



# It started with a Dalwood

Ignoring the 99 cent flagons Ray Jordan drank as an undergraduate, the first wine he can remember drinking was a Penfolds Dalwood Claret on board the *Indian Pacific* from Perth to Sydney to play Intersvarsity golf.

"That's about all I remember from the trip," says Ray. "I asked that it be served cold. Still, when you're drinking it for breakfast, that's not a bad thing."

Ray had become involved in the Wine Press Club in Sydney in 1978 and when Peter Sinic was looking for someone to write for the fledgling *WineState*, Bob Mayne, who was running PR for the Wine and Brandy Corporation when it was based at the Sydney Showground, put his name forward.

"One of the first interviews I did was with Spike Milligan," Ray recalls. "I picked him up after his show and we went to a Kings Cross restaurant somewhere until 4am ... shit, it was fun. After drinking some Morris Liqueur Muscat he said he would drop his trousers in Trafalgar Square for a bottle of it."

Ray currently writes columns for Perth's morning newspaper *The West Australian* on Thursday and in the paper's Saturday magazine. He also writes a book each year which reviews the West Australian wine industry and all of its wines. It's in its seventh edition.

## **What is your routine for tasting samples?**

I lug them around to my wine room at the back of the house each day, open the boxes, categorise them, generally by variety, and methodically work through them, recording each wine in a database that includes an image of each wine. I have tried to set aside a specific day of the week, but it never seems to work out that way.

## **How do you keep up with the increasing number of samples sent to you?**

Challenging, but I try to get to all of them. I really only reject wines not available in WA. If I had more time I would taste them too, but you've got to draw the line somewhere.

## **What is your pet hate regarding how samples/media releases are sent to you?**

Incomplete information. It really pisses me off. For instance, wine samples sent without even the most basic information, such as recommended retail price, or contact details get disappointed with the lack of

Wine writers don't need tasting notes, but information such as price, availability (i.e. are they available in WA?), region, source of fruit, winemaker, and contact details etc. are essential. Other information that might provide a fresh look at the background to the wine, if available, is also useful.

## **You must receive a lot of invitations to special events hosted by winemakers; how do you prioritise them?**

Basically I don't like lunches and very seldom do dinners. I prefer to meet the winemaker with his/her wines at my 'office' the Court Wine Bar and taste the wines with them for an hour or so. They can do their dinner with retailers and the like after that, and I can have a beer.

## **What's the best-run wine tasting event you've been to this year?**

Howard Park's Jeff Burch showed his new Burch & Marchand wines over dinner at his house. It was simple, provided benchmark comparisons, moved along at good pace and at the end I felt I had a clear take on what Burch and his partner in wine Pascal Marchand were trying to achieve.

## **What should winemakers do to increase the chances of getting a write-up from you?**

To me it's all about building relationships ... and graft. Plenty of good wine and a little lucre under the table help ... alternatively maintain dialogue, even if it's just to say giddy. Honesty also helps from both the winemaker and a PR company if used. If the vintage is a dud, don't try to guild the lily. Also be careful with PR companies. Good PR companies and communications specialists who present the wines without being pushy are excellent. Without wishing to be precious, bad ones who ring and ask when the story or review will appear really piss wine writers off.

## **What inspires you about Australian wine? And what disappoints you?**

I am inspired by the fact that our best wine keeps improving. There are a lot of talented people out there who work bloody hard at improving the quality of their wines. And this is not only small producers. Winemakers in the big companies work their guts out to lift standards.



**WBM**  
**April, 2009**  
**Page: 62**  
**Section: General News**  
**Region: National**  
**Type: Magazines Trade**  
**Size: 725.77 sq.cms.**  
**Published: Monthly**

Brief: YRDWINE(P)  
 Page 2 of 3

imagination in some wines. For instance you see a lot of Sem/Sav Blanc blends over here and I think more winemakers could have a go at trying to differentiate them from the standard style. Happily some are. High alcohols also annoy me. In some years it's hard to avoid, but when wines are made to that Parkerised formula you simply ask: what's the point? I'd rather drink a liqueur Muscat.

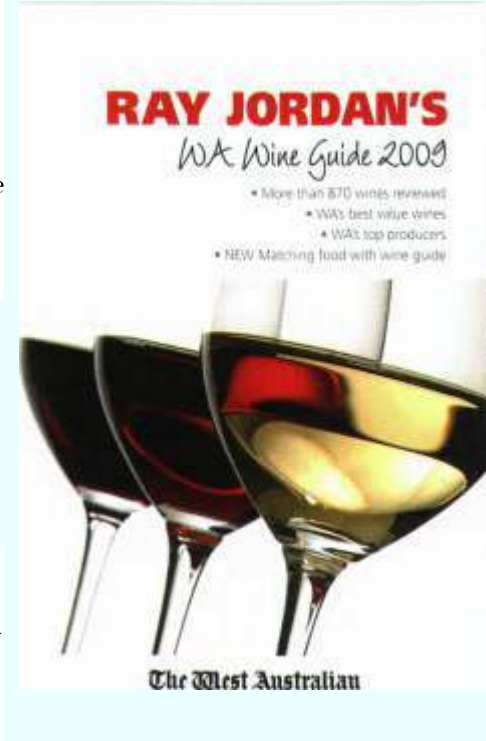
**What do you think of the overall quality of Australian wine at present?**

In the main it's getting better. Our Chardonnays have reached a new level of style and sophistication and Cabernets have improved. I think there are some exciting new varieties starting to make an impact.

**What's the best wine you've tasted in the past month?**

Pretty hard to go past the 1959 Moet Grand Vintage that had been disgorged not that long ago as part of the promotion for the 2003. I'd have to say the Penfolds Bin 389

2006 was a damn fine wine too.





**What's been the most exciting development in the wine industry in the past year?**

The emergence of new varieties and winemakers prepared to have a go with them.

**What are your thoughts on Australia's fascination with NZ Sauvignon Blanc?**

I didn't think there were that many fans of used wine. Perhaps they don't realise that Sauvignon Blanc is really a practical joke.

**Which winemakers are 'in the zone' as far as you can see?**

Interesting question, because you can easily look at the new young guys and forget the great winemakers who have been in the zone for years. Guys like Charlie Melton and Robert O'Callaghan for instance, Andrew Wigan and others, have made some great wines. Then you see guys like Larry Cherubino, Louisa Rose and Steve Pannell, who are doing some terrific things.

**What's the next big thing in terms of region/variety/style?**

Tempranillo has a real future. I don't think Sangiovese quite captures the Aussie palate as well. The new leaner and more restrained

yet ultimately more complex Chardonnays might stop people saying they don't like Chardonnay (I think Kath and Kim have a lot to answer for on that score.)

**What is your favourite everyday wine?**

I love a Riesling at the end of the day but I've started to drink a heap of Moscato. Of course there are some pretty neat rosés being made these days too.

**What is your postal address for samples?**

15 Pennell Road, Claremont, WA 6010

**How do you get away from wine?**

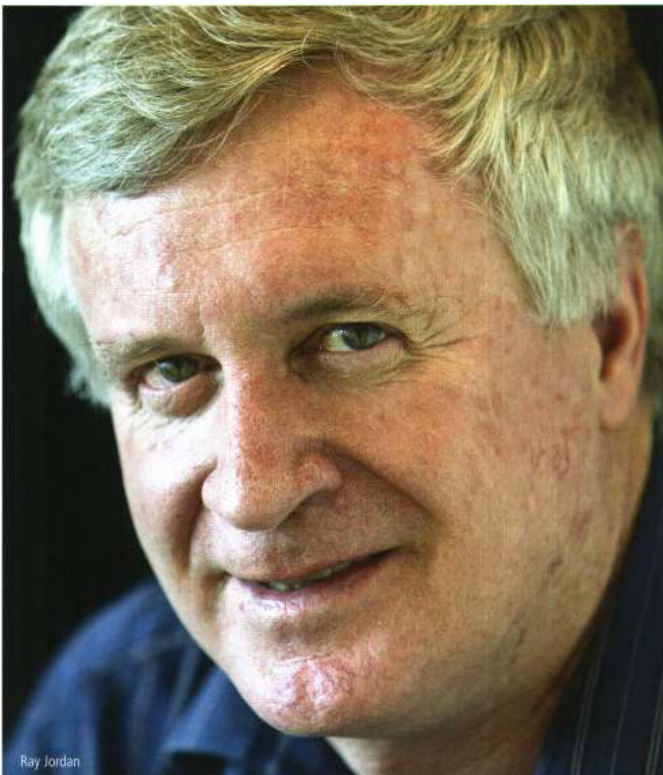
Play a little golf. Do boxing most mornings though the gym owner likes to keep me inside because he says I'm bad for business. I've lost 1kg in 11 years at his gym. I play a little blues guitar but get frustrated I can't play my Fender Telecaster like Eric Clapton or Peter Green.

**What's your perfect Sunday morning?**

I'd rather not say ... this is a family mag.

**What wouldn't we know about Ray Jordan**

He's a cricket history tragic, can't stand modern sanitised Australian Rules (bring back the biff), and loves blues music, which he listens to while tasting wine.



Ray Jordan