



Spring Newsletter

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By Erin Larkin

~ New Releases ~

2019 PICARDY SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON

I must confess to having consumed quite a bit of the previous release 2018 sauvignon blanc semillon in the past few months. I just cannot find another house that delivers this particular brand of punchy acidity and ripe southern fruit. The 2019, is tighter and more lengthy than the 2018, and certainly takes a full 24hrs to come out of its shell. Initially it is restrained - packed with pure, almost crystalline, fruit (green apple, crunchy pineapple) and that brine-y swoosh through the finish. There is a fine phenolic grip through the mid palate which serves to up the ante in the interest department, and makes it eminently food friendly. Another magnificent SBS release from this house. In comparison to the 2018 this is fine and sharp, plenty of cut-through and no shrinking violet. Speaking from experience, this only gets better the day after, don't be afraid to try it over a day or two.

2018 PICARDY BOISÉ - SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON

The introduction of old French oak here really takes the fruit characters into a new dimension. Where the 2018 SBS fruit was all about white nectarine, green apple and citrus, the 2018 Boise strays into the realm of juniper, blackcurrant, hints of star anise, yellow peach and toasty spice through the finish. This style is completely relevant to Australia and our warm climate, in that the vibrant-to-bursting acidity from the sauvignon blanc and the semillon plays a countering role to the richness of the older oak characters. It is refreshing, yet it remains complex and medium bodied. This has the recognisably generous fruit of the 2018 vintage, and I love it for that.

2018 PICARDY CHARDONNAY

As usual, this wine, perhaps more than any other wine in the Picardy stable, goes through a significant evolution over time from now at release, through to a year and beyond. It always, as now, emits tight fresh tropical aromas in its youth - honeydew melon, green mango and nashi pear. From the mid palate onwards it moves into curry leaf, stone fruit and sea salt as it prepares for the lingering flavours through the finish. This is fantastic. Each year I am more and more thrilled about this wine. This year it leaves an impression of salted summer peach, the crackle of fine fresh toffee, sweet red apple skins, flaking of lemon pith and wisps of greek yogurt and curry leaf. Complex, full and long. Lovely stuff.

2017 PICARDY TÊTE DE CUVÉE PINOT NOIR

The Tete de Cuvee is always released a year after the estate pinot from the same vintage. So one could say that the pinot is the preview to the Tete. I like to look at it like that. To give this release some context, the 2017 Pinot was a fine a silky affair, with Pemberton fruit that straddled a Tassie/Yarra fence in terms of supple and juicy, pink fruit characters. Needless to say, incredibly drinkable, delicious and much loved. The Tete is without fail, richer (owing to lower yielding vines), more brooding and darker in colour. This release is no exception. Here there is charcuterie, black olive and charry spice around the edges of the red cherry fruit, the depth and complexity on the palate telling us we're in serious pinot territory. The length, as ever, pulls away through the finish and gallops like a thoroughbred on Melbourne Cup day. I hope you're decanting your Tete de Cuvee - the young ones like several hours prior to serving, you won't regret it.

2017 PICARDY MERLIMONT - 52% Merlot, 27% Cabernet Sauvignon, 21% Cabernet Franc

We've not seen the Merlimont for a while, as it is only made in appropriate years; 'welcome back' I say. This has a juicy, plump and chocolate-y nose, underpinned by blackcurrant and raspberry. There is mulberry and freshly cracked black pepper, and very fine grippy tannins. This is a spicy, almost old-world right bank blend, and one we don't see too many of around these parts. The flavours are long and fine through the finish, really pulling this experience out to its north. Powder fine and spicy, another exciting and elegant Merlimont release.

~ Previous Releases ~

2018 PICARDY SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON

So. If we thought the 2017 was fresh and tight and hitting the spot - I've got some news. The 2018 is taking it to a new level. We're talking fresh pineapple on the nose, green apple, jasmine, hints of white nectarine, lemon and white pepper. The palate has stingingly bright acidity. Crunchy and refreshing, it serves as a perfect foil to the ripe and concentrated fruit. It doesn't have the mineral restraint of the 2017, but it has a piercing presence about it. There is a desperately satisfying suggestion of berry through the finish, perhaps blackcurrant even. It is juicy and vibrant, and leaves a sense of juniper, aniseed and even star anise in its wake. Thanks to the judicious use of sand lime in the vineyard, the thicker skinned berries provide an intriguing phenolic grip which sets this wine apart, making it a very serious proposition indeed.

2017 PICARDY BOISÉ - SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON

First and foremost, the oak plays a centerstage role here, at this early stage. Aromas of cinnamon bark, crushed pistachio, rosewater, almond meal and blackcurrant waft out of the glass. The palate reminds me full well why this is such an exciting style. Sometimes (ok not often) chardonnay can feel a touch heavy, particularly if the weather is balmy. The ripe tropical flavours can be a little much. Enter Boisé. All of the acidity, poise and finesse of sauvignon blanc, made complex and rich by the introduction of oak. They play well together - the resulting interplay is vibrant but restrained, showing grapefruit and lemon rind at its edges. This is a spicy, complex and exciting wine, one that will well reward even 6 months time in bottle before you get into it.

2017 PICARDY CHARDONNAY

Salted yellow peach, red apple skin, rockmelon, frangipani, almond meal, hints of saffron, and a suggestion of bergamot. The palate has a powdery finesse about it, the palate plush and succulent. There is curry leaf, nashi pear, Greek yogurt, white pepper, stone fruit, a swoosh of fresh sea spray and a lingering impression of crushed slate minerality. Holy mackerel, I could write about this all day. Safe to say, this is a cracking rendition of the Picardy chardonnay house style, and although it is difficult (oftentimes foolish) to call it early, this might be my favourite chardonnay release yet.

2017 PICARDY PINOT NOIR

Fragrant summer strawberries, green peppercorn and black cherry on the nose. The palate is typically structured and fine, with masses of concentrated berry fruit that silkily drips off the sides of the palate. It is elegant and composed on entry, however it explodes on the mid palate in a burst of refreshing acidity and ripe silky fruit. The flavour swells in the mouth, before it gently tapers through the long finish. This is spicy and creamy at once; redolent with dusty exotic spice countered by poached strawberry, and wrapping up in a stemmy, olive tapenade finish. What a marvellous wine. This has the sweet/savoury balance sorted, and is perhaps the most complete estate pinot release to date. It somehow balances the sweet fruit I associate with Tassie, the dry phenolic structure and finesse that I associate with the Yarra, and of course the fine boned yet concentrated flavour profile that is endemic to Picardy.

2015 PICARDY TÊTE DE CUVÉE PINOT NOIR

Typically slightly darker in colour than the estate, and always slower to open up after pulling the cork. This is all blood plum and black spice, where the estate is rollicking summer berry fruit. The palate here introduces you to a dark and brooding pinot - characters of resin and tar underpin the sweet cherry fruit. This has true floral perfume and incredible length of flavour, with no shortage of crushed black pepper, balsamic poached plums, star anise, black liquorice and salted grilled red apple. The texture on the palate becomes more silky the longer it spends in the glass; it swells, and coats the mouth in moreish, succulent pinot flavours. Certainly, more rich and 'adult' than the estate, this requires more time and less noise to come into its own space... once there... this sophisticated and elegant wine reminds us what the best from the west tastes like. Bloody good.

2015 PICARDY SHIRAZ

Very much in the style of Northern Rhone (not that we need to compare to other places to verify worth, but it does help to set the palate scene), this is silky, juicy, full of red berries, lifted fragrant fruit and enough savoury spice to bring this in perfectly balanced. This is a cool climate shiraz done well - it is elegant, ripe, structured and restrained. There is a black fruit undertow to the palate, laced with red apple skins, black pepper and star anise. Wonderful length and texture, it just seems to linger and whisper suggestions long past the point of being swallowed.

2016 PICARDY SHIRAZ

Impossibly bright on release, as it is each year. This year has added layers of spice and textural complexity. The palate has wonderful depth of flavour without weight - it is still an elegant mid-weight wine. The shiraz delivers floral aromatics, red globe grapes, summer raspberry, black berry, and the already integrated Burgundian oak finely laces up the fruit. The tannins are powder-fine and lingering... in that wonderful lip-smacking way. Elegant and more of a Northern Rhone style of Syrah, not Shiraz, as we in Australia know it. The Picardy shiraz really flies the flag for the elegant WA style - not in the mould of the structured and full-bodied Frankland or Great Southern, but the aromatic, floral style more akin to Margaret River. This style is gaining popularity and momentum as people (us, the drinkers) discover how well it suits food and generally delivers great pleasure. This is a gorgeous wine and will go through many stages in its lifetime; where it is right now though... wonderful stuff.

2015 PICARDY MERLOT, CABERNET SAUVIGNON, CABERNET FRANC

Merlot 61% / Cabernet Sauvignon 20% / Cabernet Franc 19%

As with every year that I look at this on release, it is luscious, silky, plush and rich - but it is never overdone or demanding. Redolent of red berries, poached raspberry, pink peppercorns and hints of cocoa, mulberry and vanilla pod. The 19% Cabernet Franc contributes structure, acidity, fragrance and blackcurrant to the mix. The oak, as with all of this release, is judged expertly and serves to sprinkle the fruit with spice, balance and structure.

2016 PICARDY MERLOT, CABERNET SAUVIGNON, CABERNET FRANC

68% Merlot, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Cabernet Franc

This year, a higher percentage of Merlot, the Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc are obviously in lesser quantity, but feature in the same order.

Szechuan peppercorn and green peppercorn on the nose, cacao nib, pink grapefruit, blood plum and mulberry. This is sophisticated, medium bodied. The tannins sit right up on the mid-palate before spilling into the sides of the mouth, they're grippy but fine-grained and chalky, this whole experience is an exercise in finesse. The 15% Cabernet Franc contributes white floral aromatics to the wine, while the Cabernet Sauvignon plays its blackcurrant, structure role. The fruit has a fine minerality about it, a real impact of schist and shale, which laces right through the palate into the finish.

2016 PANNELL FAMILY MERLOT CABERNET

This is a bright, juicy, edgy wine, made in the style of the Pannell Family label; that is to say - drink and enjoy now. This is full of creamy red fruit, balanced by a silky texture and energetic acidity - making it a perfect match to roast pork. There's a guilty kind of pleasure in the simple blackcurrant character that resides mid palate - giving it a quaffing vibe that is all too easy.

