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MATCH UP
Michael Gray.

Sommelier's Choice

MICHAEL GRAY, MONSTER KITCHEN AND BAR, CANBERRA

Michael Gray has been a busy man in the last year, launching Monster Kitchen and Bar in Canberra's hot new Hotel Hotel.

Thankfully, Gray made some time to put his mind to a wine match for a home-cooked favourite, **apple and rhubarb crumble**. "I'd go for **2009 Telmo Rodriguez MR Moscatel** (A\$48) from Malaga in Spain," he says. "It's got aromas of fresh herbs and marzipan with well-balanced sweetness and acid, and supple, ripe beurre bosc pear fruit. A nice partner for the fruit and topping with enough strength for the brown sugar sweet spots."

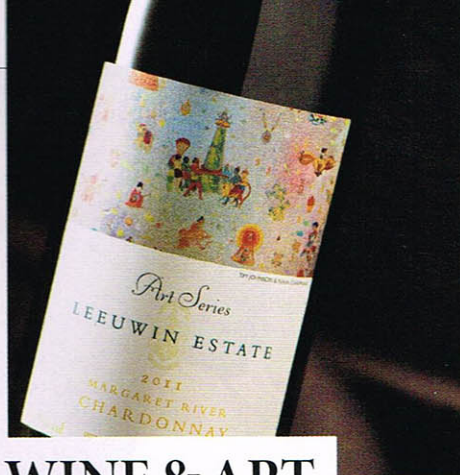
Opening in the last week of June, Monster has been an instant hit and while he won't jinx it by saying it's all going smoothly, he admits, "The kitchen is killing it and I'm really proud of the front of house guys. We're just trying to make it better and better." With the kitchen headed by Sean McConnell and with Gray's experience at Vue de Monde group it's no wonder people came flocking.

In terms of the wine program, Gray has put together a short, sharp list. "The focus is on small producers," says Gray. "The ethos of the hotel is carried through. We got a Canberra glass artist to make glasses for us and the priority with the wine list is on showing off the Canberra region." This results in a list offering roughly one third of Canberra wines, another third from around Australia and the remainder made up of imports. There's a focus on grower Champagne, smaller producers, and there are lots of natural, biodynamic and organic wines.

So what's on the hit-list for diners at Monster? "There's this **38-hour braised lamb shoulder** and I'm recommending the **2012 Clonakilla O'Riada Shiraz** (A\$36)," states Gray. "It does great things for the rich, reductive flavours in the dish. It's incredible."

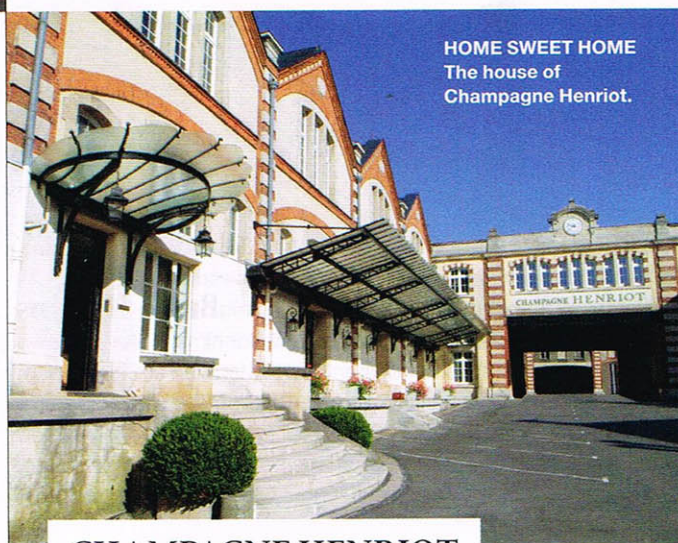
His love for local wines doesn't stop at matching with lamb, however. "It's exciting to be in Canberra at the moment. There's this great energy with people like Nick O'Leary, Nick Spencer (Eden Road) and Alex McKay (Collector)," explains Gray.

"We'll open up a second dining room with a multiple-course menu and wine matching. You don't want to show off all your tricks from day one," says Gray. Maybe not, but that moscatel could be just the trick the next time you make a crumble. JK
Ground Floor, Hotel Hotel, NewActon Nishi, 25 Edinburgh Ave, (02) 6287 6287, www.hotel-hotel.com.au/eat-and-drink/monster/



WINE & ART

Celebrating winemaking as science and art, Leeuwin Estate adorn their Art Series range of wines with paintings by famous Australian artists. To mark the release of the **2011 Art Series Chardonnay**, Leeuwin Estate commissioned **Tim Johnson** and **Nava Chapman** to create the label. The painting explores the connections between Aboriginal, eastern and western cultures. As for the wine, see Huon Hooke's review on page 146. JK



HOME SWEET HOME
The house of
Champagne Henriot.

CHAMPAGNE HENRIOT

For the first time, the entire range of Champagne from **Henriot**, one of the oldest family-owned houses in France, is available in Australia via the new online retailer Bootleggers (www.bootleggers.com.au).

Henriot Champagne is based largely on chardonnay sourced mainly from grand and premier cru vineyards in the Côte des Blancs – even their non-vintage wines are crafted from these grapes. As Henriot export director **Anne Deraisme** explains "We've been all about chardonnay for over 200 years." And that's how they intend to continue. Of course, other grapes come into the mix, and while only certain cuvées contain a dash of pinot meunier, the pinot noir for the Henriot Champagne comes mainly from Montagne de Reims.

The Henriot style is fresh and elegant with light complexity. Look out for the crystalline **Blancs de Blancs** (A\$110) that's delicious with seafood, or the complex and fruity, **Brut Rosé** (A\$118) a perfect match for heartier, and in particular, tomato-based dishes. The Henriot Exceptional Range includes the **2005 Brut Millésimé** (A\$135) and the glorious **1998 Cuvée des Enchanteleurs** (A\$320), both made from equal parts of chardonnay and pinot noir, with the latter assembled from six of Champagnes most prestigious grands crus.

JUDY SARRIS

