

giaconda

THE MONA LISA OF PINOT



On a recent fly-fishing trip to the Victorian Alps region with my colleagues Grant and Ian it soon became evident that a visit to the Giaconda winery was not only appropriate but mandatory especially since the trout were scarce but the wine plentiful. Giaconda Vineyard

and winery is situated nine kilometres southwest of Beechworth on the Wangaratta Road in North-eastern Victoria, in the foothills and within sight of the Victorian Alps.

On our arrival we were greeted by Nathan Kinzbrunner who, as it turned out, was one of the most pleasant and approachable cellar hosts I have met in a long time. For the inquisitive mind 'Giaconda' derives from 'La Gioconda', which is the lesser known title of the world famous painting 'Mona Lisa' ['My Lisa'] by Leonardo da Vinci. The feminine definite article 'la' means 'the'. The feminine adjective 'gioconda', used as a noun, means 'mirthful, joyous, jocund, gay, cheery'. The phrase is pronounced 'lah joh-KOHN-dah'.

Giaconda, created by former mechanical engineer Rick Kinzbrunner in 1980, has perhaps some of the most sought after wines in Australia and overseas - especially the Chardonnay and its much famed Pinot Noir which are legendary and sell out before release every November "en-Premiur".

Nathan was kind enough to let us barrel sample the outstanding 2011 Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in the new iso-climatic underground ageing room, which turned out to be a tunnel dug into granite. The constant 14-17 degrees Celsius makes for a slow and undisturbed maturation process that allows the wines to retain freshness with complexity. The wines are handcrafted in the case of the

Chardonnay and Pinot Noir using traditional Burgundian methods and of course top quality French oak.

For me the highlight was the barrel tasting of the 2010 and 2011 Nebiollas, which it appears, has become a passion for Rick from his Red Hill site in Beechworth. The soil is a granitic loam over decomposed gravel and clay. The clay is important allowing sustained water-release to the vine roots; while the soil, being not too rich, is ideal for wine quality as yields are naturally regulated; approximate harvest being limited to two tonnes per acre. The vines are drip irrigated in some years only when necessary to prevent stress.

At an altitude of 400 metres (1330 feet) the site, which is a south facing slope so that the vines do not receive the direct impact of the sun's rays, is relatively cool.

Vintage occurs between mid-March and mid-April depending on the season with the grapes being handpicked in the cool of the early morning.

2010 Yarra Valley & Beechworth Pinot Noir

This wine displayed beautiful deep aromatics of cherry and exotic spices with characters of forest floor evident on both the nose and palate. The wine has a rich, savoury and powerful palate, followed by grippy tannins and lingering acidity. Showing great balance with perfect weight the wine has 13.5% alcohol. This wine is of course a blend of Beechworth and Yarra Valley fruit. In short, this wine is indeed the Mona Lisa of Pinot.



Giaconda Vineyard
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Greg Bondar
 Food and Wine Editor

bonjour AND BIENVENUE TO VAMPS

Established in 1983 by Tony and Veronique and still operated by them to this day, Vamps French Bistro is situated in the heart of Paddington at popular The Five Ways.

I am not sure what Tony had in mind but interestingly I note that the word 'vamps' can have two meanings - either an upper part of a boot or shoe covering the instep and sometimes extending over the toe or it can mean a woman who uses her sex appeal to entrap and exploit men. Take your choice but either way Vamps is situated in a lovely Victorian terrace where the atmosphere is one of warmth and cosiness.

Tony always warmly greets you and before long you are enjoying cuisine that is classically French with Australian and Asian overtones to suit the Australian climate and clientele making Vamps a favourite BYO haunt for locals and visitors alike.

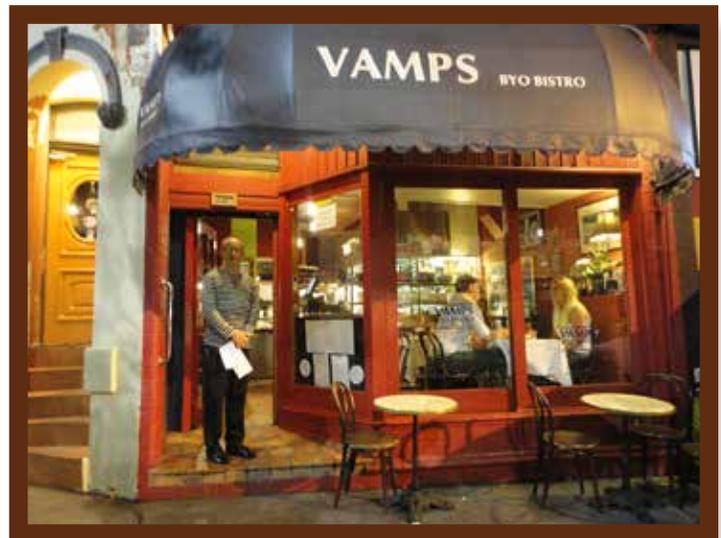
Vamps' unique Victorian terrace-house venue provides various separate areas for private dinners, big or small.

- Private Room - seats up to 12 comfortably
- Upstairs Room - seats up to 40 people on three tables
- The Deck - seats up to 20 comfortably

This tiny French restaurant shows no sign of relinquishing its hold at Paddington's Five Ways. The French menu includes, but is not limited to, pate maison, soupe a l'oignon, coq au vin and a sinfully creamy creme brulee. During my dinner with wine officianos Peter and Joe and their lovely wives we were treated to a classic French dinner experience.

For entrée we had Escargot a l'ail gratine (snails gratineed in garlic butter) along with Lamb brains in parmesan crust on pickled zucchini with sambal and Rognon diable avec epinards fletris (devilled kidneys on wilted spinach with almonds).

For the Plats Principaux (mains) there was Filet de Boeuf, sauce bernaise ou poivre (eye filet steak with



sauce bernaise or pepper) or the classic Poitrine Porc (twice cooked pork belly, crackling and braised red cabbage). The Canard aux Cerise (slow roasted duck with cherries in port reduction sauce) was so French.

Open for dinner Tuesday to Saturday from 6:30pm to 12am with the (last order 10.00pm Vamps is a real treat and Tony can only be congratulated for what is both a memorable dining night out and also the opportunity to experience a touch of France in the heart of 'Paddo'. We'll be back.

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