

FROM THE CELLAR... d'ARENBERG

YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“d’Arenberg is a luxury food,
wine and art experience that
challenges convention.” –
d’Arenberg



*A view from the d’Arenberg Cube terrace, and a sample
of one room inside the Cube – quite the experience!*



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

November 14, 2018

By the time we arrived at the d’Arenberg estate, we had heard many things about the famous d’Arenberg Cube. The building, or should we say, the architectural feat, stands a couple hundred metres in from Osborn Road, but the black and white structure remains hidden until you venture onto the picturesque property.

One of the friendly staff members at the main door showcased a statue of a cow cradling a piece of mechanical equipment—a work of art, no doubt—before directing us into the first of many sense-enlivening rooms. And, so the adventure began...

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The current proprietor, Chester Osborn, is the fourth-generation owner of the extraordinary estate. From what we learned, and from what we observed, he took the estate in a rather different direction from his predecessors, at least artistically-speaking, while managing to maintain the integrity of the production.

In total, d’Arenberg produces over 70 wines from 37 different varieties. This remains virtually unprecedented in the McLaren Vale, if not Australia and the entire world. Over 3,000 tonnes of grapes are crushed per year, a noteworthy percentage of the entire McLaren Vale production.

The cellar door sits on the top floor of the four-storey Cube, allowing for panoramic views in all directions. In terms of artistic presentation, one could easily see the various works, including oil paintings, interactive displays, and statues, as random.

A closer look, however, opened our eyes to the thoughtful and creative manner in which many of the pieces were created and



We found Alice in Wonderland's Cheshire Cat inside the Cube – or d'Arenberg's version thereof!

presented. As an example, some displays pay homage to the four generations that have operated the estate, a nice touch in our view. In addition, each of the 70 wines has its own illustration somewhere in the Cube.

During our time in Australia, d'Arenberg was the only winery that charged a Cellar Door admission fee. Although this could act as a deterrent for some, the number of people flocking to the Cube suggested visitors feel quite willing to absorb the nominal fee in exchange for the unique sensory experience. For us, the overall experience more than covered the price of admission.

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

The winemaking team at d'Arenberg strives to showcase the best of each varietal (or combination of varietals) in both the vineyard and the bottle. This means growing and sourcing the highest quality fruit and transforming it into world-class wines.

Grapes are pressed by foot, a laborious approach, as we came to appreciate, not to mention a tremendous way to stay in shape. All wines remain unfiltered. In many ways, everything that happens at d'Arenberg revolves around passion, including a passion for the land, the vines, the grapes, and, ultimately, the wine.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH TANYA WITHERS, d'ARENBERG

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: I love wine because it's a living thing. A snap shot of a season in time preserved, made with love to be shared with friends over fine food and conversation!

Q: Of all the wines you produce at d'Arenberg, which one is your favourite and why?

A: The 2004 Coppermine Road Cabernet Sauvignon. Fabulous. A cracking vintage. A millesime.

Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: New Zealand Pinot Noir from Martinborough. It's beautiful! I might be a little biased because I'm a Kiwi.



Chester and a grape grower – or wax versions of them...

[Of note, Martinborough, not to be confused with Marlborough, sits on the south end of New Zealand's North Island, about 55 km north-east of Wellington.]

Q: What's the best part of your job?

A: Meeting people who really enjoy soil and wine, as well as the history it has. It attracts very interesting people.

Q: What's the worst part of your job?

A: Nothing.

Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?

A: Pouring our Nostalgia Rare Tawny Port to a very handsome man and calling it a Pawny Torte. Gulp.

Q: Tell us one thing about you or your winery that nobody else knows.

A: The Osborn family has employed generations of people at the winery.

“Every vineyard has a personality, which we encourage to flourish with minimal intervention in the vineyard and winery. Through time honoured techniques, such as open fermentation, foot treading and basket pressing, this personality is allowed to shine. – Chester Osborn

THE TASTING...



A wall of d’Arenberg wine under pipes, which are meant to be part of mouth (Any d’Arenberg staff member would be happy to explain).

We lucked out with our gracious hostess, Tanya, who showcased 21 of d’Arenberg’s wines over the course of two-plus hours. She shared her insights into the winery, giving us time and space to enjoy the range of offerings.

We started with the non-vintage Pollyanna Polly, a sparkling wine made from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier (price: \$30 AUD) and ended with one of the flagship wines, the 2011 The Old Bloke & The Three Young Blonds, a blend of 91% Shiraz, 3% Marsanne, 3% Roussanne, and 3% Viognier (price: \$200 AUD).

In between, we tasted the:

- 2017 The Dry Dam Riesling (price: \$18 AUD)
- 2011 The Dry Dam Museum Release Riesling (price: \$30 AUD)
- 2017 The Olive Grove Chardonnay (price: \$16 AUD)
- 2017 The Money Spider Roussanne (price: \$20 AUD)
- 2017 The Lucky Lizard Chardonnay (price: \$30 AUD)
- 2018 Stephanie the Gnome with Rose Tinted Glasses (price: \$18 AUD; Sangiovese, Cinsault, and Shiraz)
- The Peppermint Paddock Chambourcin Graciano NV (price: \$28 AUD)
- 2016 The Feral Fox Pinot Noir (price: \$30 AUD)
- 2017 The Biophilic Silurian Cinsault (price: \$29 AUD)
- 2017 The Anthropocene Epoch Mencia (price: \$29 AUD)
- 2016 The Bonsai Vine Grenache Shiraz Mourvedre (price: \$29 AUD)
- 2015 The Derelict Vineyard Grenache (price: \$29 AUD)
- 2016 The Twenty Eight Road Mourvedre (price: \$29 AUD)
- 2015 The Conscious Biosphere Petit Sirah Aglianico (price: \$29 AUD)
- 2015 The Coppermine Road Cabernet Sauvignon (price: \$75 AUD)
- 2016 The Ironstone Pressings Grenache Syrah Mourvedre (price: \$75 AUD)

- 2016 The Dead Arm Shiraz (price: \$75 AUD)
- 2015 The Noble Botryotinia Fuckeliana Semillon Sauvignon Blanc (price: \$20 AUD)
- 2016 The Noble Wrinkled Riesling (price: \$20 AUD)

Of these wines, the 2018 Stephanie the Gnome with Rose Tinted Glasses and the 2015 Noble Botryotinia Fuckeliana took top honours. The 2017 Lucky Lizard Chardonnay and the 2011 Dry Dam Museum Release Riesling finished close behind.

On the nose, the 2018 Stephanie the Gnome with Rose Tinted Glasses offered strawberry, rhubarb, hay/dried grass, and a hint of green pepper. With a light-medium body and high acidity, this beautifully-coloured Rosé blend gave us more strawberry in the mouth, as well as minerals, herbal notes, and white flowers. We enjoyed the medium finish dominated by minerals and tart strawberries.

As for the 2015 Noble Botryotinia Fuckeliana, a blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc, a wine named after a German botanist, Karl Fuckel, the nose offered marmalade jam, apricots, and honey. This full-bodied beauty had a luscious mouth-feel, with medium-high acidity and more marmalade and honey flavours on the palate. The acidity balanced out the sweetness, culminating in what we would describe as a delectable, intoxicating finish, or put another way, a party in a glass.

FINAL NOTES

During our time at d'Arenberg, we appreciated the pairing of tradition (e.g., traditional winemaking techniques) and creativity (e.g., the diverse array of art spanning the Cube's walls). Admittedly, not all of the artwork, or wines, will appeal to everyone, but for us, that's part of the allure.

Kudos to d'Arenberg for the diversity of labels and names, each with a different story, and all available on the winery's website (see below). To boot, a specific piece of art accompanies each wine, with all artwork created by talented Australian artists.

If you want a unique wine tasting experience, you have to visit d'Arenberg. Not only will you taste some incredible offerings, you will walk away a changed person, hopefully for the better! Seriously, prepare to have your senses enlivened as you embark on a one-of-a-kind wine tasting adventure in the heart of McLaren Vale. Just make sure to book in advance.

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