



President's Message

Welcome to February everyone.

2024 is well underway with our wine classes being held at Kevin Murphy's factory this year. Thank you Kevin.

We have seven students keen to learn the craft and start their journey into the world of Amateur winemaking. We all wish them well and hope they have a great experience. Our January meeting as you all know was held with a tasting of lagrein at Hickingbothams in Dromana with yours truly attending late with some of our recently joined new members participating. A very successful evening with a great feel our hosts showing us around the vineyard to end the night. Thankyou to Vince for organising. Our February meeting has our Sparkling wine mini comp as well as our activity on tips and tricks to make better wine, good timing considering we are going to be receiving shortly grapes for the 2024 vintage. So if you plan to attend and would like to share a tip or trick that might help others to make a better wine bring it along and give a presentation it might be as simple as getting rid of vinegar fly at your place or creating a yeast starter, every trick helps.

Cheers for now

February 2024

www.fawg.org.au

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Coming Up

Friday 9th February 6.30pm
Three Riesling's Masterclass via Zoom from Best's Winery- includes 3 bottles shipped to you to taste during the class \$215
<https://www.bestswines.com/product/three-rieslings-zoom-masterclass>

Saturday 10th February 11am-5pm
Geelong Wine Walk- 8 venues with tastings and canapés + more \$130
<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1140350>

Saturdays 17th and 24th February 9am-1pm
FAWG Winemaking classes at Kevin's factory Carrum Downs \$165
Contact Glen fawgpres@gmail.com

Friday 23rd February 4pm-10pm and
Saturday 24th February 12.00-10:30pm
Eltham Jazz Food and Wine Festival at Eltham Town Square free
<https://www.elthamjazz.com.au/>

Every Friday and Saturday 1 hour (12-4pm)
Rahona Valley Wine and Chocolate Paring Dromana \$20
<https://www.visitmorningtonpeninsula.org/Whats-On/View/11653/the-art-of-chocolate-and-wine-matching>

CORDON CORNER

By Mike Payne

By now most vineyards will have the bird nets on, depending on site location and grape varieties, and veraison will be well on the way through. Most will have limited access to the vines for further fungicide applications so, our attention is turned to monitoring the crop and maintaining the canopy. With the forecast, by the experts, of a hot and dry summer, the soil moisture levels continue to be fairly high due to low temperatures and rain showers, so the canopies continue to grow. Anyone who decided to go to the trouble to shoot thin and provide only minimal leaf coverage to the bunches should now have their labour returned with a well-earned rest.



Now is the time to physically feel the individual berries as they begin to soften and those with white varieties this is the only way to check on the progress, along with the odd taste or two of course, so as we move through February we will be berry and bunch testing to estimate harvest dates.

SENTIA WINE TESTING



The guild has a Sentia wine analyser available to members to have wine samples analysed for FreeSO₂ and Malic Acid.

The tests can be carried out prior to guild meetings, starting at 7pm. If you wish to have your wine analysed, please ensure you arrive early and advise Kevin Murphy that you require your wine analysed.

Samples should be kept away from air (ie in a sealed bottle, or sample vial with minimum air space). Only a very small sample is required for the tests.

Costs are: Members - Free SO₂ \$6.00 and Malic Acid \$15.00 Non-members - \$10 and \$20
FAWG Calendar

FAWG Calendar

Meeting Date	Club night Activity	Competition	Tasting Talk	Industry/Event	Committee Date
December 3rd 2023	No Tuesday meeting End of year			Sunday 3 rd Xmas party at Balnarring Hall	Tues 19 th Dec Zoom
January 10 th 2024 ***** Wednesday *****	Lagrein and other Tasting @Hickinbotham 194 Nepean Hwy Dromana		Dinner for \$35 at 6:30pm or just tasting and meeting @ 7:30pm for free Contact Vince to book dinner.		none
February 13 th 2024	Tips and tricks for making better wine	Sparkling wine mini comp		Wine Classes 17 th and 24 th February Carrum Downs	Tues 6 th Zoom 7pm
March 12 th 2024			TBA	Autumn Winemakers lunch	Tues 5 th Zoom 7pm
April 9 th 2024		Sheila Lee Liqueur & Fortified mini comp			Wed 3 rd Zoom 7pm
May 14 th 2024	Find out how good is your palate			wine tour with Eltham	Tues 7 th zoom 7pm
June 11 th 2024		Gordon Evans white wine mini comp		Winters winemakers Lunch	Tues 4 th Zoom 7pm
July 9 th 2024	AGM meeting Homemade night				Tues 2 nd zoom 7pm
August 13 th 2024	Cellar dwellers Unusual, Old and mulled wines			2024 Guild Show at Balnarring hall 30 th Judging day Sat 31 st public day	Tues 6 th Zoom 7pm
Sept 10 th				Spring Winemakers Lunch	Tues 3 rd Zoom 7pm
Oct 8 th	Spanish Night Food & Wine				Tues 1 st Zoom 7pm

Funnies



Wine Making Classes February 17th and 24th

This course introduces the principles of wine making, but more importantly, introduces you to the expertise and experience of over 100 guild members who will be more than happy to assist, or mentor, you through your winemaking journey. Where feasible, you will be assigned a guild 'buddy' who lives close to you, so that you can call for advice, or assistance, when winemaking.

- The course is provided on a not-for-profit basis and includes a basic winemaking kit.
- The kit includes a winemaking book, equipment and ingredients for your first batch of fruit wine.
- Experienced guild members will be available to answer any questions you may have and they will provide wine for tasting and evaluation.
- **An initial free membership of the guild, up to the AGM in July, is also included in the cost of the course, so that you can talk to our members and get a feel for what the guild offers.**

Wine class payment deadline end of January
Payment into the guild acc 633-000
143837391 ref box surname
Contact email fawgpres@gmail.com or phone
Glen on 0488331001
Cost \$165 everything provided
Time 9am-1pm approx
Bring pen and paper for taking notes
Kevins address: Factory 2/3 Lathams Rd
Carrum Downs



REMINDER

The 5th Red Hill Mead Show

We are accepting entries now.



- Experienced judges
- Full reporting

Entries must arrive by Friday 1st March.
Leave plenty of time for your mail/courier

Remember: The best Mead receives :

The Red Hill Mead Show Trophy

\$10 per entry

<https://www.redhillshow.com.au/mead-show>



Entries for the Red Hill Show Homemade Wine and Liquors section close on the 3rd of March with delivery to Scott House in Red Hill by the 4th of March. Cost to enter is \$3.00. The link below is the pdf of the requirements for entry.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/582e5ca9197aea6fce5df372/t/65a85f555ef07b43c7092997/1705533269606/2024+Red+Hill+Show+Homemade+Wine+Liqueurs-SERVER.pdf>

Enter online via :

<https://www.redhillshow.com.au/exhibit>

My Vintage Year

By: Dave Chambers

John Leenaerts is a member at Eltham and is a very fine Wine Maker, I have a couple of cases of his Gold Medal winning Shiraz in my cellar. When I first approached John about doing an interview for the two newsletters, he was very enthusiastic. As I have said many times before this we should share more between both guilds. This is not a first we have had other interviews with Eltham members before this.

John has a very professional approach to his wine making. He is fussy about detail. In fact, the interview is text book how to make wine. After you read this make your first barrel of Shiraz you may not win a Gold Medal at the next show, but you will be well on the way to making wine that is very drinkable.

Dave: Why wine and not beer.

John: Well wine came first. I was never a beer drinker until I discovered the world of craft beers in my late 30's. I worked for an engineering company that also had a microbrewery (3 Ravens). This changed my outlook and liking of beer with flavour rather than the commercial beers available such as VB, Melb Bitter etc. I used to drink mainly mixed spirits a white wine in my early 20's to mid 30's. The white wine of choice was either the Ben Ean Moselle or the Blue Nun Reising. It wasn't until my mid 30's that I started to acquire a liking for red wine. From that moment onwards I hit the road running with Red Wine and now rarely drink anything else.



Dave: What wine region or village anywhere in the world is your fantasy wine tasting destination.

John: Well, my wife and I have travelled extensively overseas over the years and I am a great believer in trying the local produce of the regions we travel and as such the local wines. I keep comparing to Australian wines and still consider them as outstanding for flavour, styles, and value from those I've tried overseas. My fantasy wine tasting destination is by far the Barossa Valley, closely followed by Clare Valley.

Dave: What is your first experience that you remember that led to an interest in wine.

John: Going to a restaurant in my late teens (with then my girlfriend, now wife) and discovering that there was either beer or wine on the menu (no spirits), As I mentioned, I wasn't a big beer drinker, so wine was the go. Good old Ben Ean Moselle was ordered and enjoyed! From there, I was hooked on white wine until my mid 30's when the world of red wine opened the door by me, so much so, that I wanted to know more on how it is made. It wasn't until about 2004 when I worked with an Italian home wine maker who made Shiraz (which he called 'garage hermitage'), I tried some and it blew my mind as to how good this was and yet homemade! This triggered my interest and inspiration to take on the full gamut to wine making where I would grow and make wine. I had the land to grow grapes, an Uncle who was the vineyard manager at Mt Avoca Wines who provided me with cuttings from 100 year old shiraz vines to get me started and a work mate who helped me immensely on my initial wine making. Perfect! The uncle proved very handy to call on for advice such as trellis setup, vine establishment, cuttings, spraying, fertilising etc. I still have the many phone notes from my uncle which I filed and called 'Uncle Tom's Vineyard Tips'.

Dave: What is an interesting unknown fact about you that members of Frankston or Eltham Guild may or may not find interesting.

John: That I am a Mechanical Engineer which explains the logical & calculated approach to everything I do!

Dave: What wine do you prefer to make Red or White and what variety.

John: My preference is Shiraz and always my first choice for tastings. I enjoy the vast differences in this wine style from each of the regions in Australia.

Angela Harridge has two Vice Presidents Questions for you:

Angela Your wine label is Wilhelmina Estate - can you tell us about how that came about. John: Ahh Yes, the name and the lady on the bottle. 2010 sadly saw the passing of my mother in ICU recovery after a heart bypass operation, her name was Wilhelmina (Wilma). This was at the time when I was planting my grape vines, in memory of her I named the wine after her and the emblem on the label is a photo of her when she was engaged to my father

Angela As novice winegrowers, with vines planted on a 'less than perfect' site, Wayne and I have really appreciated your advice over the past couple of years - especially regarding your spraying regime. Tell us about what you're growing and any challenges you may have.

John: Living on property in Warrandyte South on the door step of the Yarra Valley and with two wineries (Riverlea Estate & Rob Dolan Wines) located within a stone throw of my residence, It was presumed that the area was conducive to grow grape vines. As a lover of red wine, Shiraz & Cabernet Sauvignon grape varieties, vines were planted in 2010. These were sourced from cuttings off 100-year-old vines from my uncle who was the vineyard manager at Mt Avoca wines at the time. Uncle Tom proved very handy with providing the basic info to get started such as row spacing, trellis & irrigation setup, when & how to prune, spray and fertilise. I have learnt via experience so, so, much more over the 12 years I have been growing grape vines. You think wine making is challenging, I think growing grapes is far worse! My land (although not ideal) with slope and existing gum trees, offers up additional challenges (sometimes favourable and sometime not). Each season is so different and to gain the skills on identifying and knowing what to do to the vines and when, such as when and how often to irrigate, spray, canopy thin, fertilise, net etc. It is amazing how astute I am to the weather forecast, vine health and season timing (early or late). I

walk the vines every morning with my dog as a ritual, from this I get to monitor the progress and health of the vines first hand, things like first signs of bud burst, flowering, grape bunch growth, leaf health, veraison, monitoring (tasting and testing of baume) and when to harvest.



Dave: Does technical astuteness give you an edge in your wine making skills. Wine making is skill that unfolds with experience. Are you finding this to be true for you in your wine making.

John: Yes, I find this very true. Being self-taught on viniculture and wine making, I never stop research and reading on the matter to refine my knowledge and skills. Each season is so different and brings with it different challenges which builds on my expertise. I certainly believe that you will never stop learning on this matter.

Dave: Are you into the intellectual part of the discussion about wine. Wine can be so many things to so many people. But what does it bring to you.

John: Yes, my passion for wine making gets me chatting for hours with many a wine maker or anyone interested in the subject. My kids avoid the subject matter deliberately and prewarn family and friends not to mention the subject to me to avoid me getting started on the topic.

Dave: Are you a pedantic fussy wine maker or do you prefer to feel your way along steady as she goes. It will work out in the end.

John: I am a pedantic wine maker who plans and targets the wine to be made from when to pick the grapes, grape quality and properties. I am fanatical about testing and tasting along the journey from the grapes on the vine and through the entire wine making process. It's amazing how astute your taste buds can be. You can't make good wine from poor quality grapes!

Dave: What are you excited about for the future of home wine making. Where do you see it unfolding over the next ten years.

John: Home wine making offers the opportunity to experiment and trial different techniques to refine wine making without huge amounts of consequence if unsuccessful. The quality of home wine making is rapidly improving which I believe is aided by availability of better testing equipment and literature available. Traditional the cost of good testing apparatus was out of reach for the common home wine maker. The gap between commercial and homemade wine has substantially narrowed or in many cases exceeded commercial wines. I believe home wine making is getting more and more recognition and appreciation over time.



Dave: What inspires you to make better wine. Is it the Gold medals or the knowledge that you are ever improving on your skill.

John: I am always striving to make the next vintage better than the last, I'm always reviewing and seeking improvement. I don't believe that there is such a thing as the perfect wine as it is a matter of opinion which can vary greatly. I make wine to suit my style of taste, winning a gold medal is a bonus and reinsurance that others also like my wine.

Dave: Who or what has been your biggest influence in wine making and how long have you been a Wine Maker.

John: My biggest influence as I mentioned earlier was an Italian home wine maker that I worked with (Nando). He was also very passionate about wine making and If I hadn't tried his wine and been so impressed, I wouldn't be wine making today.

Dave: Can you describe where you make your wine. Is it in your kitchen or do you have a dedicated area for wine making.

John: Ask my wife, she looks and shakes her head at what I call my cellar door, wine making area, wine cellar and vineyard, and equipment, she says that it is a hobby that has run out of control! Fortunately I have a very large garage under my home.

Dave: What have been the positive surprises of your membership of the wine guild.

John: The quality of wine made by others and knowledge I have gained from discussions with guild members, guild presentation topics and courses I have attended.

Dave: What were you drinking in your twenties.

John: Ben Ean Moselle and Bourbon and Coke.

Dave: If you could tell the young John about life, what advice would you give.

John: You should've gotten the inspiration and inclination to make wine a hell of a lot earlier than you did!

Dave: Enlighten us with a couple of your favourite wine tweaks.

John: The one thing that I do which is possibly outside the norm and that is that I cool/cold macerate my shiraz must for 3 – 4 days prior to adding the yeast and commencing fermentation. I have found that this enhances the extraction of flavours and colour significantly. Basically, I add 10ppm of PMS to preserve the must after crushing, I then extract 80 litres which I transfer into a typical plastic beer fermentation drum (these are the ones with the large screw top lid and fit in my fridge with shelves removed). This is placed in a fridge and then transferred back into the open fermenter of must. I do this both morning and night to maintain the must temperature below 12 deg C. This prevents the wild yeast from commencing the ferment. Sometimes I must add some frozen plastic icepacks initially to get the temperature under 12 deg C. During this initial maceration I am testing the wine, adjusting the pH daily to get this around 3.40 pH, and hand plunging 4 times a day. I have a plunging roster to hand plunge 4 times a day with whoever is at home at the time. Once the pH has settled and achieved, I then let the wine come back up to room temperature and then add the yeast to commence the fermentation. There's no urgent hurry in adding the yeast and getting the fermentation going.

Dave: I have heard in my short time with the guild some complete disasters while making wine. What is your biggest disaster you can share with us.

John: My first ever attempt to make wine – Vintage 2013. My vines were only 2 years old and didn't yield enough to produce wine, so my wife who worked with a friend that had a property in Heathcote with Shiraz grapes, offered 500kg to get me started. Unbeknown to me at the time,



these were possibly the poorest quality grapes that I had ever seen. I can't remember the numbers but the Baume, PH, & TA were nowhere where they should have been and it looked like they had been picked while raining? Obviously, the resultant wine was terrible (undrinkable) and went down the drain. The 2014 vintage utilised my grapes and won a silver medal at the Eltham Wine show when I first entered in 2017, I also won a gold for my 2016 Shiraz which I was pretty stocked about. This was a serious lesson on the necessity for quality grapes which are a must to make good wine!

Dave: I have asked this question of everyone. So far, a hundred percent have said making wine was never a financial consideration. What was the motivation and still is for you after so many years.

John: My motivation was to gain knowledge on how to grow grapes and make red wine, this is still my driver and passion today as I continue to meet the challenges of each season and seek to better each vintage.

And Finally

Dave: You are going to a desert island to spend some chill time. You are taking with you one piece of music, one bottle of wine, a book and food. To be clear, that is a choice of one bottle of wine, one meal and so on. What will be placed in your suitcase and declared at the customs terminal on your way to Loloata Private Island Resort, Papua New Guinea.

John: Dire Straits Brothers in Arms, a bottle of 'Black Guts Shiraz' (Rusden Wines – Barossa), and a pile of Grapegrower & Winemaker Magazines (which I read from cover to cover).



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