

The Advertiser

Lifestyle

TONY LOVE'S Bottle Stop

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Here's a blast from the past. I have two bottles in front of me. One is a Maglieri Wines La Brusco. The other a Chalmers Lambrusco.

Both are sparkling reds with close connections to their Italian heritage, though vastly different in their make-up and backstories.

Many may remember the original Maglieri Australian Lambrusco from the 1980s and '90s. It was made by Steve Maglieri in a traditional sweet and fizzy style from McLaren Vale grenache with 10 per cent shiraz in the blend. In the space of its double decade lifespan, it skyrocketed to extraordinary popularity — half a million 12-bottle cases sold annually.

It was the wine at every wedding, party, and everything in between, of the day. Queues of buses lined up at the Maglieri winery in McLaren Flat.

Then, in 1998, Mildara Blass, now part of the Treasury Wine Estates empire in a different form, wanted a piece of the action and bought the Maglieri company including the Lambrusco. A caveat prevented Steve from making wine for five years, though Serafino Wines eventuated to become the successful family wine company it is today. Mildara Blass retained the brand name. Until now.

After a gentleman's deal with Treasury management, Steve has regained his own name and set about introducing a new Lambrusco style wine under the Maglieri Wines brand. He has to call it La Brusco (\$12) to get around international naming regulations.

It's still a Grenache dominant wine with shiraz, undeniably McLaren Vale in that sense, and a little drier than it was 30 years ago, though still on the sweet side. It's frizzante rather than excessively bubbly and has the potential to appeal to a new generation as well as a sweeter, red-wine loving Chinese market.

Will it be as huge as the original incarnation? Watch this space. Now to the Chalmers 2014 Lambrusco (\$43), which is crown sealed, bubbly as well, and able to take on the full name because it's actually made from one of the allowable Lambrusco grape varieties originally from Italy's Emilia-Romagna region now grown by the alt-variety pioneering Chalmers family in Heathcote, Victoria. It's made in the traditional bottle-fermented champagne style, like the best of our Australian sparkling shiraz wines but from a heritage Italian grape variety. It's comparatively dry and full bodied, and will appeal to more adventurous serious drinkers.

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