



PLUMPJACK

WINES

WINE CLUB

January 2006

Happy New Year! It is with great anticipation that we start our new annual oenological trek through the multitude of wines and wine regions. It never ceases to amaze me how vast a selection of wine there is to choose from, and how the overall quality of wine from around the globe continues to improve with every new vintage. Our two wines this month are great examples of this phenomenon. Both producers are located in the largest, and what is considered the most important, wine regions of their countries. While there are huge wine factories pumping out millions of

gallons of juice in these areas, our featured producers are making wines of high quality that display the utmost expression of varietal fruit flavors, while maintaining the characteristics of their unique terroir. Organoleptic euphoria does not have to come with the outlay of big bucks. What adds to the enjoyment of these wines is their reasonable price, considering their outstanding quality. Both wines this month will provide immediate pleasure but have the potential for aging. Try them now, but buy some extra bottles. They won't be around for long.

The Barossa Valley, located just one hour north of Adelaide, is South Australia's premier wine region. Lutherans from Prussia and Silesia settled the region in 1842, and many German and English settlers followed, creating a unique region with a distinct lifestyle based on good food, wine and music. The Barossa Valley is 15 miles long and between 2-4 miles wide. It is a patchwork of small villages and townships including Lyndoch, Rowland Flat, Tanunda, Bethany, Angaston, Marananga, Seppeltsfield, Nuriootpa and Greenock. There are over 48 wineries and over four hundred grape growers, some of whom are sixth generation, that supply approximately sixty thousand tons of grapes, and 25% of all wine produced in Australia. The region has a typically Mediterranean climate, with dry summers and mild winters. From the standpoint of the grape, the valley is regarded as a hot district, similar to Portugal, with summer temperatures often rising to 90°F and more - stressful unless supplemented by irrigation or watering. Torbreck was established in 1994 by David Powell and his wife Christine, and is located at Marananga on the western ridge of the Barossa Valley. It is named after a forest situated just south of Inverness in the Highlands of Scotland. David is a former lumberjack who worked in various vineyards where he picked up his oenological knowledge. David says, "I am not a scientist. My wines are based on my palate and on what I have learned." Torbreck is one of the new-style cult 'boutique' wineries in the Barossa. Powell's philosophy has been to secure grapes from small parcels of old-vine Barossa vineyards, and then to make hand-crafted wines in a traditional style that reflect their Barossa origins. Yields are invariably low, and the resulting wines are deeply impressive. Robert Parker writes, "David Powell, unquestionably one of the world's finest wine producers, has an uncanny ability to discover old vine Barossa vineyards, and then secure long term contracts for their fruit. Torbreck's wines continue to get better and better, combining the old vine ripe fruit of Barossa with a European sensitivity to elegance and balance." The 2004

*2004 Torbreck
Woodcutter's Semillon
Barossa Valley
Marananga, South Australia*
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*2003 Joffré e Hijas
Grand Malbec
Valle de Uco
Mendoza, Argentina*



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Woodcutter's Semillon is 100% Semillon. The grapes were harvested from select vineyards in the North Western Barossa Valley in March 2004. Half of the wine was barrel fermented and aged for 10 months in 3-year-old French oak barriques, and the remainder was fermented in stainless steel. The 2004 Woodcutter's Semillon is a gorgeously aromatic white, offering wonderful honeyed citrus, almond, and floral aromas. Exuberant, medium-bodied, and richly fruity, it is as pretty as Semillon can get, and will drink beautifully with many different cuisines. It pairs nicely with PlumpJack Café's local Dungeness crab cakes with fennel and celery root salad or pan-roasted Scottish salmon with Yukon potato puree, scarlet turnips and Meyer lemon sauce.

The 2004 Woodcutter's Semillon is \$17.99/bottle, \$194.30/case.



Argentina's winemaking history dates back to the 19th century, when European settlers brought their vines and winemaking traditions to the region. With almost 500,000 acres under vine, Argentina is the fifth largest wine producer in the world after France, Italy, Spain and the USA. There are approximately 2000 wine producers but less than 10% of these companies export to international markets. Mendoza, by far the biggest and most important of Argentina's wine regions, is situated on the western side of the country directly west of Buenos Aires. It accounts for 68% of Argentina's total surface cultivated with grapevines, over 70% of Argentina's total wine production, and represents almost 91% of the country's total wine exports. Mendoza, with over 682 wineries, is divided into three wine growing regions: Northern, Central and Southern. In the central region, southwest of the city of Mendoza, lies the Uco Valley. It is situated at the foothills of the Cordillera de los Andes (the Andes Mountains) at an altitude between 9,700 and 15,000 feet above sea level and has a special cool microclimate that nurtures the grape vines and allows perfect ripening. The surface area planted with vineyards represents 5.65% of the total of Mendoza province. Water from the Tunuyán and Tupungato rivers is used to irrigate the vineyards. In general, rocky soils are located in spots in the higher and steeper zones. They are barely fertile and are made up of pebbles, coarse sand and some silt. The soils are by the nature of their physical/mechanical composition very permeable and allow good drainage. In 1998, Raúl V. Joffré visited Mendoza, fell in love with Valle de Uco, and decided to invest in one of the strongest passions of his life: making wines. Today he owns over 148 acres of vineyards. Along with his four daughters, Raúl has assembled a talented team, which includes the well-known agronomist Santiago Mayorga from Argentina and winemaker Michel Rolland from France. The 2003 Grand Malbec was made from grapes that were hand-harvested from estate vineyards at 11,000 feet altitude and transported in small boxes to the winery. After fermentation was complete the wine was aged in French oak for 10 months. The 2003 Grand Malbec has a spicy component, almost peppery with a touch of sweet earth coming up underneath, and then a wave of intense, ripe blackberry, mulberry, boysenberry and raspberry fruit aromatically. The palate is simply textbook Malbec, seamless, fuller-bodied, with impressions of juiciness but at the same time dry, and a sweet core of black, dense fruit wrapped inside. It shows exceptional balance and structure, backed with fine, ripe tannins. Assorted red meats, game, mushroom dishes, mild to strong cheeses, and pasta in red sauce all work wonderfully with this Malbec.

The 2003 Joffré e Hijas Grand Malbec is \$16.99/bottle, \$183.50/case