



# Genie in the bottle

by Rhys Connery

We all like to take a special bottle of vino to share with good friends... and love being invited back to dinner parties. The last thing you want is for your favourite vintage bottle to taste like a rough old port. The best way to avoid this is to look after your wines or they will rapidly become over the hill.

The beauty and joy of wine is that it is constantly evolving from the moment it is placed in the bottle and careful storage will minimise the chances of spoilage and enhance the enjoyment of wine.

The ideal conditions for storing wine are a cool, dark, quiet place. The foundations or basement of the house are a perfect location for your cellar. This is probably quite difficult for many of you apartment dwellers, but that sunny balcony with panoramic harbour views is definitely not the ideal place for storing that special drop. A cool dark cupboard works well instead.

The best conditions are a constant temperature of 15 degrees and plenty of humidity (50 to 75%). Unfortunately Sydney's seasonal temperature fluctuations can damage the airtight seals of corks due to the contraction and expansion of wine in the bottle. Laying bottles horizontally and resting them in humid conditions will help to keep corks moist and prevent drying and cracking. So don't think about storing that bottle of vintage Bollinger in the fridge for your 50th Wedding Anniversary... it is too dry and will be ruined way before the special day.

Wine will age gracefully in the bottle provided it sleeps comfortably. If you don't have a suitably cool dark place in mind you could try the temperature controlled cellars at Wineark, wine storage services based in Merdun. Whether you have 10 or 10,000 cases they have the facilities. For more information phone 1800 275.

Why bother storing wine and what happens during bottle aging you may ask?

During red winemaking, tannin is extracted from grape skins, seeds, stalks and oak barrels. Tannin is the great stuff that dries your mouth out and causes flavour to linger. Highly tannic reds will have a greater life expectancy than light bodied reds.

Robust, full blooded reds need to sleep in the cellar for a few years. As tannin molecules reduce and soften, acid levels also soften to produce a balanced wine with more up front fruit flavours. Flavours become more complex with bottle age as slow controlled oxidation produces esters and aldehydes. Old reds reveal more reserved fruit flavours (raisins, prunes), smokiness and fine silky powdery tannins that will gently massage your tongue and warm your insides.

On the other hand a young wine with high tannin levels will taste astringent and bitter due to the fruit flavour being masked by tannin. Remember to look after the genie in the bottle by careful storage and taste your wines regularly to discover how they change with time.

Wines to recommend this month:

**Taittinger NV \$65:** This champagne has beautiful depth of aroma with sweet ripe peach and freshly baked brioche characters. Champagne of class with fine bead, light and refreshing with a long finish.

**Chandon Brut NV \$23:** Domaine Chandon of the Yarra Valley are leaders in making fine fizz. A clean, fresh citrus aroma with a whiff of honeysuckle and complex flavours of fresh strawberries, crushed nuts and creaminess combine to produce a fine wine.

**Delatite Gewurztraminer 99 \$20:** A cool climate aromatic wine from Victoria with intense lavender, rose water fragrance. Good intensity of fruit, sliver of pickled ginger spice with a great acid zing. Fabulous with freshly panfried fish or fiery curries.

**Bethany Semillon 97 \$18:** The Schrapel family are 5th generation winemakers of the Barossa. A fine semillon with green apple citrus, lanolin and a pinch of charred oak. Plenty of flavour richness to complement chicken, risotto and mushroom risotto – just don't forget to add a splash!

**Montana Reserve Pinot Noir 98 \$28** Rich flavours of dark cherries, cassis with layers of spice and toasty depth. This full bodied pinot has gripping tannins which linger and would benefit 2-3 years in the cellar.

Rhys runs Wine Gratification Courses – a four week course of wine discovery, tasting premium and aged wines, slide shows, sniff-a-thons, option games and blindfolds. CBD, North Sydney commencing 7 August.

For more information please phone (02) 9909 1737 or email [thevinepress1@hotmail.com](mailto:thevinepress1@hotmail.com)