



# Curly Flat

October 2010

No. 22

## VINE To WINE

*Time to release ...*

### 2008 Curly Flat Chardonnay

#### James Halliday's Tasting Note on the 2008 Chardonnay

“Bright, gleaming quartz-green; a super-elegant wine that reflects its terroir in much the same way as Riesling does, even though there are more winemaking inputs; grapefruit, apple, nectarine and mineral notes are the leaders, oak a vehicle and no more. Immaculately crafted. Rating 96.

James's annual Australian Wine Companion 2011 has been released and Curly Flat has again been given James's highest rating of 5 red stars. 2008 Curly Flat Chardonnay is included in his Best Chardonnays listing.

#### Our tasting note on 2008 Curly Flat Chardonnay

*Appearance:* Vibrant, bright, light gold with hints of green straw.

*Bouquet:* Complex bouquet – shows both the citrus characters of ripe, blood orange/pink grapefruit, together with some slightly herbal, cashew/nutty, mealy and lees characters, with subtle oak residing in the background. Complexity shows further layers with slight briny/oyster shell and struck match tones. A heady bouquet that is complex and powerful!

*Palate:* Solid weight, yet only 12.8%, with generous sweet fruit up front, together with lots of natural acidity. This grows along the palate line; textured mouth feel; solid acidity, balanced with the ample juicy primary fruit. Seamless line and length, already exhibiting a long finish.

*Overall Impression:* As with prior Curly Flat Chardonnays, defined by its origins - young but complex, layered, textured; solid structure, yet it has relatively low alcohol (12.8%) It will build further complexity with time in bottle.

*Cellaring:* Generous fruit allows for early drinking, but will age for many years. Probably peaking about 2016.



#### The 2006 Curly Flat Pinot Noir – an international perspective

Each year Winewise use their judging panel to assess a single variety from producers around the world. This year it was Pinot Noir and the sixteen judges were served eighteen masked wines – six from France, six from New Zealand and six from Australia. The French wines included some top names including Domaine de la Romanee-Conti, Domaine Armand Rousseau and Domaine A. F. Gros. The judges included two of Australia's most experienced show judges, Ian McKenzie and James Halliday. The judging panel deemed the 2006 Curly Flat Pinot to be the best in the line up and Lester Jesberg of Winewise summarised the panel's comments: “This is a delightfully fragrant pinot noir with red berry/ cherry characteristics and a fine, velvety mouthfeel. There's a briary complexity suggesting a small stems component, and the oak is comfortably absorbed by the intense fruit. A complete wine” Full report on our website.

Two points of interest from this tasting. First, the wines under cork closure, and that included all the French Burgundys, were all impacted by cork to some degree. Some were chemically cork tainted with the trichloroanisole rendering some wines undrinkable, while some were physically cork tainted where the cork has allowed oxygen into the wine. Second, while not suggesting the new world wines are better than some of the wonderful Burgundy wines, this line up and the results do show there is exceptional value from some new world producers such as Curly Flat.



#### Vale Curly Dog

We bred her and shared 14 great years of companionship, so it was no wonder sadness descended on Curly Flat with the passing of our faithful Curly Dog. Her son, Musti, has gotten over his mother's departure thanks to his new friendship with Rex, Jeni's rescued old kelpie. This photo of Curly Dog was featured in Craig McGill's latest edition of Wine Dogs. ([www.winedogs.com](http://www.winedogs.com))

## 2008 vintage conditions - how bizarre?

How to describe the growing season October 2007 to April 2008? Bizarre! Hot, very hot, and dry; with a wild, wet, hail ridden stint just before Christmas 2007.

Every month saw average maximum temperatures well above the long term monthly averages. Three months in particular – November, January and March had quite extreme variation, being 6.9 °C, 8.1 °C and 8.3 °C above the long term average maximums. Remember Adelaide's hot spell in March of 16 days above 35°C?

The months August to October usually deliver 232mm of rain, but we only got 70mm – a deficit of 160mm. Rain and hail in late December delivered 108mm in four days. This rain came fast and furious and not effective as it ran off, rather than into, the soil.

Harvest started relatively early, on 19 March and went through until 16 April. This one month spread reflects the variations in altitude and aspect of our vineyard blocks, together with differences brought about through clones and the ages of the vineyard blocks.

## How did Curly achieve moderate alcohol levels?

With these weather conditions 2008 will be remembered, by most, as the year of high alcohols. Not at Curly Flat as our alcohol levels for the 2008 wines are relatively low, even for a cool year. 2008 Chardonnay has 12.8% alc.; 2008 Curly Flat Pinot Noir (to be released in March 2011) has 12.6% alc. The Williams Crossing 2008 Chardonnay (sold out) had 12.4% and the Curly Flat 2008 Pinot Grigio (sold out) had 11.7% alc. Contrast this to most 2008 wines being well above 14%, some even above 15%.

There are 3 main contributors to our moderate alcohol levels. First, our focus on acidity; natural acidity from the vineyard. Our harvest decisions are primarily based on acidity; a contrast to the traditional approach of measuring sugar. Second, our farming methods – biodynamic, or natural farming – means no herbiciding, and no bare ground. Add composting and mulching, and we have cooler and moister soils. Further, under this regime, vines tend to be self regulating; and this probably extends to moderating the sugar accumulation, and retention of natural acidity. Third, the micro climate enjoyed in the Romsey/Lancefield sub-region. Romsey/Lancefield, being tucked in just south of the Great Dividing Range, is the greatest beneficiary of the cool conditions, in particular, the low over night temperatures, that protects us in the hot years. Add to that the very deep, volcanic basalt soils providing enormous soil volumes for the vine roots to exploit and help the vine cope.

## Delivery instructions

When ordering, please give instructions regarding where to leave the wine if there is nobody in attendance at the delivery time. In the absence of delivery instructions we will send via Australia Post and the wine can be collected from the post office if nobody is home at time of delivery. Delivering to a business address can be a good option.

## Coming events ...

**Weekend of 13 & 14 November Budburst ~ Macedon Ranges Wine & Food Festival** with 30 vigneron showing their wines. Most rarely open their cellar doors so this is an opportunity to find some hidden gems. Curly Flat will be showing our wines at Campaspe House on Sun 14 Nov. Curly Flat is not a Budburst site in 2010. Our cellar door will be open as usual that weekend - we will not be serving food. See [www.budburst.com](http://www.budburst.com) (the 13 Oct listing for Curly Flat is wrong - still showed 2009 details)

**Sunday 21 November** will see Andrew McConnell and his team from Cutler & Co return for their fourth annual lunch at Curly Flat. Cutler & Co was recently named as Australia's Best Restaurant in Gourmet Traveller. This lunch was listed in our May newsletter and has sold out.

**Monday 22 November** Donovans at St Kilda will host a Curly Flat dinner featuring 4 vintages of Chardonnay (including our first, 1998) and 3 vintages of Pinot. The private dining room with stunning views of the bay seats only 20, so book early (03 5429 1956) to join us in one of our favourite restaurants. \$130 per person all inclusive.



## The Drought ...it's temporarily suspended!

We have had very good winter rains; in fact, the best since we started the vineyard some 18 years ago. June, July and August saw consistent rains: slow and steady, allowing good infiltration. This was then topped up with 60mm of rain on the first weekend of September. By that stage, the ground was already at "field capacity", the soil water holding capacity is at its maximum. The ground could hold no more, so all creeks, dams and water courses were flowing. Roads were closed. It has been a long time since we have been bogged – it's a great feeling.

We have not seen these circumstances before. It could be a year of considerable vigour. We will just remain vigilant. It will be a year of low, possibly no, irrigation.

In part due to the rain and cloudy conditions, September was one of the coolest on record. This has resulted in budburst being several weeks behind that of the last few years; it is almost back to "normal". Half way through October and some of the vines are yet to burst bud.

The rains have flushed the soils and the vineyard looks and smells very healthy. It is a relief to know that nature has provided such a wonderful start to the season. There is anticipation in the air ...