

Private Cellar

14 Aug 2009 by Tamlyn Currin

Tamlyn Currin tasted the following wines shown by UK importers Private Cellar in London last March. Private Cellar are, inter alia, UK importers of the impressive collection of Australian wines named, variously, Songlines, Bylines and Leylines, made by a strong team advised by John Duval, who used to make Penfolds Grange and now has his own excellent label. Prices are per bottle including VAT unless otherwise stated. JR

DRY WHITES

Mayol Sauvignon Blanc 2007 Vin de Pays d'Oc 15 Drink 2009

Maison Mayol is a joint venture between négociant-grower Stéphane Vedeau and professor of winemaking at Montpellier, Claude Serra.
Pungent grassiness. Very much green peach on the palate. Fresh, balanced and easy but unremarkable. 12% (TC)
£6.99 Private Cellar

Ch de Marsan Sauvignon Blanc 2008 Bordeaux 15 Drink 2009

70% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Semillon.
Slightly smoky, late-summer fragrance of drying grass. Distinctly cheesy-leesy influence lingering over ripe citrus and passion fruit. A very slightly sweaty finish. 12.5% (TC)
£7.95 Private Cellar

Fattori, Gregoris Pinot Grigio 2007 IGT Veneto 16 Drink 2009

Light apple and green melon. It has a supple, rounded texture – like biting into a golden ripe pear. A smudge of almond flour. Very pretty, and infinitely more to offer than most Pinot Grigios out there. 12.5% (TC)
£8.95 Private Cellar

Villa Wolf Pinot Gris 2007 Pfalz 16 Drink 2009-10

Unnecessarily heavy bottle.
Lemony, evening flower scent and warm honey. Slight spritz. Very lively, bounces, although it doesn't quite taste bone dry. Pears in syrup and silky lychee flesh. Nutty on the finish. Some length. 12% (TC)
£8.35 Private Cellar

Dom de Bel Air 2007 Mâcon- Villages 16 Drink 2009-10

Sunshine-ripened apples and baked cinnamon spice. Broad, mouthfilling apple butter and then dainty lemon grass. Smoky sage-leaf. Very moreish and giving. GV. 13% (TC)
£9.95 Private Cellar

Dom Anne-Sophie Debavelaere, Clos du Moulin à Vent 2006 Rully 17.5 Drink 2009-12

This is something a little special. The nose is intense and compelling – a perfectly crystallised kaleidoscope of melon, lime and kiwi cut by delicately scored pumpkin seed savour. A breath-catching balance of weight and elegance. Deep and unfolding. Grilled nuts. Layered, fine and hard to spit. 13% (TC)
£13.95 Private Cellar

Dom Thierry Matrot 2006 St-Romain Blanc 16 Drink 2009-12

Smoky, flinty, cut glass. Very linear and mineral. The light finger-tip touch of white pepper, then a handful of crunchy apple and green pear. Curves and angles. 12.5% (TC)
£18.95 Private Cellar

Josef Leitz, Rudesheimer Riesling Kabinett 2007 Rheingau 16 Drink 2009-10

Delicate sweet pears on the nose. Spritzy, peachy with mineral, flinty edges. Jasmine fronds. Lime. Lunchtime, garden and sunshine! 9.5% (TC)
£11.75 Private Cellar

Bishop's Head Riesling 2008 Waipara 16 Drink 2009-10

Such a floral nose! Frangipani and honeysuckle in the early morning. Off-dry. Delicate. Quite Gewurz-like with lychee and pear juice. Some ginger and lime. Not typically Riesling but a lovely drink to accompany the sweetness of shellfish. 12% (TC)
£9.95 Private Cellar

Springfontein, Terroir Selection Chenin Blanc 2008 Walker Bay 16 Drink late 2009-11

Unfiltered. 5 months in barrique, 30% new.
Gold lights. That smell of honey on warm bread. Minerals. A slowly rising crescendo; Asian pear, then ginger, then honey, then buttery bread. Some spice and leesy notes. Smudgy floral. 13.5% (TC)
£11.95 Private Cellar

Songlines, Bylines Semillon 2008 Hunter Valley 17 Drink 2010-15

Light, steely. Even a hint of goat's cheese! Lots of chewy, cream-of-tartar texture, with the suggestion of honey to come. Very, very racy, lean and mineral. The Paula Radcliffe of wines. A long-distance runner. You could drink now, perhaps, if you decanted. But if you can, wait, and wait a bit more. 10.5% (TC)
£17.95 Private Cellar

Pax Verbatim, Rockwater Fountain Viognier 2008 Stellenbosch 16 Drink 2009

Gentle. Baked-peach aromas. Fine acidity and spry despite the weight (at 14.5%). Cashew nuttiness, and the velvety texture and flavour of golden peaches. Rounded. Some interesting traces of rosemary and sesame. Good length. (TC)
£10.95 Private Cellar

Songlines, Bylines Chardonnay 2008 Hunter Valley 17 Drink 2009-2012

Barrel-fermented, lees ageing and bâtonnage.
Smoky flint and Bramley apple lingering on the nose. Creamy and leesy. Oak spice, with rich texture, full sweet melon but not over-ripe. Acidity and minerality with cut and thrust. Spicy caressing length. Well balanced. 13.5% (TC)
£17.95 Private Cellar

SWEET WHITES

Louis Guntrum, Oppenheimer Herrenberg Riesling Auslese 2007 Rheinhessen 17 Drink 2011-20

76.3 g/l RS, 8.2 g/l acid.
Very pale. Tangy seductive aroma of lemon cheesecake, and just a hint of tinned pears. So very delicate – gossamer. A touch of flower nectar and grapefruit. Pure. 9.5% (TC)
£16.45 Private Cellar

Fattori, Motto Piane 2006 Recioto di Soave 17 Drink 2009-16

Motto Piane is a single vineyard and the name means 'flat hill'. 100% Garganega picked at the beginning of Oct dried for 45 days in small cases. In mid Nov the grapes are destalked and macerated for 48 hours in small stainless steel vats. When the fermentation is in progress, the must wine is transferred into 20 hl oak casks. Fermentation takes two weeks after which the wine remains on the lees until the spring.
Deep gold. Very intense, pronounced nose – ginger syrup, apricots, sultanas. Very unctuous, fig preserve and dates in syrup. Honeyed Rooibos tea. A lovely woody spine. For hedonists. 13.5% (TC)
£17.95 per 50cl Private Cellar

CHAMPAGNE

Marc Chauvet, Blanc de Noirs Brut NV Champagne 16 Drink 2009-10

A faintly pink tinge. Earthy pink-plum freshness on the nose, and definite autolysis. Shortbread, cream and the merest inkling of honey. A creamy, full mousse. Tingling minerality and those plum notes again. Zesty length, richness. VGV 13.5% (TC)
£19.95 Private Cellar

REDS

Mayol Merlot 2007 Vin de Pays d'Oc 15.5 Drink 2009-10

Light bright ruby. Sour plums, then a dusty scent. Neat, silky tannins. Juicy, buoyant. GV 13.5% (TC)
£7.25 Private Cellar

Ch Haut- Gay 2006 Bordeaux 15.5 Drink 2009-10

Belonging to the family of the Comte of Tastes, and only eight hectares, located in Lalande de Fronsac. 50% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc.
A light nose, and light body but honest, friendly, warm fruit. Balanced. Slightly chalky tannins. Not massively long and complex but delivers for the price and very quaffable.
13% (TC)
£8.95 Private Cellar

Ch Samonac 2005 Côtes de Bourg 16 Drink 2009-12

Looks very youthful still. Rich and earthy – the smell of autumn, rain on burnt wood, black plums wrinkling in long lazy sunlit afternoons. Dense dark fruit, the tart smack of damson, smooth firm tannins. Some elegance. A thoughtful wine. 13.5% (TC)
£9.95 Private Cellar

Ch Carignan 2005 Côtes de Bordeaux 17 Drink 2009-13

65% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc. 'No residual sugar, no added acid'.
Rich dark colour. Subtle cedar and tobacco spice, elegant fruit perfume. Plenty of depth with well-tensed tannins. Soft plum/ berry fruit. Very shapely, unfolding. Neatly sketched acidity. A great food wine. 13% (TC)
£13.44 Private Cellar

Ch Cap de Haut, Comtesse de Fumel 2001 Haut- Médoc 16 Drink 2009-10

Cur Bourgeois. 30% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot.
Ruby, with a hint of garnet. Gorgeous nose – dried cranberries and blackcurrant, forest fragrance. Very elegant, lithe. Juicy fruit, a herbal line. Slightly dusty, 'ancient wood' tannins reminiscent (in a good way) of church pews and libraries. Like a spry, gracefully- ageing gentleman. Classic, but don't keep too much longer.
£14.25 Private Cellar (sold out!)

Ch Beauchêne, Le Pavillon 2007 Cotes du Rhône Rouge 16.5 Drink 2009-13

Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault. 4 months in oak.
Pale bright ruby. Very meaty nose! Blood oranges, tomatoes and fresh red berries. Sweet, rounded mouthful without a trace of heaviness. Light on its feet. Raspberry fruit with just a scanty suggestion of chocolate. Velvety tannins. Crunchy citric coriander spice. GV. 13.5% (TC)
£8.25 Private Cellar

Ch Beauchêne, Premier Terroir 2006 Côtes du Rhône Rouge 16.5 Drink 2010-14

Quite taciturn on the nose. Rugged tannins – needs a little time? Very exuberant, high-spirited fruit just held in check by a lingering liquorice finish. A rather intriguing undertone of Turkish delight and chocolate. Flattering and easy to like. 13.5% (TC)
£10.95 Private Cellar

Frédéric Magnien 2006 Bourgogne Rouge 15.5 Drink 2009-10

Pure strawberry hit on the nose! Gleeful strawberries on the palate. A mouthful of summer. Life and lift and red-dress-sashay. Tannins are ever so slightly stilted. 13% (TC)
£13.50 Private Cellar

Dom Anne- Sophie Debavelaere, Les Sceaux Premier Cru 2005 Beaune Rouge 17.5 Drink 2009-15

Quite deep ruby. Fragrant, a glass of raspberry essence. Focused, precise. Tenacious tannin. Earthy and furled, tightly packed. The singing tangy sweetness of summer pudding and raspberry coulis. Lots of sparkling light, yet feet-on-the-ground. This tastes hand-crafted; an autograph. Long and fine. 13% (TC)
£15.95 Private Cellar

Dom Lucien Boillot et Fils 2006 Volnay 16 Drink 2011-16

Classic Pinot aromas. Quite abrupt tannins. Dominant. I suspect this needs to be left alone for a little while to get over adolescence. Very, very folded up, but a curve of fresh firm fruit waiting in the wings. 13.5% (TC)
£24.96 Private Cellar

Springfontein, Sopiensklip Merlot 2007 Walker Bay 15.5 Drink 2009-10

Sample label.
Slightly jammy nose, in the way of a flan with sugary sticky plum topping. Very, very ripe dark fruit. Voluptuous. Fleshy. Cocoa and sweet, sweet mulberries. Plenty of rich oak. Well-framed by a slightly earthy, mintiness that lends welcome freshness. Too sweet? Might hold up to sticky-bbq glazed ribs.
£8.25 Private Cellar

Enrique Foster, Ique Malbec 2007 Mendoza 16 Drink 2009-12

100% Malbec.
Deep purple. Damp, earthy, orris root fragrance. Bold fresh palate, rich bitter coffee beans and liqueur and plums. Soft deep-armchair tannins. Broad-shouldered. Earthy finish. VGV. 14% (TC)
£8.25

Enrique Foster, Reserva Malbec 2005 Lujan de Cuyo 16 Drink 2009-13

Silly heavy bottle!
Rich colour. Intensely oaky smell – like walking into a winery full of barrels. Sawdust, cherry and coconut. Under the great slug of oak is some crunchy red apple and leather. Gamey. Deep, dark fruit, chilli-chocolate, mocha. Hot, brooding and savoury. This is big and macho. 14.5% (TC)
£13.95 Private Cellar

Songlines, Leylines Shiraz 2007 McLaren Vale 16 Drink 2009-12

15 months in oak.
Dark, boudoir-purple. Plum and sour-cherry compote. Fascinating whirl of scents; roast tomato, singed herbs, tobacco, herb tea and just a teaspoon of muscavado sugar. Deep, dense, sun-ripe black fruit. Sweet black tea and then live-wire acidity zipping through to lift it all up and get things moving. Fresh, herbal lines. Black pepper. Classic. 14.5% (TC)
£12.40 Private Cellar

Songlines, Bylines Shiraz 2006 McLaren Vale 16.5 Drink 2009-13

Old vines. 20 months in French oak.
Light garnet. Beautifully scented oak, prunes soaked in brandy and molasses. The rich earthiness of Turkish coffee. Then, as if kicking through fallen leaves and berry-laden brambles, it opens - generous dark fruit, forest floor. Dense. Makes me think of mahogany furniture. Leather and spice persisting. Very evocative. Save for November. 14.5% (TC)
£23.45 Private Cellar

Joseph Phelps Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 Napa Valley 17 Drink 2010-20

Smoky plums, a dense bouquet. Very, very Napa Cab. Lots of spicy cedary oak. Grippy confident tannins, and a rather attractively self-important weight. Cassis. Suave, glossy, with resonating depth and concentration. Just a brush-flick of minty herbaceousness on the finish. Long. 14.5% (TC)
£30.95 Private Cellar