

RECENTLY TASTED

I've just returned to the office after a trip to Melbourne to taste 13 vintages of Wolf Blass Black Label. The tasting was preceded by a showing of the soon-to-be-released (March 2016) Luxury Collection wines which are reviewed below.

A full report of the Black Label tasting – 1973, 1974, 1975, 1978, 1982, 1984, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2010, 2012 and 2013 will follow shortly.



2014 Wolf Blass White Label Piccadilly Valley Chardonnay A very appealing vibrant, full-on white peach style of chardonnay with cashew elements and a touch of new oak. The palate is tightly coiled and creamy, with uplifting acidity. An impressive wine that needs a year or two in bottle. (\$34.00) ★★★★★

Wine details: Vine age over 25 years. 100% malolactic. Whole bunch press. Put to French oak barriques for fermentation with full solids.

2013 Wolf Blass Grey Label McLaren Vale Shiraz This wine offers fresh, rich dark berry characteristics with some chocolate and spice. New oak shows fairly obviously at the moment. Fine persistent tannins wrap around perfectly ripe fruit, and there's an acid kick on the finish. A few years' cellaring will soften the edges. (\$45.00) ★★★

Wine details: The grapes were sourced from all over McLaren Vale, but the emphasis was on higher, cooler sites. New and older barrels – 58% French, 42% American. Partial barrel fermentation.

2013 Wolf Blass Grey Label Langhorne Creek Cabernet Shiraz The initial impact is of obvious ripeness, but it's not quite as vibrant as the McLaren Vale Shiraz. Plummy red fruits make a favourable initial impression on the palate which is comparatively simple. (\$45.00) ★★★

Wine details: New and older barrels – 69% French, 31% American. 52% cabernet sauvignon, 48% shiraz.

2012 Wolf Blass Medlands Vineyard Platinum Label Shiraz The very intense nose shows fresh blackberry, loganberry, blueberry and toasted nuts new oak. The palate offers beautifully expressed varietal flavour and very fine tannins, with an obvious oak overlay. The oak needs plenty of time to integrate, but this wine certainly has the all the attributes to age very well. (\$200.00) ★★★★★

Wine details: The Medlands site is in the Para River basin on alluvial soils near the famous Dorrien vineyard. It was replanted in the early nineties, but there are still some 70-80 year old vines that are being rehabilitated. The fruit was de-stemmed, crushed, then fermented in small open vessels. Aged for 22 months in 75% new and 25% one year old French barriques.

The Latest from Wirra Wirra

2013 Wirra Wirra The Absconder McLaren Vale Grenache The nose provides a great introduction – dark cherry/berry, positive French oak and a hint of varietal earthiness. The tannins are gentle, and fresh flavour flows the length of the palate that finishes with an acid twist. (\$70.00) ★★★★★

2013 Wirra Wirra RSW McLaren Vale Shiraz A vibrant blackberry style in which the fruit is matched beautifully to French oak. It's a restrained style for Vale shiraz, with persistent savoury tannins and a fresh acid lift on the finish. (\$70.00) ★★★★★

2013 Wirra Wirra The Angelus McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon Fresh, ripe blackcurrant aromas and flavours are well matched to toasty oak. The tannins are balanced, but there's a decided acid tweak on the finish. (\$70.00) ★★★

Penfolds to the Max

2013 Penfolds Max's Shiraz Blackberry varietal fruit is very much to the fore here, rather than the familiar Penfolds oak. Good flavour intensity and comparatively soft tannins make this a very drinkable red. (\$30.00) ★★★☆

2013 Penfolds Max's Shiraz Cabernet This is a rich dark berry style with a hint of cassis. There's no shortage of flavour and drinkability. (\$30.00) ★★★☆

This Penfolds pair are well made mainstream reds pitched into a very competitive segment of the market. Not only is there a multitude of rivals, but Penfolds runs the risk of confusing its own clients because wines like Bin 28 and Bin 128 fall into the same price bracket. What's more, we also have The Max Schubert (\$450.00) and Max's The Promise (\$50.00). I think it's entirely appropriate to honour Max Schubert's memory with a \$450.00 small production wine, but

2013 Yering Station Yarra Valley Chardonnay If you're looking for a wine that is the epitome of modern Australian chardonnay, you could do much worse than this one. It combines white nectarine with nougat and lightly toasted cashew characteristics. The oak is subtle and lees contact provides a creamy texture. Very enjoyable drinking. (\$38.00) ★★★★★☆

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