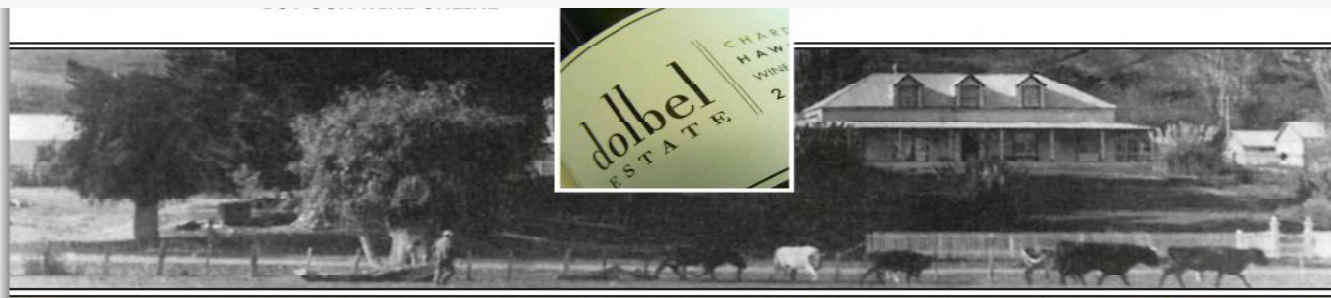




“HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINES” – Autumn 2009



This newsletter comes a little later than we had originally intended. Since our last letter to you we have been very busy. The 2009 harvest is now nearly over and became much more of a battle towards the end than we might have expected from the otherwise great summer. More of the vintage further in this newsletter.

We have been putting extra emphasis into our sales in the past few months and are getting rewarded for our efforts. Not only is our range of wines now about to be significantly expanded, but we are also beginning to be recognized in the trade as offering high quality wines at sensible prices for a small boutique producer. You will soon be able to find Dolbel Estate wines in a greater spread of wine shops and restaurants.

In striving to achieve our quality goals we do have a problem or two. Our first goal is to produce wines “with a twist”. That means that at times our wines will not necessarily show the usual New Zealand style and our last newsletter illustrated that our Sauvignon Blanc is an example of Dolbel being a bit different. But we all share Winemaker Tony Prichard’s vision of letting the fully ripe grapes lead the style of wine that will be produced. An additional problem for us though, is that we will only produce a Dolbel wine if the grape quality is good enough for the job. The success of the vintage is vital. All our grapes are hand harvested and kept as whole berries until we want fermentation to start and that means that we can be selective in the vineyard. It also means that from our single vineyard grape quantities for Dolbel Wines will always be restricted. At best we will only produce small quantities of each wine style and at worst there will be vintages when a particular style will not be produced at all. Such is the case with our Unoaked Chardonnay. This has become one of the most popular of our wines but has only been produced in the 2007 vintage. Stocks are running out and we have unfortunately not been able to produce an Unoaked Chardonnay from either the 2008 or now the 2009 vintages. If you like the wine – get in quick!

Our Barrique Fermented Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc have been produced in both the 2008 and 2009 vintages. As you perhaps have guessed, we don’t hurry things along at Dolbel Wines. We prefer to care for our wines and only release them when they are

ready. Two new releases are announced in this newsletter and both can be ordered now. They are the 2007 Merlot Cabernet and the 2008 Rosé. Full notes of both these wines are included in this newsletter. The 2008 Barrique Fermented Chardonnay, 2008 Sauvignon Blanc and the 2006 Methode Traditionnelle (bubbles!) will both be released later this year. The Chardonnay is looking as good as ever, and we especially have great expectations for the Methode. This has had a greatly extended period on lees and we have set out sights on being up there with New Zealand’s best. Watch the next newsletter for details.

So, what happened to the 2009 vintage?



Aerial view of Dolbel Estate vineyard

At the start of the vintage we battled a few frosts. Not as bad as past years but still we were grateful for the newly installed frost protection windmills. The weather for budburst and flowering was perfect although strangely the fruit set was not as prolific as usual. Despite this we still set a good crop and crop thinning was hardly needed. The summer was great. The new plantings of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay developed superbly and we became quite excited about getting additional quantities of grapes for our wines, provided the grapes made the quality targets. Drought was forecast but was not really an issue as rain events happened throughout the season. The shyer bearing and earlier ripening varieties all ripened slightly earlier than usual but the grapes were clean, disease free and everything was set for a fabulous vintage. But that was not to be. Just at the point when harvest decisions were being made, the skies clouded over, cyclone weather conditions arrived with rain, followed by warm humid conditions and then thunderstorms and more

torrential rain. Within thirty-six hours Dolbel grapes were battling botrytis. A rush to hand harvest selecting the best grapes and leaving the infected behind saved the vintage. Fortunately we saved enough to make all our wine varieties except Unoaked Chardonnay but the quantities were all less than expected. 2009 vintage will be in short supply.

It is interesting that our small parcel of Syrah survived the deluge unscathed. Being a later ripening variety with loose bunches the grapes were less vulnerable at that stage and the open bunches allow water to flow and ensure good air movement for drying. We're impressed with the Syrah and have made the decision to plant extra vines to make a commercial Dolbel wine for the future.

What happened to the Merlot Cabernet and the Rosé?

At last, they're here! We have taken a bit longer than expected to get these two wines ready for the market. On the way we have had to adapt the label to include bar codes for our retail outlets and ensure that we meet the label requirements for any export opportunity. We have also been treating the Merlot Cabernet with "kid gloves" to ensure that the quality we have so carefully nurtured did not suffer during the bottling and settling process. Both wines are packed in our six pack boxes and can now be ordered on line or by phone from our 0800 number, or even with the order form enclosed with this newsletter! Tony Prichard's notes on the harvest, wine making and tasting are now available to view on our web site but we can't resist the chance to spread the word here as well.

Dolbel Estate Merlot Cabernet 2007

This is the first red wine to be produced under the Dolbel label. In 2006 we tried but didn't quite succeed in making a wine that achieved the quality requirements we have set for Dolbel. That 2006 wine was perfectly acceptable, has improved with age, and has been sold to friends, shareholders and those in the know under our alternative Springfield label. It has even been selling well as a "House" wine in a Christchurch café. While not on our price list, this 06 Merlot Cabernet under our Springfield label can be purchased by contacting Carole on our 0800 DOLBEL phone line. It is packed in dozen lots and is priced at \$13.50, including GST (plus freight), per bottle.

The grapes from the 2007 vintage were superb, fully ripe with intense berry fruit characters. The Merlot came from our Springfield vineyard and the small parcel of Cabernet Sauvignon came from friends in the Gimblett Gravels area. All the grapes were hand harvested; the wines were fermented in tanks and then matured in a mix of new and old French barrels for fourteen months.

The resulting wine shows fabulous colour, a real "French" element to the structure and texture, good fine grained tannins and rich mid palate and length. With all the quality boxes ticked this wine just had to make the grade for Dolbel and has now set the standard for us

for the future. And to let you into a secret – the 2008 Merlot Cabernet that is happily enjoying quietly resting in French oak barriques promises to be another blockbuster. Meanwhile we hope you enjoy the 2007 Merlot Cabernet. It is ready for drinking now with the initial aging having taken place in the winery but it can be expected to develop further as it ages and we are hoping for notes of licorice and aniseed as the fruit structure begins to mature.

Dolbel Estate Rosé 2008

This wine almost "just happened"! As mentioned in the last newsletter, this wine is made from free run Merlot juice and is fermented completely dry. This juice comes from separating a portion of the free run juice immediately at crushing in a process known as saignée leaving behind a higher skin to juice ratio for the Merlot Cabernet wine production. The free run juice was fantastic, being light in colour and very sweet, and because of the superb quality of the Merlot fruit, the resulting wine made from this free run juice is of a calibre rarely seen in New Zealand Rosé. The wine was given a short fermentation in oak barriques and a small portion of the Merlot from the original fruit was added back to lift the colour of the final wine. Our Rosé is fermented totally dry to give a crisp finish among the overtones of strawberries and other berry fruits.

Normally Rosé wines tend to be introduced for the summer season. Taking things in our usual gentle style at Dolbel Estate meant that there was no way this Rosé could be ready for release last summer. Also it is a Rosé with a difference and to condemn it to a "summer drink" is to lose sight of the fact that like all Dolbel wines it is intended to be drunk with food. Its bigger style does give this Rosé year round appeal. We suggest serving it only slightly chilled to preserve the fresh berry flavours and try it with desserts especially chocolate as a sensible alternative to the usual "Sticky". We are also discovering it is great with hors d'oeuvres. There's a recipe challenge coming along here for our new sales agent, Stella Lovering (see below).

We hope you take the opportunity to try these two new wines and that you do enjoy them. One of the things we are very interested in is getting comments from our customers so feel free to call Carole on our 0800 phone even if just for a short chat.

The other way to get feedback is to show our wines to friends and customers and we certainly do enjoy running tastings. Our next major showing will be held in Spring with the release of the 2008 vintage white wines and the Methode Traditionnelle. With the extended range now including the Merlot Cabernet and the Rosé, that could be quite some event. We will make sure that you are invited!

Meanwhile, look out for Dolbel wines on your restaurant wine list or on the shelves of your local wine shop. We won't be everywhere as we are far too small for that but it would be fun to spread the word by asking for us.

Who are the new team members at Dolbel Estate

Wines?

Jeff Taylor



We are very excited that Jeff Taylor of Taylored Wines, has come on board to handle sales of Dolbel wine in the Auckland region. Jeff has a long history of involvement in the hospitality/wine industry. After managing Scenic Cellars for 5 years until 1993, Jeff became part owner of Saints Waterfront Brasserie, which he managed for 9 years. From 2003-2005 Jeff developed "the Mount" in Mount Eden, after which he sold his share to his business partner.

Taylored Wines was established in 2006 after Jeff was approached by a number of wineries keen to increase their wine sales. Jeff's goal is to establish a market place in both on and off premise for the group of smaller wineries he represents. We feel very fortunate to be included as part of Jeff's vision.

Stella Lovering



We are delighted to introduce Stella Lovering who has joined us to tackle sales in the Wellington region. Many Wellingtonians might remember Stella from her days at Marbles Restaurant in Kelburn or in later times running her homestay "Edgewater" in Karaka Bay. It was over a dinner recently with some of the Dolbel Wines team (enjoying, of course, our wines) that Stella, enthused by the combination of the wines with food exclaimed, ".... these wines are fantastic, everybody should be drinking them, I've got some time available right now, let me get out there and spread the word!...." Well, who could refuse that sort of offer from one of Wellington's best known restaurateurs and "Foodies", so Stella joined the team and as good as her promise is rapidly spreading the word.

Dolbel wines are made with the intention of accompanying food and now with our own in house

"Foodie", Stella has suggested that we should be providing recipes that go with a Dolbel wine. You'll find the first of these further in the newsletter.

On a closing note, our 2007 Chardonnay was recently awarded a four-star rating (Very Good to Excellent) by a Cuisine magazine tasting panel. To quote the judges – *"The experience of Tony Prichard (former long-serving chief winemaker at Church Road) comes through in this accomplished symphony of ripe fruit and rich oak complexity. Put it to work with a smoked fish pie."* Check out the May 2009 issue for more details.

All the best,
Andy Nurse and the Dolbel Team

Stella's Recipe

Great with Dolbel Estate Sauvignon Blanc

Fish, Fennel and Potato Stew

Serves 6

4 potatoes
4 fillets of meaty fish (Groper, Bluenose, Hapuka, Snapper)
4 cloves garlic
1 stick celery
1 carrot
2 leeks
1tsp fennel seeds
1 litre fish or chicken stock

Method:

Peel potatoes and cut into even sizes. Put into a pot and cover with water and salt. Cook until tender. Drain.

In a heavy based pot, sauté with olive oil, diced garlic, celery and carrot until tender. Add chopped leeks. Sauté until leeks are soft. Add fennel seeds.

Pour in stock and bring to boil. Add fish pieces and potatoes and bring to boil again. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve immediately in a soup bowl with crusty French bread.

Contact Details:

Dolbel Estate Wines
Tel: 0800 DOLBEL (365 235)
Fax: 04 472 3635
Email: wines@dolbelestate.co.nz
Website: www.dolbelestate.co.nz