

My Vintage Year

An interview series: Where we interview wine people. They may be your fellow guild members or significant others in the Wine Industry. Was this their vintage year.

By: Dave Chambers

Today it is Libby Hatzimichalis

Dave: Why wine and not beer.

Libby: Why not beer too? I love to brew and I've made a few good ales in my time. Although wine will always be my favourite.

Dave: How did Wine Making as a hobby unfold. Has this been an easy path for you. What came first the Wine Guild or Wine Making.

Libby: Definitely wine making came first. I started at a young age making wine. Switched to making beer for a while before discovering the Guild and I haven't looked back.

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

Libby: I was 15 and at our local library. I saw a book titled, making wine at home and borrowed it. I thought it looked easy so I bought the equipment with my pocket money and made a batch of blackberry wine. It turned out so well and a passion was born

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

Libby: Most people already know I drive trains for a living, so I'll say that I'm desperately trying to get my mother in laws orchids to perform as

well for me as they did for her.

Dave: If money was no object. What wine or beverage fantasy purchase would you make with unlimited funds.

Libby: I'd love to have my own cool room to make white wine. I'd also love to have a go at using barrels. At the moment my space is too small for either.



Dave: What are you making now or have recently that you are most proud.

Libby: I bought the machine picked Shiraz from Heathcote this year. It's shaping up nicely and I have high hopes.

Glen Fortune has a Presidents Question for you:

Question: Libby you make both country and grape wine, so my question for you is which one gives you a bigger challenge and why

Libby: I think country wine is more challenging. Grapes have all they need to make wine but other

fruit needs a lot more tweaking to make it drinkable.

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.

Libby: I just bought a new, for me, Sentia and malo strips. It's nice to know with certainty that malo has finished. I like to keep an eye on my wine but not to overly fuss with it the flavours will develop

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.

Libby: I love to make wine, I love to talk about it and I love to listen to others talking about their wine. It gives me a real sense of satisfaction when it turns out well.

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.

Libby: I try to guide the wine and keep notes but I find that it knows what it has to do and will happily bubble along with minimum input from me.

Dave: What is wine making to you. I suspect it is not just a hobby. But a consuming passion that excites you. Is this true.

Libby: Yes very much so.

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

Libby: I'd love to see more people giving it a go and getting excited about making wine.

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

Libby: The gold medals are great but I think its more inspiring to know I've made something that other people enjoy too.

Dave: Who or what has been your biggest influence in wine making.

Libby: The Guild has been invaluable to me, but the biggest influence is being an associate judge at the wine shows. Tasting a lot of wine under the guidance of the head judge raises the experience to a new level and brings out all the nuances and I think helps me to try to make my own wine better.

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

Libby: Country wine is usually inside the house in the laundry. But the Shiraz is out in the garage

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

Libby: Meeting like-minded people and enjoying their company as well as their wine.

Dave: What were you drinking in your twenties.

Libby: Pretty much what I'm drinking now, when I could afford it. Wine was often on the dinner table at home growing up and I found I developed a good palate early on.

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

Libby: Be more confident and try to get in to the wine making industry



Dave: What wine do you particularly enjoy making. Has the Guild turned out to be an ideal group either socially or for ideas for wine making.

Libby: There are one or two county wines I like to make and some I wouldn't have bothered trying, if not for the John Lee trophy. So yes the Guild has turned out to be an ideal group to help me expand my horizons and step out of my comfort zone and try something new

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

Libby: I made a rosè one year that turned out horrible so I decided to have a go at fortifying it. Each time I tasted it over the next year or so, it was still horrible. But a couple of years later I was just about to put it through the still, when I decided to taste it. one last time.

Well blow me down it was great. So now if something doesn't work out I try fortifying it.

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.

Libby: The year was 2020, I'd bought some grapes and like everyone else couldn't go out to buy the things I needed to make it better. So it turned out pretty ordinary but I bottled it anyway not realising that it had gone through a natural malo, which hadn't finished. When malo did finish the wine had a nasty bitter taste, as well as smoke taint. Unfortunately I didn't realise it before putting an entry into the show. Needless to say it didn't do well at all and ended up going through the still.

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.

Libby: No it was never a financial consideration. I just love to make wine and it gives me a great sense of satisfaction when it comes out well and it is enjoyed by family and friends.

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.

Libby: I will be taking a lovely Thai red curry washed down with a great rosé whilst listening to come chill out jazz. I've been reading a series of murder mysteries by Garry Disher set on our own beloved Mornington Peninsula, so one of his books will be packed in the suitcase too.

