

NEWSLETTER



Steels Creek Estate

June 2009

Welcome

Hello again from Steel Creek Estate – this is the first year that we have sent out two Newsletters in the same year. But then again it has been an exceptional year for us at Steels Creek Estate with the Black Saturday bushfires providing some uninvited excitement!

At the Cellar door

Cellar Door is now operating as usual for business on weekends and public holidays from 10:00am to 6:00pm or you can phone to see if we are about. A big thank-you to all those who have been to visit since the fires, we really appreciate your support. Talking with customers at the cellar door has been good therapy and helps with the healing.

Since the bushfire we have hosted a number of small groups for a private wine tasting in the winery. The highlight for us was a group that arrived in a 1952 Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board bus. Dare we say, Simon recalls travelling in these buses around Melbourne? Your group may not have such an interesting vehicle to travel in but we invite all small groups of up to 30, to share the experience and join us at Cellar Door.

The 2001 Shiraz will only be on tasting until 14 June. As always stocks seem to become very limited when a wine is drinking at its peak. Our 2001 Shiraz is drinking beautifully, its soft velvety mouth feel complemented by spice and pepper has made it very popular. Especially with our new customers that have discovered Steels Creek since the bushfires made our little piece of paradise more widely known. As a result we are rapidly selling out of 2001 Shiraz. Limited quantities remain, be quick to snare the last bottles.

We will be releasing our 2002 Shiraz over the weekend of the Shortest Lunch. For Steels Creek Estate the 2002 and 2003 vintages were very low yielding, thereby producing more concentrated and powerful wines. As expected the 2002 Shiraz is more intense than 2001 with a firmer mouth feel and savoury tannins. It also has some very unusual lantana notes within the bouquet of black fruits and of course plenty of pepper as is typical of the Shiraz from our vineyard. This wine received 91 points from James Halliday and will be available from cellar door from 20 June.

Shortest Lunch

The Yarra Valley Smaller Wineries "Eastern Subaru" Shortest Lunch is on again, this is our 10th year. Come and join us on 20 and 21 June 2009 from 10:00am – 5:00pm both days. Simon will be serving on the tasting table so this is a great opportunity to ask the winemaker any questions you have on the wines and viticulture.

The chefs from Red Kitchen will again be serving their fine fare of slowly braised grass fed Yarra Valley beef with a piquant caper sauce or smoked, marinated and slowly baked eggplant. Both dishes are served with creamy potato bake. Complement your meal with your choice of yummy Red Kitchen relishes and preserves. Our chef Stephen says this is perfect food for a cold winter's day and having tried both it is easy for us to agree, delicious! Stephen has a passion for food and wine and is always happy to chat about both. To ensure the freshest of local ingredients are used Stephen will be joining us at a friend's farm to dig new potatoes for the potato bake a few days before the event.

Our estate wines are also available by the glass for you to enjoy with your meal. Full details of this year's event are in the attached Shortest Lunch brochure.

The once only \$5 purchase of a Shortest Lunch wine glass is your passport to all the Smaller Wineries participating in this event, \$2 of which is donated to the CFA.

Gardens and Landscaping

It is now June and garden and vines at Steels Creek are only just starting to think it is autumn. In March and April all the fire affected plants shot new growth so it is easy to understand why they did not want to give up all this new foliage straight away. Over the last few months we have cut back most of the garden plants to remove the parts damaged by the fire. For most areas of the garden this has created the illusion that the fire was never there at all.

We have removed the burnt red gum sleepers from around the driveway garden and are replacing them with yellow sandstone. We decided to make the most of this opportunity and update the driveway garden and include a paved area for seating. Paved areas need to be level, which means a retaining wall and earthmoving to level the land. In a moment of insanity we decided to build a dry-stone retaining wall and ordered 12 cubic metres of sandstone. Laying this rock is proving not only physically demanding as we try to manhandle stones into position but also mentally challenging as it is like having one enormous jigsaw and no picture of what the finished puzzle should look like. Our progress is slow and it is almost certain that the retaining wall will not be completed in time for the shortest lunch. After the wall is complete we still have the paving and garden to do, however with the vineyard beckoning for attention we will have to postpone this project until spring. The new garden will be planted with succulents and water wise plants and while we wait for the garden to be completed we will continue to divide and propagate our existing plants.

In the vineyard

We managed to organise our first working bee in May and our volunteers helped us to pick up burnt bird netting and melted drip lines, removed burnt posts and made the vineyard safer by securing all the loose trellising wires. With time to spare and lots of energy they also removed the burnt fencing along the western boundary. If you would like to participate in any future working bees please email and we will let you know when the next one is.

We are now preparing for the daunting task of pruning the vines, a process that normally takes time but has the added complications this year of deciding how to resurrect the fire damaged vines. A significant area in our East Block has sustained substantial damage. Where there is life there is hope – that is, where we find green tissue this will tell us the vine has survived. This may entail pruning all the dead wood from the crown or at worst cutting the vine off at ground level to encourage shoots from the base of the vine. Spring will tell if this has been successful – if not, new plantings will be required. Either way we are not expecting full recovery of the affected vines in the 2010 vintage.

An important task in conjunction with the pruning this year is the replacement of burnt trellis posts. As previously mentioned we have to replace 150 posts throughout the vineyard. Insurance will cover the cost but obtaining the appropriate contractors in a timely fashion will be difficult.

Our kangaroo fence around the vineyard was very badly damaged and repairs will be delayed pending the completion of the vineyard repairs. A sad consequence of the bushfire is that the kangaroo numbers have been significantly reduced and hence may not pose a threat to the vines in the immediate future.

Water

As for Melbourne and its surrounding areas rainfall at Steels Creek is still well below normal. For the first 5 months of this year our total is 115mls, with only 1.5mls each month in January and February, 47mls March, 50mls April and 15mls for May.

Signage

Those of you that have visited since the fire may have noticed that our large sign at the corner of Sewell and Hargreaves roads is missing. It was made with cement sheeting however due to the intensity of the fire no trace of it can be found.

We have now ordered a new sign and hope to have it installed in time for the shortest lunch making it a little easier for new customers to find us.

Shortest Lunch Specials Up to 20% Discount on Wine

Newsletter recipients who attend this event are eligible for a minimum 10% discount on all bottled wine purchases. Better still buy a dozen or more and receive 20% off! Just mention this offer when making your purchase.

Photos

At last we have organised photos of the fire damage to the vineyard on our website. There are no photos of the actual fire as both of us were far too busy putting out spot fires after the initial front passed over to be taking photos. There is however a dramatic photo of the ash cloud from the Wandong/Kilmore fire taken at 2.30pm the day of the fire. It was a couple of weeks before either of us could face taking any photos. The photos on the web were taken from late February till mid March when we had our first significant rainfall after the fire. You can also see how quickly some of the vines responded after the fire with fresh new shoots. To view the photos go to the Steels Creek Estate website www.steelsckestate.com.au and select the movies tab. While you are looking at the website why not also register to receive our newsletters via email. It is easy, just select the cellar door tab and click to subscribe under Newsletters and fill in your details.

Go Green

This newsletters go green tip comes from our customers. Whenever you visit a wine region for tastings and purchases toss a couple of empty wine cartons or wine carry bags in the boot. By reusing your wine cartons you can eliminate wasteful packaging.

If you cannot make it to the Yarra Valley our wine is also available online www.steelsckestate.com.au.

In the interests of saving paper and printing we no longer include an Order Form with this Newsletter. If you do not have access to the internet and hence our online order form, then we will gladly send you a form or we will take your order over the telephone.

We hope to see you soon at Steels Creek Estate

Best wishes and Regards,

Simon and Joanne



Steels Creek Estate

1 Sewell Road Steels Creek VIC
PO Box 282 Yarra Glen VIC 3775
Phone (03) 5965 2448

Email: scemail@steelsckestate.com.au
Web: www.steelsckestate.com.au