

NEWSLETTER

RELEASE OF THE 2014 BLACKJACK VINTAGE

Greetings and Best Wishes to our mail order customers: again, we thank you for your loyalty and support

VINTAGE and VINEYARD

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the death of one of the wine legends of the Australian Wine Industry. Maurice O’Shea died on May 5th 1956.

Although recognized as a master blender of wine he, more than anyone, pioneered the winemaking philosophy of a sense, or scent, of place. At a time when table wines were invariably generically labelled, he produced some of Australia’s most renowned and memorable single vineyard wines from his Mt Pleasant Winery in the Hunter Valley.

It is something we strive to emulate at Blackjack.



Figure 1 1950 picture by famous Australian photographer Max Dupain of pressing at Mt Pleasant Winery, Hunter Valley.

One of the primal, almost spiritual, appeals of making wine is the link to the cycles of the natural world.

Each year there is the birth of a wine, the child of that particular natural cycle. In essence the wine produced in that year, in some ways, is an historical reflection of that particular year. Like smells of childhood that seem to have an unimpeded and direct access to the memory centre in the brain, so too can a bottle of wine. The smell, the taste are subconsciously

linked to the story of that vintage .Memory, context and narrative are intertwined. There is of course a narrative hierarchy. Some vintages are more memorable than others, more often than not associated with extreme climatic events. The blackened vineyard in October 1998 after the most severe frost in the Harcourt Valley for 50 years is immediately evoked on opening a bottle of the resultant, and scarce, 1999 vintage; the torrential rains, flooded creek, and water logged vineyard of 2011, where only the Shiraz was bottled under the Blackjack label. Whilst not an extreme weather event the 2016 vintage will be remembered as being the earliest, and close to the shortest vintage in our 28 years at Blackjack. In the 1990’s we almost invariably commenced vintage around Anzac day. Since the year 2000 this has gradually moved forward to being around the end of March and/or the first week of April. We started the 2016 Vintage on the 29th February and the last of the grapes picked of the 8th March! According to one academic viticulturist, this very early harvest can be attributed to the record average high October temperatures.

For some reason, there are no surviving vintners’ notes of the 2014 vintage- *fortunately the vintners are still surviving!* Verbal memory challenges remember it as a warm to hot and dry summer linked to an “Indian summer” autumn- perfect ripening conditions. There was also some good early spring rains. Vintage commenced in the second week of April and finished the first week of May. Crop levels were a little above average.

WHAT’S NEW

Those who have connected to Blackjack Facebook will already know that the Blackjack likely lads are going back to the future. In the beginning, the initial vision was to produce a single wine which included all the varieties grown at Blackjack Vineyards. In fact, the first release, the 1992 vintage was a blend of the whole vineyard, predominantly equal quantities of Shiraz and Cabernet, but also small quantities of Pinot and Merlot. So, in an act of reminiscence, we have barrel fermented, and blended, small quantities of grapes from our original Shiraz, Block 6 Shiraz and Cabernet blocks and also given them extended maturation on skins. If it lives up to our expectations around 100 dozen will be produced and offered to our mailing list customers first. If this wine does make it to the bottle it will need a name, so suggestions welcome.

Those who read last year’s newsletter will be pleased to note that we have “evolved” the new label and are now much happier with the end result.

We have also embarked on the, curiously, very slow process of upgrading our website, in an attempt to make it easier and



**Figure 2: Back to the future?
Old idea, young muscle, new wine.**

simpler (at the back end as well) to view and use on all the devices that connect to the World Wide Web. It will also have a dedicated member's login page which will ensure our mailing list customers always get the best price and first access to promotions we may have from time to time.

OUT and ABOUT

For the past 24 years, Peel Estate Wines in West Australia has been conducting a **Great Shiraz Tasting** of a selection of Shiraz from the main growing regions of Australia and overseas. This event showcases **20 six-year -old** wines, with the Australian benchmarks Grange and Hill of Grace always on the list. We are more than a little chuffed to note that the **2009 Blackjack Shiraz** was included in the top six wines at a blind tasting of around 110 Shiraz enthusiasts. Indeed, to be included in the final top 20 wines is an accolade in itself.

Both the **2013 Shirazes** received high scores (95 & 94) from James Halliday. The **2013 Blackjack Shiraz** was awarded a **Silver Medal** at the highly competitive **2015 Great Australian Shiraz Challenge** and also at the **2015 International Wine Competition** held in London.

Jeremy Oliver of the Australia Wine Annual gave both the **2013 Shiraz and Block 6 Shiraz a 93 rating**. He gave the same **93 rating** to the **2013 Blackjack Cabernet Merlot** which he also considers to be the best release under this label. The same wine was awarded a **Silver Medal** at the **2015 Decanter Asia Wine Awards**.

Again, it has been a stay at home year in terms on the export front. We have mainly focused on consolidating our good relationships with our importers in China and to a lesser degree Canada.

MELBOURNE TASTING

We have again booked the Royal Society of Victoria Building for our Melbourne release of the 2014 wines. We look forward to catching up with many of you.

- **Thursday 21 July 2016 from 4 pm to 7 pm.**
- **The Royal Society of Victoria,
9 Victoria St (cnr Exhibition St and Victoria St)
Melbourne 3000**, in the Burke and Wills Room.
www.royalsocietyvictoria.org.au

See enclosed INVITATION for time and date and bring it along to go into a draw to win a mixed dozen of the **2014 Blackjack Vintage**.

And congratulations to one of our long term supporters, Peter Otzen from Southbank, who won last year's 2013 mixed dozen.

The new releases will be on tasting from **SATURDAY July 23rd** and we invite you to come and try the new vintage. We are open weekends from 11am to 5 pm. We look forward to meeting you. If you purchase directly from cellar door please let us know so we can keep our mail order records up to date and so you get your mail order discount. We again extend to our valued mail order customers the opportunity to have your order **delivered freight free**.

We use Australia Post to deliver wine. If not home they will leave a note for collection at your local Post Office or you can have it sent to a PO Box. Australia Post will not leave wine unless someone is at home to receive it or there are specific instructions fit to be left. Please ensure that it is a safe and secure area as Australia Post will **not accept responsibility for wine left under these circumstances**. **Please include any preferences with delivery instructions.**

For those interested in a good read get hold of "The Wine Hunter" by wine writer Campbell Mattinson. It is the compelling and inspirational story of Maurice O'Shea.

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