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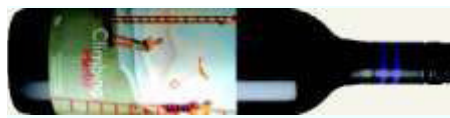
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**Mulyan Block 7 Cowra Chardonnay 2006, \$25; Block 9 Cowra Chardonnay 2005, \$25; Cowra Chardonnay 2006, \$20; Cowra Viognier 2006, \$20**

Cowra's wine reputation was built on chardonnay. A young Brian Croser sourced his first Petaluma from here in 1977, and in the 1980s Cowra's ability to efficiently produce big volumes of rich, peachy chardonnay saved Rothbury Estate's bacon. Now, as Peter and Jenni Fagan show with these terrific Mulyan wines, there's a seriously good side to Cowra chardonnay - more akin to the 1997 Petaluma than the mass produced Rothbury wines of the '80s and '90s. These are generous and peachy wines, but young and fresh with the complexities of barrel fermentation and maturation. The oak fermented viognier's on the mark, too. See [www.mulyanwines.com.au](http://www.mulyanwines.com.au)



**Millamolong of Orange: 24 Goals Riesling, \$20; 56 Miles Shiraz 2007, \$20; Isabelle's Ghost Merlot 2007, \$20; Cumulus Wines Climbing Merlot 2006, \$20**

These are all from the high, cool Orange area. Millamolong's star to me is the juicy, ripe, finely sculpted shiraz. It's closer to grape juice than wine at this early stage, but should be absolutely delicious with just a few months' bottle age. Their riesling is OK, but other regions do this variety better. The merlot, like the shiraz, is simply too young. And because it has harder tannins, it's not a drink-now proposition, and there's no certainty that they'll be tamed by time. Climbing, too, has merlot's assertive tannins, but they fit with lovely fruit and form part of the elegant framework of the wine - a delightful drop indeed.



**Bay of Fires Tasmania Chardonnay 2006, \$36-\$38**  
**Tapanappa "Tiers" Vineyard Piccadilly Valley Chardonnay 2007, \$75**

These are contrasting top-end chardonnays from Bay of Fires (owned by US-based Constellation Brands) and Tapanappa, owned by the Croser, Cazes and Bollinger families. The Tassie wine leads with what some winemakers call a "struck match" character - a winemaking artefact derived from barrel fermentation. This hovers over the aroma and flavour and, to my taste, becomes a distraction, albeit minor, in an otherwise, intense, taut and wonderful wine. Croser's wine, from the Tiers Vineyard (planted 1979) is an altogether more subtle wine - luxurious but with finesse and a seamless integration of the fruit and barrel ferment and maturation elements. It just needs time in the bottle.