

# Benwarin



HUNTER VALLEY

## **Review from the Newcastle Herald – January 2007**

**By John Lewis**

Benwarin meant little to most hunter wine drinkers until the 2006 Hunter Valley Wine Show at Singleton.

The Benwarin 2004 Chardonnay won the Murray Tyrrell Trophy for the best Chardonnay of any vintage and a gold medal in the 2004 and older, Chardonnay dry white class and the Benwarin 2005 Chardonnay won a gold medal in 2005 Chardonnay dry white class.

It was a dream show debut for Sydney couple Allan and Janneke Bagley, who only seven years before had bought a 40-hectare grazing property in Mistletoe Lane, Pokolbin, and began planting a 19-hectare vineyard.

At present they sell their wines only by mail order and the two trophy winning Chardonnays are still available at \$16 a bottle and the 2006 Verdelho sells for \$15. I thought the 2004 Chardonnay was one of the best of the variety to come my way during 2006.

The Benwarin wines are made by consultant winemaker Jim Chatto at the First Creek winery in McDonalds Road, Pokolbin, and are not confined to Chardonnay and Verdelho.

The Vineyard also has plantings of Shiraz, Sangiovese and Chambourcin and recently I sampled three new releases – the Benwarin 2005 Hunter Valley Sangiovese (\$18), Benwarin 2006 Hunter Valley Semillon (\$15) and the Benwarin 2004 Hunter Valley Shiraz (\$18).

I particularly enjoyed the Shiraz and the Semillon, which is a prime example of Jim Chatto's increasing familiarity with this classic Hunter variety.

The wine is green-tinged pale straw and has lemon zest and green pea scents. Crisp, zippy grapefruit flavour shows on the front of the palate and mineral characters, underlaid with a whisper of toast and honey, feature on the middle palate. Spicy acid comes through at the finish.

It would be ideal with oysters natural, salad nicoise or pan-fried whiting.

The 2004 Shiraz is ruby red and has aromas of gumleaf litter and briar. Smooth, ripe Illawarra plum flavour dominates the front of the palate and Turkish delight chocolate and spice comes through at the finish.

Try it with warm rare beef salad with walnut dressing, crispy lamb and stir fried udon noodles or scotch fillet steak and mushrooms.

The Bagleys have development approval to set up a cellar door outlet at their vineyard. They plan to get the building under way this year.