

## THE LAUGHING MAGPIE 2004

### **An article written by Mark Hamilton for the Law Society Bulletin**

I'm the sort of diehard Port supporter who yells out "Go Magpies" at Port Adelaide AFL matches. None of the designer "black, white and teal" jumpers for me. The black and white "gaol bar" guernsey forever, I say. So when I saw that Chester Osborn had named his 2004 Vintage Shiraz-Viognier "The Laughing Magpie", I quickly Googled "d'Arenberg Wines" to see if Chester, too, was a Port tragic who had named his wine as a celebration of Port's 2004 Vintage year, the year of its first AFL premiership.

Alas, no. Their explanation, pleasant enough in itself, is that Chester's two young daughters named their tame Kookaburra, the "Laughing Magpie" as they found it difficult to pronounce the word "Kookaburra".

The website did explain that d'Arenberg had adopted this name for its Shiraz-Viognier blend because the Australian Magpie is of course a black and white bird. The point is that the d'Arenberg Laughing Magpie is a red wine made from a blend of "black" grapes (the Shiraz), being the traditional name for grapes that make red wine, and from white grapes (the Viognier).

Anyway, I had come across the 2004 d'Arenberg The Laughing Magpie (100% McLaren Vale fruit - Shiraz (94%)/ Viognier (6%) (\$27.99 recommended retail by the bottle or available at \$25.99 each by the dozen at some outlets) in the continual quest to discover wine which over delivers quality for price, to recommend to fellow minded lawyers.

Made by winemaker for d'Arenberg Wines, Chester Osborn, the earlier vintages of The Laughing Magpie were McLaren Vale's first ever Shiraz-Viognier blend combining the (black) Shiraz and its white partner, Viognier.

Made from concentrated ripe bunches of Shiraz and Viognier, using traditional winemaking techniques of open fermentation and a basket press, the wine was transferred into American and French oak barriques for maturation for twelve months prior to bottling.

Deep complex Shiraz (with an alcohol volume of 14.5%), typical of the best Shiraz McLaren Vale has to offer, provides the back bone for this wine. The Viognier adds a dash of floral and spice and silkiness to the rich blackberry fruit which added to the fine finishing tannins of the Shiraz, results in a wine which is succulent and highly drinkable.

The d'Arenberg winemaking style is based on traditional winemaking methods but its full range of interesting blended wines are of exceptional quality and interest across the board, and thoroughly contemporary in conception. The Americans love the wine and the quirky labels and names introduced by Chester Osborn, who must be the most extroverted winemaker in the Australian wine industry.

A little independent verification - James Halliday's Australian Wine Companion 2007 gave The Laughing Magpie Shiraz Viognier 2004 95 points with the Halliday description being;

*"deeply coloured; strong black fruit aromas are lifted by the Viognier component; a rich tapestry of dense, dark fruits has followed up the wood."*

The wine won a gold medal in the Decanter World Wine Awards, London 2006 and a gold medal at the International Wine Challenge, London May 2006 as well as a gold medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition 2006.

As well, James Halliday rates d'Arenberg Wines as a five star winery in the Australian Wine Companion 2007.

The local South Australian distributor for d'Arenberg Wine is Empire Liquor (telephone 8351 7666). Empire says that the 2005 Vintage is about to be released by the winery but because of its exceptional pedigree, they purchased a large portion of the remaining 2004 stock which remains available in good wine shops in Adelaide.

Whilst in the \$25.00 to \$30.00 bracket this wine is excellent quality which represents good value for money. It would compete well with wines in the \$35.00 plus range.