

"Now this is a wine cellar, Prime Minister" Jeni Port, The Age, Epicure March 2004. Review No. 59

## Dear John,

**G**OT a moment? Thanks. I know you've got Mark Latham on your back and there's an election looming, so I guess you don't have too much time to ponder the contents of your cellar at Kirribilli House.

But perhaps you should. You'll find a brisk walk around the cellar will reveal some serious shortcomings in its contents (see Epicure, 9/3/04).

It's unbalanced (I didn't realise you were such a semillon-sauvignon blanc and cabernet kind of guy) and frankly, with the exception of a couple of wines, boring.

If you're hoping to appeal to the wine industry for a few extra votes — and it looks as if they'll come in handy — then how about doing winemakers justice with a selection that won't have visiting dignitaries wondering why there's so much fuss about Aussie wines?

I know you think the cellar is important. Why else did you pay a consultant \$8000 to put it together in the first place? But let's just consider an alternative.

It's a blend of conservative and new age. I promise Tony Blair will love it.

It's a mix of big and small companies, acknowledges leading regional styles and makers as well as exciting newcomers and proves you don't have to spend more than \$100 on a bottle of Aussie wine to provide the best this country can make.

If the list breaks the budget, I'd be happy if only one or two wines from each category get through.

Better to have one great example of Australian winemaking than several mediocre ones. It probably works out cheaper, too.

### Sparkling wines

I've got nothing against hard-working Yellowglen Yellow and Taltarni Brut, but there has to be room in your cellar for some serious quality bubbles as well, something to celebrate an election win perhaps?

**Hardy's Arras vintage:** A complex, classy

sparkling from the acknowledged king of Aussie bubbly, Ed Carr.

**Jansz non-vintage:** Excellent aperitif style that supports Tasmania's claim to the title of sparkling wine state.

**Knappstein Chainsaw sparkling shiraz:** An Australian drop worth celebrating.

### Riesling

Time to show off, and why not? Australia makes some exceptional rieslings. Bring out the Clare Valley heavyweights (especially from the 2002 and 2003 vintages), include a new-wave westerner and a modern icon and you've got a showcase of riesling styles.

**Jeffrey Grosset:** Cellar must-have, from a modern master. Watervale or Polish Hill? It doesn't matter.

**Petaluma Hanlin Hill Vineyard:** Perfection in a glass, ice-cool elegance.

**Frankland Estate Isolation Ridge:** an up-and-comer from WA revealing the Great Southern as an exciting new riesling region.

**Wolf Blass Gold Label:** a mainstream politician's dream — an all-round performer from the man (and the company) that made riesling popular.

### Chardonnay

What a great excuse to show the breadth of Aussie chardonnay, pitting state against state.

**Cullen:** A super-stylish WA wine revealing fruit intensity and a rich textural quality. Tell George Bush it gives his Californian chardonnays a run for their money.

**Stonier:** A maritime-influenced Mornington Peninsula chardonnay that perfectly reflects the sun-and-surf Australian lifestyle.

**Freycinet:** Recognises the super fresh and vibrant Tasmanian style.

**O'Leary and Walker Adelaide Hills chardonnay:** Adelaide Hills is one exciting chardonnay region and this wine does a fantastic job of retaining those clean stone-fruit and mineral complexities.

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### Semillon

I know you have one semillon but it's from a company that is no longer trading (Reynolds). Time to update.

**Tyrrell's Stevens Reserve semillon:** Trad unwooded Hunter style that's pretty lean when young but takes to the cellar like an electioneering politician to a baby.

**McWilliam's Mount Pleasant semillon:** Can't believe this Aussie classic wasn't already in the cellar.

**Mount Horrocks semillon:** A different take on the traditional style with a classy, barrel-fermented wine from Clare.

**Moss Wood semillon:** Margaret River semillon and a great winemaker are a powerful combination.

### Mix'n'match

Every cellar needs an odd spot, a place where you can find something outside the norm or an individual wine that dances to its own tune. It's a bit like the parliamentary dining room.

**Shaw and Smith sauvignon blanc:** Our leading sauvignon blanc, no question.

**Cape Mentelle sauvignon blanc-semillon:** If you want a zesty, fresh sem-sav, go directly to Margaret River.

**Tahbilk marsanne:** A hard-working Aussie battler that dragged itself up by the bootlaces to become a true classic. What a success story.

**Scorpio pinot gris:** From a Mornington Peninsula winemaker taking a punt on a new style.

### Shiraz

I notice shiraz is a bit thin on the ground in your cellar. Stop treating it like a backbencher. It's the face of Aussie wine success overseas.

**Clonakilla:** Supremely elegant and vivacious, represents the new look of Aussie shiraz. And don't forget it's from Canberra.

**Craiglee:** A cool southern Victorian style with peppery bite.

**Peter Lehmann Eight Songs:** Got to have a Barossa in there somewhere.



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