



Hard-earned thirst needs a big cold

**Mike
BURNETT**

VINTAGE *wednesday*

Food is wine's greatest partner — but it is not alone.

Occasion is another, with sparkling wine linked to celebrations.

Season (weather) is also becoming increasingly recognised and is drawing comment from the industry and writers alike in promotion or analysis of wines.

At its most basic level, there is a fitting image of a full-bodied red being completed by a fire after a hearty meal on a winter's night.

Similarly, the refreshing glass of white outside during a summer barbecue or picnic.

Breaking that down a little further, it is still hard to go past a chilled glass of riesling after a day at work or in the garden.

This year's rieslings are hitting the shelves, and a couple of releases from the region that many consider Australia's leader for the variety, Clare Valley, provide encouragement that there is some fine drinking on the way.

The wines are Pikes Clare Valley 2007 Traditionale Riesling (\$25) and the Jim Barry 2007 Watervale Riesling (about \$15).

Although both wines come from the Clare Valley, they have significant directional contrasts.

The Pike family clearly states where their wine is positioned by naming it "traditionale".

The Barry family has gone the other way by making changes to a

wine it has been sourcing from Watervale in the Clare Valley for 30 years.

Managing director Peter Barry said that the wine itself and its packaging had been altered to attract young people.

"We see the pure, vibrant flavours of Watervale riesling as a natural for young people who enjoy the fresh, clean taste of sauvignon blanc, but are yet to experience the wonderful underlying complexity of dry, aromatic riesling," Mr Barry said.

Without getting too technical, Mr Barry also draws attention to the wine having a pH of 2.92 compared with the levels of 3.1 to 3.2pH normally associated with Australian wines.

"The wine doesn't necessarily taste that much more acidic, but it is more actively acidic in chemical terms," Mr Barry said.

"This is reflected in greater stability, slower ageing and, more importantly, in much fresher, pronounced flavours on the palate."

The wine has a mix of citrus flavours and the acid spreads through the wine rather than forming a spine. There are some floral notes and light spice.

It is a wine for now and can be consumed on its own.

Those who like a glass after work at wine bars or the like could find this an ideal order.

Pikes Traditionale will keep long-term riesling lovers happy.

It has generous layered citrus flavours, with a mineral edge, and fine acid spine.

It demonstrates the depth that can be obtained in good quality riesling.

This one shapes up as one that will age well, with Pikes suggesting 7 to 10 years cellaring potential. Although fine on its own, Pikes Traditionale would be an ideal match with seafood — naturally.

Pikes has also released its 2007 Valley's End Sauvignon Blanc Semillon (\$22), 2007 White Mullet and 2006 Red Mullet blends (both about \$15).

It has been mentioned numerous times in this column that Western Australia has set the pace with sauvignon blanc semillon blends but does not have ownership as the Valley's End demonstrates.

This is a fresh and crisp wine that needs to be consumed while young — now or in the next year or two. It has a mix of ripe tropical fruit and citrus flavours.

The 2007 White Mullet is a flavoursome blend of riesling, viognier, chenin blanc and sauvignon blanc.

The 2006 Red Mullet mixes shiraz, sangiovese, merlot and tempranillo to produce a wine with sweetish red fruits and spice.

The Mullets are a good catch at their price for lazy afternoon drinking.