

wines IN THE PULPIT



When I think of Pulpit Rock I think of two famous destinations – Pulpit Rock known as Prekestolen in Norwegian, which is one of the most profound tourist attractions in Norway and Pulpit Rock, which was first shown on a map of Blackheath in 1882, which has six lookouts connected by steps, a

boardwalk and ladders.

However, on this occasion, my visit to Pulpit Rock took me to the Southern Highlands and a picturesque vineyard along the Wombeyan Caves Road, in Bullio, via Mittagong. The vineyard name “Pulpit Rock” comes from the local name for the impressive sandstone outcrop on the hill-top above the vineyard.

The vineyard is owned by Philip and Carol-Ann Martin. Philip manages the vineyard and is responsible for all the viticultural decisions. The winemaker, Rhys Eather, makes the wine from his Hunter Valley Meerea Park winery.

In my meeting with Philip I found both his wines and his philosophy to winemaking very interesting and practical. He aims to produce rare and exceptional wines using the opportunities offered by the unique characteristics of their vineyard.

The Pulpit Rock Estate is situated on a 90ha property in the Southern Highlands but the vineyard is a mere 4ha with plantings of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir at an elevation of over 700m on soils which are shallow and of low-fertility. They are derived from the granitic porphyry bedrock - a fine-grained igneous rock. The soils are shallow low-yielding sandy loams over granitic porphyry bedrock which can be seen on the surface in some sections of the vineyard.

The vineyard is laid out with rows 3m apart, a vine spacing of 1.5m, and divided into three blocks. The climate can be described as a ‘cool-climate’ region with cool to cold winters, occasional snow, with long, and mild spring and autumn conditions with frosts confined to mid-winter.

Philip begins his grape harvest any time from mid-March



Philip Martin

to mid-April depending on the seasonal weather conditions. I was impressed to learn that harvesting is all done by hand with the Chardonnay ripening within days of the Pinot Noir. As part of his viticultural philosophy, Philip aims for ‘low intervention’ which in essence means allowing the vines to grow naturally as far as possible, in order to allow the wine to express a distinctive ‘terroir’ a French term for all the characteristics of the vineyard site that is imparted to a particular wine.

I tasted two exceptional wines during my visit and I must confess that my expectations were exceeded with both the Chardonnay and in particular the Pinot Noir. All Philip’s wines are bottled under Stelvin screw caps to ensure freshness, controlled maturation, and to avoid the possibility of cork taint. I must confess again that I would have liked to see the Pinot under cork as I think cork can add extra complexity to wine.

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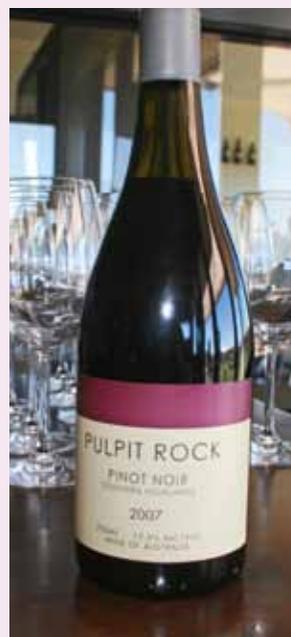
Vineyard: 2877 Wombeyan Caves Road, Bullio, Via Mittagong,

Website: www.pulpitrockestate.com.au

Greg Bondar

Food and Wine Editor

WINE OF THE MONTH



Can you find an alternative word for “pinot-phile”

2007 Pinot Noir

As a self-confessed ‘pinot-phile’ the wine colour is deep carmine with the nose showing florals and a hint of eucalypt underscoring black cherry and spice. The palate is sweet and savoury, showing cherry and raspberry flavours matched with smoky barrel influences. The tannins are still quite muscular and the wine has great intensity and opulence with a long finish. The wine is matured up to 18 months in oak, assembled, then lightly egg-white fined, minimally filtered and bottled. Again at \$49 per bottle this is a real winner and a great wine for special occasions.

magnificent

MEGALONG BEEF

Starting at Blackheath, the road down into Megalong Valley, in the World Heritage Blue Mountains, is a slow 15 minute drive that winds its way through deep green rainforest which changes into eucalyptus forest and open farming land. The road was established in the early 1900s and travellers can look up and see the long white buildings of the once famous Mark Foy's Hydro Majestic Hotel with its elaborate lines in direct contrast to the rugged cliffs and rainforest below.

'Megalong' is an Aboriginal word for 'valley under the rock' where settlement began from around 1838. A number of



Craig

years ago, a young boy regularly visited the Blue Mountains, where his grandparents lived. He now owns property in the valley as he not only saw the land as a lifestyle opportunity but the cattle he grazes on it are now the essence of a new business known as Megalong Beef.

Megalong Beef is situated on the vast and sweeping property 'Olana' which is a Persian word meaning 'my house in the valley' and was named

after the famous New England gothic mansion of the 19th Century American landscape artist Frederick Church.

Megalong Beef, owned and run by Craig, aims to produce the very finest beef of exceptional quality, rather than quantity beef, which is evident by the way Craig raises and manages his cattle. He allows champion stock to roam freely on the property with its unique microclimate and rich granite soils.

Craig's stock is essentially the Black Angus breed which are grass fed, followed by a 110 day stress free grain feeding

program resulting in exceptional taste and tenderness in all the cuts offered at Craig's Katoomba and Wentworth Falls butcher shops or indeed at the farm gate in the Megalong Valley. All the beef is aged and expertly packaged to lock in the freshness – the meat is never frozen so it is ready to eat on purchase or delivery.



Most Sundays Craig opens up the farm gate, which he calls the 'BeefDoor' for visitors to view the

magnificent surroundings of Megalong Valley and of course the cattle roaming the beautiful Olana property. Visitors are given the opportunity to sample and buy the various cuts of beef and even enjoy a BBQ lunch surrounded by Craig's vintage cars and music played by special guests - you must try the sausages at the BBQ – wow!

For those wishing to give Gift Card vouchers, which can be redeemed for any Megalong Beef product, Craig has introduced 'Megalong Dollars' valued up to \$150 thereby making them a perfect gift for the discerning beef lover.

Megalong Valley 'BeefDoor' is situated on The Six Foot Track and open most Sundays but check out

www.megalongbeef.com for opening times and online sales, call **4787 6013**, or email

info@megalongbeef.com

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