

Bollinger breaks free

WELL, the world continues to change and nowhere more so than in the world of wine.

The small and extraordinarily high-quality Champagne house of Bollinger is known for its continuing family ethos and for the strong, powerful and robust nature of its long living and complex wines. Of Champagne's 4500 producers, it must be classified in the top half dozen.

This family-owned institution is renowned for its history and for the previously unwavering traditional winemaking approach to its classical wines.

This year though, for the first time, the new releases display a change of style, with the non-vintage release, the "Special Cuvee," presenting a younger, fuller, fresher and very modern mouth feel. It is fair to say that it retains the great power and length hallmarks of this house and that is a marvellous wine in its own right. It will develop until 2012. 18.7 points.

If the Special Cuvee indicated a change of style, it was illustrated by the release of the stunning 1999 Vintage La Grande Annee. This eight-year-old wine is also clean, fresh and very appealing and these features were amply displayed throughout its great length of flavour. 19 Points

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Faber Vineyards winemaker John Griffiths plying his trade in the winery.

President honoured

WINE Industry Association of WA president John Griffiths' contribution to the State's wine industry was recognised last week when he was awarded the 2007 Jack Mann Memorial Medal by the Wine Press Club of WA.

Established in 1989 and sponsored by the Houghton Wine Company – the winery Griffiths started his VWA wine industry career at before establishing his own winery Faber Vineyard in 1997 – the medal is awarded annually to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the industry.

While the forthright Griffiths is happy to comment on all things vinous, the Swan Valley winemaker sounded hesitant and almost at a loss for words when it came to discussing his award.

"I was surprised and humbled – look at the people who have won the award in the past, they're real icons," he said.

But when the focus of the conversation shifted from personal accolades to wine, the winemaker was back in his comfort zone and his words resonated with that familiar passion and enthusiasm the region's winemakers are renowned for.

"Vintage this year in the Swan Valley was short, sharp and fast, and hot," he said.

"We picked reds and whites very early. At Faber, we picked our whites before the first heatwave and then the reds.

"I'm really happy with the reds. They're stunning."

According to Griffiths, the 2007 vintage will produce some outstanding fortifieds and he is already hailing Faber's 2007 muscat as the best he has ever made.

In addition to chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon and the regional standards of shiraz and verdelho, Faber Vineyard's range also includes a fantastic petit verdot (\$16.50).

While the variety normally features in cabernet blends in minuscule amounts, the Faber interpretation shows off the grape's unabashed fruit flavours in a long-lingering and luxuriously supple tipple.

Admittedly, this is a fruit-forward wine full of ripe, confected red berry flavours, but it's balanced like a mob ledger and far easier – and perhaps safer – to get into.

While Faber wine is available at fine wine retailers, the best way to taste it along with the rest of its brethren is by arranging an audience with its maker at the winery.

Call Faber Vineyards on 9296 0619 for details.

Max Veenhuyzen

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Competition closes 12:00pm on 25/06/2007. The winners will be chosen by random draw on 25/07/07 at 10:00am. Prizes include: 1. The Dreamworld Family Holiday Package (2 adults, 2 children, 2 dogs, 2 cats, 2 birds, 2 fish, 2 reptiles, 2 amphibians, 2 insects, 2 plants, 2 flowers, 2 fruits, 2 vegetables, 2 grains, 2 legumes, 2 nuts, 2 seeds, 2 oils, 2 vinegars, 2 wines, 2 spirits, 2 beers, 2 soft drinks, 2 juices, 2 teas, 2 coffees, 2 milks, 2 yogurts, 2 cheeses, 2 meats, 2 fish, 2 poultry, 2 eggs, 2 dairy products, 2 confectionery, 2 bakery products, 2 frozen foods, 2 canned foods, 2 dry goods, 2 health and beauty products, 2 pet products, 2 toys, 2 games, 2 books, 2 magazines, 2 newspapers, 2 other products).

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BELLINGHAM Road - 9202 0100

SOUTHERN METRO:

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BELMONT Tavern - 9277 2077
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EAST FREEMANTLE Royal George Tavern - 9339 2747
FALCON Gables Tavern - 9334 2433
KARDIA Tavern - 9337 4999
MIDLAND - 9349 0388

WATERLOO METRO:

MANORIAN Best House Tavern - 9331 1034
RAVENHILL Road - 9337 4854
RAVENHILL Tavern Road - 9401 3778
SAFETY BAY Winkler Road - 9337 1388
STIRLINGHILL Road Tavern - 9335 0088
SOUTH LANE 100's Tavern - 9401 4811
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Beer specials and 9th July. All other specials ends 16th July 07. While stocks last. Open till late, 7 days. Country prices may vary. Pics for illustration purposes only.