

## COONAWARRA CABERNETS – 2004 & 2012

In October, 2007 The Winewise panel reviewed a dozen 2004 Coonawarra cabernets in a large comparative tasting which also featured cabernets from Margaret River and the Yarra Valley. We put the Coonawarra reserve bottles away in the cellar with a view to retasting them in the future, deciding that mid 2016 was an ideal time to revisit the wines. To make the tasting even more interesting, we asked all the producers for a bottle of their 2012 cabernet. Here's what the panel discovered in a fascinating tasting.

### 2012

**2012 Wynns John Riddoch Limited Release Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon**

A tight, intense cassis style showing attractively toasty oak that has been kept on a leash. The vibrancy of varietal fruit and perfect structural tannins make it a cellaring special. (\$120.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.winestar.com.au/wynns-coonawarra-john-riddoch-cabernet-sauvignon-2>

**2012 Bowen Estate Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon** Here's another excellent example of pristine cabernet fruit matched with sympathetically-handled oak. There's also a hint of regional mint which adds a positive note of complexity. Cellar. ★★★★★

**2012 Balnaves of Coonawarra The Tally Reserve Cabernet**

**Sauvignon** This is a very powerful cabernet which is packed with blackcurrant aroma and flavour. It's quite closed and tightly structured – a little submerged under oak - but cellaring prospects look good. (\$90.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.balnaves.com.au/shop/>

**2012 Parker Coonawarra Estate First Growth** Rich, intense and varietal, with firm tannins. High quality oak plays a prominent role, and may always challenge the fruit. (\$110.00) ★★★★★

**2012 Flint's Gammon's Crossing Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon**  
A rich, ripe cabernet with plenty of cassis and sweet oak. Fresh but big and firm - lacking finesse. ★★★★★

**2012 Penley Estate Reserve Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon**

Slightly advanced colour. A little lean, and quite minty, with obvious oak. ★★★

**2012 Majella Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon** Fairly lean, firm and minty. Has varietal and regional character, but not quite the desired intensity. (\$35.00) ★★★

**2012 Lindemans St George Vineyard Coonawarra Cabernet**

**Sauvignon** Powerful and rich, but slightly dull. Very firm and puckering. (\$60.00) ★★★

**2012 Leconfield Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon**

Comparatively developed colour. Shows blackcurrant aroma but is slightly forward. Quite lean and bony. ★★☆☆

## 2004

### **2004 Brand's Laira The Patron Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon**

This is a brilliant cabernet in all respects. It's strongly varietal, fresh and powerful, with a beautifully balanced, fine, firm tannin structure. Cellar for another seven years at least. ★★★★★ (See footnote)

### **2004 Flint's Gammon's Crossing Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon**

A classic mature cabernet that is right in the middle of its drinking window. Coonawarra through and through. ★★★★★

### **2004 Lindemans St George Vineyard Coonawarra Cabernet**

**Sauvignon** This wine shows mature characteristics of tobacco leaf and spearmint. The palate is intense, fine, and firm, with lingering tannins. ★★★★★

### **2004 Balnaves of Coonawarra The Tally Reserve Cabernet**

**Sauvignon** A powerful, deep cabernet that still has something to offer. The rich fruit is backed up by "sweet" oak, and the tannins are being softened by time. ★★★★★

### **2004 Penley Estate Reserve Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon**

Shows attractive cabernet fruit, but the oak is a little too prominent. ★★★★★

### **2004 Wynns John Riddoch Limited Release Coonawarra Cabernet**

**Sauvignon** This wine is comparatively undeveloped, but is quite solid, even "chunky". There's no shortage of varietal power, but the finish is very firm. ★★★★★

*Note: This wine really puzzled us because the 2007 review read "shows strong varietal character with the faintest touch of leaf. The palate is long, fine and balanced."*

**2004 Redman Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon** Quite mature, firm and dry, but there's adequate fruit. ★★★

**2004 Leconfield Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon** Has reasonable fruit, but is just about at its limit. ★★★

**2004 Bowen Estate Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon** Browning, developed and leafy. ★★☆☆

**2004 Parker Coonawarra Estate Terra Rossa First Growth** Not really fresh. There's a mature jamminess and the finish is very dry. ★★☆☆

**2004 Majella Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon** Very mature, with pronounced green leaf overtones. ★★

Looking back at the reviews written in 2007, there were only a couple of surprises. Both the Wynns John Riddoch and the Majella fell from grace. Maybe we shouldn't have been so surprised. The 2007 results were true committee decisions involving nine judges, including winemakers David Bicknell, Pete Bissell and Ed Tomlinson. Only Lex Howard, Lester Jesberg and Deb Pearce participated in both tastings.

July 14, 2016

The ratings for the above wines in our 2007 tastings (converted to stars) were:

★★★★★

2004 Brand's Laira The Patron Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon  
2004 Wynns John Riddoch Limited Release Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon  
2004 Flint's Gammon's Crossing Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon

★★★★☆

2004 Majella Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon

★★★★

2004 Balnaves of Coonawarra The Tally Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon  
2004 Penley Estate Reserve Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon  
2004 Lindemans St George Vineyard Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon

★★★

2004 Leconfield Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon  
2004 Parker Coonawarra Estate Terra Rossa First Growth  
2004 Bowen Estate Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon

**Footnote:** It was a pity that the Casella marketing department failed to deliver the 2012 equivalent of the Brands The Patron.

Coonawarra has passed through some phases in the past fifty years, but this tasting indicates a certain settling down. However, we caution against making overtly oaky wines. We have entered an era where many consumers of quality red wines are seeking those that express origin, rather than cooper, and derive structure mostly from skin tannins.

## 2016 WINEWISE SMALL VIGNERON AWARDS

Entries are now open for the 2016 Winewise Small Vigneron Awards. All Australian producers who crushed less than 250 tonnes for their own label in the 2016 vintage are eligible.

Full details can be found at:

<http://winewise.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-SMALL-VIGNERON-AWARDS.pdf>

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2013 Moorilla Cloth Label Red (33% pinot noir, 29% shiraz, 19% cabernet sauvignon, 10% cabernet franc, 9% riesling) Everything is fresh and ripe – plum and dark cherry backed up by savoury tannins and a caress of oak. The palate is long and satisfying. (\$110.00) ★★★★★

## NEW RELEASES FROM MOORILLA

**2013 Moorilla Cloth Label White** There aren't many multi-varietal blends pitched at the top end of the market, but this one is 21% sauvignon blanc, 19% gewürztraminer, 19% chardonnay, 16% riesling, 13% pinot gris and 12% pinot noir. Winemaker Conor van der Reest goes to great lengths with this wine. I've included his notes below.

“All fruit was hand-picked and delivered to the winery before chilling the whole clusters overnight. The fruit was processed the following morning. The pinot noir was whole bunch pressed with a portion of cuvée juice transferred directly to oak for wild fermentation. For all white parcels except the pinot gris (which was pressed directly due to some botrytis presence) one picking bin of the total was crushed and kept separate for fermentation on skins. Earlier varieties were used as a seeding inoculate for later picks (i.e.: pinot noir to chardonnay to riesling, etc). Maceration was performed by hand, pushing the cap down and hand-plunging to be as gentle as possible. It was allowed to proceed until roughly one Baumé, prior to basket-pressing the wines directly to individual oak barrels. Once residual sugars were confirmed, the wines were sulphured and allowed 2-3 months in oak with stirring prior to blending. The final blend was transferred to a 1500 litre oak vat. Here it stayed and matured. We then racked the wines and readied them for bottling. Post stabilisation, the wine was then filtered and bottled on July 31st, 2014.”

Now that you've digested all that, how does the wine taste?

Sauvignon blanc and gewürztraminer are the two most discernible components on a nose which shows a European-style lees influence. The other blend components make their impacts on a long, dry palate that ends with brisk acidity. Don't expect any showy oak. (\$110.00) ★★★★★

**2016 Moorilla Praxis Chardonnay Musqué** This wine was made from what we know in Australia as the “muscat clone” of chardonnay because of its aromatic nature. It's ideal for unoaked cool climate chardonnay, as this wine demonstrates. The perfume brings to mind riesling, and it's both clean and intense. There's a hint of sweetness which enhances the satisfying, acid-fresh palate. (\$32.00) ★★★★★

**2014 Moorilla Vineyard Pinot Noir** The nose has substance and complexity, showing elements such as beetroot, dark cherry and ripe stems. Smooth, supple tannins are a feature of a well balanced palate that invites drinking. (\$55.00) ★★★★★

**2015 Moorilla Praxis St Matthias Vineyard Pinot Noir** A pleasant light-bodied style that is varietal and very easy to drink – in the manner of a cru beaujolais. (\$32.00) ★★★

*Continued at the foot of page 3*