

# THE SATURDAY PAPER

## WINE

The beverage director for Andrew McConnell's restaurants recommends her favourite drinks as the weather cools. By *Leanne Altmann*.

## The best wines of autumn 2019



CREDIT: EARL CARTER



**Amrit 'Tucks Road', 2018 chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria (\$31)<sup>1</sup><sub>SEP</sub>**

Saffron, golden pear and roasted hazelnut abound in this full-flavoured chardonnay, held in check by a fine line of acidity. Natural fermentation, a lo-fi approach in the winery and old oak maturation contribute a broader, creamy texture, personality and sunshine. It's chardonnay that brings colour and character to autumn days.

**Jankara, 2016 Vermentino di Gallura Superiore, Sardinia, Italy (\$43)**

Inspiring examples of vermentino can be found in Gallura, in the northern reaches of Sardinia, where elevation and cool ocean breezes retain the vitality that's so marked in this wine. It's medium bodied and perfumed, with aromas of coastal herbs and almond kernel, and briny tang. There's plenty of texture and chalky extract but no oak influence, making Jankara a sympathetic wine for a broad range of seafood and vegetable dishes.

**Chapel Hill 'Americano', vermouth spritz, McLaren Vale, South Australia (\$32 for 4)**

Chapel Hill has transformed its McLaren Vale grenache with the addition of wormwood and local botanicals into a fragrant strawberry-fruited vermouth. With the addition of a splash of soda and a little fresh shiraz grape juice, Americano is gently bitter and gently sweet, and as sessionable as an icy-cold lager.

**Weingut Stadt Krems 'Lössterrassen', 2017 grüner veltliner, Niederösterreich, Austria (\$24)**

For more than half a century, the winemakers of Krems an der Donau, a little north-west of Vienna, have toiled to make wine from the town's terraced vineyards. Here, then, is the most typical example of the region – grüner veltliner. It's a soft and open wine, typical of the silty loess soils in which grüner veltliner thrives. It features a gentle fragrance of white pepper, Williams pear and bitter grapefruit pith, with a weighty texture and a satisfying intensity of flavour.

**Bonnet-Huteau 'Les Dabinières', 2017 Muscadet Sèvre et Maine sur lie melon blanc, Loire Valley, France (\$25)**

I confess to having a small obsession with the wines of the western Loire at present, particularly melon blanc from Muscadet. Subtle and savoury, Les Dabinières tastes like sourdough, sea salt and fresh-cut apple. Biodynamically farmed, the low yields of fruit give an intensity not always seen in wines from this region. With Chablis prices escalating because of challenging weather and ever-growing demand, there is great joy to be found in a plate of freshly shucked oysters and a generous glass of new-wave Muscadet.

**Frankland Estate 'Alter Weg', 2018 riesling, Great Southern, Western Australia (\$32)**

Alter Weg is rapidly becoming something of a cult wine for Frankland Estate. Fruit from the iconic Isolation Ridge vineyard is interpreted in an old-is-new way, with cloudy grape juice wild-fermented in old oak. The shape of the vineyard remains the same – a thrilling line of steely acidity – and is complemented by additional weight and texture on the palate. Fragrant with mandarin blossom, ripe apple and brown lime, it's the road less travelled that has made all the difference.

**Thymiopoulos Vineyards 'ATMA Red', 2016 xinomavro/mandilaria, Naoussa, Greece (\$25)**

Farming biodynamically on the slopes of Mount Vermio in northerly Naoussa, Apostolos Thymiopoulos is a winemaker to watch. Here, he blends Naoussa's great black grape xinomavro with a little deeply coloured

mandilaria. Ripe forest fruits are complemented by savoury notes of cured meats, roasted tomato and woody dried herbs. It's a trip to northern Greece, via ATMA.

### **Traviarti 'Rosso', 2017 nebbiolo/barbera/cabernet sauvignon, Beechworth, Victoria (\$30)**

Rosso is winemaker Simon Grant's nod to the earlier-drinking nebbiolo-based blends of Piedmont. Sleek and savoury, supple bramble fruit is contained by coiled, cocoa-like tannin. Nebbiolo and barbera show Italianate structure and a seasoning of dried herb and undergrowth, while cabernet sauvignon is a supporting artist rather than the star. Compelling drinking, and an exciting future ahead for wines from this elevated site above Beechworth.

### **Crittenden Estate 'Kangerong', 2017 pinot noir, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria (\$45)**

The Crittenden family is a formidable name in the Victorian wine scene, a pioneer of the Mornington Peninsula and a multitude of grape varieties. All of the fruit for Kangerong is sourced from the sustainably managed family vineyards. There's a seamless flow to this wine – the translucent black fruit, rose petal, the delicate warm spice. Moderate in concentration, it feels fresh, with a gentle Campari-like bitterness to contrast with the properly ripe fruit.

### **Pittnauer 'Pitt Nat', 2017 pétillant naturel rosé, Burgenland, Austria (\$58)**

The passion that Gerhard and Brigitte Pittnauer have for their wines and their place is strikingly evident. Their style may be minimal intervention, but it's also very hands-on. Pitt Nat is sulphur-free fizz crafted with all the care and attention normally paid to traditional method sparkling – and it shows. A blend of blaufränkisch, syrah and merlot from a site in conversion to biodynamics, it's brisk and fresh, with ruby grapefruit and just-ripe cherry fruit. Amusing name, delicious wine.

### **Peter Wetzer, 2017 kékfrankos, Sopron, Hungary (\$55)**

In the far west of Hungary lies the region of Sopron, home to the grape variety kékfrankos and the elegant organic wines of Peter Wetzer. Seductive, cool blueberry fruit flows across the palate, balanced by a pleasantly grainy texture. Aromas of cured meats, white smoke, damp leaves and wet stone, unencumbered by oak. If persistence is a hallmark of quality (and it is) then there's plenty of quality on show here.

### **Reed 'Papa', 2017 Fleurie gamay, Beaujolais, France (\$50)**

Sierra Milne views her Australian wines "through the spectrum of Beaujolais", so it seems fitting that the first Reed wine made abroad is named for her mentor, Pierre-Marie "Papa" Chermette. A small parcel of gamay from his prized Fleurie Poncié vineyard was made even smaller during a challenging growing season in 2017. The quality of the vintage is well matched by Milne's restrained approach in the winery, resulting in a finely framed wine with a vibrant core of hibiscus and kirsch, and memorable length.

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