



WINEWISE

THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE

May 2014



Winewise takes to the whisky trail

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PINOT NOIR

Note: **Os** = Outstanding
HR = Highly Recommended
R = Recommended
Ag = Agreeable
Ac = Acceptable
Un = Unacceptable

Excellent value wines in purple.

Judged by: Fran Austin, James Halliday, Lester Jesberg, Peter Nixon & Deb Pearce

We usually have one or two surprise results in the Championship. The main reason for that is because the panels are chosen carefully to avoid leanings to any particular agendas. There are cliques on the show judging circuit that push particular styles. Put two or more members of such a clique on a panel of five and the results can be skewed. Here we have five professionals from varied fields of wine expressing their opinions equally without discussion.

2010-2012 Gippsland & Bellarine Pinot Noir

2012 del Rios of Mount Anakie Pinot Noir This is a stylish and impressive pinot noir. The red berry fruit is fragrant and delivers plenty on a silky, structured palate with nicely integrated oak. (\$32.00) **HR**

<http://www.delrios.com.au/wines/2012/del-rios-pinot-noir>

2012 Brown Magpie Single Vineyard Pinot Noir Another classy pinot from the Bellarine region. It certainly delivers the goods in terms of fresh, ripe varietal fruit, and the fine palate is very long. (Not yet released, but the 2011 is only \$22.00!) Get into the queue! **HR**

<http://www.brownmagpiewines.com/cellar-door/wines/red-wines/brown-magpie-single-vineyard-pinot-noir-2011>

2012 Waratah Hills Pinot Noir An attractive perfumed pinot with savoury tannins and a long, fruit-driven finish. Will provide excellent drinking for the next few years. (Not yet released) **HR**

2012 Clyde Park Block B2 Pinot Noir On the light side, with slightly green tannins. (\$75.00) **Ag**

2010 Lethbridge Mietta Pinot Noir Looks and tastes older than its four years. The tannins are green and hard. (\$31.50) **Ac**

2012 Tasmania Pinot Noir

2012 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir This wine has enjoyed many show successes and it's easy to see why. The fragrant dark cherry nose carries brambly hints and the palate is opulently silky. A couple more years will see this wine deliver even more drinking pleasure. (\$55.00) **Os**
<http://www.homehillwines.com.au/index.php/wines5/red-wines>

2012 Kelvedon Estate Pinot Noir Very rich and vibrant, showing beautifully defined dark berry varietal fruit. It's long-flavoured and perfectly balanced. (Not yet released but will probably be in the mid \$30.00 range) **HR**

2012 Josef Chromy Pinot Noir A very fragrant, elegant pinot noir with excellent length of palate and a pleasing savoury finish. It's beginning to drink well now. (\$26.00) **HR**
https://www.crackawines.com.au/Josef_Chromy/2012_Josef_Chromy_Wines_Pinot_Noir/Sales

2012 Home Hill Estate Pinot Noir Shows some cherry jam character and is laden with flavour. However it's a little disjointed at the moment and needs a year or two in bottle. (\$36.00) **R**

2010-11 Tasmania Pinot Noir

2011 Home Hill Estate Pinot Noir There's a touch of bottle-age complexity here that just manages to lift this wine to the top. Although the palate isn't a blockbuster in pinot terms, it's long and very well balanced. (\$36.00) **HR**

2011 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir Nicely ripe, with freshness and herbal complexity. Has good structure and will benefit from another year or two in bottle. (\$50.00) **HR**

2011 Dawson & James Pinot Noir Shows some whole bunch complexity, and the tannins are ripe. Just needs a little more mid palate fruit. (\$50.00) **R**

2010 Winstead Lot 16 Pinot Noir Tends jammy and over-ripe, and shows some new oak. (\$42.00) **Ag**

TASMANIAN PINOT NOIR FINAL

2012 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir

2011 Home Hill Estate Pinot Noir

2010-12 Adelaide Hills, Orange & Southern Highlands Pinot Noir



2012 Wicks Estate Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir Here's a pinot nearing the peak of its form. It's packed with dark cherry flavour and offers just a touch of herbal complexity. The palate is supple and long. Delicious. (\$20.00) **Os**

<http://www.wicksestate.com.au/index.cfm?method=storeproducts.slowdrilldown&productid=80376a17-b4e6-92cb-c00e-5f4c760bcf83>

2012 Logan Pinot Noir (Orange, NSW) A totally different style to the Wicks wine. The Logan pinot noir shows brambly whole bunch character which enhances the perfumed raspberry and strawberry characteristics. The palate is long and delicate. (No longer available) **HR**

2012 Riposte The Sabre Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir A vividly coloured pinot with fragrant dark cherry aromas. After the captivating nose, the silky, long palate is no disappointment. It will become the best wine in this group after another 2-3 years. (\$27.00) **HR**

<http://www.winestar.com.au/prod4890.htm>

2012 Swinging Bridge M.A.W. Pinot Noir (Orange, NSW) This is a supple, approachable pinot noir offering pure strawberry varietal flavour on a long, gentle palate. (\$30.00) **HR**

2010 Riposte The Sabre Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir Not surprisingly, this wine shows some maturity in comparison to the 2012s. However there's no lack of varietal flavour and the tannins have softened somewhat, inviting very enjoyable drinking. (\$29.00) **HR**

2010 Tertini Southern Highlands Pinot Noir Light mature colour. There's good fragrant varietal fruit here, but a stemmy character is at the forefront. (\$53.00) **Ag**

2012 Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir

2012 Montalto Teurong Block Pinot Noir A powerful dark cherry style with excellent structure. Although substantial, the palate is balanced and strongly varietal. This wine will be even more impressive in 2-3 years. (\$65.00) **Os**

<http://www.montalto.com.au/store/>

2012 Robert Oatley Vineyards Finisterre Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir Attractively complex, with fresh cherry aromas and flavours. The oak is just a little obvious at the moment. (\$29.00) **HR**

2012 Montalto Main Ridge Block Pinot Noir Comparatively light colour. The nose is fragrant, with a pleasantly earthy complexity and the palate is long and fine. A delicate style. (\$65.00) **HR**

2012 Montalto Estate Pinot Noir Very fresh and appealing, with vibrant varietal fruit and fine, supple tannins. Very good drinking. (\$46.00) **HR**

2012 T'Gallant Tribute Pinot Noir A big, ripe powerful red with toasty oak. A pinot noir for shiraz fans. (\$33.00) **R**

2012 Montalto Pennon Hill Pinot Noir Pale colour. Lean and comparatively advanced. (\$30.00) **Ac**

2012 Yarra Valley Pinot Noir (1)

2012 Domaine Chandon Barrel Selection Pinot Noir The freshness and intensity of this wine are very strong points. Length, structure and balance dot all "I"s and cross all "t"s. (Not available) **Os**

2012 Tarrawarra Reserve Pinot Noir This is a very impressive cellaring style. The intensity and length of flavour are encountered only in the best of pinot noirs, and the structure is ideal for long-term keeping. (\$60.00) **Os**

<http://www.tarrawarra.com.au/product/2012-Reserve-Pinot-Noir>

2012 De Bortoli Riorret The Abbey Vineyard Pinot Noir A complex subtle style of pinot with a cherry fragrance. There's an attractive herbal hint and the tannins are fine. (Not yet released) **HR**

2012 Mayer Bloody Hill Pinot Noir There's a beguiling funky hint to the nose and the palate is silky and fine. Almost more Burgundy than Yarra. (\$35.00) **HR**

<http://www.oakbarrel.com.au/store/beta-store-red-wine-australia-timo-mayer-bloody-hill-yarra-pinot-noir-2012/dp/8082>

or contact timomayer@bigpond.com.au

2012 Yarra Valley Pinot Noir (2)

2012 Coldstream Hills Reserve Pinot Noir A superbly silky, textural pinot noir with an almost black truffle-like complexity and a dash of new oak. It needs time, but all the attributes for cellaring are there. (\$79.95) **Os**

http://www.mycellars.com.au/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=1170&utm_source=winesearcher&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=May

2012 De Bortoli Yarra Valley Estate Pinot Noir There's a complexing funky touch to the nose and the palate delivers intensity, length and structure. This excellent wine definitely needs time. Amazing value. (\$20.00) **HR**

http://www.aussiewines.com.au/wine_Growing_Regions.php?pid=2234&page=144&s=&f=&wines=Victoria

2012 Domaine Chandon Pinot Noir This is very drinkable, elegant pinot noir with raspberry overtones and a touch of complexity. (\$23.00) **HR**

<http://www.winestar.com.au/prod4853.htm>

2012 Coldstream Hills Pinot Noir Here we have an attractive meeting of drinkability and complexity. The silky texture impresses, as does the length and balance. (\$27.00) **HR**

2012 Mayer Granite Pinot Noir Styles like this split panels. There's an element of stems here and the colour is a little advanced, but the palate is a winner - silky, fine and long. (\$59.00) **HR**

YARRA VALLEY PINOT NOIR FINAL

2012 Domaine Chandon Barrel Selection Pinot Noir

2012 Coldstream Hills Reserve Pinot Noir

PINOT NOIR FINAL

2012 Wicks Estate Pinot Noir

2012 Montalto Teurong Block Pinot Noir

2012 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir

2012 Domaine Chandon Barrel Selection Pinot Noir

2012 del Rios of Mount Anakie Pinot Noir

Five very different wines were lined up for the final. Four of them received first-place votes. The Wicks Estate scored two firsts and two seconds, edging ahead of the Montalto. Whether you feel it's right or wrong, sheer drinkability played a strong role in the outcome.

In this tasting we were reminded of the diversity of Australian pinot noir styles. The Yarra Valley provided the strongest group overall, but failed to snatch the prize. Often overlooked, the Adelaide Hills wines also showed well, in general being more fruit driven, made to develop complexity with bottle age.

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WINEWISE CHAMPIONSHIP

CLASSIC AUSTRALIAN RED BLEND

Note: **Os** = Outstanding
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Un = Unacceptable

Excellent value wines in purple.

Judged by: Lex Howard, Lester Jesberg, Nick O'Leary, Deb Pearce, Nick Spencer.

During the 1950s and 60s the blend of shiraz and cabernet sauvignon rose to prominence in Australia. Famous examples were Mildara Yellow Label and Penfolds Bin 389. Sometimes labelled "Claret", the cabernet-shiraz or shiraz-cabernet enjoyed great popularity before the focus on varietal wines. Despite being somewhat out of fashion, this blend has much to offer.



2012 Bleasdale Langhorne Creek Petrel Reserve This blend hits the spot exactly. It shows blackberry and mulberry characteristics with a caress of oak, and the tannins are supple but provide just-right structure. Drink or cellar? The Petrel Reserve fills both roles. (Not yet released) **Os**

2012 Anvers Wines Razorback Road Adelaide Hills Shiraz Cabernet The power and depth of this wine are very impressive indeed. The blackberry/licorice aromas and flavours are complemented by quality oak and the finish is very long. Cellar. Brilliant value. (\$22.00) **Os**

<http://www.anvers.com.au/buy-our-wine-anvers-red-selection/>

2012 Longview Vineyard Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon Quite spicy and complex. Although the nose verges on peppery the palate is ripe, substantial and long. The fine tannins are an added attraction. Another wine of amazing value. (\$17.00) **HR**
<http://www.longviewvineyard.com.au/shop/>

2012 George Wyndham Founders Reserve Shiraz Cabernet There's excellent dark berry and blackcurrant fruit here, but the oak is a little obvious and dusty. However this is still a very good drink. More value! (\$15.50) **R**
http://www.crackawines.com.au/Wyndham_Estate/2012_Wyndham_Estate_George_Wyndham_Shiraz_Cabernet/Sales

2009 Wolf Blass Grey Label Shiraz Cabernet The complex notes, derived from a few years in bottle, are appealing and the tannins have softened, allowing enjoyable drinking. (\$39.00) **R**

2011 Sons of Eden Pumpa Shiraz Cabernet There's a green hint to the ripe dark berry nose. The palate is rewarding, but the nose let this wine down. (\$25.00) **R**

2010 Jim Barry PB Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon A powerful blackberry-like wine that is quite firm, even raw. It definitely needs time. (Not yet released)

Although we were disappointed with the numbers in this class, there was nothing wrong with the quality. This was one of the best categories in terms of overall standard.

A COUPLE OF CLASSY AUSSIE "RHÔNES"

2013 John Duval Wines Plexus Marsanne Roussanne Viognier The apricot and honeysuckle aromas are almost understated and the freshness is impressive. The dry, structured palate is very satisfying and long. (\$30.00) **HR**

2012 Mitchelton Marsanne At two years of age this wine is still very restrained, but the varietal honeysuckle is evident. This is a tight, textural wine that is enjoyable now, but it will be even better next year. (\$22.00) **HR**
<https://www.mitchelton.com.au/wines/mitchelton-marsanne>

Lester Jesberg

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TUMBARUMBA CHARDONNAY

Winewise readers have had the inside running with Tumbarumba chardonnay and sparkling wine. We've made it clear that "Tumba" is one of Australia's best regions for both, so Deb Peace and I jumped at the invitation to join Nick Spencer (Eden Road), Jim Chatto (McWilliams) and Adrian Lockhart (Hungerford Hill) in presiding over a tasting of 2012 Tumba chardonnays for the local growers. All wines were tasted "blind".

Here's how it all panned out.

Excellent value wines in purple.

Outstanding

2012 Eden Road Tumbarumba Chardonnay Showing intense white peach with faintly funky, nutty, buttery overtones. Purity itself. Long and textural, showing the classic regional acidity.

Note: This wine is a blend of the Maragle and Courabaya chardonnays reviewed below. (\$40.00)

2012 Eden Road Maragle Chardonnay Here we have richness, freshness and funky complexity. Powerful white peach flavour shows through on a palate with impressive depth, balance and texture. (\$50.00)

<http://edenroadwines.com.au/collections/small-batch>

Highly Recommended

2012 Coppabella Chardonnay This is an attractively vibrant citrus style with hints of white nectarine and subtle lees complexity. It's tightly structured and textural, with lovely acidity that doesn't dominate. (\$20.00)

<http://www.wineselectors.com.au/product/COPPA20112-Coppabella-of-Tumbarumba-Single-Vineyard-Chardonnay-2012>

2012 Armchair Critic Tumbarumba Chardonnay There's pronounced peachiness and grapefruit here combined with freshness and intensity. Nice fruit/oak combination. Textural phenolics. Excellent acidity. Faintest hint of funk. Cellar. (\$17.00)

<https://www.kemenys.com/go.jsp#!class=Product&spn=1097425>

2012 Eden Road Courabaya Chardonnay The appealing restrained fresh white peach is enhanced by a hint of cashew. The palate is long, dry and racy. A cellaring special. (\$50.00)

2012 Ravensworth Tumbarumba Chardonnay This chardonnay is quite wild and free, but there's lovely fruit expression - pink grapefruit with hints of nougat. It has excellent structure and is long, powerful and uncompromising. Needs time. (\$30.00)

<https://www.wineboss.com.au/Order.aspx?ref=mkv&wsrsrc=mkv>

2012 Lock & Key Chardonnay Restrained fig-grapefruit characteristics. It's a beautifully low-key style of chardonnay with a creamy texture. (\$17.00)
http://www.moppity.com.au/index.php?route=information/news&news_id=83

2012 Coppabella The Crest Chardonnay A fresh figgy varietal expression with subtle complexity. It's a good regional style offering fruit weight and lingering acidity. Cellar. (\$21.00)
<http://www.winesociety.com.au/wines/27843/coppabella-of-tumbarumba-the-crestchardonnay-2012>

2012 Moppity Vineyard Estate Chardonnay A very restrained chardonnay with some free SO₂ and funk. There are intriguing hints of lime and green pineapple. A tightly coiled chardonnay with strong acid drive. (\$25.00)
http://www.moppity.com.au/index.php?route=information/news&news_id=83

2012 Tumbarumba Wine Escapes Chardonnay There's a pronounced sulphides complexity here together with hints of oyster shell. The palate is taut and linear. It's a polarising wine. If you don't like funkiness, stay away. (\$24.00)
<http://www.tumbarumbawinesescape.com.au/shop/>

2012 Collector Tiger Tiger Chardonnay A delightfully restrained grapefruit style showing a little too much high quality oak. Glorious fruit expression though. Texture, length and acidity. (\$45.00)
<http://www.oakbarrel.com.au/store/collector-tiger-tiger-chardonnay-2012/dp/8888>

2012 Barwang 842 Tumbaruma Chardonnay Fragrant grapefruit/lemon rind. Intensity and acidity - the latter quite prominent. Has enough fruit and texture. Not yet released

2012 Penfolds Bin 311 Impressive white peach, lees funk and oak together with a hint of butter. Good texture and acidity. Maybe a little too much grip. (\$40.00)
<http://www.winehouse.com.au/ShowWines.asp?pID=39018&c=19348>

Recommended

2012 McWilliams Mount Pleasant Isabelle Very pure and uncomplicated. Fresh figgy aromas. Good fruit weight with lingering acidity. (\$20.00)

2012 Eden Road The Long Road Chardonnay Rich and peachy. Fairly simple but is fresh and varietal. A little hardness on the finish but shows a very nice touch of oak. (\$27.00)

2012 Courabaya 805 Chardonnay Funky. Subdued quincy fruit. Hint of butter. Attractive phenolics in a somewhat French approach. Acid-driven. Interesting. Not yet released

Agreeable

2012 Armchair Critic Under And Over chardonnay Shows strong peach aromas heading to tropical. Slightly forward and full flavoured, but has good acidity. (\$13.00)

2012 Obsession Tumbarumba Chardonnay (Adrian Brayne) Powerful yet subdued. Subtle complexity. Oak a little too prominent. Not available (minute quantity)

2012 Hungerford Hill Tumbarumba Chardonnay Fresh white peach with obvious oak. A somewhat one dimensional fruit-oak style. (\$25.00)

2012 Clonakilla Tumbarumba Chardonnay Rich and forward. Very complex, showing oak, nuts and butter. Oak too prominent. (\$40.00)

2012 Barwang Tumbarumba Chardonnay There's a confection-like banana note. Overall it's not quite vibrant and the palate is a little dilute. (\$17.50)

Acceptable

2012 Mount Tumba Vineyard On The Fly Deep colour. Quite buttery. Better palate with good acidity, but malolactic is clumsy.

2012 Mannus Tumbarumba Chardonnay Deep colour. Advanced on the nose. Straightforward and peachy. Oak a bit plain. (\$24.00)

We're guessing that you didn't realise that there were 23 different Tumbarumba chardonnays made from the 2012 vintage. The Tumba style is very much an acid-based one, so the chardonnays are taut and dry. Adjectives like flinty and steely come to mind. If you're a fan of big, rich chardonnays with plenty of fruit and oak, the Tumbas probably aren't for you. On the other hand if you enjoy Hunter semillon and dry, racy rieslings don't hesitate to plunge into Tumbarumba chardonnay.

You'll read about Tumba chardonnays more and more in the mainstream media as their scribes "discover" them.

Lester Jesberg

Don't hesitate to take a trip and discover Tumbarumba for yourself. Autumn is the perfect time to go because you can take in the brilliant seasonal colours and stock up on freshly-picked apples from the growers at nearby Batlow.

<http://www.visitnsw.com/destinations/snowy-mountains/tumbarumba-area/attractions?gclid=Cle3-6Lo1rwCFcvPpAodniYAgw>

TWO NOTABLE CABERNETS

A brace of cabernets caught my attention recently, and I thought you'd like to know about them before I hand you over to the inimitable Bob Clancy.

2012 Xanadu Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Here's a knockout cabernet which is packed with blackcurrant varietal goodness. It's intense and beautifully balanced, with a long satisfying finish. Why pay more for Margaret River cabernet? (\$35.00) *Outstanding*

2009 Forester Yelverton Reserve Margaret River Cabernet If you're an enthusiast of fine Bordeaux red, there's a chance you'll love this wine. It's no big "sweet" Aussie, and it has those classic cedar and tobacco aromas. The palate is firm and fine, in the "claret" style, with a hint of leaf and a long finish. (\$62.00) *Highly Recommended*

Lester Jesberg

WHISKY-WISE

Guid day again from the **Queensland Whisky Expo**.

The 2014 Expo was held recently in the beautiful and historic Tara Ball Room, upstairs in the Queensland Irish Club, a most appropriate venue for sampling and enjoying fine whisky, or whiskey as they like to spell it in the emerald isle.



The Qld whisk(e)y expo is held every February/March. It's a fantastic opportunity to sample a wide range of quality spirit from all around the world. For more info, contact Lance Currie of the Qld Malt Whisky Society by emailing lfcurrie@yahoo.com - or check

out the Qld Irish Club website for news of coming whisky events, or drop in to the club at 175 Elizabeth St Brisbane and visit the whisky bar that Lance has set up. (The Guinness on tap there is wonderful also, to be sure.)

There were no arguments about the spelling as a horde of well-integrated whisk(e)y lovers were much more interested in tasting the products of the many international distilleries spread around the grand ball room.

The unmistakeable sound of bagpipes heralded the arrival of the piper with several big guys in kilts who looked like seasoned whisky drinkers, and they welcomed the eager attendees and started the show in fine style.

Characteristics and flavours imparted by various types of casks seemed to be a major theme in this expo. We had whiskies matured in sherry casks, bourbon casks, rum casks, port casks, quarter casks, old casks, new casks, single casks and whiskies that had seen the inside of two or three different types of casks. There were also plenty of cask-strength whiskies, generally meaning that the whisky is presented and sold at its original distilled alcohol level rather than watered-down to the standard 40% - apparently it's then left to you to add water to bring the ABV down to civilised level, if you really feel the need...

I'm still approaching whisky evaluation as a wine-writer, i.e. looking to articulate the characteristics by flavour and body descriptors much the same as we do with wine. I've noticed that my joyfully ever-widening circle of whisky friends seem to be divided in preference for either full-flavoured or fine and elegant drops, which is not to say they don't appreciate the other side of that fence as well, just that they favour one or the other most of the time. So while I'm seduced by good expressions of yummy flavours, I'm trying to keep an eye on elegance and structure as well. It's just like wine in that way - and presents a similarly wonderful learning curve and lifelong journey full of instructive experiences.

Here's what I thought of the whisky I managed to sample at the Expo, *Outstanding* and *Highly Recommended* attached to those thought worthy:

BENRIACH (Speyside)

16 year old

A light nose with some wafting notes of lemon and heather. On the palate pronounced caramel flavour intermingling with lemon, some honey in there as well. Very short finish, vanishing without a trace. Nice starter but not overly exciting.

15 year old Dark Rum Finish

Initial nose of cut grass and guava, giving way to vanilla and then spice. These flowed on to the palate but were quickly surpassed by the rum-cask induced fruit cake flavours of sultanas and, not surprisingly, rum, along with chocolate and apricot. Finished pleasantly but somewhat quickly given the strong flavours. Interesting style which I'm sure would have its followers.

17 year old Septendecim

Based on peated malt which delivers a grand but not overpowering smoky nose in which I detected some apple blossom scents. In the mouth plenty of apples, cashews and spice, wrapped up in a warm and cosy smoke and honey cocoon. Finished very long and sumptuous – I kept thinking of polished leather like the couches in an old-worldy gentlemen's club. Seems that Islay doesn't have a monopoly on rich peat and smoke accents. Wonderful whisky, fabulous weight and balance. (\$150.00) **Outstanding**
<http://www.nicks.com.au/benriach-septendecim-17-year-old-single-malt-scotch-whisky-700ml>

BALVENIE (Speyside)

17 Year old Double Wood

Matured in sherry and bourbon casks. Plenty of fruity flavours here. The nose started as mild honey with scattered herbs, then graduated to orange peel and cumquat. While you could identify separate sweet and oak notes on the palate, they ultimately came together as fruit cake with plenty of currants and raisins and some chocolate. Slightly jammy but in a happy effective way. Strangely the fruit explosion in the mouth evaporated almost instantly on swallowing.

ARRAN (Island)

14 year old

Not much showing on the nose, perhaps some heather and peach and lime but you had to work hard to get them. Great in the mouth though – nice syrupy texture with malt and nuts and spice perfectly blended. Had a slightly sour, tangy feel – sort of a cross between Cointreau and barley sugar. Noticeably full and rich at back palate. However the wonderful long lip-smacking finish won me over. (\$100.00) **Highly Recommended**
<http://www.oakbarrel.com.au/store/store-whisky-scotland-island-arran-14-year-old-46-700ml/dp/8162>

12 year old Cask Strength

A light lemony nose – unfortunately reminiscent to me of a basic “pub scotch”. The palate was dominated by alcohol but eventually mellowed to reveal some peat and stone fruit flavours. Finish was very brief, more of an evaporation. For the purists I guess, but needs more flavour for my liking.

Port Cask Finish

A different sort of nose – bit like an old lolly shop, with a mixture of marella jubes, fruit tingles and jaffas – remember them? Confectionery followed through on the palate, with citrus and barley notes struggling to get a look in. For all that, it came through as round and nicely mouth-filling, but a bit unbalanced. Finished reasonably well. I quite liked it, perhaps as a liquid after-dinner sweet.

GLENGLASSAUGH (Speyside)

Evolution

Out of a bourbon cask and revealing vanilla on nose and palate. Some light straw and citrus notes also in the nose. The delicate nose gave way to a much fuller expression in the mouth. Round and mellow, like a vanilla-apricot dessert with sugar counter-pointed by spice. Not quite perfectly balanced perhaps, but rich and tasty. Finished with a grand but brief flourish.

CAOL ILA (Islay)

12 year old

Trademark Islay flavours presented in a somewhat restrained format. Nose revealed quality smoked salmon – lightly smoked and salted, fresh oil, with a dash of lime. Smoke and peat intensified a bit in the mouth, but not dramatically, and some coffee and sage notes joined in. Good intro to Islay for those yet to fully appreciate the “big smoke”. We were told this will be the new heart of Johnny Walker Blue, which might thrill you, or not.

(\$88.00) *Highly Recommended*

https://www.1stchoice.com.au/Spirits/caol-ila-12-yo-scotch-whisky-700ml_8727148

CLYNELISH (Highlands)

14 year old

Very enticing nose of lime and softly stewed fruits, perhaps mango and peach, with wood smoke wafting through pleasantly. They turned into more-honeyed flavours on the palate, with rich spice kicking in late. Balance is good, with a pleasing fruity finish. Though impressed with the flavours, I found it almost too mellow and hence a tad boring. Maybe I need to try it again... and again.



TALISKER (Skye)

Storm

We were told this is a relatively new blend of old and young barrels, an attempt at freshening the good old mellow spirit while retaining its characteristics, I guess like some of our great fortified wines. The nose was slightly smoky with preserved lemon and sea-salt. Very nice in the mouth, with a multitude of citrus balanced by smoky-sweet raisins. Interesting, and a nice fruity finish, but it seemed to be lacking something – maybe personality.

GLENFIDDICH (Speyside)

18 year old

The nose at first seemed basic but persistence revealed a web of delicate scents – like far-away smoke and sea, and the remnants of a citrus basket. The palate provided more obvious flavours of pear and plum cushioned by barley. Very full and rounded in the mouth, with great balance and good clean finish. A whisky to re-visit and mull over and you'd probably find more in it every time.

(\$120.00) *Highly Recommended*

<http://www.nicks.com.au/glenfiddich-18-year-old-single-malt-scotch-whisky-700ml>

15 year old Solera

Whisky made on a Solera system! It has certainly produced complexity and balance. Delightful sweetish wafting nose of heather and boiled lollies and barley, tempered with a tiny bit of pepper. Followed by a rich and intense confectionery palate with hazel nuts and candied orange, beautifully balanced by spice. All that richness controlled in silky texture, providing great mouthfeel. The finish accentuated the elegant expression of flavour. (\$100.00)

Outstanding

http://www.aussiewines.com.au//buyLiquor_online.php?pid=888849&page=216&varietal=Spirits

MACALLAN (Speyside)

12 year old

Nose of Kaffir lime leaf and freshly mown grass, with delicate olive oil. Mainly nuts, apple and spice on the palate. Unusual texture - I found it chewy, probably because of the nutty flavours, but that added interest and didn't detract – actually quite pleasant and rich in the mouth, with fine oak showing through. Finished clean but quick.

18 year old

Vague lemon and lime notes on the nose, and background sherry notes. Some fruit cake nuances on the palate but this lacked presence in the mouth – the soft mild texture failed to convey flavour through the palate, although the fine oak was again effective. Not unpleasant, just too simple for me, but would undoubtedly find favour with some.

LAPHROAIG (Islay)

Select Cask

Plenty of good old smoke and charcoal on the nose, cleansing and pleasing, maybe with the smell of some kippers in the pan not far away and fresh lemons waiting nearby. I was ready for more of that edgy intriguing flavour in the mouth but regrettably it didn't come. The palate was surprisingly simple and straightforward, and smacked of lemonade (fresh and properly made at least). Finish was okay for all that, but the overall effect was a bit disappointing.

Triple Wood

The 3 casks are apparently bourbon, French oak and quarter. They seem to have combined to rein in the big Islay flavours and present them in a soft and quite distinguished way. Delightful nose of delicate peat and smoke, which continues on to the palate with some saltiness, lemon and honey, all quite delicate. Graceful glide into the mouth, certainly good weight, and a nice finish. A lot to like here but "delicate" and "Islay" don't sit comfortably together for everybody.

BRUICHLADDICH (Islay)

Port Charlotte Heavily Peated

"Heavily peated" had us sticking our noses in with some trepidation that we'd be subconsciously searching for fire escapes, but the immediate reaction was "not so heavily peated"! Sure the smoke was there aplenty but presented in such a pleasing laid-back way that pears and apples and sea-salt cut through it clearly, coming together in a truly wonderful nose. Then a great syrupy-smoky explosion of flavour in the mouth, featuring intense orange and lovely barley. Great balance and flavours delightfully wrapped, and leaving with a dignified and memorable exit.

(\$100.00) ***Outstanding***

http://www.aussiewines.com.au//buyLiquor_online.php?pid=888849&page=216&varietal=Spirits

Classic

Gentle nose belying its birthplace, essentially lemon and heather and subtle smoke, quite pleasant and uplifting. The palate is beautifully rounded and full of flavour, particularly citrus, and also raisins and pear and perhaps a little bit of fresh bread. Finished fruity but nice, and left you a distinct mellow feeling.

Black Art

Hmmm, I was wondering to which black art it referred. Perhaps the unusual dark caramel colour was a clue. American oak hadn't done it many favours on the nose - basic vanilla and some other sweetish scents that were too subtle to capture. The palate was rounded nicely but the texture and profile were just too soft and undistinguished, with some decidedly off-key notes. Finished accordingly short.

Octomore

Fabulous nose – not just any smoke but reminiscent to me of a sadly deceased satsuma plum tree I used for bbq wood last year which burned with an unusual richness and depth, and here was something like it in a glass, combined with apple, lemon and lightly grilled oily salmon. On the palate, the salmon had been cooked to perfection with a spicy honey glaze and preserved lemon on the side. That delightful richness is presented in a fine and smooth glide into the mouth, and then leaves behind a long memory of a happy visit. Epitome of elegance with strength.

Outstanding

BUSHMILLS (Ireland)

Black Bush (blended)

It's a blend but the oloroso barrel has imparted a striking and pleasing sherry nose, with alluring toffee and spice. A fine silky texture provided a very promising entry to palate, which delivered more spice and raisins with a charry oak background. Good structure, escalating in intensity. Some fire to the finish, long and satisfying. A whisky with real presence and depth of flavour attractive to wine lovers, at a relatively low price. (\$47.00)

Highly Recommended

https://www.danmurphys.com.au/product/DM_19358/bushmills-black-bush-irish-whiskey-700ml&CA_6C15C=1069297016

KAVALAN (Taiwan)

Yep, Taiwan. This distillery released its first product in 2008 and has already won heaps of praise from whisky connoisseurs in its short but immensely promising life.

Soloist Vinho

Strong thrilling burst of lemon, lime and heather on the first breath, followed by spice and pepper and tropical fruits – yum! Terrific graduated entry into the palate, building intensity and flavour to the back. A very nicely done caramel toffee taste overlaid mango and fig. The wonderful structure was most captivating. Finished in tune with the final stroke of the maestro's baton. (\$199.00) ***Outstanding***

<http://www.nicks.com.au/kavalan-solist-vinho-cask-strength-single-malt-whisky-700ml>

King Car Conductor

Perhaps I was still in awe of the Soloist's performance, or musing on the lovely ambiguity in the name, but this struck me as being like getting on a tram after leaving the concert hall, i.e. tram conductor rather than orchestra. The purity of spirit is striking, presumably reflecting underlying technical excellence. However the principal flavour I found was rockmelon on nose and palate, perhaps with a hint of a green apple and banana. A purist's whisky, not for a big flavour-seeker, but in that zone right on the mark.

And so to Tasmanian whiskies. Is there anything they can't produce wonderfully well down there? In a very short time, Tasmania has become internationally famous for top-quality whisky. As well as these below, keep an eye out for **Heartwood**, **Hellyers Road** and **Nant**, who have won much critical acclaim.

OVEREEM (Old Hobart Distillery)

[Port Cask Matured](#)

Delightful fruity nose, lots of lemon and lime and some red berries, also slightly salty, with effervescent smoke-fume coming, I think, from the charred oak cask. Citrus continued on to the palate but became more like preserved fruits. Apple and barley joined in, and the smoke-fume character generated a toasty warmth holding it all together in a sexy pose. Serious lip-smacking finish that left all that rich flavour lingering on for some time. I could even enjoy this with toast and marmalade for breakfast. (\$149.00) *Highly Recommended*

<http://www.oldsobartdistillery.com/purchase.html>

Sherry Cask Matured

Pretty nose with plenty of heather and cut flowers, backed by vanilla and citrus, predominantly orange. Liqueur-ish texture filled the mouth quite happily with pepper, spice and honey flavours, turning into a toffee effect at the back palate. Nice lingering finish with the rich flavours held in the mouth for a while.

LARK

Small Cask 43%

Intriguing and different nose showing diverse flavours of barley, corn, citrus, and perhaps freshly-baked lamingtons. The palate however presented a relatively simple crème caramel effect which was disappointing in flavour and texture after the promising nose. Finished nice and clean but lightning quick.



Distiller's Selection 46%

Another intriguingly different nose – this one strangely reminded me of chardonnay! It was a lovely combination of lemon, honey and florals, with beautifully controlled peat wafting through. The flavours were amplified and concentrated in the mouth, presenting a full-on citrus cake effect. Notably full and round in texture, quite pleasing but at the big end of that scale. Finished surprisingly quickly for the big flavours but very pleasantly. (\$157.50) *Highly Recommended*

<http://www.larkdistillery.com.au/products/whisky>

Single Cask (Port) 58%

Again an interesting powerful nose. Peat was more intense here but in an elegant and fine sense. Lark are fortunate, perhaps that should be clever, in having their own Tassie peat bog which they put to excellent use. Strong smells of cumquats and loads of rich stewed fruits came through the peat. On the palate fiery alcohol made its presence felt but the fruit carried it well and the balance was okay. Finish was indeed cleansing, with a shiver-inducing hit of alcohol. Great, if you like playing in the fiery zone.

SULLIVANS COVE (Tasmania Distillery)

Sullivans Cove presents a two-fold challenge to us wine-writers attempting to convey our thoughts on whisky. Firstly, it seems that the overall quality is, more than most makers, related to particular single casks (i.e. different distillations in the same style) and, within that same style, there is, according to many whisky connoisseurs, considerable variation from cask to cask, with the best being world-beating – they have championship titles to prove it. Secondly, they are extremely elegant and fine to the extent that flavours don't stand out expressively, which means that the usual wine-descriptors don't help that much in articulating your evaluation. However, I guess you can only comment on what you're given on the night so -

Double Cask 13 year old

Delicate ethereal nose of cut flowers and heather, perhaps a hint of apple. The palate is elegant, linear and focussed, but doesn't project flavour and comes across in the mouth as rather lightweight. Finished light and fast.

American Oak 47.5%

Some lemon peel and crème brûlée were the main features of a pleasant light nose. The palate presented some sugar and spice in a delicate whipped lime-caramel dessert effect, but the softness seemed to sit uncomfortably with the accompanying spirit – giving an incongruous soft but fiery feel. However the sheer elegance of the spirit is striking and will appeal to those who like that style.

Port Cask 47.5%

The port cask is French oak. Again the nose is so fleeting that it's hard to identify – was that a hint of choc-mint, maybe some caramel? The palate showed a soft meringue flavour and texture, perhaps some nougat. Trademark elegance shows but not a lot of flavour. Pleasant but quick finish.

Tasmania doesn't have a monopoly on Australian whisky production. There are fine examples coming from distilleries all around the nation. **Bakery Hill** and **Timboon** from Victoria, and **Limeburners** from WA, are well worth trying.

Here's one from Melbourne, actually made in a former hangar at Essendon airport:

STARWARD

Well! What a difference a year makes! Last year I attributed the dreaded wine descriptor "blousy" to this item. Blousy is pretty grim for a wine, but it's diabolical for a whisky. I'm very pleased that the blouse has now been replaced by a silk shirt with ruffles.

The rich nose featured a plethora of nuts – hazelnuts, almonds, cashews – floating in mandarin and cumquat-flavoured steam. The nutty flavours continued on the palate, and some orange, honey and nougat joined in. The texture is notably creamy and malty, delivering a nice spicy and fruity crème brûlée effect, which was definitely not blousy. Balance not quite perfect perhaps but the flavour profile more than compensated. Long clean ending.

Highly Recommended

<http://www.nicks.com.au/starward-single-malt-whisky-700ml>

We also tried samples from 3 Apera (sherry) casks of graduating volume. These are currently for development purposes only, not available for sale. They gave an intriguing look at how this whisky could handle really big flavours.

50 litre Apera cask: Like sticking your nose in a sherry vat. Lot of intense flavour on palate, mainly honey and caramel. Very impressive how the whisky carried the intense flavours. Beautiful long finish – lip-smacking and lovely!

100 litre: Fresh and preserved lemons joined the sherry nose. Big and beautiful in the mouth, with tobacco nuances happily joining the caramel.

200 litre: Powerful nose with lots of salt and lemon cleaning the nostrils. Plenty of intense caramel on the palate, with loads of fruit and spice. Well, it's too big – but wonderfully exciting. A great rich dessert at the end of a fabulous evening. Slainte!

Bob Clancy