

2 Saturday March 09, 2024
WEEKENDER



A little sip of Broke

RICK ALLEN names eight wines to sample at A Little Bit of Broke.

IT would be a stretch to say the locals were convinced it would be a surefire winner from the start... more of a 'let's give it a go and see' approach, really.

After all, it's not easy to lure tourists from the many attractions of central Hunter Valley wine country to a sub-regional backblock for a dose of rustic charm.

But here we are 20 years later and, in the spirit of having a crack, A Little Bit of Broke is now a big bit of Broke's wine and food identity.

And it's about to come around again - from Friday, March 15 to Sunday, March 17.

For those who haven't been, it's all things wine and food in a relaxed, road less-travelled setting - which is the only way Broke knows how to do it.

There's invariably a bit of something for everyone.

From the fine dining of Margan Restaurant - never stuffy, but certainly one of the finest eating experiences in regional NSW - to a picnic in a paddock with alpacas, it's yours to choose.

You can meet artisan producers, enjoy a country sunset with wine in hand while enjoying live music, or taste some of the new wine varieties the Hunter winemakers are so enthusiastic about.

From beekeeping to botanicals and barbara... it's Broke, and there's nothing to fix.

So, get cracking and get your Festival Kit which includes your entry pass (\$35 with 4 tastings, \$50 with 8), a keepsake Riedel O tasting glass and tasting tokens. You can also add dining, experiences, events, workshops and even shuttle bus transport in and around the venues. It's all bookable online at brokefordwich.com.au

But, for those with an appreciation of a tasty tittle, I've been asked to select eight good Broke drops to make the most of those tasting

tickets. My list includes a couple of lesser known or unusual wines, but really, there's so much good stuff to choose from. So, in no particular order, let's taste.

WINMARK

Expressions Chardonnay 2021, \$37

Winmark are chardonnay specialists - that's all they do, so it stands to reason they would need to be good. Relax, it is. This is the mid-range of three chardonnays, and it's pretty classy. Think tangy peach, then some quince and stonefruit depth, all very poised and elegant, and just a touch of quality oak. The epitome of a modern Hunter chardonnay. You can't go wrong.

WHISPERING BROOK

Arinto 2023, \$35

Haven't heard of Arinto? No worries, it's rare as hen's teeth around these parts, but this wine might change all that. It's a Portuguese white variety and Whispering Brook are the first to push it. It seems tailor-made for the Hunter - there's citrus and apples, fresh and vibrant in the mouth, with some tropical fruit richness. Really fresh on the finish, it's a winner for me.

MARGAN

Ceres Hill Barbera, 2022, \$40

This Italian red variety has found a second home in the Hunter and you can largely thank the canny Andrew Margan for that - he was the first to spot its potential and plant here. Now there's a growing band of producers and that's a good thing because it's a terrific drinking wine. This is a great example ... typically light on its feet and so easy to drink. A lovely scented nose, there's red fruits aplenty - raspberry and cherry - florals, and a bright acidic underbelly. Great with food too.

LITTLE WINE CO.

Pecorino, 2023, \$26

You're right, it's a salty cheese. But pecorino is a wine too, calling the east coast of Italy home. And now, lucky us, it has emigrated and is settling in rather nicely Down Under, even starting to pick up a bit of Strine. You'll get apple flavours, mostly red but green too, along with fennel and pear. There's a bite of citrus on the finish. It's a full flavoured and zesty white wine, great for a hot day.

GREENWAY

'Grace' Fiano Gewurztraminer, 2022, \$26

Well, here's a field blend of two white wines you don't see every day, but I think you'll find it's pretty darn tasty. Complex too. The nose has white flowers, citrus peel, Biscuit and Turkish Delight

... all rather intriguing. It's textural, almost creamy in the mouth, with stonefruit, citrus and butterscotch flavours. The finish is crisp and mineral. It just works... good value too.

KRINKLEWOOD

Francesca Rose, 2023, \$35

Francesca has been a big hit for Krinklewood over the years, one of the first of the Hunter wineries to really champion rose. You can see why. Pale blush pink, it's a blend of merlot and mourvedre. This is crisp and fresh with a nose of rose petals, musk and citrus. There's just as much happening with the flavours ... strawberry, red apple, ginger, and watermelon. It has a lovely tangy note to the finish.

1813

Five Shillings, 2022, \$32

This is a sparkling wine made from verdelho, the third of the Hunter's white wines behind semillon and chardonnay. This is made in a Prosecco style, meaning it's light and zippy and full of fine, bubbly energy on the tongue. It has citrus crispness underpinned by tropical fruit flavour - mandarin, green apple and melon. This is ridiculously easy drinking.

TALITS

Shiraz, 2021, \$48

You can't write about Hunter wine without getting a semillon or a shiraz in there somewhere. Da-dah! This is medium bodied and smooth... typical Hunter in many ways. You're talking mixed berries, red fruits but with some darker forest fruits as well. It's savoury - it would be best mates with a pizza (but isn't everything, or is that just me?) - and has a lingering acid finish. Yes, you could cellar it but hey, it's Broke ... enjoy!

