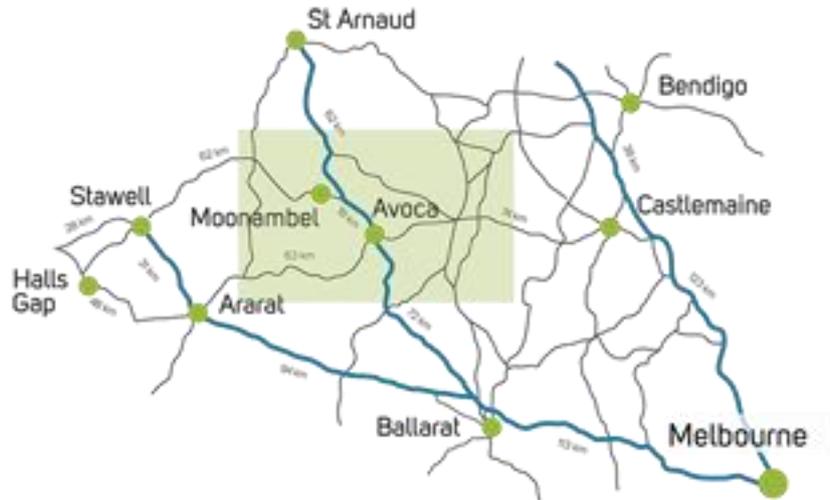


## WINES OF THE PYRENEES

The Pyrenees wine region lies south-west of Bendigo, about two hours' drive from Melbourne. Wineries and vineyards tend to cluster around the towns of Moonambel and Avoca, although Chapoutier is near Landsborough in the south-west of the region. Dogrock is an interesting player, barely scraping into the Pyrenees GI near Crowlands. Speaking of crows, as they fly, Dogrock is fewer than 20 km from Mount Langi Ghiran winery in the Grampians region. Soils in the Pyrenees can vary dramatically, impacting wine styles to some degree at least.



Vineyard altitudes run from about 220 – 600 metres above sea level. Temperatures are similar to those of the neighbouring Grampians region, but vary from site to site depending on aspect and temperature.

The Pyrenees region is quintessentially Australian, with eucalypt trees, kangaroos and cockatoos in profusion.

Winewise received great and much-appreciated support from the Pyrenees winemakers. We tasted all the following wines “blind” at the Blue Pyrenees cellar door. Allen Hart (DogRock) and Sasha Fair (Sally’s Paddock) toiled all day stewarding. The tasting panel comprised the Winewise crew – Lex Howard, Lester Jesberg, Deb Pearce and David Yeates – supported by Andrew Koerner (Blue Pyrenees) and Robert Heywood (Taltarni).

### SPARKLING

**2013 Taltarni Blanc de Blancs** A very fresh expression of sparkling chardonnay showing varietal green apple with just a hint of bready autolysis. The fine mousse and lively acidity make it a good aperitif. (Not yet available. 2012 price \$26.00) ★★★★★

**2013 Sabre by Mitchell Harris Chardonnay-Pinot Noir Traditional Method Sparkling (Macedon & Pyrenees)** Very fresh, with a touch of mushroom autolysis character. The palate is lively, fine and long. (\$42.00) ★★★★★

<https://mitchellharris.com.au/product/mitchell-harris-2013-sabre>

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**2012 Taltarni Cuvée Rosé** Pale pink. Quite complex and interesting, offering freshness, a very fine mousse and uplifting acidity. (Not yet available. 2011 price \$26.00) ★★★★★

**NV Blue Pyrenees Sparkling Shiraz** Deep purple. Very fresh blackberry aroma and flavour with balanced sweetness. Tannins linger. Needs time. ★★★★★

**2013 Blue Pyrenees Midnight Cuvée** A subtle touch of autolysis enhances the nose, and the palate offers good fruit and mousse. The dosage is, perhaps, a little too high. ★★★★★

**NV Blue Pyrenees Brut Rosé** Orange-pink colour. There's a touch of pinot noir muskiness in the aroma, but this wine, although fresh, is fairly simple. ★★★

**2013 Blue Pyrenees Vintage Brut** Fresh enough, but slightly forward, showing stone fruit aromas and flavours. ★★★

**2012 Taltarni Brut** Gold colour. Has plenty of flavour, but shows maturity on both nose and palate. ★★★

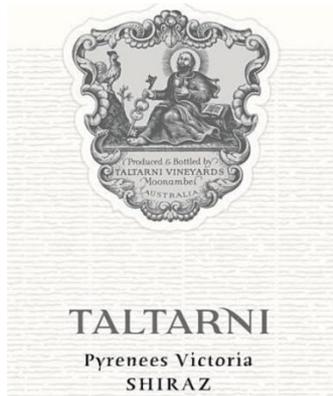
**NV Blue Pyrenees Luna** Slight pink tinge. There's a touch of pinot noir musk, and the palate is big on flavour, but not so much on fineness. ★★★

The sparkling wine market is a tough one. Not only is there strong competition from southern Australia, particularly Tasmania, but there's now quite a bit of champagne in the sub \$40.00 category. The best of these wines are well made and fresh, but is this what the Pyrenees region is all about? We'd look more towards the red wine categories.



*The tasting venue at Blue Pyrenees*

## SHIRAZ



**2015 Taltarni Estate Shiraz** This is an exceptional shiraz that delivers both power and finesse. The bouquet suggests rich berry compote, and the multi-layered palate is beautifully balanced, featuring persistent, but fine, tannins. Cellaring will produce great results. (Has been released for around \$40.00 but is not offered on the Taltarni site) ★★★★★

## *Dalwhinnie*

**2013 Dalwhinnie The Eagle Shiraz** This is a very classy shiraz indeed. It's vibrant, perfumed, and reflects precise oak handling. Complex notes of cinnamon, nutmeg and mint help paint a dazzling regional picture. The tannins are fine and the finish is long. (\$170.00) ★★★★★  
<https://www.dalwhinnie.com.au/collections/frontpage>

**2014 Summerfield Reserve Shiraz** A delightfully opulent, perfumed dark berry shiraz with power and length. The tannins are ripe, firm and fine. (\$49.00) ★★★★★  
<http://summerfieldwines.com.au/wines/reserve-shiraz-2014>

**2015 Dogrock Degrares Road Shiraz** A vibrantly scented shiraz that leans more to medium than full-bodied. The long varietal flavour is matched to a fine, firm structure. (\$35.00) ★★★★★  
<https://www.wineboss.com.au/Order.aspx?ref=cge&wsrc=cge>

**2012 Blue Pyrenees Richardson Shiraz** The fresh, concentrated blackberry/mulberry aromas are enhanced by those of dried herbs. The palate offers excellent fruit backed by firm tannins and integrated oak. (\$60.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.bluepyrenees.com.au/products/6415-richardson-shiraz/>

**2015 Mitchell Harris Shiraz** A very appealing, fresh dark berry shiraz with faint hints of five spice, mint and black olive. This is a classy red built for cellaring. (\$35.00) ★★★★★  
<https://mitchellharris.com.au/wine>

**2013 Dalwhinnie Moonambel Shiraz** Fresh, dense, blackberry aromas and flavours feature prominently in this shiraz of considerable proportions. The tannins and oak weigh in to produce a firm, but balanced, palate. Cellar for a decade at least. (\$60.00) ★★★★★

**2013 Tournon Shays Flat Vineyard Shiraz (M. Chapoutier)** Dark berry, dried herb and black olive combine in an attractive bouquet. The palate is one of good weight and length, and the tannins are firm but balanced. (\$36.00) ★★★★★

**2014 Blue Pyrenees Section 1 Shiraz** Here we have very fresh dark berry, floral, spice, pepper and mint aromas. The palate is long, with a firm, savoury finish. (\$36.00) ★★★★★

**2015 Summerfield Sarsah Shiraz** A rich, ripe, blackberry-scented shiraz with hints of rosemary and dark chocolate. The palate is tight, powerful, and of excellent length. (This and the Saieh Shiraz are available to Summerfield members only. See link below) ★★★★★  
<http://summerfieldwines.com.au/cellar-door>

**2015 Summerfield Saieh Shiraz** Rich, fresh blackberry backed up by dried herbs and a whiff of oak. This wine delivers good fruit, length and tannins. ★★★★★

**2012 Dalwhinnie Pinnacle Shiraz** A fresh, peppery dark berry style that is quite plush. The tannins are abundant but fine. Definitely one to cellar. (\$85.00) ★★★★★

**2014 Blue Pyrenees Shiraz** A very rich blackberry/spice style showing some vanilla from oak. The palate offers good fruit intensity backed by a firm structure. This bargain needs time. (\$20.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.bluepyrenees.com.au/products/14597-blue-pyrenees-shiraz/>

**2015 Pyren Block E Shiraz** Dark berry aromas with a strong touch of five spice and a suggestion of mint. The palate is impressively fine and long. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

**2014 Summerfield Shiraz** This impressive shiraz offers vibrant dark berry and dried herb aromas together with a whiff of oak. The intense palate impresses with its length and balance. (\$29.00) ★★★★★

**2012 Quartz Hill Shiraz** A shiraz of substance, with dried herb overtones backing up the robust dark berry flavours. The tannins require a few years to soften. (\$38.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.quartzhillwines.com.au/wines.html>

**2015 Dogrock Shiraz** Violets, dark berries, five spice and mint show on the nose, and those characteristics are reflected on a long, balanced palate. (\$25.00) ★★★★★

**2014 Dalwhinnie Moonambel Shiraz** Ripe and complex, showing slight grilled meat characteristics and obvious oak. A wine of good weight, with a savoury feel. ★★★★★

**2015 Pyren Yardbird Shiraz** Plenty of dark fruits here. It's a little too minty – but it has good flavour and tannins. ★★★★★

**2015 Mitchell Harris Curious Winemaker Shiraz** Big and rich, revelling in rosemary, dark chocolate and blackberry sensations. The firm, savoury tannins are a little too pronounced right now. ★★★★★

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**2015 Mount Avoca Limited Release Malakoff Shiraz** Powerful dark berry, spice and chocolate in a solid, slightly forward red. The sweet-sour finish detracts. ★★★

**2016 Dalwhinnie Mesa Shiraz** Dense, oaky, primary and firm, but somewhat simple. ★★★

**2012 Dalwhinnie Southwest Rocks Shiraz** Blackberry/licorice aromas and reasonable flavour intensity backed up by fairly firm tannins. ★★★

**2014 Pyren Broken Quartz Shiraz** A slightly forward dark berry style with a touch of spice. The finish is fairly drying. ★★★

**2014 Mount Avoca Back Block Pyrenees Shiraz** Slightly advanced colour and nose. The red fruits flavours are of adequate intensity, and oak shows on the finish. ★★★

**2015 Mount Avoca Estate Shiraz** Shows some sulphides on the nose. The palate is firm, with drying oak. ★★★

**2014 Quartz Hill Shiraz** Powerful, but quite reduced (sulphidic). ★★★

**2015 Mount Avoca Limited Release Old Vine Shiraz** The fruit is more than matched by oak. ★★★

**2014 Mount Avoca Back Block Victorian Shiraz** Light and oaky, with a sweet-sour finish. ★★★

**2012 Wimmera Hills Dedication Shiraz** Shows some maturity, but also spiciness and oak. It's a bit too developed and there's a touch of volatile acidity. ★★

**2010 Wimmera Hills Dedication Shiraz** The dark berry aroma and flavour are overcome by "horsey" overtones and the finish is very drying. ★

Shiraz is the star of the Pyrenees. It produces wines of substance and structure without crossing the line into over-ripeness. Regional characteristics like bay leaf, rosemary, mint and five-spice contribute complexity without, in most cases, dominating the aromatics.

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## TALBOT PROVIDORE

Talbot is a village of approximately 260 residents situated about 25 km south-east of Avoca. In the centre of town lies a little gem, the Talbot Providore, purveyor of high-quality regional produce. On Saturday evenings the Talbot Providore becomes a restaurant specialising in local ingredients. We strongly recommend it.

<http://talbotprovedore.com.au/>

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## CHARDONNAY

**2016 Dogrock Degraives Road Chardonnay** Fresh and grapefruity, with hints of nougat. The palate offers length, structure and texture. ★★★★★

**2016 Tournon Landsborough Vineyard Chardonnay (M.Chapoutier)** Fresh, restrained white peach aromas show out, together with some barrel ferment nuttiness. A little textural creaminess enhances the palate. ★★★★★

**2014 Blue Pyrenees Chardonnay** Fresh and peachy, with plenty of straightforward flavour. ★★★★★

**2016 Dalwhinnie Moonambel Chardonnay** Deep colour. A plain cling peach style of chardonnay. ★★★

**2016 Mount Avoca Estate Organic Chardonnay** Deep colour. Forward and peachy, with obvious oak. ★★★

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## THE AVOCA HOTEL

One of the highlights of our visit to the Pyrenees was provided by the Avoca Hotel. It's worth a drive from Melbourne for the food alone, but when we asked what gins were available for a pre-dinner tippie, we were shown a list of 50. There are about 150 Pyrenees wines available, including mature classics. You get the picture. This is no ordinary rural hotel. It's all on the web site.

<http://www.theavocahotel.com.au/>

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## CABERNET SAUVIGNON

**2015 Taltarni Estate Cabernet Sauvignon** A perfumed cassis style of cabernet with a hint of regional mint. The palate is long and stylish, built on a structure of fine, firm tannins. (Has been released for around \$40.00 but is not offered on the Taltarni site) ★★★★★

**2012 Blue Pyrenees Richardson Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon** A fresh, ripe, complex, blackcurrant varietal style with a dash of new oak and a hint of mint. The palate is firm, but richly flavoured, and needs a few more years to really deliver the goods. (\$120.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.bluepyrenees.com.au/products/13850-richardson-reserve-cabernet-sauvignon/>

**2015 Summerfield Taiyo Cabernet Sauvignon** This wine offers rich cassis aromas and flavours together with a faint mintiness and toasty oak. It's a substantial, but balanced, wine that will reward cellaring. (Available to Summerfield members only. See link below) ★★★★★  
<http://summerfieldwines.com.au/cellar-door>

**2013 Blue Pyrenees Richardson Cabernet Sauvignon** A powerful cassis style with elements of five spice and mint. A big but firm wine that is balanced and impressive. Cellar ten years. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

**2014 Blue Pyrenees Cabernet Sauvignon** A very fresh cabernet offering cassis and dried herb aromas. The palate is fine and long, with typical cabernet structure. Excellent value. (\$20.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.bluepyrenees.com.au/products/15823-blue-pyrenees-cabernet-sauvignon/>

**2015 Pyren Block D Cabernet** Here we have rich, ripe cassis aromas with a hint of spearmint. The generous flavour is backed up by balanced tannins and toasty oak. (Not yet available) ★★★★★

**2013 Dalwhinnie Moonambel Cabernet** There's great colour and depth of varietal flavour, but the oak is prominent. ★★★★★

**2013 Pyren Broken Quartz Cabernet** Fresh cassis aromas with minty overtones. There's plenty of power on a firm, persistent palate. ★★★★★

**2014 Summerfield Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon** A fresh, rich cassis-scented cabernet with hints of dark chocolate. It's a little too astringent and oak-driven. ★★★★★

**2016 Curious Winemaker by Mitchell Harris Whole Bunch Cabernet** An interesting red with some blackcurrant pastille overtones. It certainly packs a punch flavourwise. ★★★★★

**2015 Mitchell Harris Cabernet Sauvignon** Fresh red fruits with cassis and eucalypt. The palate has length and structure. ★★★★★

**2013 Mount Avoca Estate Cabernet Sauvignon** Slightly weak colour. A firm style with red berry and spearmint aromas. It needs a little more mid-palate weight. ★★★

**2015 Quartz Hill Cabernet Sauvignon** Slightly advanced colour. A firm cabernet with adequate strength of varietal flavour. ★★★

**2014 Dalwhinnie Moonambel Cabernet** Quite complex, with a hint of black olive, but it's not quite fresh enough, and astringency takes over on the finish. ★★★

**2015 Mount Avoca Estate Cabernet Sauvignon** A charry/toasty cabernet with decent weight of fruit. The oak is too prominent. ★★★

**2014 Tournon Shays Flat Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (M.Chapoutier)** Colour not great. A forward cabernet with minty overtones. ★★☆☆

**2014 Summerfield Cabernet Sauvignon** The colour is slightly forward, as is nose. Red fruits flavours lead to a drying finish. ★★☆☆

**2007 Gwynneth Cabernet Sauvignon** Very mature and tending to dry out on the finish. ★★

*A key quality factor in Pyrenees cabernet sauvignon is managing the mint-eucalypt regional influence.*

## CABERNET BLENDS

**2013 Blue Pyrenees Estate Red (Cabernet sauvignon, merlot, shiraz, malbec)** This is a rich dark berry/cassis style that is packed with flavour. Hints of mint and bay leaf add complexity, and the tannins are fine and firm. (\$36.00) ★★★★★  
<http://www.bluepyrenees.com.au/products/6271-blue-pyrenees-estate-red/>

**2016 Grape Farm Mineshaft Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot** Vibrant cassis and red berry aromas and flavours are evident in this firm, but balanced, red of opulence. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

**2015 Taltarni Reserve Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon (57% shiraz 43% cabernet)** Rich and ripe, featuring regional dried herbs. A wine of substance and structure. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

**2014 Taltarni Reserve Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon** A substantial dark berry wine with a touch of oak. It's generously flavoured, but firm. ★★★★★

**2014 Major by Mitchell Harris Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz** A fresh blend showing red and black berry characteristics. The tannins are a little too astringent. ★★★

**2013 Sally's Paddock (Cabernet sauvignon, shiraz, cabernet franc, merlot, malbec)** A wine that shows some Bordeaux-like characteristics, but is quite drying on the finish. ★★★

**2015 Pyren Yardbird Union (Cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, malbec, petit verdot)** Spearmint and dark berry aromas. Supple, but slightly hollow. ★★★

**2014 Sally's Hill Cabernets (70% Cabernet sauvignon, 30% cabernet franc)** Has flavour but isn't fresh enough. ★★☆☆

## OTHER DRY WHITES

**2017 Dogrock Degraives Road Riesling** Very fresh, floral and flavoursome, with a slightly firm finish. ★★★★★

**2016 Taltarni Blanc de Noirs (60% Pinot noir 40% pinot meunier)** Fresh, slightly musky. The palate has good weight and texture. ★★★★★

**2014 Quartz Hill Viognier** A little too developed, but delivers clear-cut apricot varietal aroma and flavour. ★★★★★

**2016 Blue Pyrenees Sauvignon Blanc** Rich fresh passionfruit aromas. Plenty of flavour and some phenolic grip. ★★★★★

**2016 Taltarni T Series Sauvignon Blanc** Quite fresh, with varietal herbal overtones, and texture provided by some phenolic grip. ★★★★★

**2016 Mitchell Harris Sauvignon Blanc Fumé** A good example of the barrel-ferment style, offering nutty complexity as well as gooseberry varietal character. ★★★★★

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**2016 Mount Avoca Estate Organic Sauvignon Blanc** This wine is slightly developed on the nose, but still offers good varietal flavour and a fresh finish. ★★★

**2016 Tournon Landsborough Vineyard Riesling (M.Chapoutier)** The nose is very much preserved lemon and out of the mainstream. The rich textural palate makes it an interesting drink. ★★★

**2016 Gwynneth Chenin Blanc** Fresh apple flan nose. Reasonable fruit weight with some texture. ★★★

**2015 Dalwhinnie Forest Hut Viognier** Restrained apricot aromas together with slight reduction. The textural palate delivers varietal flavour. ★★★

**2015 Mount Avoca Cordon Cut Sauvignon Blanc** A sweet white offering glacé fruits aromas. It's relatively simple but is well balanced. ★★★

**2015 Mount Avoca Estate Viognier** Quite forward, but has plenty of apricot flavour and some phenolic grip. ★★★

**2014 Mount Avoca Estate Fumé Blanc** Shows barrel-ferment complexity, but is quite developed. ★★★

**2016 Mount Avoca Limited Release Pinot Grigio** Bronze colour. Cooked pear aromas. Slightly flabby and grippy. ★★★

**NV Blue Pyrenees UBF (75% Ugni blanc, 21% fiano)** Not super bright in appearance. Quite dull palate. ★★

**2016 Pyren Little Ra Ra Roopa Sauvignon Blanc** Deep orange colour. A skin contact wine that was out of class here. It's certainly interesting – if you like the style. ★★

## ROSÉ

**2016 Blue Pyrenees Bone Dry Rosé** Pale pink colour. The strawberry nose is fresh, as is the palate, but the flavour is slightly dilute. ★★★

**2016 Quartz Hill Mencia Rosé** Pale pink. Fresh delicate red fruits nose followed up by a balanced palate. ★★★

**2016 Mitchell Harris Pinot Noir Rosé** Pale pink colour. Fresh red fruits aromas with balanced tannins. ★★★

**2016 Dalwhinnie Mesa Rosé** Quite red in colour. The nose suggests sautéed strawberries. There's too much grip for the fruit weight. ★★

**2014 Gwynneth Cabernet Sauvignon Rosé** Red/orange colour. Advanced and firm. ★★

## OTHER DRY REDS

**2015 Dogrock Degraives Road Grenache** This is a gem of a grenache. We've rated it highly twice before, and it shone out here. It's vibrant, fragrant, long-flavoured and finely structured. Delicious. (\$35.00)

★★★★☆

<https://www.wineboss.com.au/Order.aspx?ref=cge&wsrc=cge>

**2016 Mount Avoca Limited Release Sangiovese** A fresh cherry-spice varietal with bright fruit and fine, savoury tannins. (\$47.50) ★★★★★

<https://mountavoca.com/products/2015-sangiovese>

**2014 Mitchell Harris Electric Motor Mataro** Lovely spicy red fruits show on the nose. The palate is satisfying and well balanced by fine, savoury tannins. (To be released very soon for \$25.00) ★★★★★

<https://mitchellharris.com.au/>

**2016 Pyren Little Ra Ra Cabernet Franc** There's a dash of shiraz included, but the intense raspberry varietal character shows out clearly. It's a delicious drink, with fine, well balanced tannins which linger. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

**2015 Mount Avoca Limited Release Lagrein** Mulberries and plums abound in this flavour-packed red. There's also some toasty oak and the palate is firm. Promising. ★★★★★

**2014 Blue Pyrenees Malbec** Rich ripe dark berry aromas with a touch of mint. The palate is packed with flavour leading to a firm finish.

★★★★☆

**2016 Mount Avoca Limited Release Tempranillo** The vibrant red fruits aromas and flavours are accompanied by fine savoury tannins, but the wine is held back by plain, obvious oak. ★★★★★

**2014 Summerfield Tradition (Shiraz, merlot, cabernet sauvignon)**

The fresh, rich dark berry fruit is matched with slightly puckering tannins. There's also a eucalypt overtone. ★★★★★

**2015 Sally's Hill Malbec** The ripe red fruits aromas and flavours have great appeal, but the finish is a little too firm and drying. ★★★★★

**2015 Mount Avoca Estate Merlot** Fresh, plummy and spicy, with oak evident. The finish is quite astringent. ★★★★★

**2016 Dogrock Tempranillo** The fresh dark berry nose carries a hint licorice, and the palate offers attractive fruit together with tannins that are firm. ★★★

**2014 Summerfield Merlot** Shows ripe plummy fruit together with hints of clove and mint. The tannins are slightly furry. ★★★

**2015 Dogrock Grenache** Offers raspberry grenache character, but is a little too developed. ★★★

**2016 Tournon Shays Flat Vineyard Sangiovese (M.Chapoutier)** Has varietal dark cherry flavour, but the palate is solid and on the edge of jamminess. ★★★

**2014 Mitchell Harris Sangiovese** Slightly dull, with a dry, firm finish.

★★★

**2014 Blue Pyrenees Merlot** Forward, minty and slightly light. ★★★

**2016 Mount Avoca Moates Lane Pinot Noir** A very plain light dry red. ★★★

**2015 Dalwhinnie For Walker Sangiovese** Quite firm and raisiny, with an acid lift on the finish. ★★

**2014 Sally's Hill Cabernet Franc** Ripe red berry with a slightly medicinal overtone and a drying finish. ★★

**2015 Tournon Landsborough Vineyard Grenache (M.Chapoutier)**

Advanced colour. Jammy, developed and dull. ★☆

Apart from shiraz, this is undoubtedly the most exciting category. Grape varieties like grenache, lagrein, mataro and sangiovese have the potential to greatly extend the region's viticultural horizon.

As this tasting demonstrates, the Pyrenees distinguishes itself in a state blessed with several high quality wine regions. It does so through quality and individuality. Though not as high-profile as some viticultural locations closer to Melbourne, it offers much to wine enthusiasts. Foremost among its strengths are red wines of intensity, with the structure for long-term cellaring. But there are other gems to be sought out, and we're sure a visit to the region would be greatly enjoyed by anyone interested in wine. If you can't get there in the near future, Pyrenees wines are easily obtainable through the wineries' web sites.

We thank the Pyrenees Grapegrowers & Winemakers Association for their strong support and warm welcome. This tasting would not have been possible without their co-operation.

## WINEWISE RATING SCALE

★★★★★	Outstanding	97-100 pts	Gold medal
★★★★☆	Highly Recommended	93-96	Gold/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	

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