



**CLUB MEETING**

**Wednesday 7 March 2018**

**Commences 8pm** (please be punctual)

**Guest Presenters**

**Andrew McFarlane & Chris Herbert**

*“The length and breadth of Shiraz”*

We reckon we know our Shiraz in the SCOV, but how well do we know it? Join us for a look at Shiraz from the far East and West of Australia, from down on the coast to way up in the hills. Come and join The Delirious Duo™ as they wander about the countryside like the vinous Leyland Brothers on a journey of discovery.

Guests are most welcome

Please contact our new Pres – James Taylor

**February Committee Meeting**

The first committee meeting for the year was held at the home of Andrew and Janeen McFarlane.

The theme for the blind tasting was to bring a wine that was presented to the club in the previous year. Here was a chance for us to show that we were all paying attention at the meetings and could easily recognise a wine we had tasted and ultimately purchased (and possibly consumed) during the year.

Unfortunately those lofty ambitions were to be shown as futile! There was an occasional correct guess as to grape variety and/or vintage, but little or no success at identifying a wine correctly. However, a good time was had by all and we possibly gained from the experience.

The wines tasted in order of presentation were as follows:

Wine	Points awarded	Supplied by
Tellurian Fiano (Heathcote) 2016	4	Janne Williams
McWilliams Mount Pleasant Philip Shiraz 2014	12	Graeme Wilson
Mr Riggs The Gaffer Shiraz 2015	15	Tony O'Brien
Mr Riggs Piebald Syrah 2015	21	Andrew McFarlane
Shottesbrooke GSM 2014	2	Gerald O'Byrne

Interesting outcome with the Mr Riggs Shiraz/Syrah combination being the most popular wines. On the night of their presentation to SCOV the Shiraz was the most popular, but the Syrah proved the better wine at February committee meeting.

**Andrew McFarlane**

*See next page for article: 'When should I decant a wine?'*

**Food and Wine Night**

Unfortunately we are not able to proceed with the planned annual Food and Wine night in March. The RSL Club has tightened its rules around liquor and food service and we do not have approval to run this evening at this time.

We hope to be able to reinstate this popular club night in 2019, and will endeavour to achieve this.

**Janne Williams**

**Wine Collection**

Please remember that if you ordered wine at any club night, it is your responsibility to collect or arrange collection by another member if you can not attend.

Any queries regarding this, please contact Cellarmaster Chris Herbert

**Calendar of Events 2018**

- Autumn Harvest Dinner
- Day Trip
- Casual Dinner
- November – AGM
- December – Christmas Dinner

Dates are to be advised.

**The Shiraz Club of Victoria Inc.**

President: James Taylor 9592 2262  
 Secretary: Janne Williams 9819 2373  
 Treasurer: Andrew McFarlane 9580 9591

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# When should I decant a wine?

The definitively abridged guide to the abridged definitive guide to ageing and decanting wine – when, why, what and how long.

Ah, yes – decanting. Mayhap it's just me, but I think it's one of those things that a lot of people are unsure of, particularly when it comes to the when and the how long.

It's a common misconception that old wines are the ones that need the decanting. If you'll forgive me for a broad, sweeping over-simplification for a moment, but it's kind of the opposite.

Let's cover off some of the basics...

If you think of a wine being 'born' when it gets bottled, then everything from there on is the wine's life.

Much of its life will be spent in the bottle, where it grows, or ages.

Just like we humans, with a wine there's your infancy, your youth, maturing into adulthood, you have your prime (just how old that is depends on your taste, I guess), and then the hopefully graceful journey into your twilight years, your body gets tired, fragile, and then you die.

Grim, but fundamental, both with you and I, and with a wine.

That life-span is not a fixed number of years, it's relative to how long a wine was built to age, and that depends on the vines, the vintage, and the winemaking.

Some wines are made to have long, distinguished lives, forever to be immortalised in the annals of vinous folklore, others to be consumed in a brief blaze of glory. This pretty much means that some will age fast, others will age slow. But they're all aging, from the minute they're bottled.

All wines need some period of nurturing in the bottle before you should even consider opening them. That might be as brief as four or six weeks for a new Riesling, for instance, or it might be four or six years, minimum, for a Grange or a nice Bordeaux.

And some wines will age well in the bottle, even some whites. They'll evolve into fascinating, complex, delicious creatures over the years. And some won't. Some are really only lovely in their youth, and will tire and die in just a couple of years – most Sav Blancs and Rose's, for instance.

But what's all this got to do with decanting? I'm getting there!

The minute you open that bottle, it's like pressing extreme fast-forward on your wine's life. It sucks in that first breath of fresh air when the cap's cracked, or the cork's pulled, and from that point in its life through to death all happens in a matter of hours or days, rather than years.

The more air, the faster the fast-forwarding. So simply opening a full bottle, or having a glass and re-closing it... little bit of air. Fast-forward.

Pouring it into a nice, sexy wide decanter, maximum wine to air contact... lots of air. Super fast-forward.

If you think about that, then you'll better understand the right time to decant which wines, and for how long they'll need to be decanted.

Let's take for instance your average Grange. Generally built to age around thirty years, birth to death, give or take depending on the vintage, so let's call that its lifespan. And let's assume it hits its prime at twenty. That's when you want to drink it.

The good folk at Penfold's keep it in their barrels and then bottled in their cellars for a few years before even releasing it, so you don't get a baby grange. Okay rich guy, so let's say you shelled out your \$785 for a bottle of 2008 Grange last year. At five years old, it's still just a kid. Hands off! But if you absolutely must, you're going to need to get some rapid aging happening.

This baby is going to want some serious fast-forwarding, which is going to require some decent time in the decanter. I'm talking six to eight hours, and it will probably taste even better the next day.

Freshly opened, it's like a shy kid – so much potential, but awkward, introverted, "closed" – all edges, and needs some air to settle into something worthy of the wine it was destined to be. It's not going to develop all those interesting aged characters – you're asking it to grow up too fast, but it will settle into itself. Of course, you can't turn off the fast-forwarding, so in two or three days, it's going to be dead, or very close to it.

Imagine now it was actually a 1996 Grange you bought (you lucky bugger), and she's been lying in your cellar for years. She's eighteen years old, and in her prime (for a wine!). She doesn't need a day in the air to grow up,





she's ready and raring to go. So you'd only need to decant her for enough time to get used to life out of the bottle. I'd go half an hour to an hour.

But she's also on fast-forward the minute you tapped that cork, and given she's already in her prime, she's probably only got eight to twelve hours of life left before her death, so you don't want to leave her open and undrunk for too long.

Some very old wines will only be alive for thirty minutes or so once opened, and will change and evolve sip by sip!

So that's a wine built to age – if you're opening it young, it needs lots of decanting (set four hours as a minimum guide). If you're opening it in its prime or close to it, start tasting after half an hour!

What about wines that aren't built to age? Well, same rule, different time span. Your average mid-priced Shiraz has a lifespan of five years or so. If you're drinking it new, or with two to three years on it, it'll also benefit from a couple of hours of decanting. If it's five years old already (in its prime), then back to fifteen to twenty minutes.

How do you know how long a wine is built to age? Google. Often it's on the producer's website, or the retail site.

Pretty much every wine (certainly every red at least) will benefit from at least fifteen minutes of breathing (and settling) before you drink it – decanted or not. Only the most delicate (and old!) wines may be too fragile to handle too much air.

What about whites? People rarely decant whites, but there's no reason not to, especially full-bodied Chardonnays, for instance. Same rules of breathing apply, but the affect of "extreme fast-forwarding" on whites is less pronounced. But some complex whites will really open out and develop as they breathe, so there's no reason that decanting wouldn't help that process.

But don't decant a bubbly (or at least not for too long!) Not only will you look like an idiot, but you'll lose the bubbles.

There's another function of decanting, and that's to remove the sediment from a wine. It's not a bad thing, and gathers in the bottom of a bottle, so if there's

sediment in your wine (harmless tartrate crystals, mostly), you should stand a bottle upright for a while before decanting, and leave a centimetre or two of wine in the bottom of the bottle.

You ever seen someone decant a wine over a candle flame? That's just so they can see the sediment leaving the bottle and stop pouring before it goes into the decanter.

Finally, wines are also decanted to change their temperature – to warm up a red that's come straight from a cool cellar, for instance. Remove it from that cold bottle, and it'll get to the right serving temperature quicker. Same would apply to whites that might be too cold.

Back in the old days, when wines were less filtered and often dodgy, there was more reason to decant to separate all that sediment from the good stuff, and to let all those nasty smells "blow off". The blowing off still applies a bit today with some wines, particularly if they've been bottled with a bit too much sulphur to slow the bottle-aging process, but there's less sediment around than there used to be.

But going back to the breathing thing (which these days is the main reason to decant) – all you're looking to do is get the wine in touch with some air. So any wide vessel will do the trick – a jug, a bowl, a bucket, even a nice wide glass and a couple of swishes.

I've bagged out those wine aerators all my life, but they work insofar as they force bubbles of air through the wine as it pours, which again is like hitting the extreme fast-forward button.

Same with swirling your glass around. You might see a more earthy winemaker cover his glass with his big, calloused hand and give it a shake – same deal, personal hygiene notwithstanding.

Doesn't matter what you use, that's just a question of personal style. Me? I love my decanter, but I feel cooler when I decant in a plastic bowl down at the beach shack.

So hopefully that covers the whole mystery of decanting. What about keeping a wine?

Well, same rule applies. You know once it's opened, you can't turn off the fast-forward, but you can slow it down, by reducing the air contact (eg: nearly full bottle will last longer than a nearly empty bottle), by putting the wine in the fridge, or by using some sort of vacuum seal, like those odd rubber things where you pump out the air, or those little argon gas sprays.

Personally, I try not to hold on to a wine so long that I need to resort to such drastic measures, but I have been known to stick a red in the fridge for a few days, and it works, as long as you give it time to get back up to the right drinking temperature.

Salut!

**Andre Eikmeier**  
*Author Vinomofu*

I have tried running, but I kept spilling my wine.

