

PENFOLDS PREMIUM RELEASES

The annual Penfolds premium release is a red letter day on the calendars of wine journalists. Penfolds staff pour the whites and reds, and the tasters go to it. Chief winemaker Peter Gago is on hand to have a chat about the wines when requested. It's a system that works well.

Here's how I saw them this year.

2016 Penfolds Bin 51 Eden Valley Riesling Fresh and rich – certainly not a delicate style. More lime than floral. Big flavour supported by obvious acidity and balanced grip. (\$30.00) ★★★★★

2015 Penfolds Bin 311 Tumbarumba Chardonnay Lovely white peach and cumquat backed up by nutty lees and French oak. Quite creamy, with good fruit weight and typical acidity. Classy and stylish. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

Nine months in French oak (not new)

2015 Penfolds Reserve Bin A Adelaide Hills Chardonnay Restrained white peach. Oak obvious but of top quality. Subtle ground-almond complexity. Tight and backward. Oak not as assertive on the palate. Admirable length, texture and acidity. (\$100.00) ★★★★★

Nine months in French oak (40% new)

2014 Penfolds Yattarna Chardonnay A rich, slightly toasty, peachy nose which is very fresh. The oak suppresses the lightish fruit. It's possible that the flavour will build up over time, but at the moment, this is clearly the least of the chardonnays. (\$150.00) ★★★★★

Sourced from the Derwent Valley & Central Highlands of Tasmania, and the Adelaide Hills. Eight months in French barriques (70% new, 30% one year old)

2014 Penfolds Bin 2 Shiraz Mataro Ripe dark berry aromas with some earth and graphite. A little lean, showing its acid on the finish. The tannins are firm but not too assertive. (\$35.00) ★★★

82% shiraz, 18% mataro. 12 months in French & American oak (not new)

2014 Penfolds Bin 8 Cabernet Shiraz Dark fruits/plum/cassis aromas together with cedar and tobacco leaf. Has very likeable flavour that reflects the nose. A little straightforward but very much in balance. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

52% cabernet sauvignon, 48% shiraz. 12 months in French oak (5% new) and American oak (6% new)

2014 Penfolds Bin 138 Barossa Valley Shiraz Grenache Mataro Rich and ripe, showing hints of confection and graphite. The palate hovers close to “sweet fruity”, but savoury tannins bring it all together. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

64% shiraz, 21% grenache, 15% mataro. 12 months in French & American oak hogsheads (not new)

2014 Penfolds Bin 128 Coonawarra Shiraz Very attractive red berry/plum aromas intermingled with oak. There's also a faint whiff of regional mint. The palate is long and tight, with very fine tannins. (\$45.00) ★★★★★
12 months in French hogsheads (26% new, 43% one-year-old, 31% two-year-old)

2014 Penfolds Bin 28 Kalimna Shiraz Very fresh. Definitely a return to top form here. Classic blackberry and licorice with an attractive dried herbs/earth touch. Stylish and powerful without over-ripeness. The fine savoury tannins complete the picture. An archetype Penfolds red. (\$45.00) ★★★★★
Sourced from Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, Langhorne Creek, Wrattenbully, Port Lincoln and Clare. 12 months in American oak hogsheads (not new)

2014 Penfolds Bin 150 Marananga Shiraz Rich and ripe, with a lash of new oak. There's also a distinct violets fragrance. The tannins are slightly furry and obvious. (\$90.00) ★★★★★
14 months in French oak (30% new, 13% one-year-old, 4% two-year-old) and American oak hogsheads & puncheons (30% new, 16% one-year-old, 7% two-year-old)

2014 Penfolds Bin 407 Cabernet Sauvignon Fresh, ripe blackcurrant aroma with a leafy herbal undertone. Minty as well. Even more minty in flavour. Lingering varietal tannins. (\$90.00) ★★★★★
Sourced from Wrattenbully, McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Coonawarra, Clare Valley. 13 months in French oak (24% new) and American oak (10% new, 27% one-year-old, 30% two-year-old) hogsheads



2014 Penfolds Bin 389 Cabernet Shiraz A captivating nose of red and

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black fruits, tobacco leaf and oak. This is a fine, long, stylish red. One of the best-ever 389s. It can be cellared for decades. (\$90.00) ★★★★★
53% cabernet sauvignon, 47% shiraz. Sourced from Barossa Valley, Wrattenbully, McLaren Vale, Coonawarra. 12 months in American oak hogsheads (53% new, 27% one-year-old, 20% two-year-old)

2013 Penfolds St Henri Shiraz Blackberry dominates the bouquet, with a surprising volatile component that lifts the nose. It's ripe but fresh on the palate, with firm, well managed tannins. (\$100.00) ★★★★★
96% shiraz, 4% cabernet sauvignon. Sourced from McLaren Vale, Adelaide Hills, Barossa Valley, Clare Valley, Padthaway, Port Lincoln.

2014 Penfolds Magill Estate Shiraz The fresh dark berry nose, with a touch of perfumed musk, is dominated by oak. The palate brings together ripe fruit, slightly furry tannins and decidedly charry oak. (\$130.00) ★★★
Nine months in French oak (67% new) and American oak hogsheads (33% new)

2014 Penfolds RWT Barossa Valley Shiraz The nose is stunning – fresh, intense, fragrant blackberry, rose petal and plum with a caress of oak. The palate is remarkably fine, with lingering savoury tannins and an even longer core of varietal flavour. A great RWT. (\$200.00) ★★★★★
17 months in French oak hogsheads (70% new, 30% one-year-old)

2014 Penfolds Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon This is a truly remarkable wine. It doesn't have the classic cabernet flavour profile seen in the wines of Bordeaux or Margaret River, but it's still very cabernet in a style all its own. The cassis, leaf and mint are enhanced by new oak that is not assertive. It's a very supple and remarkably approachable wine with tannins that are supremely fine. But don't be fooled. Long-term cellaring will be richly rewarded. (\$500.00) ★★★★★
Sourced from Barossa Valley, Padthaway, Port Lincoln. 17 months in 100% new American oak hogsheads

2012 Penfolds Grange Classic Grange. A fresh, powerful melange of berries and plums with aromatic tobacco and new oak. The keyword for the palate is balance. The tannins are firm but fine, and the fresh powerful fruit matches perfectly and "swallows" the oak which has a certain sweet toastiness about it. Needless to say, this wine can be cellared as long as you wish. (\$850.00) ★★★★★
Sourced from Barossa Valley (81%), McLaren Vale (19%) 18 months in 100% new American hogsheads

The Penfolds reds are very much a collection of house styles. If you're a devotee you have some very high quality wines from which to choose. The relative bargains are the Bin 28 and the Bin 389. I have not tasted better young examples of either. As Peter Gago said to me when I lavished praise on the both, "all is well at Penfolds when those two wines impress." Is the 2012 Grange superior to the 2010? I'd have to taste them side by side to be sure, but I suspect not.

Lester Jesberg

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