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## Master Class – Sparkling Wine

11 October 2007

Conducted by Andrew Corrigan MW

### Wines Tasted:

#### Introduction

- A1 Moët & Chandon
- A2 Arras 2005 Chardonnay Pinot Noir
- A3 Chandon Vintage
- A4 Hanging Rock Macedon XI

#### The Australian regions

- B1 Picadilly, Adelaide Hills – Starvedog lane 2005
- B2 Pemberton, WA – Houghton 2005
- B3 Yarra Valley – Yarra Burn 2005
- B4 Tasmania – Bay of Fires 2005

#### The effect of maturation – Tigress (Dry)

- C1 2006
- C2 2005
- C3 2004
- C4 2003
- C5 2002
- C6 2001

#### House Styles

- D1 Hardy Sir James Tumbarumba 2001
- D2 Jansz
- D3 Bollinger Special Cuvée Brut NV
- D4 Larmandier Bernier NV

#### Sequel

Spumante



## Sparkling Wine Masterclass 2007

Record of the tasting by Roger Black and Tim Rose

The Guild's sparkling wine and champagne Masterclass was hosted as usual by Andrew Corrigan and Guild members and their guests were treated to a unique experience in the world of sparkling wine courtesy of Andrew and Hardys wines' Ed Carr.

Champagne is a particularly cold region and is one of the northern-most wine growing regions of Europe. The consequence of this is that wine produced in the region is made from grapes which are barely ripe and exhibit a high level of acidity. But the harsh climate is mitigated by the soil, which is highly chalky and reflects the light and warmth onto the ripening grapes. Imitators of champagne tend to concentrate on cold climate wine production but often in regions lacking the moderating effects of heat and light retention from the chalk.

Sparkling winemakers emulate Champagne in the basic techniques used. Still white wines are made in the usual way from individual vineyards and blended before undergoing secondary fermentation in the final bottle and aging on lees under crown cap seal until ready for release and sale, usually at least 3 years later (and in excess of 5 years in the case of house flagship wines).

Andrew told us that the most impressive advance that Australian sparkling wine makers have made in the past few years is to have developed stocks of back vintage wines (e.g. 2000 to 2006) from which to make non vintage blends. Thus the larger Australian winemaking companies will finally be able to compete with the French in terms of flavour complexity and house-style consistency.

The downside of this is that the money spent by the producer on growing or buying grapes, bottles, on corks or crown seals, on storage and so on, continues to be tied up in the stock of maturing wine. In summary, having a large stock of maturing wine is expensive and ties up cash.

### First Bracket:

The first bracket (five wines), was intended to explore foreign vs local characteristics, and Andrew encouraged us to try and identify the champagne in the line up.

A1 Obvious herb and apple aromas with an intense milky yoghurt smell and flavour (malolactic). It had good persistence but was not overtly high in acid. **N/V Bellussi Prosecco, Italy**

A2 Showed aromas of honey and toast, with a long dry fresh palate and intense acid. It showed good persistence and was in the aperitif style. **N/V Moët and Chandon**

A3 Aromas of summer berries with subtle acid and a fresh palate. It had good persistence, and though possibly not quite as good as A2 its still very good. **2001 Arras Vintage chardonnay Pinot Noir**

A4 Aromas of berries and crème caramel with toasty yeast the palate was acidic and sharp with no obvious creamy softness. A wine in the aperitif style. **2002 Chandon Pinot Chardonnay**

A5 Full bodied and toasty, with intense malty flavours and aromas. It had good persistence and was well balanced. **N/V Hanging Rock Macedon No XI**

The group was polled for preference and to identify the champagne in the line up. For favourite, it was a close decision between #2 and #3 with #5 having some support and the final choice was for #3.

### Second Bracket

The second bracket (also five) set out to explore new world regions named as Pemberton (WA) Yarra Valley (Vic) Picadilly (Adelaide Hills) and New Zealand and Tasmania, and the challenge was to identify which was which, based on the expected palate profile. First point: all but the New Zealand wine had been recently disgorged, and these, courtesy of Hardys, were all zero dosage.



B1 Light and clean with soft white peach and brioche aromas, with fresh acid and mouth filling mousse on the palate. Good length but some green herbal characteristics – characteristics of a cool but not cold climate. **Picadilly Adelaide Hills – 2005 Starvedog Lane**

B2 Light and fresh with apple aromas. It had reasonable persistence, but no creamy mouthfeel and was also a bit herbal. Could be wine from grapes picked a bit green in an attempt to retain the natural acid: Warmer climate? **Pemberton, WA - Houghton 2005**

B3 Strongly fizzy, citrus fresh with oyster shell aromas and tart sharp acid (cold climate?). Good balance with a delicate palate. **Yarra Valley, Vic – 2005 Yarra Burn**

B4 Apple, elegant citrus, good acid creamy persistence with good complexity and good persistence. (Cold climate?) **Tasmania – 2005 Bay of Fires**

B5 Sour milk aroma with acid and creaminess on the palate. It was a bit short and the flavours didn't linger. **New Zealand NV Quartz Reef Chauvet**

### Third Bracket

The third bracket, six wines in total, was particularly interesting. Wine Guild members and their guests were treated to a unique experience in the world of sparkling wine courtesy of our host Andrew Corrigan and Hardys wines Ed Carr. Ed arranged for 6 vintages (2001 to 2006) of sparkling wines used to make one of their non vintage brands to be shipped to Andrew for this event. By tasting these samples we were able to appreciate why this system is used. As Andrew pointed out, the 2006, 2005 and 2004 vintages were very similar: youthful, zesty, apple/lemon, highly acidic wines. In the vintages from 2003 and earlier the distinctive toast/yeast/nut flavours started to show.

Armed with this material, we were all able to assemble our own non-vintage sparkling wines!

Each had been disgorged two weeks prior to the event, each was from the same vineyard and each had similar vintage conditions. The bracket was intended to identify and highlight the development and changes undergone by wine going through lees ageing and autolysis the process of the proteins contained in yeast cells being dissolved by the alcohol in the wine.

The cross over point was highlighted by the clear differences between the 2003 and the 2004, and the learning point is that about three years of bottle maturation on lees is required before a sparkling wine begins to demonstrate the complexity associated with lees ageing. Several of the participants made up their own blends of the various wines and many seemed happy with a combination of a small amount of older e.g. 2001 wine with a larger amount of younger, 2006 wine!

Conclusion: The process of autolysis requires time to do its job. But (see above) the process is a cash draining and expensive one.

### Fourth Bracket

Fourth and final bracket, and the tasting notes start to show the effect of the previous three brackets! The fourth bracket had four wines and posed the question of style.

D1: Bit sweet, high acid (so cold climate) oyster shell and lime aromas. Palate had good acid, and the wine was in the aperitif style. Good palate coating and good persistence. **2001 Hardys Sir James (Tumbarumba)**

D2: Toast and honey aromas with some ageing aromas too. Soft and creamy palate, good length, but not big on acid. Lacks complexity and looks a bit simple. **N/V Janz Pinot Chardonnay**

D3: Smelly and complex, lots of older white wine smells, and a bit funky. Some volatile acidity (aldehyde smells) with caramelized brown sugar. Creamy rich palate, good persistence and good acid. Made from aged base wine. This wine polarized opinion. **N/V Bollinger Special Cuvee Brut**

D4: Strong malolactic characteristics, flowers and brioche. Rich palate less dusty characters than no D3 above and probably a superior wine to D3!. **N/V Larmandier Bernier (Producer Champagne)**