



APRIL 2003

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A New Reserve Shiraz DAN HILLS *Winemaker*

From the very good 2001 vintage, this is an outstanding wine made in a similar solid, strong and flavour-some style as seen in previous vintages. As a rule this Shiraz is matured in 100% American oak but, for this vintage, Tony Walker and I have tried to introduce new dimensions of flavour, aroma and texture to the wine by the introduction of a proportion of new and one year old French oak, in addition to American oak.

If you wish to drink this wine in the near future, we strongly recommend decanting the wine for several hours or leaving open overnight.

This change has added more complexity to the wine and we hope you will enjoy the difference as we think it is an improvement. Wine-making is a little like philosophy, in that everyone is allowed to have an opinion and really there is no right or wrong, just a difference.

French oak is a different species from American oak and tends to grow more slowly and with a slightly tighter grain. That is of course a generalisation since every forest and tree will be different. The tightness of the grain, the species and the growing conditions offer different aromas and flavours, as you would expect with grape varieties grown in different regions. The oak is split

rather than sawn otherwise the barrel would be prone to leaking. This means that the selection process is very stringent and wastage is often very high. The French tell us that this is why we pay so much more for their oak, but then they also tell us they are the world's greatest lovers, so who knows?

The story becomes much more complex when we start talking about extra fine grain oak, water bending the staves, different firing regimes, different coopers (barrel makers) as well as different size barrels. It is a seriously complex maze to weave your way through as a winemaker and one ultimately has to decide on styles of oak through trial and error. Let's leave it that oak is a complex medium and so too is wine. The two combine in many interesting ways. Our job as winemakers is to marry those differences into a complex, interesting and attractive wine. We have only really scratched the surface of this complexity in many respects. Keep an eye out for our wines over the next few years. We think you will be very pleasantly surprised.

For detailed tasting notes on our 2001 Reserve Shiraz please contact us at sales@foxcreekwines.com or ring 08 8556 2403.

AWARDS TO DATE: Gold Medal *McLaren Vale Wine Show 2002*, Very Highly Commended (Gold medal standard) *Royal Hobart Wine Show 2002*, Silver Medal *Sydney Royal Wine Show 2003*

Such Sweet Music ~ Another 'Duet'

Our 2000 Cabernet-Merlot 'Duet' was released last year and sold out before the new, 2001 wine could be released. The new wine was made in a very similar style and is available in larger quantities. Our 2000 wine was extremely popular in restaurants and the 2001 'Duet' can be drunk upon release and is a great 'food wine'.

Both the Cabernet Sauvignon (65%) and Merlot (30%) were grown on our Malpas Ridge and Almond Grove vineyards. Cabernet Franc (5%) from Fox Creek Vineyards was blended to give a lift to both the aromatics and mid-palate. For detailed tasting notes please contact us.

AWARDS TO DATE: Silver Medal *McLaren Vale Wine Show 2002*



Email: sales@foxcreekwines.com
Website: www.foxcreekwines.com

Telephone: (08) 8556 2403
Facsimile: (08) 8556 2104

PO Box 321 McLaren Vale
South Australia 5171

Fox Creek Wines Pty Ltd
ABN 63 070 468 423

Is the Corkscrew Doomed? JIM WATTS Director



Many of you will be very well aware of the controversy about whether wine bottles should continue to be sealed with cork, a cylindrical piece of bark derived from a Portuguese oak tree. It is not the occasional nuisance of broken cork or a lost

Queenslander Wins

QUEENSLANDER WINS MAGNUM OF RESERVE SHIRAZ

Congratulations to Wine Club member Stephen Lindsay from Brisbane who won a magnum of our 2000 Reserve Shiraz after purchasing one of our Christmas Dozens. Well done Stephen – we hope you enjoy your belated Christmas present from Fox Creek.

corkscrew that is the issue, but the common occurrence of cork taint from a chemical 2,4,6 Trichloroanisole (T.C.A.), which imparts an unpleasant smell (described as wet cardboard or mouldy shoes) in up to 5% of wines sealed with cork. Synthetic materials have been tried extensively as a replacement for cork but none of these have been found to be entirely satisfactory, in many cases because of a frustrating difficulty in their removal.

An alternative screw cap closure for wines, the Stelvin cap, was introduced in Australia in the 1970's; the closure is a layer of tin coated with an inert plastic material which, unlike cork, completely excludes air from the bottle. This Stelvin closure has now been used extensively and successfully for white wines. It has not been used as often for premium red wines because of anxiety about interference with the agreeable flavour maturation of wines seen with cork, thought to be associated with exposure to the oxygen in air through the cork seal. Experiments to date have not been conclusive although it does appear that the flavour and freshness of the wine is preserved very well with screw caps but it is very likely that the development of agreeable flavour maturity in red wines is delayed. Most important of all, cork taint is abolished with the use of these closures and they preserve the wine very well.

So far there is no way of predicting or preventing T.C.A. contamination of corks whatever their grading or cost and until that can be done, a rate of up to 5% of cork taint is totally unacceptable.

What should a small wine company like Fox Creek do about all of this?

First, we have now decided that there is sufficient evidence of the benefits of Stelvin closure to use it for all our white wines destined for domestic sale but only for some of those destined for export, because in these cases the importer is unsure of public reaction in that market.

... it does appear that the flavour & freshness of the wine is preserved very well with screw caps ...

What about our reds? The inexpensive 'Shadow's run' red has a screw cap and until now there have been no protests, and isn't the screw cap convenient? Even though cork taint is less of a problem in red wines because of the strong fruit flavours, it still occurs without regard to their progeny and price. At the moment, we have decided that until we have more information from the extensive trials being conducted between screw caps and corks, our premium reds will remain sealed with cork. Your comments would be appreciated.

Incidentally we have no intention of making Corkscrew the Cellar Door cat redundant.



Wine Club member, Paul Isherwood, sent us this photo of his Shadow.

Vintage Report 2003

DAN HILLS *Winemaker*

The vintage started with whites coming in a little earlier than the average picking times of previous years. As soon as we started harvesting we knew that some of our predictions of low yields would be realised. The quality of the white fruit looked very good, but the tonnage from nearly every block was the lowest we had seen.

When we started picking the reds on 26th February things started to look more unusual. We were picking reds in February. It has happened before, but rarely had so many of the blocks of grapes been ripe so early. Still, that is agriculture. Crops were very low on the reds. Many growers will be scratching their heads saying "What has happened?" My suggestion would be what has not happened and rain would be the answer. There has been little to no rain for too long. With no good winter or spring rain for quite some time now, the vines are suffering just like the rest of the dry Australian bush.

However, we will not grumble as the quality looks good and the low yields will perhaps correct the oversupply of wines onto the Australian market. You will only ever see high quality wines under the Fox Creek label and that means that the decisions we make about our wines from year to year are based upon quality rather than quantity. The 2003 vintage will not produce huge quantities, but we expect the quality to be as consistent as ever. Happy drinking!



Nesting Surprises

JOHN McLARTY

The diverse array of bird life in and around the vineyard at Fox Creek is an ongoing source of pleasure for staff and visitors alike. Although a few species are consummate pests, most provide a great service keeping insect populations in check and making a beautiful place even more so while going about their business. Spring and early Summer seem to be the preferred season for nesting and 2002 was no exception. What was exceptional were some of the sites they chose to set up house. The Willy Wagtail chicks, photographed resting after a moderately successful early flying lesson, were hatched on a fluoro light fitting in the machinery shed. While the neat,

petite, black fronted plovers, probably displaced by the drought, chose the edge of the Cellar Door driveway for their nest site. Within half a metre of passing vehicles, totally exposed to the elements and countless predators the obsessive parents hatched two chicks. The whole family was last seen headed for the dam. Meanwhile Mr & Mrs Blackbird thought the engine of our antique Leyland truck (pictured) looked like a prime piece of real estate. Pre-vintage servicing was delayed several weeks until they moved back to the vines to help out our viticulturist who prides himself for not using insecticides.



Winemaker Dan Hills assessing the vintage.

Shadow Runs for Drought Relief

JIM WATTS & KRISTIN McLARTY

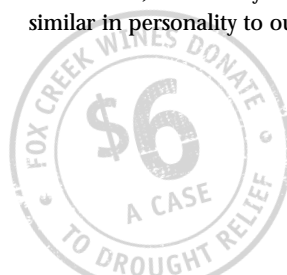
Those of you who read the last newsletter will remember our new red wine 'Shadow's run'. The wine is soft and full of flavour and blended for drinking on casual occasions like barbecues or when you want to relax. And the bottle has a convenient screw cap!

Being farmers ourselves, the suffering endured in drought affected areas has worried us. Donating funds raised from our own farming business is the least we could do as we are all at the mercy of such

environmental disasters. We have decided to donate 50 cents a bottle or \$6 from every case sold to drought relief through the Farmhand Foundation, which is administered by Red Cross. To the end of March we have donated \$5,044.

As production of 'Shadow's run' is ongoing and, we can hope, the drought is not, future funds raised from sales of this wine will be donated to water conservation projects, an issue that is absolutely crucial to sustainable farming in Australia!

The response to Shadow's run has been phenomenal with Shadow being the recipient of gifts at Cellar Door and through the mail. He is now a TV star and has been talked about in many newspapers. Wine Club member Paul Isherwood has sent us a photo of his Border Collie also named Shadow (pictured left at Palm Beach) who he says sounds very similar in personality to our Shadow.



Letter to the Editor

FROM ZORRO (THE FOX)

Just lately there has been a great deal of interest in Shadow the Border Collie. He has got his own wine named after him, he's going on television to do an interview on The Great Outdoors, he's getting requests for guest appearances and there are even rumours about a cuddly toy being named after him.

Well enough is enough, I know a dog is supposed to be man's best friend but what about me. I get rude comments from farmers saying they are going to get their guns because in Victoria they are offering a bounty on foxes and in general we are seen as a pest.

I would just like to say that not all foxes are like that. I am friendly, soft to touch, kids love me and I'm house trained. I can do television appearances, open supermarkets and chase wires even though I prefer to chase chickens.

So how about some attention for me next time you visit our Cellar Door? How about asking if Zorro's around instead of just Shadow as I've got feelings too you know!



A very disgruntled Zorro.

Stop Press

Dan Hills and Lynette Burke have just had a baby boy named Felix (he already has more hair than his father).



SEE YOU AT THE CELLAR DOOR SOON!

Diary

SUNDAY 25TH MAY

FOX CREEK WINES FLEURIEU PENINSULA CUP

A fun filled day for the whole family at Strathalbyn.

THURSDAY 5TH JUNE – MELBOURNE WINE DINNER

Shed 7 at the Atlantic South Wharf, Southbank

SUNDAY 8TH & MONDAY 9TH JUNE – SEA & VINES FESTIVAL

Come and join us in our Barrel Shed for scrumptious Italian cuisine by Augé Ristorante, music by the talented Lucifer's Lounge, great wines and lots of colourful activities for children.

FRIDAY 13TH JUNE – BRISBANE WINE DINNER

Long Room at Customs House

FRIDAY 20TH JUNE – ADELAIDE WINE DINNER

Adelaide Town Hall Auditorium

SATURDAY 28TH JUNE – TASMANIAN WINE DINNER

Elbow Room in Hobart (Wine Club member Stuart Butler reminded us that Tassie is a part of Australia and provided us with the impetus to visit this beautiful state)

THURSDAY 3RD JULY – SYDNEY WINE DINNER

Grand Ballroom in Four Seasons Hotel

THURSDAY 10TH JULY – PERTH WINE DINNER

Must Wine Bar, Highgate

FRIDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER

'FOX AT FOX' DINNER (SA WRITERS FESTIVAL)

Mem Fox and Merri May-Gill will be guest speakers at this dinner in our Barrel Shed.

To register your interest in any of the above or for further information please contact Kristin or Brenda at sales@foxcreekwines or ring 08 8556 2403.

Invitations to our Dinners will be posted later with full details however, we thought you might like to diary the dates now.

