

HUNTER PARK VINEYARD



A WINEMAKER'S PERSPECTIVE

by

Mark Turnbull

INTRODUCTION:

THIS REPORT INTENDS TO PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE HUNTER PARK VINEYARD AND THE GRAPES IT PRODUCES – AND BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHOR'S QUALIFICATIONS, THIS ASSESSMENT REFLECTS *A WINEMAKER'S PERSPECTIVE*.

THE REPORT PROPOSES TO INCLUDE COMMENTS ON

- THE VINEYARD
- THE INHERENT QUALITY OF THE CHARDONNAY GRAPES GROWN AT HUNTER PARK
- A COMPARISON OF HUNTER PARK CHARDONNAY AND OTHER GRAPES GROWN IN THE REGION
- THE SUITABILITY OF HUNTER PARK CHARDONNAY FOR WINE STYLES AND VALUE ADDED OPPORTUNITIES.

THE HUNTER PARK VINEYARD IS LOCATED ON THE NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY, APPROXIMATELY TWO KILOMETRES FROM MUSWELLBROOK IN THE UPPER HUNTER VALLEY OF NEW SOUTH WALES. (OTHER VINEYARD LOCATION AND FACILITY DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE SEPARATELY.)

THE HUNTER VALLEY AND IN PARTICULAR THE UPPER HUNTER VALLEY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MUCH OF THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF CHARDONNAY AS A MAJOR WINE VARIETY IN THIS COUNTRY AND THE REGION IS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION AS A PRODUCER OF QUALITY CHARDONNAY WINES.

LIKE MANY REGIONS PRODUCING QUALITY GRAPES IN AUSTRALIA THERE ARE DIFFICULT ISSUES OF A CLIMATIC OR GEOGRAPHICAL NATURE. THE HUNTER VALLEY IS NO EXCEPTION, HOWEVER WITH SUITABLE INITIAL VINEYARD ESTABLISHMENT AND TECHNICALLY COMPETENT MANAGEMENT, THE QUALITY REWARDS CAN BE SIGNIFICANT.

THE VINEYARD:

THIS VINEYARD WAS EVALUATED AS HARVEST COMMENCED FOR THE 2004 VINTAGE. IT WAS THEREFORE POSSIBLE TO VIEW THE VINEYARD AND GRAPE CONDITION AT MATURITY.

THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE OF THIS VINEYARD, IS IN FACT THE FIRST IMPRESSION – IT HAS QUITE STUNNING BALANCE.



- THE VIGOUR CONTROL IS EXEMPLARY
- THE CANOPY IS OPEN AND ALLOWS FREE AIR FLOW
- THE LIGHT PENETRATION IS DAPPLIED WITH NO EXCESSIVE SHADING
- THE FRUIT EXPOSURE IS SUFFICIENT FOR BUD/LIGHT INTERCEPTION BUT PROTECTED TO AVOID SUNBURN
- THE CANE LENGTH AND INTERNODE LENGTH IS NORMAL
- GENERAL HEALTH AND NUTRITION APPEARS EXCELLENT
- VINE WATER STATUS/STRESS IS EXCELLENT

TO MAINTAIN THIS CONTROL IN WHAT IS TRADITIONALLY A HIGH VIGOUR, RICH ALLUVIAL SOIL ENVIRONMENT, IS A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT.

VINEYARDS IN THIS CONDITION DO NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT — THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT AND THOUGHTFUL USE OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THIS VINEYARD AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE VINEYARD MANAGEMENT REFLECTS THOUGHTFUL “CAUSE AND EFFECT” ANALYSIS. THE STATUS OF THE:

- PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL
- IRRIGATION MANAGEMENT
- SOIL AND WEED CONTROL
- PRUNING
- YIELD MANAGEMENT

ALL REFLECT A COMPETENT OPERATION AND A COMMITMENT BY THE CURRENT PRINCIPALS TO SUPPORT THE PRODUCTION OF QUALITY GRAPES.

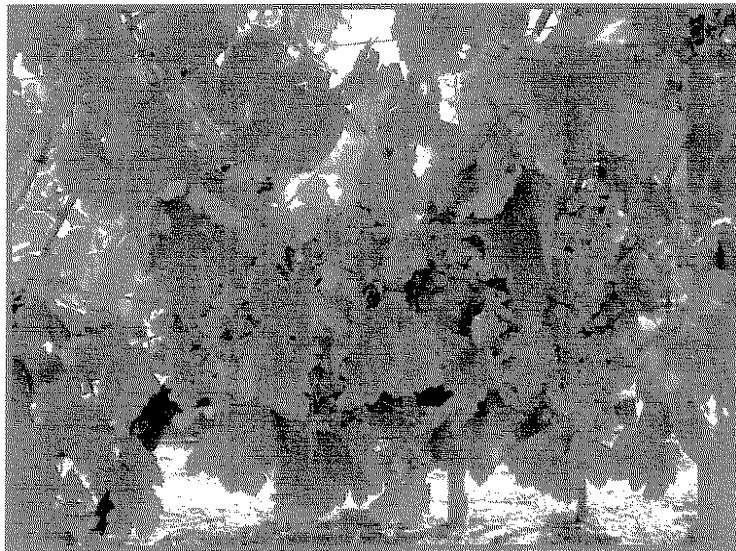
THE GRAPES:

THE FLAVOUR DEVELOPMENT OF THE GRAPES AND THE FLAVOUR PROFILES ARE SURPRISINGLY CONSISTENT FROM ONE YEAR TO THE NEXT. THIS DEVELOPMENT IS EASILY OBSERVED AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH ONE WOULD EMBRACE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT ON THE VINE, WILL PRINCIPALLY DEPEND ON STYLE PREFERENCE.

AGRICULTURAL RISK IN A DIFFICULT YEAR MAY DICTATE A MORE CONSERVATIVE HARVEST DATE – THE RESULTANT GRAPE FLAVOURS (WITH APPROPRIATE STYLE CHANGE) WILL STILL ENABLE THE PRODUCTION OF A FINE COMMERCIAL WINE.

THE CROP LEVELS OBSERVED AT HARVEST WERE APPROPRIATE AS YOU WOULD EXPECT FROM A VINEYARD IN BALANCE. THEY WERE INSUFFICIENT TO IMPACT ON THE MATURITY / FLAVOUR DEVELOPMENT BUT WERE SUFFICIENT TO REMAIN COMMERCIALY VIABLE.

THE MATURITY DATA (AT HARVEST) IS AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE BUT NEEDLESS TO SAY IT ALSO REFLECTS THE BALANCE OF THIS VINEYARD AND THE MANAGEMENT. ACIDS ARE WELL MAINTAINED FOR THE CLIMATE AND PH IS PROPORTIONALLY IN ORDER. THE ABILITY TO SUGAR RIPEN THE GRAPES HAS NOT BEEN AN ISSUE.



WINE STYLE OPTIONS:

THE GRAPES FROM THIS VINEYARD HAVE FLAVOUR AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY PROVEN TO OFFER CHOICES IN WINE STYLE OUTCOMES.

THE FLAVOURS FROM WINES MADE FROM THIS VINEYARD RANGE FROM MELON THROUGH TO PEACH AND IN THE RIPER SPECTRUM THEY LEND THEMSELVES TO COMPLEXING WITH MALO-LACTIC AND OAK.

PICK THEM EARLY FOR SPARKLING BASE — PICK THEM AT MODEST MATURITY FOR FRUIT DRIVEN STYLES (WITH APPROPRIATE MUST AND JUICE PROTECTION), OR GO FOR A FULLY MATURED COMPLEX, RICH STYLE (IN CONJUNCTION WITH APPROPRIATE OENOLOGY) TO PRODUCE A CHARDONNAY CAPABLE OF INTERNATIONAL ACCLAIM.

COMPARABLE WINES:

IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO NAME THE WINES BUT THIS AUTHOR EVALUATED SIX CHARDONNAYS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION (WITH PRICE POINTS IN THE \$18-\$32 RANGE) AND A BARREL SAMPLE FROM THE 2003 VINTAGE OF HUNTER PARK. THIS COMPARISON AND PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH GRAPES AND WINE FROM THIS AND NEIGHBORING VINEYARDS JUST GOES TO SUPPORT THE QUALITY AND STYLE COMMENTS ALREADY TABLED.

SUMMARY:

THIS VINEYARD IS WITHOUT DOUBT ONE OF (IF NOT) THE BEST VINEYARDS IN THE HUNTER VALLEY! - AND IT HAPPENS TO BE ALL CHARDONNAY!

THE APPROPRIATE ESTABLISHMENT AND CLEVER MANAGEMENT OF THIS VINEYARD HAS (AND WILL) DELIVER A QUALITY GRAPE WITH FLAVOUR PROFILES SUITABLE FOR A RANGE OF CHARDONNAY STYLES.

HUNTER PARK IS A COMMERCIAL VINEYARD IN ALL THE POSITIVE SENSES OF THE WORD — IT WILL REWARD THOSE WHO HAVE A COMMITMENT TO THE PRODUCTION OF QUALITY GRAPES.



THE AUTHOR:

MARK TURNBULL HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE WINE INDUSTRY IN A VARIETY OF TECHNICAL, ACADEMIC AND MANAGEMENT ROLES SINCE 1974 - SOME 30 YEARS. THE ROLES RELEVANT TO THIS REPORT ARE:

- WINEMAKER AT ROSEMOUNT ESTATE DURING THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE SHOW RESERVE AND ROXBURGH CHARDONNAY
- CHIEF WINEMAKER AT SALTRAM WINE ESTATES DURING WHICH TIME CHARDONNAY FROM THE UPPER HUNTER VALLEY WAS ACQUIRED FOR PREMIUM WINE BRANDS
- WINE PRODUCTION CONSULTANCIES
- WINE BROKERAGE AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT CONSULTANCIES
- ACADEMIC / TECHNICAL ROLES WITH ROSEWORTHY/UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

From multiple vineyard inspections throughout the growing and ripening season, I found the quality of the 2004 crop highly comparable to 2003. While some early disease infection was evident, which was typical of the season throughout the valley, high temperatures leading up to harvest – some into the mid 40°c, resulted in those affected berries drying and falling off the vine before harvest. I found the vineyard to be balanced and healthy and able to sustain yields of around 5.5 to 6 tonnes per acre, this is also due to soil type, water quality and quantity. Like 2003 I would classify the quality of the fruit of 2004 to be comparable to the above mentioned wines which notably retail for around \$25 to \$35 per bottle.

I have been asked to assess the Hunter Park Vineyard located at Burtons Lane Muswellbrook in the Upper Hunter Valley NSW. I have experienced the crop produced off this vineyard for the last two vintages, 2003 & 2004. I made the wine for the 2003 Hunter Park Reserve Chardonnay, which was sourced entirely from the Burtons Lane vineyard. The wine went into 70% new French oak and underwent fermentation and maturation in oak for a period of 12 months. During this period the wine integrated well with the oak and underwent partial malo-lactic fermentation resulting in a well harmonised, fruit-driven style. I have worked with Hunter Valley Chardonnay for many years and would compare the quality of this fruit with wines such as Tyrrell's Moon Mountain and Brokenwood's Graveyard Chardonnay, two wines made with very similar technique.

Hunter Park Vineyard Assessment

Mr Andrew Dibley
General Manager
Hunter Park Wines

23rd March 2004

Winemaking & Consulting
DOGLIANI

I have been involved in the wine industry professionally for over 10 years based primarily in the Hunter Valley, working in a winemaking capacity for companies such as Brokenwood and Tyrrell's Wines. I currently operate my own winemaking consultancy and contract business as well as performing the role of Winemaker/Viticulturist for my family winery and vineyard Chateau Pato, established in 1980.

Based on this experience, I would classify the Hunter Park Vineyard a premium chardonnay site comparable to other premium chardonnay vineyards in the Hunter Valley.

Nick Paterson
Consultant Winemaker

