

My Vintage Year:

Today it is Nathan Ueda

How unique are our members here at Frankston Guild. Nathan is one of those. He not only decided to make wine through a chance visit to the 2017 FAWG Wine Show, but he has become now an ambassador for the Frankston Guild in Tokyo. His membership was all so fleeting at the guild. We hope he stays with us and somehow connects in his unique way with guild members. He has very kindly offered for members to call in and visit when in Tokyo. In his very short time with FAWG he has done so much. I think you will find this quite a unique interview. I did.

Dave: Why wine and not beer.

Nathan: I work for Japanese packaging company. We produce and supply aluminium cans for beverage and food companies. We also make cans for wine. To increase the sales of cans for wine, my company acquired a canned wine company based in Melbourne and I was sent from Japan to Melbourne in 2013. I wanted to learn about wine so I started visiting many wineries and joined the guild in 2018. If my job was related to beer or coffee in a can, I might have brewed beer or roasted beans.

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.

Nathan: I heard about FAWG Wine Show in 2014 and visited the Show in 2017. I was surprised to know that wines made by non-professionals tasted so good. I tasted a lot of wines and probably looked bit drunk, FAWG members advised me to drink plenty of water. I saw the "Wine Making Course" poster in the shed and decided to take the course. In February 2018, I learnt wine making process step by step. On the last day of the course, David Hart served his wine. I tasted his Cab Sav and it tasted really good. I decided to ask him for his advice. In March 2018, I

started making Shiraz. In the beginning, I called David Hart almost every day and he kindly shared his knowledge and experience. I just followed his advice, so wine making was not a difficult path for me.

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

Nathan: Again, my company makes canister for wine. We have a winery in Japan too, and also produces canned wine. So wine was in my mind since I was 24. Also, my girlfriend at that time

was into wine, so we started visiting wineries in Japan.

Dave: Did that immediately lead to your hobby of making wine.

Nathan: No. In Japan, amateur wine making is illegal. You would need to produce at least 2,000 litres per annum to acquire a production license. Therefore, making wine as a hobby was not in my mind.





Dave: What is an interesting unknown fact about you that members of Frankston Guild may or may not find interesting. Apart from the fact you now live in Japan.

Nathan: My job in Melbourne was to manage our Australian subsidiary (canned wine company). However, our relationship deteriorated and they commenced a litigation against us in 2015. For the past 6 years, I was involved in the legal matter which was very exhausting work.

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

Nathan: Four cases of Grange. I will drink it every year for 48 years to see how it develops. $\$800 \times 48 = \$38,400$. Do you think it is expensive or good life lesson?

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

Nathan: 2021 Skin contact Gisborne Chardonnay. I only made two bottles, but it went very well and looks and tastes like hip organic natural wine. 2021 carbonic macerated Shiraz is another experimental wine which I made. I can't wait to taste the wine.

Glen Fortune Our President has a Guild Question for you:

Question: Glen: As our first Japanese member, how did you find the experience? Being a member but more importantly learning to make wine and will you being making wine in Japan, what sort and would you like to be our first international member, if you have the time.

Good luck and all the best.

Nathan: I think I was very different from other member of the guild. I am Asian, English is not my first language, and I am in different age group. However, guild members kindly accepted me. If I have a chance, I wish to make wine with Koshu, a Japanese indigenous white grape, to match with Sashimi (fresh raw fish) or Tempura (deep fried seafood and vegetable). I don't think I can attend monthly meeting but I would love to be FAWG's international member and enter my Japanese wine to the wine show if I can make wine.

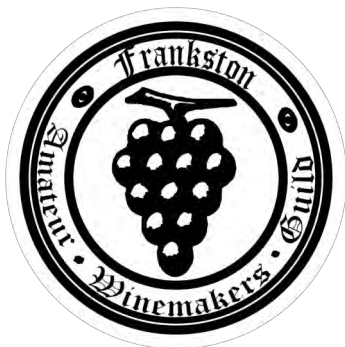
Dave: Does technical astuteness can give you an edge in your wine making skills. Wine making is skill that unfolds with experience. Are you finding this to be true for you in your wine making.

Nathan: Definitely. In my limited experience, I've learned that measuring and recording the result is very important to understand the condition of the wine.

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.

Nathan: Somewhat yes. But in the end, good wine is the wine which makes people smile.





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

Nathan: I don't know enough to be a pedantic, but I do care about hygienic level like everyone else.

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. And how given the laws in Japan will you continue to make wine. Are grapes available to the hobby wine maker.

Nathan: Wine making built a strong confidence in myself. Since no one makes wine in Japan as a hobby, I believe I am the only Japanese in the world who have won 8 medals in the international amateur wine show and FAWG novice trophy (thank you so much). I might be able to acquire some wine grapes if I become good friend with Japanese winemakers. But the more difficult part is to acquire consumables such as malo bugs, bottles and corks etc because there are no supplier for amateurs in Japan.

Dave: What are you excited about for the future of home wine making. Where do you see it unfolding over the next ten years. Maybe you will be back in Australia by then.

Nathan: I am not sure if I will be making wine due to the above reason. What I wish to do is to utilise my connection and experience. I believe I know about Heathcote more than any Japanese, and am thinking about importing and selling high quality Heathcote Shiraz in Japan. In Japan, Australian wine account for 5% of imported wine and most of the Australian wine are low end

wine. I want to change the image of Australian wine in Japan.

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

Nathan: Some people says if you can make a wine and drink it with a friends, you wouldn't need a medal but for me, medal has been a big inspiration. It is a proof of your hard work and knowledge.

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

Nathan: David Hart. He always try new wine making process and also accepts my idea of making wine in unique way and gives me an advice. Also, I found

out that keeping a passion is most difficult thing in life (not only wine or hobby but also for work). I admire people who keeps passion and David Hart is one of those people.





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

Nathan: I lived in Port Melbourne and Prahran, so I did my wine making in underground car park, balcony, bedroom, and kitchen. My cat Nico always helped me out.

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

Nathan: I was able to meet many different people. I especially enjoyed tasting different types of country wines!

Dave: What were you drinking in your twenties.

Nathan: Beer, wine, and tequilla. I like to consume alcohol because it makes me happy. I am Japanese but I never had a chance to appreciate sake. Since I am now living in Tokyo, Japan, I will start drinking sake. Maybe I will bootleg sake too ;-)

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

Nathan: Trust your gut. When I look back to the mistakes I made, most of them didn't follow my intuition. In other words, if I followed my intuition, even if I made a mistake, I would probably do not regret those mistakes.

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.

Nathan: Heathcote Shiraz. In my four years of wine making career, I've made Shiraz from Heathcote (grapes were always harvested at Shiraz Republic) for three years. Therefore, it is my roots.

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

Nathan: Sanitize as much as possible and keep your curiosity.

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.

Nathan: In 2018, when I was fermenting Shiraz for the first time, it started to make rotten egg smell so I asked David Hart for his advice, and then gave DAP to my wine. Luckily the problem was solved and I was so relieved.

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.

Nathan: I love drinking wine, so knowing the process and all the effort helps me to appreciate wine.

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.

Nathan: "Three Little Birds" by Bob Marley & The Wailers, my 2018 Heathcote Shiraz, "Killing Commendatore" by Haruki Murakami, and double cheeseburger with chips!





Japan Letter: **Dave Chambers &** **Nathan Ueda Share** **Some Thoughts.**

While doing the Interview My Vintage Year with Nathan Ueda featured in last months Newsletter. I discovered he could write a nice story. In the ensuing discussion we had; he was leaving Australia and I was doing my first catering for the FAWG Xmas get together. We thought that we should collaborate on some writing of some sort. See below our individual efforts.

Dave Chambers Some Japanese Reflecting.

My first visit to Japan on a skiing trip some 15 or so years ago was as I look back quite a culture change. I wasn't prepared for the Japanese way of order, neatness, humanity and just pleasantness of character. Those of you that know Nathan Ueda will know what I mean. Visit soon you will come back with a greater appreciation for the culture, the technology and history, but mostly the friendliness and warmth of the people of Japan will stay with you. We flew in to Tokyo's Narita Airport after a three night stay in Hong Kong. After the relative chaos of cars and people, Japan was a breath of fresh air and a relative calm hovered over all of us. We skied the main island of Honshu and then ventured in to the frozen North of Hokkaido and days of

endless dumps of snow, day and night. It didn't stop snowing for the week we were in Niseko. It's cold in Hokkaido it snows right down to the beach all Winter.

For some immersion in to the culture we visited the famous railway station at Harajuku and the girls dressed up like little dolls. The tiny streets of Harajuku are legend for quirky fashion and food. The subject of food and Japan often appear in the same sentence. Japanese order and culinary genius are taken to another level with food. We had the most sublime Shitaki Mushroom with Scallop Broth in Saké cooked over a gentle flame at our table. To describe this dish as unique and a highlight of my culinary life is short on superlatives. At a Japanese Tea 6 Course Dinner we ate sweet glasslike raw prawn sashimi, sublime.

Whatever you preconceived notion about Japanese food may not prepare your surprise, when you eventually visit. The food is mostly extraordinary. Take a trip through Tokyo Station Food Hall and the vast displays of exceptional food from perfect Strawberries to delicate Sashimi. Catch the Shinkansen Bullet train and scoot along to 360 kilometres per hour the length and breadth of Japan to a small village where you need a token for the meal you want. A vending machine will print out your ticket for food after you have filled it with the appropriate coins. The Japanese love vending machines. You can get both hot and cold beverage out of the same vending machine, genius.

You may wonder as to what beverages the Japanese partake. It is common knowledge that more Whisky is manufactured in Japan than Scotland. Then there is Saké. Japanese Rice Wine, but as Nathan and I know it is not simply Rice Wine but a complicated process that evolves before the product arrives in the bottle. There is quite a history of an indigenous wine making with an indigenous grape called Koshu. Nathan described to me how he will make some new friends in the wine industry and hope they will benefit him with some grapes. For the home wine maker in Japan it is a paradox so connected with a culture of food and beverage, it is almost illegal to make wine....Dave.



Nathan Ueda Growing Up In Japan.

I was born in Yokohama, Japan in 1984. My father's company decided to send him to US branch, so my family moved to Dallas, Texas when I was 10 years old. I spent eight years in Dallas. I didn't speak any English and I was shy, so it was quite difficult for me. There was a Japanese school which was held on every Saturday, and it was a place of relief for me. I am still very good friends with those whom I've met at Japanese school. After I graduated American high school, I decided to go to University in Tokyo so I moved back to Japan. I thought I was Japanese, but I struggled for the first few years trying to fit in to Japanese culture.

After I graduated University, I joined Japanese packaging company. (I still work for the same company.) Not many people speak English in Japan, so I thought I could use my experience and skill to help Japanese company to expand their market in overseas. I worked for four years in Tokyo but I was not dealing with foreign companies, which was not what I had expected. But in 2012, my company started dealing with Australian company which was based in Melbourne. Since I spoke English, I was luckily chosen to be a translator for meeting.

My first visit to Melbourne was in 2012 (10 years ago). Although I grew up in Texas from age 10 to 18, Melbourne was very different from Dallas or New York. Japan always care about what America is doing, because we are close allies (they are Japan's boss) but Japan don't know much about Australia. Most Japanese would think of Australia as a huge country with many Koalas and Kangaroos. Anyway, visiting Melbourne was very new experience for me. Melbourne CBD is designed as a grid with many beautiful buildings which I found very interesting. In 2013, my company established an office in Melbourne and I was sent to Melbourne as a sole representative of my company until December 2021. Eight years in Melbourne is a very valuable thing for me.

The largest difference between Texas and Melbourne which I found was that people are nicer in Melbourne. In Dallas, if you can't speak English, some people will treat you if you are dumb, but in Melbourne, most people will treat you almost equally. Some Melburnian even apologized to me because I didn't understand what they were saying, which never happened in the US!

It seemed like Australians don't like US much, which was very surprising. Instead, they like England. I hope I can live in England for few years in the near future. The other thing which I noticed is that Australians are more laid back com

pared to American or Japanese. Japanese on the other hand, are very picky. They like to dot the i's and cross the t's.

I believe food is more diversified in Japan. There are hundreds of Japanese restaurants which serves different types of gourmet. If you have a chance to visit Tokyo, I will show you around our beautiful city...Nathan.