



My Vintage Year:

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 Leah Mottin.

Leah is a quite recent attendee and member of the Frankston Guild. She has in her considerable youth (compared to many of us more senior in years) achieved quite a lot in a short career in Wine Making.

She is whip smart and creative. She has the smarts to deliver something interesting each month. We can all look forward to Leah's tenure as Editor of our Newsletter and member of the committee. As the only woman on the FAWG Committee she will add some balance and another constructive point of view to the mix.

She is by her own words a wine maker prepared to try anything to improve the outcome. And as she admits, wine making is an unfolding passion that you are forever learning. Something we would all agree is that wine making can be a mystery. There is no perfect formula. Like me and Leah we are all searching for that addition or method that adds the magic to your bottle.

I found Leah's wine story so far compelling. I do make the best Garlic Bread you have ever tasted, and who doesn't love Cat Stevens and a French Shiraz.





Dave: Why wine and not beer.

Leah: It is much more exciting walking around the vines than walking around the hops!

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.

Leah: I started studying Agriculture and fell into viticulture because I enjoyed the science behind growing plants more than animal husbandry. The wine industry is hard and competitive which is why I have always toiled with the idea of making my own brand. I stumbled upon the guild before I thought about making my own product.

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

Leah: I got a harvest position in England when I was looking for any type of work, it rained the whole time but the work was loads of fun! We were a high-end sparkling company (Exton Park Vineyard) that produced as little as 12T one year due to spring hail damage to 100T the following year.

Dave: Did that immediately lead to your career in making wine.

Leah: Yes, they offered me a

full-time position working in the vineyard where I stayed

and learnt as much as I could about viticulture and studied a Masters in Winemaking part time by distance.

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

Leah: I am allergic to sulphites in all food and alcohol, every time I have a glass of wine I have to take an antihistamine! Also, I worked a vintage in the Napa valley for a contract wine company that produced small batch high end styles to California.

Dave: If money was no object what wine or beverage would you buy with these unlimited funds.

Leah: Chardonnay from Chablis, Vintage Krug, Pinot from Burgundy, all the small batch Gin I can find and Vodka from Russia.

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

Leah: My first batch of Pinot Noir MV6 from my family's property. The first batch is always the most cared about and the most important in my eyes.



Chris Myers has a Guest Question for you:

Question: I realise that your career is based very strongly on the technology behind winemaking but could you tell us please where you place the witchcraft of country winemaking in your scheme of things?

Leah: To make great country wine is a very hard task in my opinion and those who achieve it should be applauded. Making country wines is not very common which means there isn't a great deal of information out there to draw from. It is a lot broader than traditional still winemaking as it can be made from practically anything, which means that you need to account for starting sugar and acid values anywhere on the scale. This would make it difficult to create a balanced wine not to mention the pectin concentration and instability of some fruits/vegetables. However, this means it's a lot



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.

Leah: Yes, I think working in a laboratory setting has given me greater confidence in the numbers I am looking for in a wine, but hands on experience especially during fermentation is a key component.

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.

Leah: Wine is very complex especially when you get into fortified and sparkling wine styles, I love that there is always something to learn and even now there are new methods and styles been uncovered.

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.

Leah: As long as you know the core concepts of winemaking, I say wing it! There could be something really interesting that you end up making. Stick to the core numbers and let your senses lead the way.

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

Leah: Yes, I love being active, it's something I am always thinking about. Winemaking gives you a chance to be a bit creative and it is something that others can appreciate in their own way with you.

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

Leah: I think people will start experimenting with new styles as society's drinking habits change. The more exposure there is to home wine making the more likely people are to try it. It can be daunting the thought of making wine for the first time but if we introduce Kit wines and get people understanding country wine-making, this is something that is easily accessible and adaptable to a home situation, I good thing to try during COVID.

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

Leah: I am not driven by medals; I am a harsh critic on my own stuff and if it's not good enough I will be the first to say it. I would love to be able to produce consistently good quality wine, but doesn't everybody.

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

Leah: The winemakers I have worked directly with over my career have put in a lot of effort to guide me in the industry. Big credit goes to Trent Eacott at St Annes Vineyards and the Winemakers at Chandon.

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

Leah: I made the first batch in San Remo, where the vineyard is. The salt air and wind exposure is challenging at times but it works well so far. I have an old school basket press a VC tank and a lot of second hand gear from the Guild. The more I make the more I will refine how I manage the fruit processing.

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

Leah: I enjoy the discussions on 'samepage' and tuning into what everyone else is up to. I have become a lot more involved in the past year and I think there are some really exciting things coming up that everyone will enjoy.

Dave: What were you drinking in your twenties.

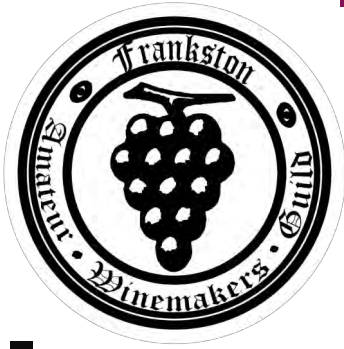
Leah: I drank everything, and I still do. I love gin-based beverages and limoncello has always been a winner especially since I started making my own. The more you try with both food and beverages the more you will improve your sensory perception.

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

Leah: I would tell her to try new things and worry about money less, sometimes splurging on good food and wine is worth it even if the benefit comes much later. Experiences are important!

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.

Leah: I enjoy making red wines because they smell so great during fermentation and they can be a very hands on, but very keen to try some country wines and beer when I have the chance. The guild is great for bouncing ideas about anything wine related, everyone has different opinions and experiences and this creates a great length of knowledge and debate. Worth a look!



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

Leah: Blending is a great art, even just 5% of another wine in your stock can change a wine completely. Acid is key though, know your acid numbers and how they will change with malo and cold stabilisation. You need to think four steps ahead and predict what the acid will finish as. With white wine take care with phenolics, fining and extraction can make a big difference to quality, always treat your pressings and free run differently as they are different wines at the end of the day.

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.

Leah: I have used a liquid tartaric acid addition instead of granular and calculated the concentration incorrectly, I ended up adding four times the amount of acid. Let's just say that was a very punchy wine!

Dave: I have asked this question of everyone and 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.

Leah: I just really enjoy it. I love being outside and doing active tasks. I was always better at practical tasks and found that's where I stood out, so I went with it.

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.

Leah: I will have a classic Neapolitano fettuccini with quality parmesan and garlic bread, a bottle of shiraz from northern rhone, the book 'The Night Circus' and 'The Wind' by Cat Stevens.

