in mind that there are many factors such as your mood and the food you enjoy with the wine which can effect your perceptions.

Concentrate - it is really important to focus on each aspect of the wine. Holding your nose as you taste demonstrates very clearly that tasting utilises all your olfactory system, that is the sense of sight, smell and taste.

We have at the cellar door a very handy, credit card-sized Wine Tasting Guide which opens out to provide you with a great deal of colour coded information on a myriad of different aspects of wine evaluation. It even has a plain white surface so that you can assess the various hues in the wine and a key to influences such as winemaking, bottle age and fruit.

It is a good idea to keep your own tasting notes for reference.. You will quickly develop your own short hand system. Be honest and open minded and try to remember as much as you can but most of all – have fun!

CHAMBERS PHILOSOPHY No.1

More recent visitors to our cellar door will probably have seen our new 'Pricing' poster. As it has been so popular (people like to have their photo taken next to it) we have had the message printed onto T. Shirts.

The T.Shirts which are made from 100% cotton and come in sizes medium, large and extra large.

A bit of a hoot for \$22 (GST inc) each!

This is the first of a series of T.Shirts with quirky sayings and philosophies which we will issue from time to time. You never know they might become as popular as the wine or become collectors items!

WE COMMIT TO PROVIDE EXCELLENT VALUE AND REASONABLY PRICED WINE TO OUR CLIENTS RATHER THAN INDULGE IN FANCY BUILDINGS, BOTTLES AND B.S.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Wine on Sunday** - Collins Place, Melbourne
October 7th/November 4th/December 2
- **Rutherglen Wine Show**
September 24th-28th (See article Chambers Vol. 9)
- **Albury/Wodonga Wine & Food Festival**
September 28th-30th, 2001 (See article this issue)
- **Historical & Cultural Precinct Opening**
September 28, 2001 Beechworth at its best.
- **Chiltern Heritage Ironbark Festival**
21st of October. Please ring the Tourism Association for more details on 03/5726 1115.
- **Rutherglen Agricultural Show**
October 20th. A traditional country show for the whole family to enjoy!
- **Legends Weekend & Picnic in the Park**
November 10th-11th, 2001. Another great weekend of wine and food – this year honouring Len Evans.
- **Tour de Muscat**
November 10th 2001. Cyclists amass to tour and enjoy Victoria's most historic wine region.
- **Wangaratta Jazz Festival**
November 2nd-6th, 2001. The name says it all!

WINE PROFILE:**Muscat Blanc a Petit Grains**

Originating in France, this variety has three colour variants – white, rose and red. The latter is most common in this region, where it is known as Brown Muscat.

As the noblest and almost certainly the oldest known variety of Muscat, this grape certainly has a very colourful history. It is thought that the Romans, or possibly even the Greeks before them, brought it to France where it has become the oldest cultivated variety.

This variety makes luscious fortified wines when the early ripening fruit is left on the vine to encourage concentrated sugar levels. It is also sometimes added to dry white wines to accentuate the flavour.

The grape itself has the smell and taste of juicy raisins with distinctive aromatic and 'grapey' characteristics.

**GRAPE ESCAPE No.56**

Why not head our way for the NSW Labour Day weekend? The weather is usually great and you can enjoy the Albury/Wodonga Wine & Food Festival, a showcase of our great regional wines matched with fantastic local foods.

Albury's restaurants kick off the weekend with a progressive dinner - a 'Frolic' on Friday night, 28th of September. Then on the Saturday, nearby Wodonga hosts "Wine & Dine on High" offering wine and food matches from their participating restaurants and cafés.

Then it's back over the Murray to the QEII Square, Albury on the Sunday, for a Producers Picnic to culminate the festivities.

This large regional centre is only 30 to 35 minutes by car from Rutherglen so you can have either a quick get away or maybe a leisurely gastronomical break. Sound appealing? Go on then—treat yourself!!!

Lovely land of the Long White Cloud

Along with a number of other wineries, Chambers Rosewood recently participated in 'Victorian Wines in New Zealand.'

We visited Auckland, Wellington and then Christchurch offering tastings to trade people, various media writers and the general public.

Although we did not attract as many visitors as anticipated, we caught up with many old friends and made lots of new acquaintances.

Many people remembered Bill from his last visit some eight years ago and were very pleased to know that they would be able to purchase the product locally.

One elderly gentleman sampled the Rare Tokay and remarked that he was "perfectly happy to die with that taste on his lips!" Hopefully, we were able to convince him to sustain life for quite some time to come.

We took some of Bill's chardonnay with us for them to try and it was right on the money. Coming from older vines and with some bottle age it went over a treat against their young, quick drinking wines.

There was lots of friendly rivalry and ribbing about sport and the pronunciation of various words - particularly when the Botrytis Tokay was described as "heaven on a stick." All those amazing vowel sounds!!!

They were not too impressed when one of their chaps scored an own goal in the soccer and won the match for Australia.

We look forward to a long and happy association with the newest members of our rapidly expanding international Chambers family.

GOSSIP & GOODIES

Have you tasted the 2000 Gouais yet? This variety came to world attention recently when it was found to be one of the parents of Chardonnay – the other being Pinot. Bill has traditionally blended it with Riesling but the 2000 is proving to be very popular. Its clean, crisp finish and subtle buttery tones make it ideal to serve with seafood or vegetarian dishes.

This wine is very pleasant with fresh asparagus topped with creamy sauce sauce and cracked pepper.

It is very reasonably priced at \$10 a bottle.

Why not take it along to a blind tasting or to one of those boring wine "know - it -all's?"

The odds of them not picking it would have to be pretty good.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are very pleased to announce that Chris Eerden of Lace Fine Wine Merchants, is now our agent for New Zealand.

If you have family or friends in New Zealand, please spread the word. They can contact Chris on 9 828 4725 or

via email on laceline@xtra.co.nz to chase up their nearest outlet. They can also arrange email delivery of our Newsletter by contacting us at wchambers@netc.net.au

People Profile - Charlie Symonds

You have possibly seen our Vineyard Manager, Charlie working amongst the vines. He is a big, brawny Kiwi who has worked with us for over twenty years now. If you are familiar with 'Wal' one of the cartoon characters from Footrot Flats you will have a good idea of what Charlie looks like.

He returns to his farm in Pahiatua (near Mangatainoka) early each year to catch up with his family and refresh his accent.

He is also a passionate golfer, who plays with a very healthy handicap. Our local course also benefits from his watchful eye and careful nurturing. We're hoping he'll teach us how to do a Hakka at this year's Christmas Party!

In the Vineyard...

Large commercial operations often use mechanical pruning but here at Rosewood we painstakingly do it by hand. You will see our solitary vineyard workers, secateurs in gloved hands, all rugged up against the cold, working their way down rows of naked vines.

Each vine, each variety, must be expertly pruned, shaped and trellised to give of its best. The long branches, called 'canes' are pruned back to leave just a few 'spurs' which will grow to produce the new fruit.

If there are too many canes the vines will produce too much fruit which could deplete the available nutrients or perhaps inhibit ripening. Controlling the amount of fruit promotes quality yields and consequently makes better wine.

Great care is taken to select and cut the right canes with the woody rods from the previous vintage being lopped off. The remaining new growth canes, shoot from the 'crown' of the vine which are then tied onto the trellis to train them into the required 'canopy.' This is the name given to the habit or form the vine will take, depending on the variety of grape, climate and terrain of the vineyard. Vines grown in cooler areas are generally trellised much higher off the ground to provide adequate sunlight to ripen the fruit.

Spring though is the acid test for all the hard work done during these dormant winter months. The warmer weather heralds 'budburst' with fresh green shoots, full of hope and promise for the next vintage.

And so the cycle starts again under the care of our patient vineyard workers, totally attuned to the seasons and ever vigilant to the vagaries of weather, weeds and pests.

Psssst....

Keep an eye open for the November/December issue of Winestate Magazine...

It will feature North East Victoria wines.

SPECIAL CLUB MEMBERS ONLY OFFERS

*Expires 30/11/01
unless sold out beforehand*

• JUDGE & JURY

- 2 X '97 Riesling (Pre Release)
- 2 x '00 Botrytis Tokay
- 2 x '97 Chardonnay
- 2 x '97 Cabernet Sauvignon (French)
- 1 x Special Muscat
- 1 x Oloroso
- 1 x Dry Flor Sherry
- 1 x '93 LBV (Vintage Port)

\$160 plus freight

• CHAIRMAN'S CHOICE

- 2 x '00 Gouais
- 2 x '99 Lakeside Late Harvest
- 3 x '97 Blue Imperial
- 3 x '96 Shiraz
- 1 x Rutherglen Muscat
- 1 x Rutherglen Tokay

\$125 plus freight

• PANEL PACK

- 4 X '98 Riesling
- 2 x '97 Autumn White
- 4 x '99 Shiraz & Blue Imperial
- 1x Mt Carmel (Liqueur Port)
- 1 x Oloroso

\$105 plus freight

