

VINE *Life*

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White wines liberated - at last!



Cheryl loads up the line in the bottling and labelling room at Symphony Hill Winery . The first roll of Savina Lane labels in the foreground.

“You have to choose, Brad” said our multi-award-winning winemaker, Mike Hayes, when our white wines were being bottled last year, “I can either lock you up or lock up the wine.”

Brad chose to lock up the wine, but its long sojourn in the dark has now ended, our whites have been liberated (the reds are still in barrels), and we can at last offer some wine to special friends of Savina Lane.

There are only 418 bottles of the seductive Fiano and 864 of Wild Yeast Viognier, so if you want to enjoy the first Savina Lane wines, be quick.

Details of how to order are on the last page. There are also a few words about these varieties on page 5, in case you're not familiar with them.

When we moved to Savina Lane in February, 2012, the idea of having our own wine was a leap into new territory,

but it didn't seem an impossible one. Our beautiful little vineyard had some exciting varieties and Mike was enthusiastic about the potential of the wines that could evolve.

According to Mike, both wines in our first release are excellent examples of their varieties. Handcrafted at the five-star Symphony Hill Winery, they are beautifully balanced - a Mike Hayes signature.

To the circle of friends of Savina Lane who have followed our story over the past 18 months through these updates, we say thank you for your support and encouragement - and in many cases, physical labour as well. It has meant more to us than you can know.

We hope you will enjoy our wines, visit us when you are up this way and be here when we launch the new cellar door and winery complex in 2015. But don't muck about if you want to try the result of our hard labours, get those orders in..

Love's Labours (not) Lost

Perhaps I shouldn't pinch the title of one of Shakespeare's plays, but last year, getting the bird-netting on and off the vineyard had been a tiresome labour of love resulting in a huge loss of time when we had little to spare, so Brad put his thinking cap on.

We could of course shoot the birds or hunt them away with dogs, but we love seeing them here so we're stuck with using protective netting.

Brad's design and fabrication ingenuity was therefore put to the test. His contraption for putting out the nets this year was a huge success, and now we can say the same about his second invention - a 'bull's horn' shaped device that makes lifting off the seven kilometres of bird netting, as easy as drinking our Viognier.

It takes the two of us just an hour to remove 1300 metres of netting - a whole acre. We just unclip them before the arrival of the pickers, then I drive the tractor down each row and Brad pulls in and stuffs the nets into half-wool-bale-sized bags he has sourced from the Bundaberg Bag Company.

Brad's invention has saved us many hours of labour. Last year we had to unclip the nets, then lift and reclip them up out of the way of the fruitpickers. After the pick, we then had to unclip them again and roll them off over the top of each row and wrap them before storing away. It took days and drove us crazy.



Above: Brad's invention makes it so easy remove those heavy nets. Each one is 100 metres long and 5 metres wide.

The old method was particularly stressful because it had to be done at the last minute to avoid too much loss to the greedy birds. Last year I remember working with some good friends furiously clipping-up nets while the fruitpickers were hard on our heels. Now we two can do it just before they arrive. And we don't have to revisit the nets later to unclip and lift off by hand.

Yes, the nets *did* cause us a lot of *Much Ado about Nothing* last season, but this year, *All's Well That Ends Well*.

It was a little nerve-wracking at first, but Cheryl has finally learned to drive the tractor.



Vintage woes with a French twist



Picking the Graciano, vintage 2013

Collapsing on the back deck after the last pick for 2013 was over, we had time to reflect on our good luck the previous year when we were so new to it all. It had been a textbook vintage in 2012 that was not fully appreciated by us until vintage 2013, which challenged us mightily.

The unusually hot weather over Christmas-New Year brought *veraison* on early and in some varieties, unevenly. (*Veraison* is when the grapes change colour from green to red). Our Old Vine Shiraz heritage block suffered terrible sunburn and was then almost finished off by ferocious attacks from huge flocks of starlings. We were able to pick only a fraction of the fruit due to bird damage. Instead of eating a whole grape, starlings just have a peck at each one, resulting in a tiny hole that spoils the fruit.

We walked a tightrope between fighting off disease and dealing with slow-to-ripen fruit due to constant drizzle and grey skies. Grapes need warmth and sunshine to ripen and every day that passed, the weather conditions made it

easier for botrytis in particular, to break out. We agonised about when to pick and relied heavily on the expertise of our winemaker. In fact, we wondered whether the Graciano would ripen at all, but the sun did eventually appear and lifted Baumé levels. The leaves of the Graciano were already turning gold by the time we harvested.

Final tally was around a 30% loss of fruit over the whole vineyard mainly due to botrytis in the Tempranillo and sunburn and starling damage to the Old Vine Shiraz.

It was a pleasure to welcome a team of young French fruitpickers this year along with a few of our local lads. I managed to get quite a bit of French conversation practice with them, although it seemed strange to hear French being spoken in the vineyard.

The Frogs laughed and chatted as they picked, but still kept Brad busy collecting buckets of fruit and tipping them into the huge bins on the back of the tractor, which I drove with great caution up and down the rows, trying not to run over pickers or buckets of fruit.



Locals and Froggies all did a great job



Picking buckets washed and ready for next day's harvest

Finally, a chance to relax.

The master vine-pruner who looked after our vines last year has left the district so we've been having pruning lessons from another master - Mike Hayes - in how to prune our own vines.

Pruning is one of the most rewarding and relaxing jobs in the vineyard, especially with Brad's new electric secateurs. Just gently press a button and the toughest, most

gnarled piece of vine is history. So of course would be any fingers that got in the way.

We started pruning a week or so ago, after several severe frosts had really put the vines to sleep, and will continue until the job is done, hopefully by the end of July or first week of August. If you like a little danger in your life and wouldn't miss a digit or two, come and have a try.



We're expecting! (We think).

Our two wild black swans have mated and we believe are now caring for a clutch of eggs, as only one swan at a time is emerging from the reeds on the western reach of the lake, which is now teeming with waterbirds despite the frosts.

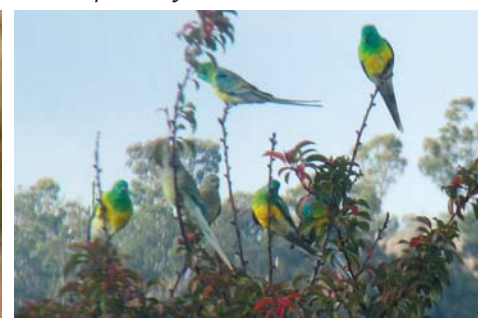
There are swamp hens, egrets, coots, grebes, herons, lapwings, cormorants and numerous species of ducks. This morning I saw two species of Spoonbills. Turtles and frogs are plentiful.

Our trees are full of parrots and yesterday an echidna decided to visit. And of course the big mob of roos is always with us. They love the rye-corn Brad has planted near the house. (It was meant as mulch for the vineyard).

Not having a cat or dog has meant this is a sanctuary for wildlife, although we could have done without the squadrons of yellow-tailed black cockatoos that have eaten every last pine nut in our five-acre stone pine orchard. We had hoped for a big harvest of pine nuts this year, but they got in before us. The trees are too tall to net, so I guess we'll just have to appreciate the beauty of these birds and forget about enjoying our pine nuts.



Top: Parents-to-be, our Black Swans. Above: An echidna passes by our kitchen window.



L to R: Long-necked Freshwater Turtle laying eggs; Yellow-Billed Spoonbill & Royal Spoonbill; Red-rumped Parrots

Raise a glass to the Romans

Where would we be without the wine-loving Romans? The credit/blame for spreading viticulture to every corner of the western world (and beyond), is down to those hardy roman legions who just couldn't go a single day without a glass of wine.

Although wine grapes were cultivated in many small areas of the ancient world, including in Greece, the histories of winemaking in France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain were all profoundly effected by the Romans who believed that wine was a daily necessity, not a luxury reserved for the rich.

Romans were avid vine collectors and their legions took vines with them wherever they went, encouraging their cultivation by local tribes in areas where viticulture was unknown. In a Roman world, wine was drunk by everyone - even women and slaves, every day. The conquered peoples were quick to seize the economic opportunities of viticulture and to adopt this excellent Roman custom.

It is believed Viognier vines were taken by the ancient Romans to the hillsides of the northern Rhône Valley of France, mostly likely from what is now Croatia. The variety almost died out after the fall of Rome. It was revived in medieval times, possibly by the monasteries, then almost wiped out again during WWII by Allied bombs - the Rhône Valley being a prime target as a centre of industry. In 1965 only eight hectares survived.

As a low-yielding variety that can be difficult to grow, it is not popular with wine producers looking for big yields. **Less than 1% of grapes grown in Australia are of the Viognier variety (and the same goes for Fiano of which even less is grown).**

Fiano, our other white wine, is also an aromatic variety and comes from the Campania region, south of Rome. Known as *vitis apiana* to the ancient Romans, it was a favourite of great Roman author and philosopher, Pliny the Elder (who didn't have a fridge to chill it in so enjoyed it at room temperature - please take note). He included it in his great encyclopaedia *Naturalis Historia* and commented that it was one of the few Roman wines worth drinking. Fiano vines also take a little more care and attention than the more common varieties and produce only small quantities of fruit.

Both Viognier and Fiano have wonderful flavour which derives from the fruit itself. They're luscious and seductive, with enticing, fruity aromas. The perfect food wines, they can be enjoyed as an aperitif, but really come into their own when served with almost any food, including spicier dishes which are often difficult to match with wine.

The 'roman' head on our logo, (perhaps a young Bacchus?) was inspired by roman mosaics we have seen on our travels. It pays tribute to those ancient legions who spread grapevines throughout the Roman world. And although, unlike the Romans, we don't believe wine is a daily necessity of life, we do think life would be far less interesting without it.



PLEASE DON'T GIVE US THE SHIVERS

We learned the hard way that our gorgeous aromatic wines don't like to be served chilled. They need to be at around 12-15C for their seductive aromas and complex fresh and fruity flavours to be released.

In Australia our white wines are often served far too cold and our reds, especially in summer room temperatures, far too warm.

At a pre-release tasting of our wines recently, we served our fiano and viognier only 15 minutes or so after they had come out of the fridge. We were horrified to discover they didn't taste the way they should have. It was only after they had lost their chill that we had the gratifying responses that we had been expecting.

So, remember, don't serve our white wines straight from the fridge. In fact, don't refrigerate them at all unless your room temperatures are above 18C. Aromatic wines need to be served COOL but not COLD. By all means put the wine into the fridge to cool in summer, but when you take it out, wait a while before drinking.

Cheers ,

Brad & Cheryl Hutchings

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If you've missed out on Issues 1-4 and would like to be part of the ongoing story of Savina Lane, send us an email and we'll forward the back issues to you and add your name to our circle of friends of Savina Lane.

Now it's your turn. But be quick.



There are only 418 bottles of our hand-crafted 2012 Fiano and 864 of the 2012 Wild Yeast Viognier. Setting a price for them has been a long process of benchmarking and taking advice from others in the wine industry. Our Cellar Door retail price reflects the high production values and costs involved.

CELLAR DOOR RRP \$34 PER BOTTLE

FIRST VINTAGE OFFER FOR SPECIAL VINE LIFE FRIENDS: \$24 EACH

(MINIMUM SIX - PLUS \$10 DELIVERY PER ORDER WITHIN AUSTRALIA, WHERE APPLICABLE)

ORDER FORM

Just print out and fill in this form, scan and email back to Savina Lane or send it back by Australia Post with your old-fashioned cheque, and we will arrange delivery to your door.

Please send me the following:

Bottles 2012 Wild Yeast Viognier @\$24.00/bottle = \$

Bottles 2012 Fiano Classico @\$24.00/bottle = \$

MINIMUM SIX BOTTLES
PLUS \$10 DELIVERY WITHIN AUSTRALIA

Please deliver to: _____

Contact phone: _____

HOW TO PAY

When our Cellar Door opens in 2015 we will have a Visa Card payment system set up, but until then, as we have such a small amount of wine to sell, payment can be made by direct deposit or cheque, through the mail.

Make your payment via direct deposit to:
BJ & CA Hutchings
BSB: 014-672 Account 2791-17475

Or post a cheque made out to BJ & CA Hutchings, with this completed order form to:
SAVINA LANE WINES
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