

a brave new world

Australian born Don Buchanan has recently been appointed as Managing Director of Hatten Wines based in Sanur Bali. This appointment follows a life time of working in the wine industry in Australia and overseas. Don has won many awards, medals and trophies for his wines and has recently set up Buchanan Wines vineyard and Winery in Tasmania, producing super premium cool climate wines. He also created a micro brewery at Rosevears Hotel in the Tamar Valley producing boutique beers and consulted with Boags Brewery in Tasmania. With a love for cooking, good food, fine wine and flying (he pilots his own 2-seater Ultra Light Plane), Don and his wife Judy are looking forward to using this varied experience to build on the established success of Hatten Wines - the Original Balinese winery. The new world comes to Bali, but is it possible to produce wine in a tropical climate? We caught up with Don in the cellar to find out.



How long have you been a winemaker and was it something you had always aspired to be? In 1969 I finished Agriculture College in Victoria –Australia, there was a recession in the agriculture industry and no jobs were available any where in this field including outside Australia. There was a job offer in Tanzania - Africa but that was not the right option for me. My mother played lawn bowls with a winemaker and so she arranged for me to work at his winery and this is how it began. At 18 I became what is known as a Cellar Rat (worker/laborer of winery). **Is it something that you have always aspired to be? How did you make this decision?** No, I never thought of being a winemaker however within a month of working in the winery I was hooked, it did not take me long to become assistant winemaker. **How many wineries have you actually worked for?** Some of the companies are: Lindeman, Leo Buring, Kaiser Stuhl, Krondorf, Buchanan Wines, Arrowfield, Tisdall, & Hopwood which is an Indonesian owned winery in Australia. I also had the opportunity to work in Europe. **What's the greatest joy about being a wine maker?** I see growing beautiful fruit and crafting it into wine is no different to an artist with a palette of paint and a

canvas. I love creating wines for people to enjoy, that complements food and adds to their quality of life. A day without wine is a day without sunshine! **So you are a romantic?** I guess so, but I just love crafting good wine. **What is your favorite variety?** Riesling and Pino Noir – are my absolute fetishes. **Why?** Because they are both ballerinas – the most difficult and complex to produce. **Why is it complex to produce?** Pinot is a difficult grape to handle, to allow it to express its true character is not easy. You can get the same fruit off the same vines but every year it must be treated differently to bring out the best in it, it is a grape with attitude. Riesling on the other hand is a white grape that can be made in very different styles. It can be made to drink young and fresh or you can make it in a style that as a young wine is undrinkable – acidic water but which can also blossom after 20 years to become incredibly toasty, smoky bottled aged wine. **Which brings me to my next question, is it true that old age wines are heavy in tannins and most delicious with age?** Many French Bordeaux wines are known for high tannins which have to be aged to soften the tannins, colours and integrate before they are at their best and very drinkable. As a young wine they are too aggressive.

Today many New World wine are made to drink earlier, as most consumers want to be able to purchase a wine and drink it straight away without having to cellar it for years. Thankfully there is still a place for wines that require aging as the wines produced are very different and can be magnificent. **Can you describe your art of wine making, and what it brings to Hatten Wines?** We are making identifiably different wines grown from local fruit to be drunk young. Simple, clean, pleasant wine. **What is the difference between a table grape and wine grape?** Table grape are generally suitable for eating but you can make wine from them. Wine grapes are not particularly good for eating due to higher tannins and acid levels. The grapes that are available in Bali are table grapes that were grown initially for eating. We have taken these varieties and made the best styles of wine we can. We are experimenting with new varieties but the existing varieties have served us extremely well and are the back bone to what we do. They are sound, disease free and require practically no chemical spray and intervention. **Do a lot of people use table grapes?** Yes – in Australia there are a lot of multipurpose grapes: used for drying, eating, confectionary and also for wine. However these

are not the noble grapes that are traditionally used for wine making. **A lot of people assume that wine can not be grown in the tropics. What do you have to say about wine in the tropics versus wine grown in a cooler climate?** When I was first approached to come to Bali, my first response was “but they don't grown grapes in Bali”! After doing some research and visiting the vineyards I started to appreciate how it is possible. The grape grown in Bali are very different to traditional viticulture. They have a totally different balance of flavour and acidity. The climate in the North of Bali is quite benign. The temperature is rarely more that 30 degrees – all year round. It is considerably dryer in humidity and rainfall than the southern part of the island and therefore good for grape growing. From a viticulture side we supplement the water supply of the grapes in the dry season, we grow them on a high pergola to allow air movement and minimize disease. The varieties that we grow have very tough skins and are very resilient. **Do you see Hatten Wines as a serious competitor at an International standard?** No... quite honestly. Even though we have succeeded in winning medals in Europe we don't see the need to compete on the international stage. We certainly

see ourselves exporting to other Asian regions, as the wines admirably suit all Asian cuisines. They are lower in alcohol, lively, fresh, appealing food wines, to be enjoyed without being too serious or snobby. **We are seeing a growth in Indonesian nationals appreciating wine. Do you find their preference of choice different to say... an Australian would perhaps enjoy wine varieties?** Our wine styles are not big heavy, alcoholic or aggressive wines, so for a new wine drinker they are a lot easier to approach. **A lot of Asians love the 'Sweetness' of Alexandria and appear to enjoy sweeter wines. What is your view on this?** All human beings tend to have a preference for sweet things when they are young. As we mature our palate dries out and we like more savory things, less sweet until we reach our 60-70s which is when we regress and return to sweet things. The majority of Asians are new to wines – so their palate development is younger, naturally they were be inclined to go for sweeter wines. **Describe the difference between fruitiness and sweetness.** Natural fruit flavors give the impression of sweetness and give mid and end palate mouth feel that appears as sweetness. Sugar sweetness is actually tasted on the front of the tongue. **Does everyone have the ability**

to really taste the difference between wine styles? Yes it just need practice. **For new wine drinkers, what is the easiest way for them to choose an enjoyable wine?** If people want to try wines, but are not keen on the wine straight it is ok to make wine cocktails. In Barossa years ago, the favorite drink was “hook line and sinker” which as a summer drink - a beautiful combination of white wine, brown lime (which is a cordial), and lemonade, with cucumber and mint and garnished with hibiscus. This was magnificent summer drink summer drink, low in alcohol – the first actual wine cooler. So it's ok to learn by having coolers or spritzers such as red wine spritzer - AGA Red, lemonade, sugar syrup. **Do you think white wine is a better option in tropical climate rather than a heavier red wine?** Obviously yes, most Balinese food is not overly heavy and therefore lighter style wines suit Asian cuisine beautifully so it's nicer to drink something light like Rosé or a white wine or even a young red chilled. There is not doubt a lovely big Shiraz or Cabernet suit red meat. The oak complements the BBQ charred characters off the grill and compliments that type of food