

Tête A Tête



The newsletter of the Domaine A / Stoney Vineyard

PO Box 137 Campania TAS 7026

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Our 20th Anniversary

Welcome to a special 20th Anniversary edition of the Domaine A / Stoney Vineyard newsletter.

This issue we present some stunning new vintage releases, a limited release triple pack, introduce a unique friend of the vineyard and report on two new domestic markets. We have formulated a new cellar guide for you to study and refer to and we touch on the controversial cork vs. screw cap debate.

It was March 1989 when Peter and Ruth Althaus first set foot on the one acre plot of vines at Stoney Vineyard and decided they had found the place to start their quest. A year later, shortly after purchasing the vineyard from former owners George and Priscilla Park, they made their first wines – 3,000 bottles in total. Over the next eight years the vineyard plantings grew to the current size of eleven hectares. Today, production sits at around 60,000 bottles, exporting to more than ten countries and employing six full time staff, all while maintaining the high standard set at the beginning.

There have been sixteen Tete-A-Tetes if you include the 'un-official' edition

in 2000 (which we will refer to as Volume 6.5). Looking back we can see that this journey has been one of joy, frustration and profundity. From the tricky 1996 vintage, the long drawn-out and incredibly stressful 2004 to the outstanding 2000, one must admit that every wine made since 1990 has been a true expression of what can be achieved with careful site selection from a marginal growing region. And not to forget the consistent range of wines made by George Park through the '70's and '80's. Along this journey we have also met some wonderful people. People who understand our ambition and passion and more importantly the wines we work so hard to produce. It's these people that ultimately shape Domaine A – after all, without you where would we be?

Last month we had a rare opportunity to taste the entire line up of the Stoney Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. These wines are holding up very well indeed. The older wines are vibrant and youthful, while current vintages are tight and proud. Mark Robertson, our vineyard supervisor, looked at these wines for the first time. 'Concentration,

balance and elegance...' Mark commented, 'consistency across all vintages. All unique and of extremely high quality, even in the 'poor' years.'

We also had the opportunity to show a similar line-up to Paul Henry, the General Manager from The Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation, and we asked him for some comments on his favourite vintages:

'The first point I would like to make is, what a good question! And the significance of that should not be lost on anyone. Above all, Domaine A displays the very essence of all great wine estates – that vintages are surely different, but that site expression is a consistent thread that should run through all house releases.

Recent tastings show this most profoundly across the range of 2004 reds – Cabernets from Stoney Vineyard and Domaine A, as well as Domaine A Merlot, all showing an unmistakable gene pool, or thumbprint, that reflect house style, regional typicality and delicate varietal expression. (Cont. page 2)



Dam construction in 1990



View of the dam today

"We also know that our greatest achievements still lie beyond us. When the wines we have made – and the wines we are yet to make – at some time in the future speak for us, when we ourselves no longer have voices, or need to hear of success."

Tete-a-Tete, Vol 6, 1999

"And we have been able to clearly demonstrate the potential that Tasmania – and the Coal River Valley in particular – has for producing world class wines."

Tete-a-Tete, Vol 6, 1999



Peter Althaus at the old Stoney Vineyard basket press in 1990



Cork. It is without doubt one of the most debated topics in the industry today. And it comes up often in our cellar door — ‘You still use cork!?’

We know that wine ages differently under cork compared to that of screw cap. It's a living thing and needs to 'breathe'. The cork acts like a permeable membrane between itself and the big wide world. Over years the wine slowly develops and ages. All great wines need to age. That's why we cellar wine - to allow it to develop into something special. The screw cap can slow down the aging process of wine because it breathes less. Wines under screw cap can take many more years to develop than that under cork. That may be fine for some, but an '89 Petrus would be a very different wine today if it were sealed under screw cap.

We know that corks can be the major contributor to the dreaded compound TCA (Trichloronitrosobenzene), also known as cork taint. A corked wine smells mouldy or musty and lacks varietal fruit character. The industry reports about 6% of wine

(that's about two bottles in every three cases) could contain traces of TCA. However, any wine producer worth their salt will replace a corked wine. In 1989 Domaine A started importing corks directly from a supplier in Spain and reports less than 1% of Domaine A suffers from TCA.

The industry decided to move away from corks in the mid nineties and after considerable backlash from consumers it's now the more preferred closure for the vast majority of drinkers. The screw cap is much cheaper than a cork. In fact a cork can cost up to twice as much as the bottle itself. Screw cap eliminates the possibility of cork taint but it's not a perfect seal. The closure can get damaged easily and then leak, and there have been reports of excessive sulphur levels which cause 'reductive' characters in the fruit and make the wine smell 'rubbery' or 'eggy'.

Another reason one may consider cork, is the low carbon footprint compared to that of a screw cap

or plastic cork. According to tests conducted by Cairn Environment for Oeneo Bouchage, the production of screw caps gives off over 10.6kg of CO₂ per tonne compared with only 2.5kg of CO₂ per tonne for cork. The cork is 100% natural - it comes from a renewable industry, it is 100% recyclable and completely biodegradable. Contrary to popular belief, the cork tree is not cut down for harvest, the bark is stripped by hand every 9-12 years and the trees can live up to 300 years. In fact there are approximately 6.6 million acres of Mediterranean cork forests. After the Amazonian Rainforest, it has the world's highest levels of forest biodiversity.

It's all food for thought. One can't help but think there may be no option one day. In summary, neither closure is perfect. However, we have no intention of moving away from cork... it just makes sense to continue a tradition we know and understand... or maybe it's simply the romance of pulling a cork using one's favourite tool of choice.

20th Anniversary

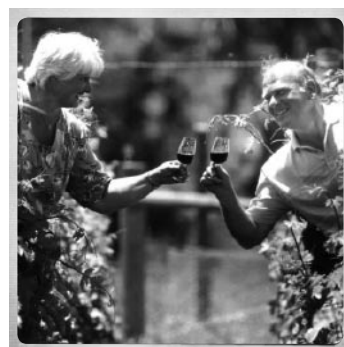
(continued from page 1)

The most compelling of these wines is currently perhaps the most modest (a relative term, I know!) — the 2004 Stoney Vineyard Cabernet.

I have never been a fan of wine notes that contain shopping lists of ingredients, but this wine confidently displays aromatic tea leaf, gentle cassia tones and some dusty, bitter chocolate and cocoa powder-textured tannin. Absolutely

brilliant wine, and with \$28 in my pocket I wouldn't buy anything else from anywhere else!

The other current unmissable is the 2009 Stoney Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc — the perfect antidote to anyone suffering from that grape's current ubiquity. Hello texture, freshness, balance, drinkability and length. Sauvignon Blanc that you actually want to drink a bottle of!



Peter and Ruth Althaus in 1990

From the desk of Louise Radman...

In late May we hosted two special events in Adelaide – a dinner at Chianti Classico and a Masterclass Tasting at The Edinburgh Cellars. Both events were a huge success and we thank the venues and all who came along.

Louise Radman, an Adelaide based journalist attended the Chianti Classico dinner and we asked if she would mind jotting down some notes:

When I heard Domaine A was finally coming to town, I knew Peter Althaus would bring his game. He may be a man of quiet words but these are wines that speak for themselves. Unlike many of their new world colleagues, I find it is the structural elements in the wines of Domaine A that impress me the most. Born of a truly cool climate in Tasmania's historic Stoney Vineyard, they are ambitious wines arising from commitment to a strict viticultural regime and sensitivity to the seasons. The focus on line, length and extraordinarily fine tannin is a common factor across the range. It lends a quality of effortless grace, even to the most robust of the wines. I really admire Peter's ability to make a powerful stylistic statement at the same time as expressing wonderful vineyard provenance. The Domaine A wines have complex personalities



Peter Althaus with Louise Radman

energized by a sense of purpose and place. Even as the vibrant aromatics, elegance and gentle natural acidity speak of Tasmania, they cast a spell reminiscent of Burgundy and Bordeaux.

Here are a few notes on the new releases:

2007 Domaine A Lady A (Sauvignon Blanc) A classic white Bordeaux style, leading with plumes of elegant smoke and whispers of flinty complexity. Pure lemon and grapefruit shine through freshly toasted new French oak and a lick of lemon butter slides through the palate. Wonderful slippery-jack texture and the natural mineral acidity of a cool southerly climate.

2008 Stoney Vineyard Pinot Noir A vivacious cool climate style driven by bright primary fruit and florals.

Opens with a vibrant aromatic profile of scented red cherry blossom and a suggestion of mint. Plenty of briary red berry flavour and forest floor nuances from nearby eucalypts. Supple and approachable with true varietal character and thrilling acid tension.

2006 Domaine A Pinot Noir

A pedigree pinot noir born of a great year in the Coal River Valley. Layers of complexity evolve in the glass to reveal wild cherry and blueberry fruits, Asiatic spices and rose bud with an underlying smoky thread. Svelte and sensual with effortless balance and finesse.

2004 Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon

All the power and presence of a great Bordeaux blend with small components of merlot, cabernet franc and petit verdot. Potent cassis, tea leaf and cedar characters with notes of peppercorn, anise and Provencale herbs. Fine grained, powdery tannins and long cellaring potential. A wine of majestic elegance from the coldest vintage on record at the site.

Louise Radman is an award winning wine expert, journalist and consultant based in Adelaide. She is the wine writer for *The Adelaide Magazine* and contributes regularly to other well known publications including *Selector* and *Gourmet Traveller Wine*. www.radvine.com

New distributors for SA & WA

We are pleased to announce the appointment of our new distributors for South Australia and Western Australia.

Based in Hindmarsh, Options Wines have been operating since 1994 and are the largest independent liquor wholesaler in South Australia. Building on an already loyal following, they have the huge job of marketing our brand in the centre of the Australian wine industry.

In February we announced Fine Wine Wholesalers as our Western Australian distributor at a special dinner at Lamonts Restaurant in Cottesloe. The wines were very well received in an educated and open-minded market.

South Australia

Aria
Assagio
Cork Wine Cafe
Dan Murphy's - Glenunga
East End Cellars
Edinburgh Cellars
Gaucho's Restaurant
Georges on Waymouth
Goodwood Cellars
Ian's Great Western Hotel
Melbourne Street Cellars
O'Hotel
Sip 'n Save Cellars Parade
The Adelaide Club
The Barn Palais
The Lion
The Manse Restaurant
The Pot
The Summit Restaurant

Western Australia

Balthazar
Bluewater Grill
Boatshed Café
Bouchard
Cellarbrations Shelley
Cinnabar
Dan Murphy's - Mandurah
Dear Friends
Fraser's Restaurant
George Street Bistro
Greenfields Liquor Store
Grove Cellars
Halo
Il Lido
Jackson's Restaurant
Lamont's Wine Store
Liberte
Liquor Barons - Herdsman
L'Attitude 28
Millioncino
Must Wine Bar
Nino's Fish Bar
Raffles Hotel
Red Cabbage Food & Wine
Restaurant Amuse
Roebuck Bay Hotel
Star Anise
Steve's Fine Wine & Food
The Quarter On Hay
The Wine Box
Tiger Tiger Coffee Bar
Van's Café
Villa D'Este
Weld Club
Your Shout Liquor
Zybistro Felix

Contact Greg Turner for South Australian distribution: 08 8346 9111

Contact Matt Holden for Western Australian distribution: 08 9314 7133

Friends of the vineyard — John Hounslow-Robinson



John Hounslow-Robinson with Tetsuya

There are many friends of the vineyard. The wines from Domaine A / Stoney Vineyard attract loyal followers from across the globe. However, with a unique understanding and appreciation, one man's passion shines bright.

John Hounslow-Robinson is a blade smith who, along with a profound love of food and wine, shares with Peter Althaus a fervour for perfection and an unwavering commitment to the handmade product.

Hounslow-Robinson moved to Tasmania 22 years ago to pursue

his passion for the age old skill of forging. In fact it was 12 years after he started forging that a family tree revealed a long line of forgers dating back to the 16th Century. The Hounslow's were involved in the first commercial English sword factory opened by King Henry VIII.

'When I started forging, it was like I had been doing it all my life. It was a very familiar process. In some ways I suppose a little spooky.'

Having perfected the art of the ancient forging technique of folding steel, known as Damascus, his exceptional knife sets have been commissioned for royal families, given to sheiks for armoury collections and are used by top chefs around the world.

'I sell my knives to people that appreciate something special and unique. I don't advertise so sales are usually through word-of-mouth. Lots of chefs and collectors... and people that have an interest in food and enjoy the process of chopping up stuff in the kitchen.'

In addition to his beautiful knives,

Hounslow-Robinson has produced many fine pieces of jewellery, including wedding bands for more than 50 happy couples!

The word 'artisan' has been thrown around a lot of late, however, we don't believe there is a more appropriate word for what Hounslow-Robinson does or is for that matter. A traditionalist in every sense of the word, Hounslow-Robinson provides a glimmer of hope in a world of homogenisation and fast-paced commercialism.

'There is nothing I enjoy more than watching people use my knives. I hate seeing them in glass display cabinets. They are as functional as they are beautiful.'

Hounslow-Robinson was introduced to the vineyard around ten years ago. And to this date remains one of our most loyal fans.

'Peter's wines, for me, are in a class of their own. They have a seamless quality about them, an honesty I rarely find in wines nowadays. And he still uses cork! I love wines under cork.'

New releases for 2010



2009 Stoney Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc

The Sauvignon Blanc was harvested first week in April, just after the Pinot Noir. Slightly smaller than normal harvest resulting in a full-bodied wine showing a flinty nose with signs of grapefruit and lychee. The palate is rich and voluptuous with a cleansing citrus finish.



2008 Stoney Vineyard Pinot Noir

It's a classic Southern Tassie Pinot. The nose shows raspberry, cherry ripe and truffle characters. Flavoursome middle palate with sweet raspberry and a soft berry finish. Balanced subtle oak supporting fine tannins. A bargain!



2004 Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon

After sleeping quietly in new French oak for three years and then three years in our cellar we are proud to present yet another outstanding Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon. 2004 was a late ripening vintage. The last Cabernet grapes were picked the first week of June... after the leaves



2007 Domaine A Lady A

This is the tenth Lady A (including two non-official releases from '96 & '97). Based on the Pavillon Blanc from Bordeaux the Lady A has earned a cult status around the globe. Described once as 'the finest oaked Sauvignon Blanc' James Halliday had ever tasted. This vintage is another cracker! Mouth-filling green apples and grapefruit, creamy soft oak and balanced natural acidity. Needs time.



2006 Domaine A Pinot Noir

More full-bodied than previous vintages. Yet maintains the elegance found in all Domaine A Pinot Noir. The nose shows concentrated dark cherry and fresh plum with underlying sage, menthol and spice. The rich dark cherry palate is supported by soft and round tannins. Hints of sage and menthol on the finish. Reminiscent of classic Grand Cru. Decant.

fell off the vine. Despite this the fruit has developed extraordinary varietal characters. The nose shows intense blackberry, lavender, clove, soy and anise. The palate is full and round with beautifully elegant fine-grained tannins. The oak is perfectly balanced. The rewards of cellaring this wine will be great.

A full list of tasting notes for these wines and past releases can be found on our website:

www.domaine-a.com.au

Magnum release: 1998 Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon & 1998 Stoney Vineyard Cabernet

Peter Althaus is proud to present two magnums from the cellars of Domaine A. Both wines are from the exceptional 1998 vintage, hailed as one of the finest at Stoney Vineyard. It was a 'text-book' growing season for Cabernet Sauvignon and the fruit was the best we had ever seen.

Both are a typical blend of approximately 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4-5% Merlot, 4-5% Cabernet Franc and 1-2% Petit Verdot. The Domaine A spent 24 months in New French Oak and the Stoney 12 months in subsequent oak.

The 1998 Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon is one of 38 wines to feature on Decanter magazine's annual 2010 wall calendar. These wines are Decanter's highest scoring wines from 2009, of which three are Australian. A real honour indeed to be included amongst some of the great wines of the world. This wine is beautifully balanced and harmonious. The nose shows classic Bordeaux characters of ripe cassis, red berries, dark chocolate and roasted coffee. The palate is rich and concentrated with dark

berry and hints of blackcurrant and spice. The long persistent finish is supported by elegant fine grained tannins. Drink now or hold for a further 10 years.

The Stoney Cabernet is deep cherry red in colour. On the nose there is dark cherry, liquorice and ripe plum. The palate is still vibrant, sweet and youthfully complex. Drinking well today however will continue to develop over the next few years.

Domaine A ranks as one of Decanter's top wines of the year

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Museum Six Pack

To commemorate our 20th Anniversary we are releasing a triple pack of Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon. Two bottles each of the 1999, 2001 and 2003 vintages. Three special wines from three great vintages. The 1999 Domaine A Cabernet Sauvignon is drinking beautifully at the moment and will compliment any great meal. It's an elegant, well balanced wine with

soft dark berry characters and hints of cedary oak. A very different wine to the 2001 indeed, which is a more 'masculine' riper style consisting of concentrated dark cherry fruit and firmer tannins. A full-bodied, yet balanced wine with many years left. The 2003 is somewhere between these two. It's a seamless wine with extraordinary depth of flavour. Drinking well today but will

benefit from a few more years in the cellar. Certainly these wines would make for an interesting tasting at a special dinner party? As with all the Domaine A wines we recommend standing the bottles to let the sediment settle and then decanting a few hours before drinking.

Vintage report: 2010

by Jeremy Harris, Assistant to Peter Althaus

Winemaking starts in the vineyard. You cannot make a great wine from poor grapes. It takes time and patience to keep a vineyard in top condition and ultimately produce a wine that honours variety and region. Proper vineyard management may be hard work however to make great wine the foundations must be laid. Peter Althaus has an incredibly high standard in all areas of viticulture and that certainly shows in the end result.

We started with a meticulous pruning regime to control crop levels in June and July of 2009. Although we were well prepared for frosts, they never came. Instead, through Winter and into Spring we had some of the highest recorded levels of rainfall in over a decade. Little or no irrigation was needed in some parts of the vineyard, this meant the vines naturally found their own way to new nutrients.

A healthy bud-burst occurred in

September. Crop levels can also be controlled in the early part of the season by de-budding. This was carried out throughout Spring and early Summer.

The Summer temperatures were consistent and sunshine hours were long – meaning constant canopy management was necessary to maintain the correct leaf to bunch ratio. Veraison (the on-set of ripening) occurred in the beginning of January and we thinned any excess bunches to leave 8 per vine – this helps the vine to grow it's best possible fruit.

Harvest started in mid March with the Pinot Noir grapes and finished with the Petit Verdot coming off mid April. The fruit was excellent – no sign of disease and evenly ripened bunches. The vintage ran smoothly and was probably the earliest harvest to date. 2010 will no doubt provide us with some stunning wines to enjoy in time.

Footnote:

On arriving at Stoney Vineyard the first thing that struck me was the location, ideally suited for grape growing, secondly was the feel, it is a strong, hard, almost austere place. Coming from a background in French vineyards where rigour and attention to the smallest detail is primordial, it has been a pleasure to become part of a team that has established an extremely high level and continues to seek excellence at every moment, be it in the vineyard, the cellar or in the relationship with our customers/clients.

Jeremy Harris began at Stoney Vineyard in December 2008. He has more than twelve years experience working in Bordeaux vineyards such as Chateau Smith Haut Lafitte — Pessac Leognan, Chateau Cantegrive — Cotes du Castillon, and Chateau La Fleur du Roy in Pomerol.

Domaine A cellar guide 2010

VINTAGE	PINOT NOIR	CABERNET SAUVIGNON	MERLOT	LADY A
1990	1995-1999	1998-2008	not made	not made
1991	1998-2004	2000-2005	not made	not made
1992	2000-2005	2002-2012	not made	not made
1993	1999-2004	2001-2010	not made	not made
1994	2002-2008	2004-2014	2004-2015	not made
1995	2000-2006	2003-2010	2000-2012	not made
1996	not made	not made	not made	not made
1997	2002-2007	2005-2010	2005-2012	not made
1998	2006-2012	2008-2018	2008-2018	not made
1999	2005-2010	2008-2016	not made	2002-2010
2000	2008-2012	2010-2020	not made	not made
2001	2010-2015	2010-2020	not made	2004-2011
2002	2010-2015	not made	not made	2005-2013
2003	2010-2016	2012-2025	2010-2020	2006-2013
2004	not made	2012-2020	2009-2019	2007-2012
2005	2012-2016	not yet released	not yet released	2008-2015
2006	2014-2018	not yet released	not yet released	2009-2017
2007	not yet released	not yet released	not yet released	2010-2019

Suggested optimum drinking time under ideal cellar conditions for Domaine A wine.