



DIGGERS BLUFF

## Digger's Vineyard - 2012

by Tim O'Callaghan

G'day folks,

We're well and truly into Winter now and the pruning season is in full flight. I can hear the crunching and grinding of the machine pruners all around me but for the handmade winemaker it's wet weather outfits and underneath, a thick beanie and thermal underwear. These traditionalists will persevere with hand snips through cold, rain, and of course, the sticky mud.

You might ask why I choose to prune this way. The answer is I want to make genuine hand made, high quality wine in my own style.

The hand pruner is able to control the shape of the vine to promote ventilation while controlling exactly how many buds are left on a vine, doing this will make a vine produce less fruit in a bumper year, stowing the excess energy in its root system which is used in the harder years resulting in consistent quality fruit from year to year. The great ancient vineyards of the Barossa are the reward for more than 150 years of effort from skilled hand pruners.



*You can see on the right we have severed a large part of the vine leaving a small portion to produce strong low yielding canes.*

For all this time the vines have taken minerals into their root systems, producing better flavours and colour as they age. Spending all Winter out in the weather might seem a strange way to spend your time but when the sun comes out and a double rainbow forms over the green crops and hills you do not want to be anywhere else.

This year ‘mother nature’ put on a special show a huge hail storm left up to 1 ½ feet of ice through the hills. It was quite a sight looking up at the ranges as they appeared to be capped in white snow. We went for a drive and half the Barossa were there tobogganing on boogie boards and of course many “snow” ball fights.



*The Barossa Ranges looking spectacular, as it does year round.*

The 2012 Vintage is looking good, I do not like to jump the gun often but 2012 shows all the hallmarks of being right up there. I have been very busy this last 2 months pruning in the day and making up new blends in the winery at night. The first to be put together was the 2010 Grenache Mataro Shiraz Stray Dog blend. This wine shows the floral characteristics of Grenache, the Shiraz component brings rich full palate and Mataro ensures good strong tannin and colour. This wine is no light weight but still remains soft and like all my wines will age well. Very reasonably priced it is a good value wine that can sit nicely alongside most food. This new release is available now.



*If anyone wants to ring and book a tasting, this will be your tasting environment.*



For a couple of years now I have been making the Lap Dog a combination of Semillon, Chenin Blanc and a very small amount of Alicante Bouchet. The Lap Dog has been very well received I have enjoyed making it, but in order to make this wine I have to hire plant because my small cellar is not equipped with the specialist equipment needed to handle white wine. There is 8 dozen bottles of Lap Dog left and I will not be making one this year - in the future it might make a comeback.

‘07 Watch Dog,

The last few years have been tough in the wine industry, especially for a small one man show like mine. This is due to many things, the rise of the Australian Dollar and the GFC has made export very difficult. So a lot of stock has been dropped back into the domestic market and the competition has become fierce. Sometimes you have to make tough decisions, I made one such decision last year and reluctantly sold my 08 & 09 vintages as bulk wine to create necessary cash flow. So there will be no 08 or 09 Watch Dog bottled. I bottled some 2007 Watch Dog but it was a difficult vintage and looking at the wine today it JUST falls short of the standard I set for my flagship wine. This is the bad news for me but good news for you, because I will be offering this stock unlabelled, to you at just \$90 / dozen. It is good wine that has aged quickly so it's ready to drink and delivers good value for money.

The good news is that the new release Watch Dog is from the exceptional 2010 Vintage. Because I like to present this wine with age I will be making a little more than I sell each year so I will claw back the bottle age that I have lost.

The Sly Dog has proven to be the most popular of my range. This has a lot to do with what the wine delivers for its price. Full bodied Barossa Cabernet Sauvignon that made properly holds it's own against the better known varieties of the region. 2009 is the current vintage and stock should see me through until Christmas.

‘07 Top Dog ,

Barossa Shiraz has a justified reputation of one of the great wines of the world and I am proud to make my small contribution to that reputation. This Shiraz is the oldest available in my cellar at the moment, it shows the way my style ages and is ready to drink right now.



*Above we have samples of individual barrels containing parcels of vineyards that have been kept separate for the entire winemaking process. This leaves us with many more options to create full bodied balanced wines.*



*I guess this is what they call a dog's life.*

Because I am a one man business I can save by taking less for myself and driving rattly old vehicles that only run for me. What I cannot avoid is the cost of maturing wine and storing it. I made a commitment to have aged wine available from the cellar, 5 years bottle age really shows my style in its best light.

I also have available in my cellar 9 aged magnums of 2007 Sly Dog Cabernet Sauvignon. These big format bottles are always a highlight at a dinner party.

I have always tried to sell my wines at the most reasonable price. In the case of Top Dog, Watch Dog and Stray Dog I've had the same price since their introduction. In the case of Sly Dog only one small price rise. You do not have to be a financial genius to know that my costs have gone up in that time so with the new release there will be a small price rise on Stray Dog and Sly Dog.

I realise my newsletter is not going to win any prizes for literature, like anything else I do in my business I do it myself and as long as it keeps you in touch and informed its done its job.

Being a little old fashioned myself I still prefer to get a written letter in the post. I understand that not everybody has the time for this, so with your orders please let us know which you would prefer hardcopy or email for we are happy to accommodate either.

So in wrapping up I would like to thank you for all your support in the past and look forward to the future.

Yours sincerely



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