

Corkscrew: wine reviews

September 14, 2018

What's this Montepulciano all about? The 2017 Calabria Montepulciano — firstly, let me state what an excellent wine this is. We had it at an authentic Italian restaurant with meatballs and napolitana sauce and it was a great food match. This red grape variety hails from its native Italy (Puglia) and because it ripens late in the season is unsuitable for the northern wine regions of Italy. H-



ere in Australia it has found a home with Riverina-based Calabria Family Wines. Deep red in colour with a youthful purple hue around the rim, the nose is fruit driven with spicy savoury flavours with the red/dark fruits jumping out of the glass. The palate is soft and judicious with raspberry, blackberry flavours together with some liquorice notes taking hold on the palate. The oak/tannin/acid structure is nicely integrated into the wine. It has lots of fruit and finishes dry, medium-bodied with lingering fruits in abundance. My friend and I looked at each other over dinner and said "Wow, how good is this!" When finished, we discussed it some more and my friend took a photo of the label so she could buy it. Brilliant! (rrp \$15)

From the same stable comes the NV Calabria Bevi Prosecco Piccolo Spritz. What a mouthful! Light see-through pink, almost blood orange in colour. The nose is fruity with blood orange and herbs; a sit up and take note kind of nose. The palate is showing orange blossom, musky and herbal notes with the blood orange flavours taking centre stage. The finish is fruity with blood orange, bitters and herbs. The wine has a tingle of acid and a little spritzig on an off-dry, fruity finish. Just the go for spring and summer. (rrp \$14.95)

The 2016 Jip Jip Rocks Shiraz has had many mentions in past columns due mostly to its consistency; it appears not to change year in or year out. Deep purple almost black in colour with a bright pink rim, the nose is intense with mulberry, liquorice and black olive flavours standing out. The fruit on the palate is rich and intense and really wraps around the gums with the fruit ripeness. While the oak is nicely integrated, the acid and tannins are firm and balanced. The wine is full-bodied with cardamom spice and savoury liquorice on a dry finish with fruit aplenty. (rrp \$21)

Here I offer you a trio of wines from Mudgee-based Huntington Estate which recently released their 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon. Purple in colour with a fading garnet rim, the colour gives way to strong blackcurrant, plum and wild berry flavours on the nose. The fruit on the palate is soft and plentiful and is comprised of rhubarb, chocolate and blackberry flavours. The French/American oak adds structure and complexity with the acid/tannins adding nicely to the mix. The finish is soft, long and enticing with lovely ripe lingering fruit carrying the wine off into a savoury, spicy medium-bodied finish. (rrp \$29)

The 2016 Huntington Estate Special Reserve Semillon is green straw in colour, and the nose is more approachable with floral, citrus overtones. The fruit on the palate consists of citrus, green apple and slight passionfruit flavours. The

acids are soft and juicy, the wine is not austere and not in your face, so to speak. The finish is dry with citrus lemon/lime flavours taking centre stage and soft mellow acids making this wine more approachable now, but it will also cellar well with age. (rrp \$30)

Lastly from Huntington is the 2017 Huntington Estate Special Reserve Chardonnay. Mudgee Chardonnay is something to behold if made well and this wine is one of those. A light straw yellow in colour, the nose offers peach and melon with a hint of vanilla oak sitting nicely in the background. The palate is dry with ripe apricot, melon and nectarine flavours. The French oak adds to the body and structure of the wine and provides hints of cashew and vanilla notes. This wine is a wine of finesse and character and one that, if cellared well, will reward you with something special. Excellent! (rrp \$30)

The 2016 Patina Scandalous Riesling. This Orange-based winery, under winemaker Gerald Naef, has established a great reputation among wine scribes for producing top quality, boutique wine since he established Patina in 1999. His love for Riesling is well noted and as far as I'm concerned, he makes the best Riesling in the Orange region. This wine is straw in colour with a green tinged crown at the rim of the glass indicating youth. The nose draws you in with green apple and orange blossoms in abundance. The palate shows lashings of natural mouth-watering acidity. This off-dry medium bodied Riesling was an excellent accompaniment to pan fried sole and lemon butter with a simple green salad with lemon myrtle dressing. A food and wine match made in heaven, but a wine that's equally heavenly on its own. (rrp \$25) I also offer you the 2016 Patina Riesling – bright straw yellow in colour with a green hue around the rim. The nose offers delicate orange blossom and citrus flavours. The fruit on the palate is long and sensual with juicy lemon/limes, orange peel with minerally overtones together with mouth-watering acidity running right through the wine. This could be one for the cellar or drink now with some prosciutto or Asian foods. Top notch, they don't come any better than this! (rrp \$25)

The Hunter Valley 2015 Gartelmann Wilhelm Shiraz is made from grapes grown in the Upper Hunter region at Denman, a place I have fond memories of when last visited in 1982 (I'll put Denman on my to-do list). Deep purple in colour with a fading pink hue around the rim, the nose offers fragrant blackcurrant and red currant flavours together with a white peppery nose. The dark and red berry fruit on the palate is rich and in harmony with the oak/acid tannin flavours. The wine has depth and complexity with a generosity of fruit. The wine is medium-full bodied, long and firm giving it great palate length (rrp \$28).

Jim McMahon teaches hospitality at Sutherland TAFE