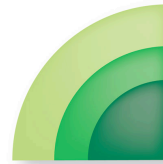




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The price of risk

The *Financial Review's* BOSS magazine ran a refreshingly honest interview with Lion Nathan CEO Rob Murray recently. Commenting on Foster's he said, "Foster's went a very different way to Lion Nathan. The mentality was led by a fairly superficial view of what the consumer was doing. The consumer is moving away from beer. They thought, 'What's growing within alcohol? Wine is growing. We're a great alcohol business so we will build both.' In fairness to Foster's, they hit that at a time when it was one bad hand of cards after another. But any business depends on the Gods. People lose sight of the price of risk to a certain extent. In organisations there's a poor understanding of risk. I've dealt with what I've got. If I had a time machine would I have bought a wine business? Probably not. When everyone else in the market is going backwards, we're probably some \$10 million adrift of seeing profitability and I think we'll get there. If we tried to exit the wine business now it's the worst time. I'm not about to do that."

Bottler of a door prize

The door prize at the 'Some Like It Hot' seminar in Renmark was three megalitres of water. Ain't that a sign of the times!

The big green writing machine

Australian wine writers are giving more and more column space to green wines. Indeed, try getting a mention in Max Allen's column in *The Weekend Australian Magazine* if your wine is not BD. Matt Skinner writes in his new book *The Juice 2009*: "With the health of our planet in pretty dire shape, and the wine industry braced to feel the effects of climate change long before most, I thought this year would be as good a time as any to look at the efforts and initiatives of those producers working against the odds to make a difference. Producers who are working to make packaging lighter, to

build and develop energy efficient wineries, to conserve water, and to grow and produce in the most natural way possible. Producers who are trying to leave things in a better shape than they found them in. Producers who I believe are worthy of your support." Yes, but one of the 100 wines featured in the book is the '08 Two Hands Brilliant Disguise Moscato, which appears to be packaged in a very heavy bottle.

Giddy up

Brian Agnew's Audrey Wilkinson Vineyard won the NSW Wine of the Year with the '06 Hunter Valley Museum Reserve Semillon (RRP\$35). Brian is one of Australia's leading litigation lawyers and was also a racehorse breeder of great fame, breeding 1992 Melbourne Cup winner Sub Zero.

Please, no excuses

As reported in *The Week That Was*, the poor ol' global financial crisis is going to get blamed for everything over the next few years. Sales managers sitting around board meetings will be let off the hook. "What happened to our sales in October?" "Oh, sorry boss, that bloody GFC." Folks, don't fall into the trap of blaming everything on the collapse of financial institutions. Remember, when the going gets tough ...

Serving up solutions

Victorian cafes are joining forces to cut the industry's water usage as part of a new campaign, Drink For Change. Cafes can register free for a week-long event, during which they'll request loose change from patrons in exchange for usually-free drinking water, to fund water-saving devices and programs. All money collected during the event will be invested by cafes in their own water saving initiatives. The campaign is being run by Grow Me The Money, a partnership between the

Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the EPA Victoria. St Kilda restaurant Monroes cut its annual water bill from \$4,000 to \$2,000 by installing two 13,500 litre tanks which are saving three million litres of water per year. If just a quarter of Victoria's 3,832 cafes and restaurants each saved just 50% of this yearly saving, the collective annual saving would be more than 1.4 billion litres—enough to fill 1,437 Olympic sized swimming pools. How about the wine industry launching a similar initiative?

Salt of the earth

We all know salt is a problem along the rooted River Murray, but every cloud has a silver lining. Gourmet Murray River Salt "comes from the underground saline waters of the Murray Darling Basin and contains only the natural minerals from the river floor". Luke Mangan, chef at South in San Francisco, uses it on just about everything in the kitchen. "This gorgeous salt has an appealing pinkish-apricot colour and a delicious, delicate flavour," Luke writes in the latest *South* newsletter.

William Rikard-Bell, we salute you

The *Australian Story* piece on the ABC about the tragic explosion at Drayton's in the Hunter, was very moving stuff indeed. The guts of young winemaker William Rikard-Bell, who got badly burnt—he famously jumped a fence and emersed himself in a dam, which saved his life—to return to the winery to take up where he left off, is a source of inspiration to everyone in the wine industry. As my friends at *The Week That Was* said, a video of this moving piece of TV should be played on the big screen at the Outlook Conference—that would do more to inspire the industry than any talk fest. Meanwhile, young William is getting married early next year. Good luck ol' son.

GOT SOME GOSS? Email busby@awbm.com.au