



**Catherine Vale Newsletter**  
**December 2009 Vol 6 No 3**

Catherine Vale Wines

***Greetings from Bill and Wendy***

The time since our last newsletter has been very sad for our family with the passing of Bill's brother Ron. You will recall that we spoke of the happy times spent during pruning with Bill and his two brothers spending quality time together. Ron was experiencing some discomfort at the time but there was no inkling of the virulent cancer which would take his life only weeks after his return to Queensland. He leaves a son Scott and wife Anne Marie and a daughter Amanda and husband James and 8 grandchildren. His memorial at Southport was a celebration of a most interesting and caring life. We will miss his regular visits to Catherine Vale but his contributions will be always appreciated. Part of his ashes have been scattered among the vines at the request of Scott and Amanda.

Wendy's Mother Winifred continues to amaze family with her recovery and regular phone calls find her carrying out normal activities.

Belinda, Vince and Alice have made regular visits with Alice now walking and saying and understanding words. They will visit Vince's family in NZ in February. Belinda has resumed some part time work from home and Vince continues to visit various CSIRO telescope facilities around the state.

Kerry and Stephen continue their active lifestyle in Vail with both doing extremely well in endurance events. Kerry was placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the US National 24 hour mountain bike endurance championship – a formidable feat. They have been looking at houses but have decided to stay put for the present.

Jodie, Berten and Timo are doing well with Timo now beginning to crawl. Jodie is back with her orchestra and Berten has taken his parental leave entitlement to look after Timo. Support for parents in Germany is certainly light years ahead of Australia! We await with interest Timo's first words with Berten talking to him in Flemish and Jodie in English. We hope the result will see him bilingual and not confused.

Gavin and Bec have bought a house in Newcastle and are well under way with improvements – greatly assisted by Bec's Dad Dick. We attended a family house warming where they prepared TURDUCKEN – a chicken inside a duck inside a turkey done on a hooded barbecue. They learned this art in Vail and found a butcher in Newcastle with US experience.

**The Vineyard**

It has been an interesting spring with some good rains and some excessive heat but growth has been excellent. A two year Hunter Valley Industry Climate Change Case Study commissioned by 12 of the region's councils has indicated a reduction in maximum temperatures during summer and spring and increases in winter and autumn. Minimum temperatures are also expected to increase during summer, autumn and winter with a decrease during spring. Rainfall patterns are expected to follow the trends of 1948-1976 with expected increase during summer, autumn and winter. Extreme heat, frosts and disease are expected to have a future impact on the industry. The study found the biggest risk is extreme heat days that would affect fruit health and composition as well as harvesting and irrigation deficiencies (November Wine and Grapegrower Magazine) It seems we had better get used to it! Our vines do look good but of course with two months to vintage we never know what is around the corner and will keep our fingers crossed.

**The Wines**

**Alternative Varieties**

We are very pleased with the progress of our Arneis. This is a rare white grape variety which we researched in Piedmont in north-west Italy in 2006 and it dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Our aim is to produce a genuine Catherine Vale Hunter alternative to the ubiquitous "cats pee" NZ Sauvignon Blanc. A recent article by Jeni Port in Australian Wine Business said "Take Arneis. Does NZ make Arneis? I don't think so. That's one good reason to explore this Italian grape variety right there. And the second reason? Not only do a couple of dozen Aussie producers grow the grape, they make it well. And it's unwooded and it's subtle but tasty at the same time. It's not Sauvignon Blanc but it still manages to fulfil some of the savvy criteria" We hope to have tank samples at the launch of our 2009 wines and let's hope it meets the above criteria. The "little rascal" which is what Arneis means is so far behaving and we look forward to the eventual wine.

Our Barbera continues to be a productive and reliable variety and it's unique flavours make it a welcome alternative for confirmed red drinkers. Our wines generally have had good ruby colour and we have found a benefit in extended storage in older barrels. The release of our 2007 vintage at the launch should be a highlight.

The experience with Dolcetto at Catherine Vale will feature in "Australian Viticulture" magazine shortly and you will know we are the only producer of this variety in the Hunter. We have made both a light Pinot Noir style red and a French style Rose which we hope you have sampled and are more than happy with our decision to go with this variety.

Our decision to go with alternative varieties was taken sooner than most who have done so and has proved ground breaking in terms of the current state of the industry. We hope you feel part of our quantum leap and that you enjoy showing off the wines.

### **Wine Reviews**

Newcastle Wine writer John Lewis said the following in a review in the Newcastle Weekender on November 21<sup>st</sup>

#### **Catherine Vale 2006 Gabrielle Dolcetto** 🍷🍷🍷

This wine is garnet-hued, has gamey, raspberry scents and brings firm blueberry flavour to the front palate. Morello cherry, mocha coffee and licorice fruit characters integrate with savoury oak on the middle palate and dusty tannins show at the finish. Great with Spaghetti carbonara or tandoor lamb kebabs

#### **Catherine Vale 2008 Verdelho** 🍷🍷🍷

Green-tinted straw in the glass, this fruity white has passion fruit blossom scents and tropical fruit salad flavour on the front of the palate. Orange peel characters, underpinned by toast and honey nuances, join in on the middle palate and the finish brings forth slatey acid.

#### **Catherine Vale 2008 Chardonnay** 🍷🍷🍷

If you're tired of fruit bomb chardonnays, here's a wine of pleasant restraint. It is brassy gold and has scents of citrus and crushed almonds, Crisp honeydew melon flavour shows on the front of the palate and white peach and delicate croissant and lemon butter fruit characters integrate with cashew-like oak on the middle palate. Flinty acid displays at the finish.

## ***Events***

### **Catherine Vale Spring Affair 2009**

Our final event for the year took on an expanded format with dinner and music on Saturday Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> where our friend Ian Thistlethwayte showed his skill and versatility on guitar and Wendy prepared a tasty meal. On Sunday we featured Chris Anthony (Klassic Blak) and a good time was enjoyed by a relatively small crowd.

We now have a drink on premise authorization which allows us to serve wine by the glass and other liquors in our licenced area so we hope to make more use of our Anderson Room

### **Broke Fordwich Spirit of the Vine**

This event run by the Wine & Tourism Association was held on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately the egos of some of the organizers and participants got in the way of the success of the event and it did not fulfill it's potential. We hope a re-vamp next year may see it become a force for good in promoting the area.

### **Catherine Vale 2009 Wine Launch**

This will take place on Sunday March 28<sup>th</sup> from 12 noon and we hope you will mark this in your calendar as a "must attend" event. An invitation and details will be forwarded in due course and if you have not attended previously be assured it is

a great day out. You will also get first look at the new release wines and can purchase at never to be repeated prices. Music for the 2009 event will be by Mothers of Intention who play Celtic Music and they were the winners of the Music Oz 07 Best World Folk Group.

### **A little bit of Italy in Broke**

This event will take place on Saturday and Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> April. Catherine Vale pioneered this event and we will again take the lead in providing two days of Italian experiences. Taste our Italian wine varieties, eat Italian food, enjoy Market stalls and play or watch games of the Italian recreational game of bocce while being entertained by Italian musicians. Several Italian car clubs will be in attendance on Sunday with their cars on display. Do come.

### **Upper Hunter Wine and Food Affair**

This great event will be held on the first Saturday of May at Denman.

### **State of the Wine Industry**

The long awaited Industry Statement released last month by the four national industry bodies paints a bleak picture. It paints a scenario of over supply and the impact this is having on grape and wine prices with profitability plunging. 20 p/c of vineyards are estimated not to have a future in the industry. Advice is that people in the industry should not expect to trade out of the problem or rely on climatic and seasonal conditions to do the job.

The size of the oversupply and the difficult market environment means the industry must adjust production downwards or suffer deepening downward pressure on prices of grapes and wine.

All this is great for the consumer but we at Catherine Vale are faced with the problem of survival in difficult times and with your help we are determined in our case to prove the doomsday predictions wrong. We will continue to take steps to progress our venture and will take on board any suggestions you may have.

We did suggest in our last newsletter that we would cease to print hard copies of our order form. Your representations have persuaded us not to go ahead with this and you will find a new order form attached. Our offer of a half mixed case of 2008 wines was only marginally successful. It was a way to attempt a greater response from the 500 newsletters we send via post. We have resisted a wine club format hoping that those who have elected to receive our newsletter will purchase at least every 2 years.

### **Wine Orders**

Now is the time to stock up on your Catherine Vale supplies for the holiday season. We do hope you will consider our wines for your summer enjoyment.

We extend our best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Yours in Wine

*Bill and Wendy*