

CENTENNIAL VINEYARDS -

everlasting



On my latest trip to the Southern Highlands, I came across one of the most consistent producers in the region, namely, Centennial Vineyards which is located just minutes from the historic township of Bowral in the Southern Highlands just over an hour south of Sydney. This premium

cool climate vineyard is at around 760m in altitude which means that grapes ripen slowly with enhanced flavour and intensity.

It is worth noting that slow ripening, together with close attention to viticulture and low cropping levels, results in premium quality fruit, creating wines of elegance and distinction. Centennial Vineyards is all about cool climate grape growing and winemaking. As mentioned, the vines ripen with lower temperatures than most Australian wine regions and since the climate is colder, vines ripen the fruit much more slowly and evenly than in warm regions, producing balanced, aromatic fruit. According to Centennial, the reason they get higher natural acidities is that the rate of acid degradation on the vine is directly proportional to temperature.

So in warmer climates, at the end of the season, their fruit is significantly lower in acidity. These higher natural acidities give the wine balance, crispness, and more lengthy palates with superior aging ability. At Centennial Vineyards, the focus is on single vineyard wines which have developed over the years, allowing vineyard blocks to show their unique character. The combination of climate, soil composition, slope, rainfall, sunlight, aspect and temperature all contribute to the individuality of the wines.

Plantings of the Spanish variety Tempranillo is an early

ripening variety which suits the cool climate producing fragrant wines of light to medium body. It was this grape variety that caught my attention at a recent tasting.



Tempranillo is a black grape with a thick skin and grows best at relatively high altitudes, but it also can tolerate a much warmer climate. Its name is the diminutive of the Spanish temprano ('early'), a reference to the fact that it ripens several weeks earlier than most Spanish red grapes.

To get elegance and acidity out of Tempranillo, you need a cool climate. But to get high sugar levels and the thick skins that give deep colour you need heat. It is the main grape used in Rioja, and is often referred to as Spain's noble grape. Grown early in the 20th century to produce jug wines in California, toward the end of the 20th century Tempranillo enjoyed a renaissance there and throughout the world as a fine wine. Often blended with Grenache and Carignan, Tempranillo is bottled either young or after several years of barrel aging. In Portugal, it is blended with others to produce port wine.

2010 Woodside Tempranillo

This is a very easy drinking Tempranillo (temp-rah-NEE-yoh) showing light body, rounded and smooth, with aromas of sour cherry, red confectionary and spice and a juicy, rounded and smooth palate. There was minimal oak contact. The Woodside Tempranillo is made entirely from fruit grown at the Bowral vineyards. With a respectable alcohol level of 12.6% the titratable acidity comes in at around 6.8 and will drink well up to 2015.



Centennial Vineyards
Centennial Road Bowral
<http://www.centennial.net.au>

Greg Bondar
 Food and Wine Editor

le très bon

- VIVE LA FRANCE

You must make time to visit the sleepy village of Bungendore in the southern tablelands on the Kings Highway near Lake George. For the historian, prior to European settlement, the area was occupied by the Ngarigo people and in 1901, both Lake George and Bungendore were proposed as sites for the nation's capital city - Canberra.



This wonderful little treasure of a village hosts a charming French restaurant owned and run by Christophe and Josephine. Christophe is a master chef



from France whose great love is teaching fine cuisine for he says that this is a more lasting legacy than the desirable but ephemeral pleasure of fine dining experience. Christophe has been in Australia since 1999, when he and Josephine established their first restaurant Christophe's Restaurant in Manuka, Canberra.

I am not surprised that Bungendore is the ideal location for Christophe's cuisine specialising in classic French cooking. The dishes will take you on a journey through France's gastronomic regions using the best local and Australian produce. The menu offered by Christophe has been created from a combination of his love of traditional French cuisine, natural flavours and fresh ingredients, his travels around the world, and his ability to work instinctively and creatively. Like an alchemist, he combines spices and herbs which put a specific touch – and thus add an element of surprise – on dishes which are centuries old. The dishes are prepared lovingly, bringing you a genuine French experience. Where possible Christophe uses seasonal certified organic local produce in the preparation of the dishes.

For a real French culinary experience, Christophe is offering something special during the black truffle season. He is conducting his much-loved French cooking classes



which combines truffles and home-made tagliatelle (Tagliatelles à la truffe) and truffled snow eggs – floating islands (OEufs à la neige à la truffe). There is also the option being part of the food and wine tour to France

joining Chef Christophe and Josephine on their annual gastronomic pilgrimage to Alsace and Lorraine.

On our visit we had Snails served in the French tradition. Tender snails prepared in butter, shallots, parsley and garlic – with a flavouring surprise – Pastis from Provence! A dozen snails served lightly gratinée. Served with sourdough bread and Traditional terrine. Christophe's terrine is a blend of pork, duck and veal; marinated in white wine and Cognac with a unique combination of herbs and spices. Served with sourdough bread and a petite salad. My pharmacist colleague David and his lovely wife Eileen savoured the Foie Gras accompanied by homemade spice bread. This highly prized delicacy imported half-cooked 100% lobe, is presented with Chef Christophe's spicy ginger bread. A delightful salad appropriately accompanies this jewel in the crown of French entrees.

For the mains, I had to go with classic Duck Confit and Toulouse Sausage Cassoulet. This famous and classic dish from the south-west of France is a hearty dish of slow cooked ingredients full of flavour. A fragrant bean sauce cooked in a stew pot marries the garnish of duck confit and pork Toulouse sausage while the others enjoyed the Wild rabbit with a vanilla and clove sauce, the Roasted pork hock sauce madère with sage and apple and Venison and grand veneur sauce. Open from Wednesday to Saturday for Lunch and Dinner and Sunday Lunch.

Le Très Bon
Restaurant & Cooking School
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www.letresbon.com.au

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