



WINEWISE

THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE

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ITALIAN RED VARIETIES – Panel Tasting

Italy abounds with wine-grape varieties, but it took a long while for Australian wineries to consider planting most of them. It follows, therefore, that it's early days, and even the fundamental question of where to plant most of the Italian red wine vines is very much open to question.

We may be seen to be very hard on some of these wines, but we looked for freshness and intensity of flavour, and did not award extra points for novelty value.

★★★★



2013 Serafino Bellissimo Lagrein The intense dark cherry aroma is enhanced by an interesting herbal note. Freshness is the trump card for this deliciously rich and savoury red wine. (\$20.00)

2014 Serafino Bellissimo Montepulciano The nose is appealingly fragrant, with cherry and raspberry notes. There's plenty of fresh flavour backed by balanced savoury tannins, and just-right acidity lifts the finish. (\$20.00)

<http://serafinowines.com.au/wine/buy-wine/>



2013 Tar & Roses Heathcote Sangiovese This wine is packed with impressive fresh dark cherry fruit. The palate is long and savoury, with a dryness that might be challenging for some. (\$23.00)

2012 Hand Crafted by Geoff Hardy Limestone Coast Lagrein Very fresh and powerful, showing dark cherry and wild berries. The palate is intense, fine and firm. There's slightly too much acid on the finish. (\$30.00)



2013 Hesketh Barossa Valley Montepulciano The colour is bright but light. Both nose and palate follow suit, being vibrant but on the light side. (\$25.00)

2014 De Iuliis Sangiovese Bright light colour. Needs more fruit but is very fresh and well made. Very much a luncheon wine. (\$25.00)

2012 Hand Crafted by Geoff Hardy Teroldego Good strong colour. Concentrated dark berries show through on a solid palate with obvious acid. (\$30.00)



2013 Symphony Hill Reserve Lagrein Vibrant cherry aromas. The palate is fresh but a bit light and simple. (NA)

2012 Hand Crafted by Geoff Hardy Montepulciano Slightly developed colour and nose. Lacks vibrancy and is drying out on the palate. (\$30.00)

2011 Oliver's Taranga Small Batch 4135 McLaren Vale Sagrantino Ripe red berry aromas, but is showing some age. Very dry and appears to losing fruit. (\$40.00)

2013 Serafino Bellissimo Sangiovese Light advanced colour. The fruit is showing development, and the finish is lean and dry. (\$20.00)

2012 McIvor Estate Heathcote Sangiovese Very light colour. Firm, dry and lacking fruit. (Not yet available)

I (Lester) once shared a dinner table with legendary Californian wine merchant Darrel Corti, and his words still resonate. "Do not continue planting sangiovese in Australia. You are wasting your time."

While I don't completely agree, I do believe that finding the right site-clone match is critical. Most haven't. The same applies to other "new" grape varieties. That process will take quite a while, and in the meantime we must accept that there will be more misses than hits.

HOME HILL PINOT NOIR – One of Tasmania’s best

If gold medals in wine shows count for anything (and they do), Home Hill Pinot Noir ranks with the best of them. I’ve lost count of how many golds I’ve helped award to Home Hill, so a visit during a recent Tasmanian sojourn was mandatory.

Home Hill, established by owners Terry and Rosemary Bennett in 1994, has blossomed to become one of Tasmania’s most important, though still very small, wine producers. Over the years Terry and Rosemary built a restaurant on site that is eye-catching, yet suits the environment beautifully, and makes the best of the views and natural light. The food ranks with the best in the state.



The winery has been the domain of Gilli and Paul Lipscombe since the 2011 vintage. Gilli and Paul work with about 20 tonnes of pinot noir split into 20 different ferments, allowing them some blending options. Home Hill is not a big new oak winery, and the Kelly’s Reserve Pinot Noir gets about 40% maximum.

Home Hill vineyard is located in the Huon Valley region, south-west of Hobart, on the edge of the village of Ranelagh which, in turn, is only three kilometres from Huonville. The prevailing climate is decidedly cool – around 1100 Heat Degree Days - but there is variation from site to site. Home Hill receives, on average, 800 ml of rainfall annually.

To learn more about Home Hill and purchase wines, go to

<http://www.homehillwines.com.au/>

The Wines

2013 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Chardonnay A subtle but intense chardonnay which is creamy and long, with nutty complexity and an impressive acid finish. (\$30.00) ★★★★★

2013 Home Hill Estate Pinot Noir Impressive dark cherry aromas lead to a ripe, fresh palate with fine, balanced tannins. It's a delightful drink now, but can be cellared for 2-3 years. (\$36.00) ★★★★★

2013 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir The nose is very fragrant, with a hint of violets. The palate is opulence itself, underpinned by fine, firm tannins and classic cool climate acidity. (\$60.00) ★★★★★

2012 Home Hill Estate Pinot Noir Very fresh, but there's a herbal hint to the light cherry nose. There doesn't seem to be quite enough fruit for the structure. (\$36.00) ★★★

2012 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir A very classy pinot with flavour and structure that is still coiled up and yet to show its best. The intensity of fruit, length and fineness of tannins are very impressive. ★★★★★

2011 Home Hill Estate Pinot Noir Fragrant raspberry and strawberry first impressions with a herbal overtone. Just trails off a little. (\$36.00) ★★★

2011 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir Quite aromatic and cherry-scented with faint hints of undergrowth. The palate offers excellent weight and structure. Still has 2-3 years ahead of it. (\$50.00) ★★★★★

2010 Home Hill Estate Pinot Noir Shows a little maturity, but still offers delicious varietal flavour. Drinking well now. ★★★

2010 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir Still fresh, yet beautifully complex. The varietal dark cherry character is intense, and the finish is long, with fine, savoury tannins in perfect balance. It's just entering its ideal drinking window. ★★★★★

This tiny estate is located in the heart of a small region that may eventually produce Australia's best pinot noirs. I was struck by similarities with Oregon's Willamette Valley when I visited, but it may have just have been the rainy day. Given the quality of the wines from vines that are not yet mature, Home Hill's future is a very exciting one.

Lester Jesberg

STOP PRESS Just last week the 2013 Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir won the Best Pinot Noir and Best Red Wine of Show trophies at the 2015 Tasmanian Wine Show.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON & BLENDS

Panel Tasting

Cabernet sauvignon has become a victim of fashion and geography. Those who like to be seen drinking the “right” wine opt for pinot noir, left-field shiraz or something even more obscure and “natural”.

A lot of Australian cabernet sauvignon is planted in the wrong places, and according to those who rush to judgement, that is anywhere except Margaret River and Coonawarra. Wine is never that simple to categorise, but I guess you get the drift.

As it turned out, the top cabernet calls neither Margaret River nor Coonawarra home, even though those two areas are strongly represented in this tasting.

★★★★



2012 Grosset Gaia Clare Valley Fresh red plum and blackcurrant show on the nose which also carries a hint of leaf. The palate is long, firm and fine. Well worth cellaring. (\$79.00)

2010 Voyager Estate Margaret River Project U12 North Block Cabernet Sauvignon Bright, slightly light colour. Shows red fruits and blackcurrant against a faintly herbal background. Elegant, fine, dry and long. It didn't seem as oaky as it was when first tasted a few months back. (\$90.00)

2012 Majella Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon The nose offers fresh red fruits plus a hint of mint. Good weight of fruit fills a firm palate supported by typical Coonawarra acidity. This wine has a very consistent record over time and sometimes slips under the radar when Coonawarra cabernet is discussed. (\$33.00)

2010 Voyager Estate Margaret River Cabernet Merlot A blackcurrant, cedar, herbal blend with very fine tannins and persistence of flavour, nodding to the Médoc style. (\$65.25)

2010 Voyager Estate Margaret River Project V9 Old Block Cabernet Sauvignon Shows fresh red fruits with dusty overtones. The palate offers good weight and fine, firm tannins. (\$90.00)

2011 Stella Bella Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Plenty of red fruits here together with cedary complexity. The palate is long and tight, with good fruit intensity. (\$32.00)

2012 Robert Oatley Finisterre Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Fresh but showing fruit that is decidedly ripe. The palate offers power and structure. Needs time to open. (\$39.95)

2012 Thorn-Clarke William Randell Eden Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Plenty of complex, secondary, cedary characteristics plus blackcurrant. The palate is powerful and firm. Needs time. (\$60.00)

★★★

2012 Smallwater Estate Rob's Block Geographe Cabernet Sauvignon This is a very fresh wine which shows good cassis varietal character, but the methoxypyrazine (vegetal) influence is too strong. (\$25.00)

★★

2012 Morambro Creek Padthaway Cabernet Sauvignon Shows blackcurrant with a herbal edge and slightly charry oak. The middle palate is a little hollow. (\$31.95)

2012 Ottelia Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon This wine delivers ripe fruit, but it's slightly dull and advanced. A firm red with just adequate flavour. (\$28.90)

2010 Suckfizzle Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Advanced colour. Vegetal and too lean. (\$55.00)

As the reviews show, this was a strong group of cabernets. We leave it to you to make decisions regarding price, but there's certainly quite a spread.

**COUNTING DOWN TO THE 2015
WINEWISE CHAMPIONSHIP.
28 DAYS TO GO.**

OTHER TASTINGS

2013 Tarrawarra Estate Chardonnay Youthful and varietal, with creamy textural elements, but it lacks drive on the finish. (\$27.00) ★★★

2012 Clairault Margaret River Chardonnay Lively and grapefruity with a hint of nuttiness. Good simple drinking. (\$38.00) ★★★

2013 Frankland Estate Isolation Ridge Vineyard Chardonnay Shows honeydew melon and white peach varietal characteristics backed by subtle oak. The palate is long and creamy. It's not heavily complex or funky, but it is a very satisfying drink. (\$27.00) ★★★★★

2013 Grant Burge Summers Chardonnay Attractively varietal, with a hint of toasted cashew. Fresh and ready to drink. (\$25.00) ★★★

Here we have three very successful gewürztraminers – all made by Mike Hayes at Symphony Hill in Queensland’s Granite Belt. In all the fuss about “alternate” varieties gewürztraminer has almost been forgotten, yet it has a lot to offer. Try these wines and you’ll quickly appreciate how good they are. Usually, spicy Asian food is recommended as a partner for gewürztraminer, and that’s fair enough, but it’s a more versatile grape than that. In Alsace it’s seen as an ideal match for munster cheese with caraway seeds, but any washed rind cheese will do and you can hold the caraway. Chicken or duck liver pâté is another good accompaniment.



2014 Symphony Hill Gewürztraminer Classic varietal aromas of lychee and rose water show clearly, and the palate is long and textural, reflecting skilful use of phenolics. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

The Topper’s Mountain Vineyard is located at Tingha, only a few kilometres south-east of Inverell airport, about 100 km north-east of Armidale. Owned by Mark Kirkby, the estate sits at 900 m above sea level, 100 m lower than the Symphony Hill vineyard.

2014 Topper’s Mountain Gewürztraminer Turkish delight and exotic spice aromas confirm the varietal identity of this wine. Racy acidity lifts the finish, making the palate appear more acidic and less structured than that of the Symphony Hill. An ideal apéritif. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2014 Topper’s Mountain Barrel Ferment Gewürztraminer Artfully accomplished barrel fermentation brings together the raciness of the previous wine and the structural qualities of the Symphony Hill. Oak flavour isn’t detectable, but the barrel work has imparted a creamy texture and the phenolic grip is beautifully integrated. The texture and complexity comes without any significant sacrifice of varietal character. (\$35.00) ★★★★★ LJ

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WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

Human beings feel the need to categorise, hence the group of grape varieties referred to as “alternate”. I find “alternate” an adjective that doesn’t really entice drinkers to indulge, just like “alternate” lifestyle doesn’t encourage the hordes to go vegetarian, burn incense and drive Priuses.

In many cases “alternate” equates with experiment and young vines. Experimentation is essential to the learning process, and all vines must pass through a maturation phase, leading to a degree of hit and miss.

Like it or not, comparisons are drawn with wines of other countries made from so-called “alternate” varieties. Piemonte in Italy, for example, sets the bar very high with nebbiolo and barbera, as does Toscana with sangiovese. Some of Spain’s tempranillos are profound red wines and profundity in tempranillo is a long way from being achieved in Australia.

Still, Australian vignerons must press on and plant “new” varieties if the right mix and match of grape to site is to be found. They must also follow their dreams. We are seeing glimmers of hope.

2014 Mr. Mick Clare Valley Vermentino Now, it may be said that vermentino doesn’t exactly make the “A team” of grape varieties, but this wine actually bears a resemblance to Sardinian vermentino and it delivers an excellent flavour-acidity combination. There’s baked apple with tropical fruit overtones. A good drink. (\$17.00) ★★★



2014 Grant Burge East Argyle Pinot Gris This is a pinot gris that is quite a departure from the bland, over-phenolic and/or pink offerings. There’s a pleasing grip to the palate which provides structure for the rich varietal fruit – and a whisker of initial sweetness - but the finish is long and dry. (\$18.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.redbottle.com.au/OrderFormSummer2014.pdf>

2013 Stockman's Ridge Central Ranges Savagnin The "once was albariño" grape is noteworthy in its own right. This example ticks all the boxes of a satisfying early-drinking style. The stone fruit/tropical aromas and generous, well balanced palate provide a lot of appeal. (\$23.00) ★★★



2013 Bremerton Special Release Langhorne Creek Malbec There's no doubting malbec's suitability to the Langhorne Creek environment. And there's no doubting that some of our best "alternate" varieties have been grown in Australia for a long time. This example shows impressive blueberry and mulberry aromas together with oak that is a little prominent at the moment. The palate will please all those who enjoy plenty of fresh flavour in their red wines. (\$24.00) ★★★★★

<http://www.bremerton.com.au/Buy-Wine>

2013 Tar & Roses Heathcote Tempranillo The fresh dark berry and licorice aromas convey well defined varietal character, and the palate offers more than adequate flavour backed by obvious powdery tannins which linger on the finish. (\$21.95) ★★★

2012 Millbrook Margaret River Nebbiolo I wouldn't have been keen on planting nebbiolo in Margaret River given that Barolo, the home of that fabulous grape, is about 300 m above sea level and 90 km from the sea. However this wine is fragrantly varietal, with brightness and depth of colour. There's enough flavour and the tannins are firm, but that's to be expected. It just goes to show how much there is to be discovered. (\$22.00) ★★★

2012 Topper's Mountain Wild Ferment Nebbiolo Shows varietal rose petal aromatics, but is fairly light and acid. We suspect that this New England (NSW) site is a little too cool for nebbiolo. (\$38.00) ★★

2011 Rosemount Estate Nursery Project Graciano Mataro Grenache A very engaging fragrant, earthy, leathery red that is supple and packed with flavour. Delicious right now. (\$32.00)

★★★★

2013 Hand Crafted by Geoff Hardy Langhorne Creek Graciano Attractively ripe, with that earthy, leathery “Spanish” edge. Easy to drink, but needs a little more intensity. (\$30.00)

★★★

2012 Handcrafted by Geoff Hardy Dolcetto A fresh light-medium red as dolcetto should be. Bright cherry flavour with fine, balanced tannins. (\$30.00) ★★★

2013 Handcrafted by Geoff Hardy Primitivo Shows a shrivelled raspberry character but still retains adequate freshness. Touched up with acid. (\$30.00) ★★

2011 Handcrafted by Geoff Hardy McLaren Vale Aglianico Lacks generosity of flavour. (\$30.00) ★

2013 Handcrafted by Geoff Hardy McLaren Vale Nero d’Avola Hint of raisin character. Too firm for weight of fruit. (\$30.00) ★

2014 Millbrook Geographe Sangiovese Fresh, ready and packed with cherry flavour. There’s some CO₂ spritz, but a rough double decant gets rid of it. (\$20.00) ★★

2012 McIvor Estate Gianniseddu Heathcote Sangiovese Cabernet Sauvignon Firm and savoury, but a little too lean, with a herbal, leafy edge. (\$62.00) ★★

2010 Handcrafted by Geoff Hardy McLaren Vale Tannat There’s some red berry aroma and flavour, with suggestions of undergrowth. The usually dominant tannins are under control, but the palate is just a little short. (\$30.00) ★★

2012 Tim Adams The Fergus Clare Valley Grenache Tempranillo Malbec Quite fresh and plummy, with some typical Clare mint. The fruit isn’t quite up to the charry oak, but this is still a good drink for the price. (\$24.00) ★★★

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