



Catherine Vale Wines

Catherine Vale Newsletter February, 2008

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Greetings from Bill & Wendy

A testing and frustrating harvest is almost over and we have been reminded once again that Mother Nature has to be respected and her vagaries constantly taken into account. The fabulous spring growth and healthy crop levels referred to in our last newsletter have not resulted in a particularly memorable harvest.

Hail damage in December and the constant rain in January and the first two weeks of February put the entire Hunter crop at risk of fungus disease and much has been lost. We fared better than many with our first pick of Chardonnay on 15th of January for a sparkling wine which Wendy has chosen to make as her project at TAFE being perfect for this purpose. She has this in good shape at the TAFE winery and unless she severely miscalculates should produce an excellent product. We will keep you informed.

Pickings of our Semillon and Verdelho saw them come in with excellent sugar, acid and pH readings. Our sometimes ridiculed hand picking regime allowed us excellent quality control and any suspect fruit was left on the ground or thrown from the bins. Pickers were in high demand as many growers could not get their machines into the soggy vineyards. Wendy worked overtime putting teams together. Our Chardonnay and Dolcetto did not fare as well with the constant rain at peak harvest time and we felt helpless as we watched superb fruit deteriorate by the day. We were forced to drop almost as much as we picked and the discarded fruit left under the vines was a sorry sight. We were able to secure enough of these two varieties to have a quality vintage but many growers lost their entire crop. This has been the case in many prime grape growing regions in NSW.

We still have our Barbera on the vine and it does look as good, if not better than most of the reds (particularly Shiraz) in the Hunter. We hope to be able to pick this in the next few weeks although as we write the rain has begun again. At least our lawns have returned and the whole

area looks lush and green. There is always a down-side and Bill managed the impossible i.e. wearing out a Briggs & Stratton motor on the ride-on while keeping the lush growth cut down! Our family is all well. Belinda and Vince had Christmas in NZ with Vince's family and were here for a mercifully cool New Year's Eve. Kerry and Stephen enjoyed their usual white Christmas at Vail with Gavin and Bec being with them for Christmas Dinner. Jodie and Berten are enjoying their new house in Duisberg and working hard with their orchestral commitments. Gavin and Bec enjoyed a skiing vacation after Christmas at resorts starting in Canada and working south through the Rockies back to Vail.

Wendy and Bill plan to visit Wendy's Mother and Sister in California as well as catching up with Kerry and Stephen before going on to Germany to see Jodie and Berten. We will be away from early May until the June Long Weekend. Catherine Vale will remain open and be looked after by several of our experienced helpers. You can still order or visit during this time.

2007 Vintage

These wines are about to be bottled and will be ready for our annual launch on Sunday 6th April (end of daylight saving again!) They look superb and we have every confidence they will meet with your approval.

We will go through with our plan to have a new bottling of the remaining half of our 2006 Barbera not bottled last year and set aside the 2007 Barbera for a further 12 months ageing. This was a plan gleaned from our visit to Piedmont in Italy in 2005 and we feel this course will give us varietal truth and excellence in the Italian tradition. We will seek your input when the plan comes to fruition.

Many of you who have visited the Cellar Door or purchased our 2006 Barbera have commented on the excellence of this vintage and rated it more favourably than other Barbera you have tried. We hope that as we take it to this next stage we will have a product second to none in Australia.

Casting your mind back a few years now you will remember that you first heard about the emergence of Italian wine varieties in Australia

at Catherine Vale. We can certainly claim pioneering status in the Hunter and it should just be a secret between you and us that our Italian experiment may not be over yet. More will be revealed!

Wine Events

We have our programme for 2008 in place now and are happy to advise the dates and plans. Do put these in your diary as we would love to see more of you at one or all of the functions we have planned.

Launch of 2007 Wines

April 6th

This will take place on Sunday 6th of April starting at 12 noon. An invitation is attached and we would love to have you come and join us for a complimentary lunch and be the first to taste our newest vintage. Meet our winemaker and hear his assessment of the new wines and purchase them at Special once only prices. This is the day you can call Catherine Vale your own but you must advise your acceptance as we do our own catering and need to know how to serve you best.

Music will be provided (at great expense of course!) by the **Funky Do Da's** a brilliant Jazz group from Newcastle and with a self expressive product. This is a well credentialed group we have not presented before so do come and enjoy their offerings. Check them out on www.funkydodas.com

A Little Bit of Italy

April 12th

This day begun by Catherine Vale has now expanded to include other venues in the area and features Italian themes and food ,wine tasting and olive picking. The date is Saturday 12th of April.

Here at Catherine Vale we feature a major Bocce tournament with teams from Italian and Croatian clubs in Sydney, Newcastle and Nelson Bay. Seeing these teams compete and enjoy their national recreational game is worth a visit in itself. Couple that with breakfast, lunch, wine tasting, roving musicians, stalls and even dancing makes for a most enjoyable day. We can promise you a day filled with atmosphere.

The climax of our day is an Italian Feast prepared for us by guest Chefs with Italian wines, music and dancing. You must book for the dinner and cost will be \$95 all inclusive. The number is limited to 50 so do book early as we have been booked out for the last 2 years. You won't forget the night.

If you would like to stay in the area and make a weekend of it, check the tourism web site www.brokefordwich.com.au or www.singleontourism.com.au for accommodation options. (Tempus Two is having an event on that evening so accommodation may be in short supply)

Catherine Vale Jazz

July 6th

This will take place a little later this year and is scheduled for Sunday 6th of July. We will again feature the hugely popular PRESERVATION JAZZ BAND. They will play from 12 noon to 3 p.m. and we will offer lunch with all funds raised on the day going to Diabetes Research. Bring your own folding chair or blanket and enjoy a few hours listening to these renown jazz musicians. Bring a few nibbles, buy a bottle of Catherine Vale wine, purchase some lunch and sit back and relax.

Aged Special Release

We have received favourable comment on our release of the 2002 Semillon and again offer this on the order form accompanying this newsletter. It is a true aged Hunter Valley Semillon rich in the tradition of this variety in the area.

Special Clean skin Opportunity

You may have read or heard recently that the Australian wine glut is over. Not true! There are still some select opportunities. We have a limited supply of cleanskin 2006 Verdelho and Chardonnay available and can offer this for the first time at \$90.00 which includes delivery or \$80.00 from the Cellar Door.

Current Release Wine and Wine Orders

We still have our full range of 2006 wines available for you to select and our order form is attached or can be downloaded on www.catherinevale.com.au. Do stock up with this excellent vintage and enjoy the exclusivity of Catherine Vale Wines as we await the bottling and release of the new 2007 wines.

We thank all of you for your continued support.

Yours in wine

Bill and Wendy