



pressing matters

AS SOMMELIER OF JONAH'S, LUKE COLLARD HAS A CORKER OF A JOB

WORDS: **BEVERLEY HUDEC** MAIN PICTURE: **MARTIN LANGE**

WHY DID YOU BECOME A SOMMELIER?

I'd always been interested in wine as a consumer but while working for a catering company in the City of London in the '90s, I ended up managing their wine stocks. At that time we did a lot of work for the big banks and London livery companies, which all had amazing wine cellars. It was then that I really got the wine bug.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT JONAH'S WINE CELLAR?

We have two separate wine cellars – one for the red wines and one for the white and sparkling wines. We have about 1450 different wines, totalling about 6000 bottles. We are particularly strong in Champagne, riesling, burgundy and dessert wines. And we have an extensive selection of magnums and even larger bottles.

DO YOU HAVE ANY UNUSUAL WINES?

With a list as large as ours you don't have to try very hard to come up with something truly unusual. Obscure wine-producing countries? Try Uruguay, Switzerland and Slovakia. Strange grape varieties? We have Kekfrankos, Tchakoli and Scheurebe. Mostly we get requests for birth and anniversary vintages, and organic wines are increasingly popular. And if you're celebrating your 115th birthday this year we do have a bottle of 1900 vintage madeira.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE STYLE OF WINE?

Wine is a very subjective experience. The company you're drinking with, the food, the

surroundings, even the weather – all have a bearing on the whole experience. But if I had to choose one, it would be pinot noir. The greatest wine I have ever tasted was a Richebourg grand cru burgundy – it made me realise what all the fuss was about.

WHAT ARE YOU DRINKING AT THE MOMENT?

Professionally I've been tasting a lot of rosés as I revamp the list for summer. Australian rosé has come of age lately and there are some great offerings from Spinifex, Bird in Hand and Foster e Rocco on our list.

WHAT IS THE MOST UNDER-RATED WINE?

New Zealand sauvignon blanc. It is regarded as simplistic and a little bogan by the wine trade but there is now a range of styles that are great with food.

WHAT IS THE MOST OVERRATED?

Red bordeaux. The claret so beloved by the English wine trade needs to lift its game. The top chateaux are fantastic wines – and very expensive – but the general standard of most is pretty average.

GIVE US FIVE GREAT WINES THAT WOULD WORK AT AN AUSSIE CHRISTMAS BARBIE

My five are: A Hunter Valley semillon for the shellfish, especially oysters – it's young, fresh, crisp and clean. A Victorian chardonnay from either Mornington Peninsula, Geelong or the Yarra Valley. These areas are really making the running for this variety these days. Barossa shiraz is still great, and there's a reason why the world beats a path to our door for this stuff. We have the oldest shiraz vines in the world (the French now come to us for vine cuttings), with a range of styles from



medium weight to full-on blockbuster. There's nothing better with charred snags or steaks. Margaret River cabernet-merlot – it's hard to find a better place to make this style than WA's south west. Rutherglen muscat is one of Australia's gifts to the world of wine.

WHAT'S YOUR GUILTY SECRET?

Craft beer. After a long day tasting and evaluating wines, the last thing I want to drink is more wine. My current favourites are Lord Nelson Three Sheets Pale Ale and Manly's own 4 Pines Kolsch.



Sound bites

fact file
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