

the dirt

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**It's back! The Forest Edge Sauvignon Blanc returns.**

**BROKENWOOD**

AUSTRALIAN CRAFT AT ITS FINEST

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# Evans-free Hunter

Iain Riggs

**E**vans-free Hunter. These three words on the third anniversary of Len's passing are slowly sinking into the collective conscientiousness of the Hunter Valley - three words that no one 10 or 20 years ago, let alone 3 years ago, would have dreamed of connecting. It is a bit like saying a Lehmann-free Barossa or Osborne-free McLaren Vale.

Len Evans died in August 2006. His initial visits to the Hunter Valley in the early 1960s as wine buyer for the Chevron Hilton Hotel quickly turned into a love affair. The Rothbury Estate, started in the late 1960s (the building was awarded the Blackett Award for outstanding excellence in industrial design), Loggerheads (the family home) and Tower Lodge and Winery remind us of him every day. Loggerheads has been sold and Trish now lives in Sydney. Toby and family have gone, as has sister Jody. Sally and family live in Sydney.

It was therefore serendipitous that Toby Evans put his hand up 12 months ago to host the fourteenth Other Bottle Club dinner. Founded by Len and based on the Single Bottle Club he started in 1977, it is a once-a-year gathering to drink some fine wine. The venue was the Albert Room at Brokenwood and the team from The Cellar Restaurant led by Andy Wright was in charge of the food.

The decision was Burgundy and instead of trying for old whites (and being disappointed) we headed down the young path for the main white bracket. Marquis de Laguiche is a wine that divides tasters. The vineyard is the largest of the Montrachet holdings and the wine is made by Drouhin. Problems of sporadic oxidation aside, it is perhaps best summed up as "old fashioned". At the Sydney Wine Show dinner (February 2008), when we opened a magnum of the 2000, one judge observed that the Laguiche vineyard was the least to look at in terms of care and attention while he was there in 2007. That is perhaps part of the explanation.

Free-range chicken ballotine with crepes and Manjimup truffles was an outstanding accompaniment to the horizontal of 2004 Grand Crus. They were in order Leflaive Chevalier, Blain Gagnard and Ramonet Bâtards, then Sauzet, Laguiche and DRC Montrachets. (Yes, the DRC should be labelled Le Montrachet as the vineyard is on the Chassagne side but that's a discussion for another day.) The DRC captivated everyone with its classic 'line and length'. It showed quite a bit of colour, with lifted grilled nuts and perfect oak. I couldn't think how to end my tasting notes except with 'other worldly' - as were the truffles, which are all the rage on the East Coast at present.

The main course accompanied the first of the Chambertin heavy hitters, 1996, 2000, 2001 and 2003. The venison, sourced locally at Cedars Creek past Millfield, was exceptional. It came from a 30kg red doe that Andy Wright presented as four different cuts - rump, fillet, loin and best end - marinated for two weeks in red wine, olive oil, herbs and a good dash of Muscat (the oil preventing any oxidation). This was a melt-in-your-mouth and truly great dish.

The final Chambertin bracket did not disappoint. The cheese was put to one side, although the Pont L'Eveque and Brie de Meaux were superb. Again the wines were served old to young - 1985, 1990, 2002 and 2005. Many lovely wines have come from the '85 vintage which is surprising given the snow, heat and hailstorms in its gestation. This bottle opened on song - a mature rim and undergrowth/dry leaf aromas, then a long sweet palate, with even some truffle. The '90 had good colour but a slight mushroom edge to the nose (cork?). The fleshy palate and the structure from this super vintage were definitely there.

The '02, was younger and prettier, but sat comfortably alongside the two mature wines

# evans free hunter 10 years at the 'Wood!' PJ celebrates 10 years at the 'Wood'!

providing the bridge to the youngest. This was for me the wine of the night. It showed lifted ripe, dark cherry and vanillin oak in the background. Seamless, spicy, maybe slight char and sweet fruit, this was Pinot at its best, with reassuring tannins that went on and on. The '05 finished an outstanding bracket, although way too young. Red and black fruits, oak, spice – it was all there. 'Almost New World' was one comment. This will be around for a long, long time.

Many years ago Bill Chambers presented Len Evans with a wine drawn from a cask of Muscat made in the 1890s - a wine so unctuous and treacly that Len often served it as a drop in the hand. It lasted many years. Hence Toby's menu note read Chambers Ancient Muscat in Ice Cream Licks (for the last time). These were originally called penny licks, as a serve cost a penny. They were used from the mid 1800s to early 1900s before the pastry cup was invented.

The evening drew to an end and, as we licked and slurped the last of the 1890s Muscat from the licks, I thought back to a yarn from 20-odd years ago.

A winemaker in the Valley was courting an Evans daughter and, he thought, perhaps successfully. One Sunday afternoon Len suggested that he and the young chap go for a walk over the property ending on the hill looking south over Len's beloved Valley.

With a twinkle in his eye and one arm around the young man's shoulder, Len extravagantly swept his other arm from west to east taking in The Rothbury Estate and the land that was to become Tower and announced: 'One day, all of this will be mine.'

And in a sense it was.

Which makes the fact of an Evans-free Valley so hard to come to terms with.

**P**J Charteris has carved his winemaking path over 25 years in the Australian wine industry, navigating his way to where he now calls home, the Hunter Valley. His first vintage in the Hunter was at Lindeman's in 1990, which ignited his passion for the region and drew him back for two more vintages in '92 & '93, until he finally found a permanent fit at Brokenwood in 1999.



Vintage 2005 - charity shave

Now, with ten years under his belt as winemaker of Brokenwood, his understanding and love of the valley is evident to all. From the endless support to the local and national wine industry he loves, to educating trade media, consumers and his commitment to the show judging system, you could say he is in his element.

His passion for producing wines of the highest quality has also ensured that Brokenwood is highly regarded by consumers and wine industry alike. Brokenwood's Graveyard Vineyard Shiraz has held both its place as one of the true 'Treasures of the Valley' and its Excellence ranking in the Langton's Classification for over 10 years. His enthusiasm for Hunter Semillon has also ensured that Brokenwood ILR Semillon and Brokenwood Semillon have been recognized domestically and on the world stage for excellence.

PJ's down to earth approach for making wine education fascinating has not gone unnoticed within the industry. Wine Australia has employed his vast knowledge of regionality and the Australian wine industry in general to open up new market possibilities abroad.

Thanks a million, PJ!

# what's on



Graveyard Lunch 2005 - bottle blonde



Vintage 2006



Vintage 2008



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[www.brokenwood.com.au](http://www.brokenwood.com.au)

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## Brokenwood Wine Dinners

- Anise, Canberra 3rd September
- Aqua Dining, Milsons Point 24th September
- Bathers' Pavilion, Balmoral 29th October
- (Venue TBC), Brisbane 6th November
- Ouzo 88, Woolloomooloo 19th November

## Accoutrement Cooking School

[www.accoutrement.com.au](http://www.accoutrement.com.au)

Accoutrement Cooking School, situated in Sydney, has a regular program of cooking classes with celebrity chefs and cookbook authors. Join Brokenwood's Grant Radford at the following classes to match our wines with the guest chef's food.

Peter Evans – Hugos' Group, Sydney 29th October

## Hunter Uncorked

Shoal Bay 12-13th September  
Balmoral 1st November

# new releases

## OUT NOW

### 2009 Forest Edge Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc

Pale colour with green tints. The first impression is of fresh, lifted tropical fruit. Lychee and gooseberry aromas with a touch of 'tal' typical of Sauvignon Blanc. The palate has excellent fruit weight, again, lychee and tropical flavours. Passionfruit and a zesty citrus acid carrying the flavours for a long finish. Everything Sauvignon Blanc should be.



### 2007 Mistress Block Vineyard Shiraz

Excellent deep, dense red with purple tints. Very attractive aromas of dark chocolate, earth and dark cherry. Some oak vanillin contribution. A medium to full bodied palate with the highish alcohol adding weight to the palate flavours and structure. Briar/char and 'pepper' Shiraz characters along with the ripe berry fruits. Wood and fruit tannins give a balanced finish and gives length. A very good example of a young Hunter Valley red that can be consumed now right through to long term bottle age, as it will reward over time.



## COMING UP

### 2004 ILR Reserve Semillon – RELEASED OCTOBER 09

Perfect colour at 5 years of age - excellent, luminous green/yellow. Lifted zesty, lemongrass aromas with some sweet apple blossom characters. Fruit dominant on the palate but typical tight structure with citrus acid finish. Initial lime plus cut grass flavours. Perfect balance of fruit, alcohol and acid. Impressive to drink now or leave for more 'toasty' development.



### 2007 Rayner Vineyard Shiraz – RELEASED NOVEMBER 09

"Consistency" best sums up this special vineyard. The 2007 wine is our 15th release and sadly the last Brokenwood Rayner Shiraz, as the vineyard is now owned by other McLaren Vale interests.



The initial feature is the dense black/dark red cherry colour. Maturation was in predominantly American oak (coopered in the Napa Valley) and the distinctive vanilla lift complements the ripe dark berry and mocha chocolate aromas of the McLaren Vale Shiraz. A full bodied mouth-feel. Good viscosity and long flavours of plum, vanilla and chary notes with an excellent finish. Although these wines can be consumed in their youth, they do develop into rich, chocolate/earth McLaren Vale mature reds. The palate has strong Turkish delight characters balanced by subtle oak and grape tannins.

# guest chef

## STEFANO MANFREDI **Bells at Killcare**

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## Fish and Rice Soup

Serves 6

### Ingredients

500g white-fleshed fish fillet -  
mulloway, snapper, bar cod or flathead

2 eschalots, finely diced

4 cloves garlic, sliced

4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

150g button mushrooms, sliced

3-4 pieces of dried porcini mushroom,  
soaked in cold water

150g chopped peeled tomatoes

1 cup Italian rice- arborio, carnaroli  
or vialone nano

½ cup chopped parsley

salt and pepper

### Method

Remove all bones from the fish and cut into small,  
bite-sized pieces.

Heat the olive oil in a soup pot and lightly fry the  
eschalots and garlic for one minute. Add the sliced  
mushrooms and stir well, frying for 2-3 minutes  
until they have softened.

Drain the porcini mushrooms, roughly chop them  
and add to the pot along with the tomatoes. Stir  
well and add 4 litres of water. Bring to the boil  
then add the rice and 2-3 good pinches of salt.

Stir and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the rice is  
cooked. Add the fish pieces and the parsley, stir  
carefully and turn off the heat. Check for salt and  
add several good turns of pepper. Stir again and  
leave for 15 minutes before serving.

## BROKENWOOD

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