

BE CONVINCED TO CELLAR PINOT NOIR

If you're yet to consider cellaring pinot noir, Bannockburn Vineyards winemaker Michael Glover may just convert you with his words on what to expect from great, aged pinot.

I have, on two occasions, shed tears over a wine. Both have been wines made from the pinot noir variety. The first was a youngster in barrel that I made in an extremely difficult and drought-ravaged year. The tears therefore may be put down to fatigue, work stress, relief and a general sense of overcoming adversity. The other was somewhat different.

It was an ancient Grand Cru opened at dinner while spending a vintage with Francois Labet at Chateau De La Tour in Burgundy. It was a Clos de Vougeot from 1949 that had been made by Francois' father. The effect of this wine on me was overwhelming. It was alive, complex and profound, but most of all, it was – to me – simply beautiful.

It came out of his cellar covered in dust, its label was half gone and its cork only just hanging in there. It was decanted carefully and poured into our glasses to show an aged brick tawny colour. Things initially did not look hopeful, until the bouquet hit our noses. The fragrance and glorious complexity on the nose were confirmed by the palate, which was like the tolling of church bells. If there is a God then He undoubtedly had something to do with this wine. Words and points were irrelevant, but it left its impressions internally. It touched my soul.

For me, this is what wine is all about and to some extent, this is where truly great pinot noir, in full flight, becomes something akin to the very meaning of life itself. It's where wine and time, perhaps fleetingly, touches art.

The young pinot noir may be dark red, full of tannin and extract. It may be closed, reticent and shy. It speaks a language that is difficult to understand. It just wants to be left alone.

It is up to time to allow the colours, tannins, acids, flavours and esters to integrate, change and modify. Dark red colours become brick brown mahogany. Thirty esters become 3000 – all of them

leaping about vying for your attention and access to your olfactory bulb. Tannins decline, dissolve, integrate and dissipate. The palate softens, broadens and lengthens over years until finally, like the butterfly emerging from a cocoon, a miracle takes place and an entirely new creature emerges – the same wine, but different.

The structured shy young beastie that had nothing to share in its youth, but seemed to possess something, is now in front of us at full maturity. It is translucent, perfumed and aromatic. Gone are the simple and youthful aromas of fruit, oak barrels and fermentation. It smells of gardens and flowers, as well as undergrowth and forests; of wet gravel and wood fires; of kitchens and animals; of earth, mushrooms, moss and fur.

It changes constantly in the glass and, just as you thought you had it pinned down, it has moved on like a will-o'-the-wisp. To put it in the mouth is to taste something heavenly. No longer is it cloaked in tannin, brooding and heavy. Its youth and energy have matured, blossomed and become wise. The wine now fills the mouth, but floats as if ethereal. It is of silk and gold. It is emotional – beyond tasting notes, scores and points. We have entered a world where wine has become spiritual, magical and mystical.

It evokes the following passage from , *Brideshead Revisited*:

“...And this is a wise old wine.

A prophet in a cave

...And this is a necklace of pearls on a white neck.

Like a swan.

Like the last unicorn.”

Not all pinot noir can perform miracles, but the very best, if given the opportunity, can perform feats of the senses beyond our wildest dreams and imagination. Wines of romance, candlelight and poetry are the very essence of humanity. 🍷



GO-TO PRODUCERS

Michael's pinot picks that will reward with time

1

Domaine Chandon de Briailles, Savigny-les-Beaune, France
(*International Fine Wines*)

2

Domaine Joseph Voillot, Volnay, France
(*Two Ducks Fine Wines*)

3

Chateau de La Tour, Vougeot, France
(*International Fine Wines*)

4

Bell Hill, Waipara, NZ
(*Whole Bunch Wines*)

5

Punch Close Planted, Yarra Valley, VIC

6

Bannockburn Vineyards, Geelong, VIC

7

Main Ridge, Mornington Peninsula, VIC

8

Bindi, Macedon, VIC