



Dancers and didgeridoo players at Adelaide Central Market.



“Back and Open For Business”

DIDGERIDOOS BLARING, SAVOUR AUSTRALIA 2013 PUTS THE FOCUS ON WINES FROM DOWN UNDER

by Kate Webber / photos by John Krüger



Josh Wesson (left), sommelier, author and Best Cellars founder, with Chester Osborn of d’Arenberg.

In September, more than 750 wine professionals from around the world converged upon Adelaide for Savour Australia 2013, the largest Australian wine forum ever held. Over three days attended business panels on market trends, had dinners in boathouses and galleries and attended tastings in libraries and museums. The country’s top chefs prepared their favorite dishes and presented them to us paired with iconic glasses of wine. There was no holding back, nothing under the table. Because as Jeremy Oliver, wine writer and Savour’s Master of Ceremonies said on the very first day, “Australia is back and open for business.”

Andrew Cheesman, Wine Australia’s Chief Executive, said the event “aimed to get the world’s wine influencers excited about and engaged with Australian wine.” To engage us, the first evening we were invited to a celebration in the Adelaide Central Market, where among the didgeridoos, cheese stalls and buckets of freshly shucked oysters was a strategically mapped tasting, with every section of the marketplace representing a different wine region in Australia. In a row dedicated to Barossa Valley, winemaker John Duval told me, “We hope to correct some of the misconceptions about Australian wine. We need not just to be referred to as an Australian style, or even a Barossa style. This should add nuance and depth to Australia. A great opportunity for people to see in depth what Australia can do.”

Tastings Galore

Wine Australia took great care in crafting their Landmark Australia Tastings, which focused on the best examples of current styles and historic perspectives of each tasting's theme. The first day I attended "Chardonnay (r) evolution," looking at 16 benchmark Chardonnays from around the country from 2004 to 2011 (the standout that day being the 2011 De Bortoli Reserve Release from Yarra Valley). The second day at "Cabernet and Friends," I had the opportunity to taste a 1994 Cab/Malbec from Windouree (Clare Valley), a 1998 Penfolds 707 (South Australia), and an elegant 2007 Cullen Diane Madeline (Margaret River). The tasting made its point very well: There is no way to indicate an "Australian" style of Cabernet, especially considering that if you lay a map of Australia over a map of Europe, Margaret River and Coonawarra are roughly the distance between Priorat and Istanbul.



Landmark Australia Tasting "Shiraz the Australian Way."



John Duval of John Duval Wines.

and "Structured, Thinking and Drinking," which was perhaps the most interesting section, showcasing varieties and styles that surprised us all. In fact, Savour could have run an entire day on grapes the world didn't know Australia did well—and I mean *really* well: Aglianico, Zinfandel and Fiano from Barossa; Sangiovese, Nebbiolo and Barbera from Victoria; Tempranillo from McLaren Vale; Verdelho from Langhorne Creek.

These weren't the only wines to which we had access. At the walk-around "discovery bars" guests could taste wines divided into categories such as "The Aromatics," "GSM, MSG and other TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms)"

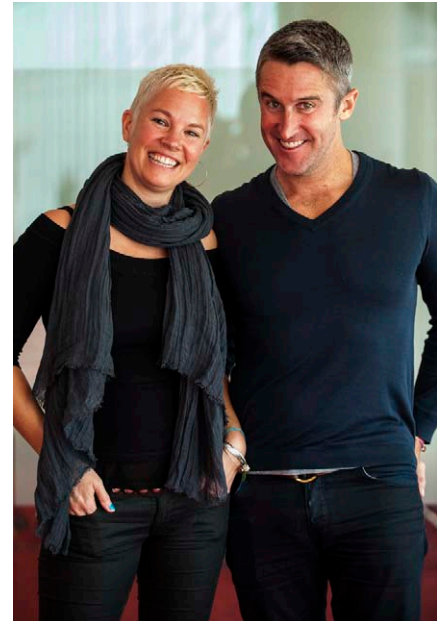
Down to Business

But Savour wasn't all fun and games, it was a business forum, and Wine Australia had secured experts from around the world including Master Sommeliers, economists, winemakers and journalists. Several panels focused on developing markets and brands outside of Australia, and were used as an opportunity for the Australian wine industry to ask the rest of the world, "What now?"

In a panel entitled "Excuse Me Waiter, Where's the Australian Section, Please?" five sommeliers from around the world all presented the same hard truth: in their markets, Australia's story had been lost to the consumer. Carla Rzeszewski from the Spotted Pig, the Breslin and the John Dory Oyster Bar in New York City said, "We're looking for wines that are driven by winemakers themselves, driven by personalities, families, histories. That's something that's huge, and something that gives Australia a massive target in terms of humanizing the wines. Consumers want to know who's making the wines. Educating in terms of what's happening in this country in massive, and no one in New York knows about it."

And so on the last day, 170 wineries presented their wines at the Grand Tasting and tried to tell their story. Savour's success was in proving to us all that Australia is no longer one story and one brand, but 2,400 wineries in 65 different regions. Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley Shiraz, Clare Valley Riesling and Margaret River Cabernet: these were the stories of Savour.

Yes, it's true: Australia is back and open for business.



Carla Rzeszewski, Wine Director, The Spotted Pig, The Breslin and John Dory Oyster Bar with Richard Betts, Master Sommelier.



Winemaker Tom Barry of Jim Barry Wines.

The Old Is New Again

Some of the new faces of Australian wines are the third and fourth generations of previously established vineyards. Australia's First Families of Wine, a collective comprised of 12 multi-generational family-owned wine producers, represents some of the best known names in Australia including Henschke, d'Arenberg, Yalumba and Jim Barry Wines. Tom Barry, third-generation winemaker of Jim Barry wines who was just named Young Winemaker of the Year by *Gourmet Traveller* in Sydney, spent his time at Savour trying to promote the qualities of Clare Valley.

"I think people sometimes forget how long Australia has been producing wine for, and hopefully people who visited Savour walked away refreshed and reinvigorated about what Australia and the Clare Valley has to offer," Barry said. "It is common knowledge amongst the industry that Australia is now pushing regionality and diversity internationally; it may take some time before consumers really pick up and run with the amazing diversity, style and quality of wines that we can produce." Let's hope that's not the case.