

BY GREG BONDAR

Wine of the month

The 2009 Koonunga Hill Seventy Six Shiraz Cabernet was released 33 years after its original predecessor, the 1976 Koonunga Hill Shiraz Cabernet – a legendary wine that is still drinking well today – and pays homage to a remarkable, long-lived style.

The 2009 vintage was characterised by some unusual weather conditions with below average winter rainfall followed by a relatively warm and dry spring. Warm summer conditions

brought on an early vintage which was not dissimilar to 2008. The wine is a blend of Shiraz (75 per cent) and Cabernet Sauvignon (25 per cent) and was matured for eight months in seasoned American and French oak barrels with Alc/Vol at 14.5%.

The 2009 has a deep, dark red core with purple at the rim, with lifted aromas of dark berried fruits including raspberry and blueberry. The wine shows good signs of integrated oak offering vanilla bean and mocha notes. On the palate, the wine displays medium

to full bodied characteristics with rich, generous dark berry fruit flavours. The balance is excellent and finishes with obvious but well integrated tannins, creating a long, lingering finish. The vineyard selection for the 2009 included parcels from Padthaway, Langhorne Creek, McLaren Vale and the Barossa Valley.

Whilst the 2009 Koonunga Hill Seventy Six Shiraz Cabernet is made for drinking now it will also benefit from a few years of extra bottle of around seven to 10 years.



Pairing wine and chocolate



Most wine aficionados maintain that pairing wine and chocolate cannot be achieved successfully, but times have changed and so have the preferences of consumers.

Most, if not all, restaurants offer a chocolate dish of some sort so it is time for restaurateurs to acknowledge that pairing the *right* wine to complement the *right* chocolate can be a match made in heaven. Whether it's a delicate white chocolate or a lively dark chocolate, there are a few tips to keep in mind when pairing chocolate with wine.

Pairing wine and chocolate is not a straightforward task as individual palates vary extensively, for example, some diners prefer the wine to be as sweet as the chocolate; for others this causes the chocolate to take on a distinct sour note. The general rule is to pair lighter-bodied wines with elegant, delicate flavoured chocolate dishes, and conversely stronger chocolate flavours (such as dark chocolate)

with more full-bodied wines. Bittersweet (dark) chocolates tend to pair well with an upfront high-alcohol Zinfandel or even a tannin-dominant Cabernet Sauvignon. The darker the chocolate the more tannins it will display. When you pair dark chocolate with a wine that has strong tannins, the chocolate will often overshadow or cancel out the wine's tannins on the palate, thus allowing more fruit

to show through. Or try a Tawny or Vintage Port, as these offer a very well balanced pairing approach.

A lighter-bodied Merlot should complement milk chocolate, along with creamy desserts such as chocolate mousse or chocolate-accented cheesecakes. Rieslings, Tokaj, Muscats or dessert wines such as Sauternes or a Barsac also tend to tolerate milk chocolates. Some sommeliers have also suggested a sparkling wine or

Champagne makes an excellent partner for milk chocolate dipped strawberries. For those preferring a stronger flavour, Port is a safe bet when looking for a perfect wine to accent milk chocolate.

White chocolate tends to be more mellow and buttery in flavour, which makes a Sherry such as a Pedro Ximénez or even a Muscato (Moscato) ideal candidates to serve with it.

Know your wine 'faults'

A wine fault or defect is, in its simplest form, an unpleasant characteristic (on the nose or palate) of a wine which often, but not always, is a result of poor winemaking practices or storage conditions leading to wine spoilage.

Many, but not all, of the compounds that cause wine faults are already naturally present in wine but at insufficient concentrations to adversely affect it. Spoilage is caused by things such as poor hygiene at the winery, exposure of the wine to excess oxygen, excess sulphur, use of dirty oak barrels or extended barrel aging, and of course, the use of poor quality corks. Factors within the control of the

restaurateur include poor storage of the wine in the restaurant caused by temperature variations, and dirty or inappropriate stemware.

Every wine waiter needs to also understand that in wine tasting there is a distinction between what is considered a flaw and a fault. Wine flaws are minor variations from normal wine characteristics and can include excessive sulphur dioxide, volatile acidity, Brettanomyces or "brett aromas" and diacetyl or buttery aromas. A wine exhibiting these qualities is usually still considered drinkable but some flaws such as volatile acidity can be considered a fault when they overwhelm other components of the wine. Wine faults are generally major attributes that make a wine

undrinkable to most wine tasters and usually centre on ethyl acetate (a nail polish taste) and the more common cork taint. The physical clues to identifying a possible fault include too much browning due to oxidation (perhaps the most common of wine faults).

To avoid any nasty conversations with consumers, wine waiters should look for and be readily able to identify the following: acetic acid in wine, often referred to as vinegar taint; high levels of ethyl acetate that imparts nail polish remover, glue, or varnish type aromas; sulphur dioxide, reminiscent of matchsticks, burnt rubber or mothballs, and cork taint, which causes earthy, mouldy, and musty aromas in wine that mask the natural fruit aromas and make the wine very unappealing. Wines in this state are often described as "corked". **OH**