



Perfect Partners?

Nicholas Jones discovers an unexpected connection between Australia and Italy – and it tastes good

When I think about Australian-Italian connections,

my mind isn't filled with names. A few half-decent footballers perhaps, despite the fact that there's a fairly big Italian community Down Under.

When it comes to food and drink, however, these are two nations which share a number of similarities. Wine is an area of common consent, with both Italian and Australian vineyards producing vast quantities of the stuff, of varying degrees of quality.

Ransome's Dock restaurant in Battersea hosted a 'dinner with a difference', in mid-October, where a series of Italian dishes, put together by TV celebrity chef Valentina Harris, were matched with superb

boutique wines from Western Australia, sourced by Auswineonline.co.uk – the specialist Australian wine importers based in the UK. The event was a rampant success, with a packed crowd enjoying some very sensibly paired food and wine – all expertly prepared.

Dinner started with an aperitivo of bruschetta of broad bean puree with pecorino, accompanied by a glass of Flametree Sauvignon Blanc Semillon (2009), with its gooseberry freshness proving the perfect match.

The next course combined sweet scallops wrapped in pancetta, with the necessary acidity of a glass of Kalgan River Wines Riesling (2008). The "primo" course soon followed, "always the most important course in any Italian meal", according to Harris. Here the Aussie representative was another white: a drop of Flametree Chardonnay (2007) which dealt with the



Tasting Notes

Auswineonline.co.uk offer a good selection of top Aussie reds and whites, I've taken the liberty of picking out a few suggestions for you, below, all of which are available to order through the website www.auswineonline.co.uk

powerful flavours presented by a stunning prawn risotto puttanesca.

After three whites, the 'Austral-Italian' alliance was tested with red wine, a main course of duck breast, potato and spinach was matched well (once more) with two reds – a Flametree Cabernet Merlot (2008) and a Flametree Frankland Shiraz (2008). Next up: the cheese. Three hard cheeses, an Asiago, Pecorino and Parmegiano, pairing nicely with its spicy Aussie partner, a Kalgan River Wines Shiraz Viognier (2007). Dessert concluded this Australian Italian love-in suitably successfully, with a sticky Talijancich 1961 Solero Bunet Muscat matching up perfectly with a soft orange and almond cake. ●

www.ransomesdock.co.uk

Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2008

This elegantly structured wine has a vibrant nose of fresh melon, peach and vanilla. A soft generous palate of ripe stone fruits and honey with subtle citrus lingering on the finish. This wine is ready to be enjoyed now and can be cellared for up to five years. **£10.50 per bottle**



Margaret River Cabernet Merlot 2008

A lovely easy drinking style of red. This Luscious earthy wine delivers rich, ripe fruit aromas of plum and raspberry. These flavours follow through onto the palate together with some spicy oak characters and soft velvety tannins. Great for now, will benefit from cellaring. **£12.50 per bottle**



Frankland River Shiraz 2007

A medium bodied Shiraz with round full fruit flavours of plums, forest berries and spice. Soft velvety tannins have been derived from oak maturation. This easy drinking wine is great for drinking now and will benefit from cellaring. **£12.50 per bottle**

