

## FULL CIRCLE Wine Solutions

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September 29, 2009

*So You Think You Know Me?*

*By Master Sommelier Evan Goldstein*

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### SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW ME?

When I began buying wines in the early 1980s at Square One, I remember being interested in and intrigued by Australia. It was, to the USA, relatively new in terms of being available domestically but out side of the wines of Rosemount and Lindemans, at the time, hard to track down. When regional wines began to trickle in, the Hunter Valley, perhaps due to the late and great Len Evans living there and being a relentless advocate, was a first to take a toehold in the USA.



Having been in Australia with the MS program over the last couple of weeks, we took part of our lone day off and went to the Hunter .... Starting with a brief visit and tasting at the Brokenwood Winery, we then lunched with several local producers in the region, tasted a range of wines and I soon realized that I was completely off the mark in what I had been thinking about the area, an assessment that had been largely unchanged since some of those initial efforts in the last 80s. Rather than medium quality Chardonnays with ample oak, I was especially impressed with two varietals - Semillon and Shiraz.

The Semillons, with the hallmarks of this unique varietal emanating from this area, were stunning, from the youthful bright current 2009 vintage efforts, bursting forward with some minerality, lime zest, celeriac, and lemongrass are framed with zesty acidity and very moderate levels of alcohol (10.5-11.5 percent). Especially noteworthy in my notes were from Scarborough, Pepper Tree Alluvius and Brokenwood. Brilliantly focused, they also age well as was exhibited by a 2003 (Scarborough) and a remarkable and still very youthful 1999 from Brokenwood (the ILR bottling). Unique, balanced and very food friendly, it was a clear reminder as to what quality dry Semillon is all about and why it's such a compelling wine at table.

Most of us associate Shiraz in Australia with the ample extracted efforts that come from McLaren Vale, old vine offerings from the Barossa and the bruisingly intense efforts from Victoria's Heathcoate. Shiraz from Hunter ... never had thought much about it. Until the luncheon. If elegant could ever be used as an adjective for Shiraz, these wines define it.

Less alcoholc, redolent of red/soft black fruits and with balanced but not overly OTT (over the top) tannins, these wines were savoury, minerally, nuanced and again more Burgundian, if you will, than the big boyz we've come to expect from this part of the world. Bottles from Thomas (their 'kiss' bottling), Brokenwood (Graveyard Shiraz), and Pepper Tree (Coquin bottling) stood out.

Have I driven a Ford lately (yes, I rented one on a business trip recently) but a trip to the Hunter, in mid and palate, this tasting demonstrated that I needed to get in the 'car' again ...

### Comments

1. You certainly have a good appreciation of what the Hunter has to offer. Brokenwood Semillons, Hunter in general, offer the best of both worlds. Fresh, crisp and perfect with seafood when young with the ability to transform into a wonderful complex with great character. I have just been drinking some 1999 Brokenwood Semillon myself (the varietal not ILR) and it is drinking superbly. Still have a few bottles left.

*Posted by [Greg Mincher@The Vintrey](#) at 3:19pm on October 5, 2009*

2. Thanks for the kind words and lucky you (having a few bottles of 1999 Brokenwood Semillon); I am indeed jealous!

*Posted by [evan](#) at 10:04am on October 12, 2009*

