

UNION BANK, ORANGE

BEST REGIONAL WINE LIST - 2010 SMH Good Food Guide Awards.

By Huon Hooke.

The Union Bank in Orange has a list of 150 wines, including 25 by the glass - all from the Orange GI. The list is strongly regional, not only Orange but the outlying regions of Cowra, Hilltops, etc, but also international. You can buy a Spanish crianza, a Cotes-du-Rhone red or an albarino from Spain's Rias Baixas. Nick Butler, who previously worked in wine wholesaling in Sydney, has been there for 18 months, taking Union Bank to the next level. It originally started as a cellar door for Belgravia, whose Orange wines are made by David Lowe, but the owners wanted it to be more than a cellar door. Recently they opened a retail bottle shop with 180 local wines, and all but one of the local producers are represented in it. You can buy anything from the shop and for a 20% surcharge, drink it in the restaurant. So you might decide on a John Duval Eligo, or Woodlands Colin Reserve '01, which would cost \$200 to \$250 on some smart restaurant lists, for \$100 retail and it will cost you just \$120 to drink in the restaurant.

"A lot of Orange cellar doors aren't open during the week, so you can come here and taste," says Butler. You have to pay of course, but there's nothing over \$9 on the by-the-glass list. The range is \$6 to \$9, and includes some wines, such as '02 Canobolas-Smith Cabernets and Bloodwood Shiraz, that are especially good value.

"We're aware Orange has a very good food and wine culture but we don't want to go to Sydney price levels. We want to have a very good shop that everyone comes to: Philip Shaw comes in several times a week, so does Printhe winemaker Drew Tuckwell."

What does the Union Bank Wine Store look like? Well, it's in a converted stable that adjoins the ex-bank building and there is no beer or spirits, only wine, and none of that is under \$15 (there's a Liquorland just down the street). "We have the three William Downie pinots all in a row on the shelf; we have Timo Mayer's wines and Mac Forbes, Hobbs and Clonakilla. We've made it a good restaurant (and shop) and not just a cellar door."

And there's more on the way: Butler says he's planning to boost the list by 100 more wines. But we reckon it's pretty good now!