

MOUNT MAJURA TEMPRANILLO



Mount Majura vineyard

If there was an award for the Canberra district vineyard with the greatest visual appeal, Mount Majura would be a leading contender. Deceptively steep, the vineyard wraps around a hillside, but generally faces east, allowing the coolish site to benefit from solar warmth. The slope of the hill encourages cold air drainage, a strong positive in a region where spring frosts are an ever-present threat.

Winemaker Frank Van de Loo has achieved success with a range of grape varieties, but tempranillo has excelled in an environment to which it is perfectly suited. In an inventive marketing move Frank has “deconstructed” the 2015 Tempranillo, bottling the three components separately. This move has created an opportunity that dedicated wine enthusiasts will find difficult to pass up.

Here’s how the three parts and the blend tasted on a recent visit to the winery. Is, as Aristotle is believed to have declared, “the whole better than the sum of its parts?”

Site notes are from <https://www.mountmajura.com.au>

2015 Mount Majura Vineyard Rock Block Tempranillo All four wines show vivid colour, but this one is a particularly bright purple-red. The nose is a highly perfumed combination of red fruits and licorice with faint notes of mint and dried herbs. Although it needs a little time to open fully, the palate offers rewarding flavour backed by firm, fine tannins. ★★★★★

Rock Block (0.363Ha, 670-680m elevation) is our original patch of tempranillo, planted in 2000 mainly to clone D8V12 with small amounts of requena, tinta roriz, D8V13 and CL770. The short east-facing rows span a reef of rhyolite, with limestone intermixed; it is among the rockiest patches in our vineyard, but has well-structured red clay-loam soil allowing good root penetration. The stand of yellow box trees below one corner of the block causes some devigoration, and contributes some eucalypt-derived aromatics to the wine; it is always the most fragrant parcel.

2015 Mount Majura Vineyard Dry Spur Tempranillo The lively aromas suggest red fruits and satsuma plum, and those fruit sensations flow through to a well-rounded palate balanced by fine tannins. ★★★★★

Dry Spur (0.934Ha) was originally planted to merlot in 1999 and has been grafted/replanted to tempranillo since 2009. This wine comes from clone D8V12 from the first 0.391Ha of the block. The block lies 170 metres to the north of the Rock block and rises 30 metres to 698m elevation with a north-easterly aspect. Soil depth declines up the slope, being thin and bony at the top. Quality from this block has been consistently high in the few years we've harvested it. It is slightly earlier ripening with darker fruit flavours and grainy tannins.

2015 Mount Majura Vineyard Little Dam Tempranillo Fresh red fruit aromas are backed up by hints of dried herbs and freshly-picked field mushrooms. The tannins impart a savoury grip, and assert themselves on a comparatively austere palate. This wine would certainly contribute backbone to the blend. ★★★★★

Little Dam (0.521Ha) was originally planted to pinot noir in 2000 and grafted to tempranillo clone D8V12 in 2004. Little Dam is 55 metres away to the south from the original Rock block, with similar aspect and elevation (669-680m). The soil is also similar, with another reef of rhyolite running through it and again mixed with limestone, but a little shallower and rockier, with less or no A horizon covering the red soil. The rhyolite here is particularly rich in the iron mineral magnetite-some small pebbles will stick to a magnet. Typically this block is the most structured of the three, with a 'dry-packed' tannin character we associate with the best examples of the variety. After not needing any irrigation in the wet 2011 and 2012 seasons, this block has been dry-grown since, and shows great depth and concentration.

2015 Mount Majura Vineyard Tempranillo This is a delicious young tempranillo that hints at central Spain, but is very much the product of unique Canberra district sites and skilful blending. It's a supple red fruits wine with subtle, complex nuances noted in its components. I enjoy this delicious red right now, but I have no doubt that it will grow into an even more fascinating wine over time. ★★★★★

Aristotle was right. The whole is better than the sum of the parts.

All four wines are available at \$45.00 each.

Frank Van de Loo is certainly making his mark with tempranillo. Vintages permitting, he'll continue to fine-tune and "tweak" methods in both vineyard and winery to lift his tempranillo to even greater heights. Don't forget, the other tempranillo-based wine from Mount Majura, the 2015 TSG, was winner of a trophy at the most recent Winewise Small Vignerons Awards.

Lester Jesberg

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