

OLD MILL ESTATE

Rosé Tasting

Tuesday 24th February 2009

by PHILIP WHITE

Old Mill Estate Touriga Nacional Langhorne Creek Rosé 2008

\$17; 12.5% alcohol; screw cap; 92++ points

Immediately bright and cheery, this big pink shunts out evocations of all manner of rosy fruits with a slightly wild, vegetal edge: ripe ox-heart tomatoes, red currant, cranberry, wild cherry, blood orange, rocha pear, feijoa, persimmon, tamarillo, watermelon, pomegranite -- even a slice of red spanish pineapple. Beside these vibrant fruits rises a brightly sharpened edge of burlap and dust, which makes the nostrils flare with anticipation, and even tickles them. The palate's perfectly viscous and comforting to feel, with a gentle, homogenised syrup of all those fruits settling the sensories until the more acrid and edgy reflections of the vineyard's complex earths and alluviums rise with the acidity to put anticipation and hunger back into mind. It's beautiful, evocative, appetising and tantalising wine which can handle a deep chill, even a big ice block with a mint, cherry and strawberry garnish, but is best served just cool in a big glass.

Old Mill Estate Touriga Nacional Langhorne Creek Rosé 2007

\$17; 12% alcohol; screw cap; 91++ points

Squishy ripe strawberry, raspberry, and blood orange are the principal aromas here, backed up with the fleshy smell of the white pith of the strawberry. It smells like these fresh ripe fruits have been diced, doused in pink champagne, dusted with confectioner's sugar, decked with a handful of maraschino cherries, and served with ice blocks, a chunk of meringue and a dollop of fresh whipped cream. But then another wave of aroma rises: the acrid, edgy smell of the dry delta alluvium, and the hessian/hemp/burlap aroma of dry meadow grass. With time, there's a whiff of charcuterie meats, like pancetta, which simply makes it all the more alluring. The palate has quite fat viscosity, like fruit syrup, before those chubby fruits arise, and the finish is clean, crisp, bone dry and appetising. While this seems a more frivolous and chuggable drink than the 2008, it takes on a more serious air as it opens and warms with time in the glass.

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Old Mill Estate Touriga Nacional Langhorne Creek Rosé 2006

\$16; 12.2% alcohol; screw cap; 93+ points

This is a much more complex and earthy drink than the 07 and 08. It immediately smells more like a dry red, with leather and walnut, and then the dusty aroma of its country in summer, with a rustic twinge of the tractor shed. Think more of a classic, ageing Penfold's Barossa blend of grenache, mourvedre and shiraz – it even has an insinuation of old oak, which must have come from the slowly oxidising natural lignins of the grape pulp. Think of opening the door of a dusty old Jaguar in your grandfather's shed, to discover a basket of fresh plums on the back seat. The palate still has plenty of the ripe red and pink fruits of the younger vintages, and these rise steadily as the glass sits on the table, but there are also more meaty dry red characters oozing up with time, and the developing tannins are more like those from a much more full-bodied red. This lovely wine is to be served cool, not chilled, as you would a good dry red.

Old Mill Estate Touriga Nacional Langhorne Creek Rosé 2005

\$16; 12.5% alcohol; screw cap; 93 points

If you had a beautiful comfy old cracked leather chesterfield, and just gave it a big drink of saddlesoap or R. M. Williams' fabulous leather dressing, the smell would be a little like the aroma of this really complex ageing rosé. There are plenty of red fruits, of course, but these are gradually becoming more along the lines of dried fig, date and pear, than the fresh plums, marello cherries and blood orange which are on the decline. It smells a little like lipstick; a little like Italian smokehouse meats, like cacciatore or prosciutto. The palate is elegantly slender and dry with fine walnut tannins, and should be served just cool, as if it were fresh from a particularly cool cellar. It leaves a cheeky little dollop of raspberry on the palate after it's swallowed, reminding the drinker of its bright rosy youth. Perfect wine for serious tapas, mezes, or antipasto.