



WINEWISE

THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE

May 2015



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GIACONDA CHARDONNAY

In 1987 I recall ordering some small-producer wines for a Winewise tasting from Richmond Hill Cellars in Melbourne. There were a couple of empty spaces in a carton, so I asked the team at Richmond Hill to surprise us with a couple of wines. Surprise us they did. A white wine caused a sensation at our tasting. It was from Rick Kinzbrunner's first Giaconda vintage – the 1986 Chardonnay.

Bearing a striking resemblance to a Meursault white burgundy, it was unlike any Australian chardonnay we'd ever tasted. Within weeks my Winewise colleague Len Sorbello and I had visited Rick and we knew that we had found budding greatness in Beechworth.

Giaconda has evolved over the years but has never lost its site-derived personality. In an era where many chardonnay makers eschew malolactic fermentation and pursue sulphides-related funk, Rick sticks to the traditional Burgundy practices including a full malolactic. If some barrels deliver funkiness, that's fine with Rick. Interestingly, he maintains that funky characteristics are much more likely to emerge in new barrels than pre-used ones.

Last week we dropped in and tasted a few vintages of chardonnay with him in the amazing Giaconda cave. Incidentally, 2½ tonnes of explosives were used in “carving” the cave out of the hillside.

The grapes are whole-bunch crushed rather than delicately air-bag pressed. After overnight settling, the juice is still quite murky when it goes to barrel for fermentation. All the chardonnay is matured in French barriques and is neither filtered nor pumped.

1993 Chardonnay The condition and freshness are quite amazing. This wine is still taut, packed with flavour and it finishes with uplifting acidity. Twenty-two years old! ★★★★★

1995 Chardonnay Nicely mature, showing hazelnut and honey overtones. The palate offers sound, “sweet” fruit and shows no sign of decay. ★★★

2000 Chardonnay Still holding up ok, but this bottle showed the first indications of drying out. Try one if you have any. ★★★

2004 Chardonnay A stunning wine that reminded Rick and I of a very good Chassagne-Montrachet. The nose offers a hint of toasted hazelnut and is remarkably fresh. The palate follows on in a long, textured, tightly structured way. Although it's drinking beautifully, it looks like living for at least another decade. ★★★★★

2010 Chardonnay Another magnificent wine. This time there's a touch of match stick which adds very positive complexity. The palate is long, restrained and full of life. Surely this is one of Australia's best-ever chardonnays. ★★★★★

2011 Chardonnay More funky than the 2010 – beyond match stick. The intense fruit more than copes with the complexity and the creamy-textured, long palate is a joy. ★★★★★

I'm not prepared to name Australia's best shiraz or cabernet sauvignon, but I will put my hand up and say that, in my opinion, Giaconda is our best chardonnay.

Lester Jesberg

THE STAG RESTAURANT



I must report on our dining experience at The Stag in Port Fairy, western Victoria. The menu has a foraging influence, but that shouldn't deter conservative diners. The flavour and textural combinations are fascinating but reflect traditional viewpoints rather than being over-the-top attempts at originality. The dishes that I ordered and enjoyed were described thus:

Veal sweetbreads, wild mushrooms, celeriac, thyme

Abalone, pâté, shellfish consommé, seaweeds, sea roquette petals

Wallaby, native currants, native leaves

Australian fruits, burnt marshmallow, lemon myrtle

The wine list leans towards garagiste and “natural”, but there are several good choices that don't fall into those categories – like Serrat, Grosset, SC Pannell and Gembrook Hill.

The Stag, 22 Sackville Street, Port Fairy Vic Tel: 03 5568 3229 **Be sure to book. The restaurant seats only about 24 diners**

Lester Jesberg

TASTED ON THE ROAD TRIP

We'll start with something special. Sure, it's expensive, but it's a wine that makes a strong point for Australia internationally. Being from a small single site, it is very much subject to the vagaries of nature, and production volumes can vary from tiny to nothing. In great years like 2010, Henschke Hill of Grace is one of the great wines of the world.



2010 Henschke Hill of Grace The aromas of red fruits, spices and licorice are almost ethereal. There's much more to the nose, but words eluded me and I preferred to just savour the experience. Palate-wise it's all about silkiness and persistence of flavour. Interestingly there's a positive herbal hint which I associate with cool-grown shiraz that plays its part in a fascinating web of complexity. The tannins are remarkably fine, and drinkability of the wine could delude some drinkers into questioning the intensity and longevity. Such questions are baseless. This Hill of Grace will provide great pleasure for decades – as long as the Vinolok seal continues to protect it. (\$650.00) ★★★★★

<http://www.eastendcellars.com.au/category-list/red-wine/henschke-hill-of-grace-2010-156842.html>

2012 Henschke Mount Edelstone It costs \$520 less than the Hill of Grace, but the quality gap is narrow. That's hardly surprising when this wine is made from shiraz grown on a site close to Hill of Grace, and the 2012 vintage was an excellent one. The perfumed blackberry/spice nose is a joy, as is the perfectly poised palate framed by very fine tannins. This wine has everything required for at least 20 years' cellaring. (\$130.00)

★★★★☆

2012 Henschke Euphonium (Shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc) If you want to experience some of the Henschke polish and style on a budget, here's the wine to try. It's vibrant and is packed with red and blue berry sensations. The tannins certainly provide some structure, but don't dominate. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

2014 Henschke Julius Eden Valley Riesling This wine is a beautiful expression of the Eden Valley. The bouquet is delicate and perfumed, and the palate is linear, pure and dry, with an excellent acid backbone. (\$32.50) ★★★★★☆



We dropped in on winemakers Sue Hodder & Sarah Pidgeon and viticulture guru Allen Jenkins at Wynns in Coonawarra. There we enjoyed two soon-to-be-released cabernets.

2012 Wynns Childs Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon This wine comes from the Childs vineyard on V & A Lane, and was chosen by the winemaking team as the single vineyard release for the vintage. The nose is opulently cassis-like, with just a caress of oak. It's very fine and long on the palate – elegant, regional and worthy of a decade in the cellar. Likely to sell for \$60-\$70.

★★★★☆

2012 Wynns John Riddoch Cabernet Sauvignon This is a more powerful, muscular cabernet than the Childs. There's an obvious lick of oak, but the intensity of fruit is impressive and the wood will be absorbed. Patience required. Likely to sell for around \$150. ★★★★★

Given the success of Bleasdale in recent times, a stop at Langhorne Creek was in order. Bleasdale was awarded the best cabernet blend medallion at the 2015 Winewise Championship and three trophies, including Producer of the Year, at the recent Langhorne Creek Wine Show.

2015 Bleasdale Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc The nose is somewhat Marlborough-like, tending quite grassy, but the palate really delivers in terms of flavour and texture. If fresh, strongly varietal sauvignon blanc is your thing, give this one a try. (\$20.00)
★★★★

2014 Bleasdale Old Vine Verdelho Australia's best verdelho? Quite possibly. Originally used to produce fortifieds, the vines were re-trellised in 2010-11 and drip irrigation was installed. This wine is the result. It's intense and citrus-like, with well balanced grip. There's so much flavour that it seems slightly sweet, but the palate is bone dry. Only 120 cases produced. (\$29.00 Cellar door only)
★★★★

2013 Bleasdale The Broad-Side (Shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, malbec) We tasted many wines during our road trip, but this one has to be the best value for money. It's a very fresh red berry style with excellent flavour impact. It's very approachable, with just the right structure for drinking now and over the next couple of years. (\$16.00) ★★★☆
<http://www.bleasdale.com.au/style/red/>

2013 Bleasdale The Powder Monkey Shiraz This single-vineyard wine has a touch of northern Rhône funkiness about it, and the intense red and black berry fruit is matched with fine, savoury tannins. A very impressive wine indeed. (\$65.00)
★★★★☆

2013 Bleasdale Frank Potts Cabernet Blend The 2015 Championship medallion winner looked just as good at the winery as it did when we judged it in February. The gorgeous cassis nose shows just a hint of spiciness, and the flavour-packed palate is long and beautifully balanced. (\$35.00 – to be released on 22 July)
★★★★☆

Lester Jesberg

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REALISTIC SCORING

Please accept our apologies for making changes to our recently-introduced star rating system. However, we feel it is important to show our support for the Huon Hooke and Bob Campbell initiative #RealReviews. You can read about it at

<http://blog.huonhooke.com/realreviews/>

We also believe that the 100 point scale has been abused by reviewers who hand out 95+ ratings like cheap lollies. In some cases those involved benefit financially from publishing inflated scores. Some simply don't have a clue about quality levels of wine and show-judging standards, but others are simply rorting the system.

Last year I attended the launch of the 2010 Grange, and saw a great example of how the 100 point system has become meaningless in the hands of some manipulators. A few in the crowd had given the 2008 and/or the 2009 Grange 100/100. Poured alongside the 2010, both were put into the shade. Frankly, I consider there is about ten points difference between the 2008 and the 2010. The end result of the "generosity" of scoring is that people are deceived. They assume that all three Granges are brilliant wines when, in fact, only one of them is. Such deception is repeated on a grand scale with so many of the 95+ reviews.

We are right to expect professionalism and honesty from our wine scribes. Both are sadly lacking in many cases. The only income Winewise earns is from subscriptions and entry fees from the Championship and Small Vigneron Awards. We pride ourselves in maintaining the frank, independent and forthright stance that Winewise introduced in 1985.

Here is the new rating scale. We will publish only the star ratings. Please bear in mind that our tasters will continue to rate wines using a 5-0 system where 5 = Outstanding and 0 = Unacceptable. By the way, we do not believe the perfect wine exists.

★★★★★	Outstanding	97-100 pts	Gold medal
★★★★☆	Highly Recommended	93-96	Gold or high silver
★★★★	Recommended	90-92	Silver
★★★☆☆	Recommended	87-89	Bronze
★★★	Agreeable	85-87	Bronze
★★☆	Agreeable	82-84	
★★	Acceptable	80-82	
★☆	Acceptable	77-79	
★	Barely Acceptable	74-76	
☆	Unacceptable	71-73	
No stars	Undrinkable	<71	

Please don't ask us why only 30 points out of a 100 point scale are used. Ask the drones who rushed to exploit it. We know the 20 point scale ran from about 9-20, but at least that provided a better spread.

By making the changes to our scoring methodology, we follow the approach not only of Huon Hooke and Bob Campbell, but other writers such as Chris Shanahan of the *Canberra Times*. Hopefully, the #RealReviews movement will grow and allow wine enthusiasts to compare reviewers in a meaningful way.

PETER LEHMANN WIGAN RIESLING

Chief winemaker Ian Hongell hosted this vertical tasting for us at the Peter Lehmann winery. Wigan Riesling is named for recently-retired Peter Lehmann chief winemaker Andrew Wigan who was Ian's mentor.

2010 Peter Lehmann Wigan Eden Valley Riesling From an "extraordinary vintage" according to Ian Hongell, this wine combines richness and restraint. The florals of Eden Valley are clearly evident, and the palate is racy, long and dry. An Australian classic. (To be released shortly) ★★★★★

2009 Peter Lehmann Eden Valley Riesling This is a powerful, aromatic riesling which is just beginning to show hints of toasty development. As well as the great depth of flavour there is an abundance of regional character and elegance culminating in a lively acid finish. This wine is drinking beautifully. (\$28.00) ★★★★★☆

2008 Peter Lehmann Eden Valley Riesling A rich, toasty riesling that is packed with varietal flavour and is drinking at its peak. (\$29.00) ★★★☆☆

2007 Peter Lehmann Eden Valley Riesling The richest, most developed and honeyed of the five vintages tasted. This wine is holding on, but should be enjoyed in the short term. (\$34.00) ★★★

2006 Peter Lehmann Eden Valley Riesling If you want to experience everything Wigan Riesling has to offer, try one of these if you can. At nine years of age, it's remarkably fresh, but shows some toasty maturity as well. I think the 2010 will evolve in a similar fashion. ★★★★★

Lester Jesberg



Sauvignon Blanc & Blends

Sauvignon blanc may not be everyone's wine of choice. Some delight in the powerful varietal characteristics while others find them far too unsubtle. Nevertheless it takes just as much care in the vineyard and winery to produce quality sauvignon blanc as it does for riesling and semillon.



2014 Deep Woods Estate Ivory Semillon Sauvignon Blanc The fresh nose shows both the grassiness of semillon and the gooseberry of sauvignon blanc. Packed with flavour, the lively palate delivers everything fans of the style could seek. (\$13.00)

MEDALLION WINNER

<http://shortysliquor.com.au/white-wine/white-wine-variety/white-blend>

2013 Streicker Bridgeland Block Sauvignon Semillon Citrus and grassy notes are well matched with lees and oak complexity. The palate is all about texture, and the flavour lingers impressively. A wine with a future. (Not yet released)

2013 Swinging Bridge Orange Sauvignon Blanc The fresh lemon grass aromas have considerable appeal, and they are supported by a subtle complexity, possibly lees-derived. The palate is textural and full of life. (\$16.00)

2014 Watershed Shades Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon A very fresh gooseberry/grass style that delivers plenty of weight and freshness. It's drinking at its best now. (\$15.00)

2014 Brash Vineyard Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc The nose offers impressive passionfruit aromatics together with a hint of green pea. Acidity adds some zing to the finish. (\$22.00)



2014 Mandon Estate Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc A fresh, ripe gooseberry/grass style that is drinking well now. (\$22.00)

2014 Colmar Estate Orange Sauvignon Blanc Varietal, perfumed and grassy, with an attractive lively palate. (\$24.00)

2014 Grace Farm Sauvignon Blanc Semillon Shows plenty of gooseberry and passionfruit backed up by zippy acidity. (\$22.00)

2014 Deep Woods Estate Sauvignon Blanc A rich tropical fruit/pineapple style with faintly sweaty overtones. Funky and interesting, but very full-on. (\$20.00)

2014 Singlefile Denmark Semillon Sauvignon Blanc Grassy and gooseberry-like with pineapple overtones. Slightly short on the finish. (\$25.00)

2013 Ross Hill Pinnacle Series Sauvignon Blanc This is a far from straightforward wine. There's plenty of funky secondary character and a touch of oak to match the intense flavour. (Not available)

2013 Howard Park Miamup Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon Complex and lemony, with some phenolic grip. Another "outside the square" wine. (\$24.00)

2011 Suckfizzle Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon Fairly developed but rich and interesting in the manner of a Graves blanc. It's all about texture and complexity. (\$45.00)

2013 Topper's Mountain Barrel Ferment Sauvignon Blanc Shows some attractive grassiness, lemon rind and lees character, but is a little too oaky. (\$30.00)

2014 Cannibal Creek Sauvignon Blanc This wine offers grassy varietal character but is also showing some barrel ferment complexity. Pleasant short term drinking. (\$28.00)



2014 Bendbrook Savvy Quite tropical-fruity, with a hint of sweetness. Full-flavoured and at its peak. (\$18.00)

2014 Watershed Senses Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Shows a touch of lees complexity but is slightly too herbaceous and lean. (\$29.95)



2014 Cape Naturaliste Sauvignon Blanc There's quite a lot of methoxypyrazine greenness here and the palate is lean. (\$20.00)

2014 Windance Estate Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon The nose lacks freshness and the palate, though delivering grassy flavour, is becoming broad. (\$20.00)



2014 The Hidden Sea Limestone Coast Sauvignon Blanc A rich but forward wine showing obvious stone fruit character. (Not available)

Sauvignon blanc is usually made to be consumed on release. A few barrel-fermented styles are exceptions to this approach, but some wines that were awarded gold medals in September-October were starting to "lose it" by February.

WINEWISE PANEL TASTINGS

CHARDONNAY

This selection of currently available chardonnays features a stunner that shows a 2015 Championship medallion was no fluke.



2014 Singlefile Family Reserve Denmark Great Southern

Chardonnay This is a delicate yet intense chardonnay with a touch of match stick complexity. It's only just beginning to evolve, but the palate is already stunning – creamy, long and restrained, with great intensity of flavour. We feel it will surpass the outstanding 2013. (\$50.00)

<http://www.singlefilewines.com/Wines/A14SWRESCHARD/Singlefile+2014+Family+Reserve+Denmark+Chardonnay>

<http://www.rathdownecellars.com.au/products/online-store/index.php>



2014 Pepper Tree Limited Release Hunter Valley

Chardonnay A reserved, vibrant wine showing white peach characteristics and a hint of nutty complexity. The palate is beautifully balanced, and delivers generous flavour. (\$22.00)



2013 Tarrawarra Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay This is a chardonnay of considerable power and structure. It's a little forward and shows some barrel-derived nougat complexity. There's an awkwardness about this wine right now, and we suspect it will show to greater advantage in a year or two. (\$50.00)



2014 Wynwood Estate Reserve Hunter Valley Chardonnay

Full, fresh and peachy, with a touch of oak. A pleasant, fairly simple drink that is nearly ready. (\$N/A)

2014 Pepper Tree Limited Release Orange Chardonnay

There's plenty of flavour, but it's simple, tending to tropical fruit. Vanilla bean oak aroma and flavour also shows through. (\$22.00)



2014 Capercaillie The Cuillin Chardonnay Comparatively advanced colour. A big peachy drink-now style. (\$N/A)

2013 Mawson's The Vickers Limestone Coast Chardonnay

Quite plain and forward, showing ordinary vanilla oak. (\$15.00)

SHIRAZ



2013 Penfolds Bin 128 Coonawarra Shiraz Although it's quite big for a Coonawarra shiraz, this tight, brooding red is fresh and very well balanced. The richness of flavour is appropriately supported by skin tannin and oak. Cellar for best results. (\$40.00)

2012 Nashwauk McLaren Vale Shiraz Another substantial shiraz that delivers the goods. The lively blackberry flavour seems to come in layers, and the tannins have a pleasingly savoury edge. Needs time. (\$25.00)



2013 Pig In The House Cowra Shiraz The vibrant summer pudding aroma is captivating, and the lively fruity palate provides plenty of drink-now pleasure. (\$25.00)

2012 Kaesler The Bogan Barossa Valley Shiraz A big, rich shiraz with plenty of dark berry flavour and a supportive tannin structure. The acid adjustment shows via some tartness on the finish. (\$50.00)

2012 Kaesler Old Vine Barossa Valley Shiraz The nose is fresh enough, but shows confectionary characteristics and is a little simple. There's no shortage of flavour however. (\$80.00)



2013 Montrose Mudgee Black Shiraz Quite perfumed, but a little simple. Firm tannins dominate. (\$34.95)

2010 d'Arenberg The Dead Arm McLaren Vale Shiraz Even allowing for five years' ageing, the nose is fairly dull. A big, plain, chewy red. (\$65.00)

2012 Mr Riggs McLaren Vale Shiraz Ripe, tending syrupy. Too oaky as well. (\$50.00)



2013 Paxton MV Shiraz Has plenty of fruit, but is unpleasantly pungent. (\$22.00)

2012 Mr Riggs Scarce Earth McLaren Vale Shiraz Very drying on the finish, with Bonox and clove characteristics. (\$50.00)

2013 Bilgavia Estate Hunter Valley Shiraz Very developed colour. Shows earthy aged characteristics. (\$26.00)



2012 Rusden Black Guts Barossa Valley Shiraz Very weak colour. Surprisingly hard and herbal. (\$85.00)

A tasting of more disappointment than pleasure.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

★★★★

2012 d'Arenberg The High Trellis McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon This is a nicely constructed cabernet in which pronounced cassis varietal character shows through. The palate is stylish, firm and intense. (\$18.00)
<http://buy.darenberg.com.au/collections/all/products/the-high-trellis>

★★★★☆

2013 Vinaceous The Raconteur Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Shows clear-cut blackcurrant varietal character, with a herbal hint. Just needs a little more mid-palate flavour. (\$25.00)

2012 Nashwauk McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon This is a big wine but it shows well defined cassis cabernet character. What it lacks in finesse it makes up in weight. (\$25.00)

★★★

2012 Singlefile The Philip Adrian Frankland River Cabernet Sauvignon The colour lacks depth and is cause for concern. However there's plenty of initial flavour on a firm palate. (\$80.00)

★★☆

2013 Brash Vineyard Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Shows varietal character but is a little too herbaceous. (\$40.00)

2012 Hay Shed Hill Margaret River Cabernet Merlot A dense red with obvious vanilla oak.

★★

2012 Oakridge Whitsend Vineyard Yarra Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Lean, with green capsicum character. (\$36.00)

2013 Hungerford Hill Hilltops Cabernet Sauvignon Developed colour. Quite plain and firm. (\$35.00)

2012 Pig In The House Cowra Cabernet Sauvignon Quite herbal, lacking fruit weight. (\$25.00)

★

2012 Kaesler Barossa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Weak colour. Already showing signs of drying out. (\$30.00)

☆

2012 Rusden Good Shepherd Barossa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Poor weak colour. Very dull and herbal.

Too many young wines which fail to deliver freshness and/or flavour.