



WINEWISE

THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE

March 2013



L to R Championship judges Tim Kirk, Tim Knapstein, Deb Pearce

CONTENTS



Page 3 Sparkling

Page 5 Riesling

Page 11 Sauvignon Blanc

THE 2013 WINWISE CHAMPIONSHIP

The concept of the Winewise Championship was born in the years I judged at the National Wine Show. The founders of that show had displayed considerable vision over 25 years ago in bringing together some of the best wines from the state capital shows, but I felt the concept needed a revamp.

Even though shows like Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide still receive strong industry support, having judged at them, I began to view them as “medal factories” with very large classes that are impossible to judge properly. I decided that regional shows (i.e. wine shows confined to the wines of single regions) produced more reliable results and provided a more accurate picture of wine quality. Put them all together, and we have a good representation of the complex mosaic that is Australian wine.

That formed the basis of my approach to a national wine show. Invite all the gold medal winners from the regionals and a few speciality shows like the International Riesling Challenge to enter, and wait and see what happened.

The response has been fantastic, and instead of spending days dealing with seemingly interminable line-ups of wines from different and contrasting regions, we would taste the wines in groups no larger than seven and simply rank them in order of preference, awarding nine to the best, six, four, three, two, one down to zero for the last. The grouping would be left to the stewards and would be based on grape variety, vintage and origin. In the case of large numbers of entries, there would be a number of heats and a final. Forget scoring out of 20 or 100. It simply wasn't necessary.

Every medallion-winner is a wine of excellence, but the strongest classes were chardonnay and shiraz. Both showed considerable diversity of style, and the wines that rose to the top were world class.

The Winewise Championship was judged over three days, and recognised the fact that it's often difficult for judges to commit to that amount of time. Consequently ten judges participated, two doing the full three days, the others two or one. It's an approach some shows would do well to consider.



Lester Jesberg

The 2013 Winewise Championship - Sparkling

This result was the most controversial of the whole Championship. The controversy stems not from an argument about quality; rather it's all about style. In many major wine shows, panels have debated freshness versus complexity in sparkling wines. Lester remembers discussing the matter more than once with Brian Croser when Brian chaired the National and Sydney wine shows. In essence, Lester accepted more "artefact" than Brian. Neither person was necessarily right. Consider champagne. At one end of the scale we have a well made grand marque non-vintage wine. At the other there is Krug Grande Cuvée or vintage Bollinger. It could be argued that the "standard" NV champagne is too simple, and that the other extreme is too complex. That is, the elements of "artefact" (autolysis, oxidation etc) are too great. Where then is the ideal spot on that continuum?

Six experienced judges simply could not agree on where that spot was, and the sheer vibrancy of the Centennial won the day by the narrowest of margins. To illustrate how close the vote was, bear in mind that each of six judges had 9, 6, 4, 3, 2 points to allocate to the five wines, and the top three scored 38, 37 and 36 respectively. All three wines are worthy of the medallion, but after discussion (before the identities of the wines were revealed) we decided that there could only be one winner.

Best value wines shown in **purple**.

SPARKLING WHITE



NV Centennial Blanc de Blancs After building an impressive show record, this wine triumphed in the 2013 Winewise Championship, edging out two of Australia's finest methode

champenoise wines. Having spent 42 months on lees, it's no surprise to find bready, nutty autolysis notes on the nose. The very fine mousse imparts a creamy feel to the long vibrant palate. A delicious aperitif. Made entirely from Southern Highlands, NSW chardonnay. (\$37.00) **Outstanding**
http://www.centennial.net.au/cellar_door/our_wines.php

2001 Radenti Chardonnay Pinot Noir This is a multi-layered Tasmanian sparkling wine that, although subtly complex is also engagingly floral, and the palate is long, fine and lively, with delightful acidity. We haven't often described a \$50.00 as good value, but the cost of ten years' lees-ageing makes it a bargain in our opinion. (\$50.00) **Outstanding**
http://www.freycinetvineyard.com.au/order_now/order_now.html
<http://www.winestar.com.au/prod2185.htm>

2001 Courabyra 805 Pinot Noir Chardonnay Pinot Meunier Here's another wine that spent ten years *en tirage*. The nose offers restrained bready and brioche-like aromas, and the creamy palate is long and very satisfying, built on a spine of classic Tumberumba acidity. (\$55.00) **Outstanding**
<http://www.courabyrawines.com/online-order-form.html>

2008 Chandon Yarra Valley Cuvée There's a hint of lees complexity that adds to the stone-fruit characteristics, and there's a suggestion of greenness as well. The palate is long, but the acid is slightly hard. (\$30.00) **Recommended**

2009 Saracen Estates Sparkling Maree It's certainly complex, but there's a touch of eggy sulphides in the mix. Nevertheless, there's plenty of flavour and fresh acidity. (\$38.00) **Agreeable**

It may be a small group, but the future of Australian sparkling wine is etched deeply here.

SPARKLING RED

There was very little between the three wines. All earned two first-place votes, but three second places saw the Quelltaler prevail.

NV Quelltaler Watervale Sparkling Shiraz A very fresh wine with just a hint of leathery background maturity. The palate is very well balanced – not too sweet not too dry, and the tannins are quite fine. (\$25.00) **Highly Recommended**

NV Bundaleer Sparkling Shiraz The rich dark cherry fruit is attractive, as is the vibrancy of this wine. Although we noticed the oak, it will appeal to many. The sweetness and tannins are very well balanced. (\$20.00) **Highly Recommended**
<http://www.bundaleerwines.com.au/Buy/ProductInformation/tabid/164/ProductID/12/Default.aspx>

2008 Kimbarra Wines Eric Sparkling Shiraz The vivid purple colour and fragrant rose petal nose are very attractive. Although the tannins are firm, they are fine, and suggest that this Grampians wine will cellar very well. (Not yet released) **Highly Recommended**

The 2013 Winewise Championship - Riesling

Forty-five rieslings were judged through a series of heats and taste-offs, and in the end, a grand final. The six judges were presented with groups of wine no larger than seven. Each judge ranked the wines in order of preference, with nine points going to the top wine, through six, four, three, two, one and zero for last in the case of seven wines. In groups smaller than seven the points went, nine, six etc.

Bear in mind that all the wines judged had been awarded gold medals at one of our accredited shows in the preceding six months. For a list of accredited shows refer to www.winewise.net.au.

Best value wines shown in **blue**.

GROUP ONE

2012 Clonakilla Riesling This is a very clean, reserved style that begs for some bottle age. It's a wine of considerable finesse, and its racy acidity is a highlight. (\$25.00) *Outstanding*

2012 Orange Mountain Wines Riesling Deliciously limey and fresh, with a great line of acidity, this wine has excellent potential, and will fill out nicely over the next couple of years. (\$25.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Ravensworth Riesling Limes and apples, with a faintly herbal note. The palate is long, built on a spine of acidity. Needs time. (\$20.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Logan Weemala Riesling More stone fruit than citrus. Fresh enough, but the level of sweetness is a little too high. (\$17.00) *Recommended*

2012 Robert Stein Riesling Unmistakeably limey and varietal, but looks a little forward in this line-up. (\$35.00) *Recommended*

2012 Pikes Traditionale Riesling Full-on, showing stone fruit. Drinking now. (\$19.00) *Agreeable*

2012 Four Winds Vineyard Riesling Shows citrus varietal characteristics together with some Euro, forward, solids-like character. (\$19.00) *Agreeable*

GROUP TWO



2012 Leo Buring Clare Valley Riesling There's a real explosion of lime here. It's backed up by racy acidity, and the strong varietal flavour persists. A very impressive wine that has at least 2-3 years' potential. (\$15.00) **Outstanding**

2012 Pikes Merle Clare Valley Riesling Another very impressive Clare which offers restrained lime/citrus characteristics and a long, acid-fresh palate. Cellaring recommended. (\$45.00) **Outstanding**

2012 Peter Lehmann H&V Eden Valley Riesling Has plenty of flavour, but at the same time there's admirable refinement. An attractive, perfumed, fresh riesling. (\$18.00) **Highly Recommended**

2012 The Bend Great Oyster Bay Riesling A fascinating and innovative Tasmanian riesling. It's very limey, but there's a European-like complexity about it. Characteristics like solids and botrytis were mentioned, such were the secondary characteristics. This wine was polarising, but we have no argument with the original gold medal. (\$25.00) **Recommended**

2012 Patrick of Coonawarra Estate Riesling Full-flavoured, with tropical/pineapple overtones and a lively acid finish. (\$29.00) **Recommended**

2012 Heggies Vineyard Riesling A big, fresh, limey mouthful of riesling that finishes a little too firmly. (\$17.00) **Recommended**

2012 Pewsey Vale Riesling This is quite a full flavoured riesling that leans more to stone fruit than citrus, and looks like a comparatively early developer. (\$16.00) **Recommended**

GROUP THREE

2012 Orlando St Helga Eden Valley Riesling The nose offers an enticing combination of lime and floral notes, and the palate is delicate but long, with good acid drive on the finish. Classic Eden Valley. (\$15.00-\$20.00) *Outstanding*

2012 Peter Lehmann Portrait Eden Valley Riesling Another floral/lime style, typical of Eden Valley. It's an impressive linear wine which shows a little obvious SO₂ at the moment, but it will shine in 1-2 years. (\$16.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Pikes The JT Riesling This wine is on the closed side at the moment, but there's no doubting its varietal character or quality. It will definitely improve with cellaring. (\$42.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Pressing Matters R9 Riesling There was a decided lack of agreement on this one. It's certainly a striking wine – perfumed and intense, with a good acid backbone. Some tasters suspected that botrytis played a role in the Euro complexity and marked it down. We suggest you try it for yourself. (\$25.00) *Recommended* (although a couple of judges rated it more highly)

2012 Ad Hoc Wallflower Riesling Shows some attractive cool area aromatics, but just trails off a little on a clean, fresh finish. Good drinking. (\$19.00) *Recommended*

2012 Plantagenet Mount Barker Riesling Surprisingly forward, and looks to be a very short term prospect. (\$21.00) *Agreeable*

2012 ELIMINATION

One of the group-topping group winners had to be eliminated to provide the right fit for the final. Unfortunately, the Clonakilla was the one to go. We say unfortunately 1. Because the vote was so close, and 2. Because the Clonakilla's comparative restraint held it back slightly. Don't hesitate to buy it if you want a cellaring proposition.

GROUP FOUR

2011 Gilberts Mount Barker Riesling Very attractive, rich and limey. The concentrated flavour is perfectly balanced by steely acidity. An excellent varietal and regional example. (\$22.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Jacob's Creek Reserve Barossa Riesling Richly flavoured, and starting to hit its stride, this riesling offers satisfying drinking now and for the next year or two. (\$15.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 De Bortoli Yarra Valley Reserve Release Riesling This riesling is a very enjoyable, textural drink. The palate is utterly satisfying, delivering appealing stone-fruit flavour and lively acidity. (\$30.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Zarephath Riesling Although flavoursome and varietal, this wine appears to be coming forward quite quickly. Good acidity livens up the finish. (\$25.00) *Recommended*

2011 Leo Buring Leopold Derwent Valley Riesling There's some adventurous winemaking on display here. The nose reminded us of some of the more reduced rieslings of the Mosel's JJ Prüm. However, the funkiness was too intrusive. Time may possibly produce something special, but at the moment the negatives outweigh the positives. (\$37.00) *Agreeable*

GROUP FIVE

2011 Richmond Grove Watervale Riesling The Clare limey fingerprint is clearly visible in this beautifully made riesling. Intense flavour is backed up by acidity that seems to extend an already long finish. Classic. (\$19.00) *Outstanding*

2011 Jacob's Creek Steingarten Eden Valley Riesling There's a touch of development apparent, but that's no problem. It simply means that this delicious, balanced riesling is entering its drinking window. Enjoy over the next year or two. (\$29.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Rhythm Stick Wines Red Robin Clare Valley Riesling Too developed in all respects. (\$20.00) *Acceptable*

2011 Silver Wings Wines Mount Monument Riesling Advanced, with a green edge. (\$N/A) *Acceptable*

GROUP SIX

2007 Pewsey Vale Contours Riesling Here's a delicious, full flavoured riesling that is approaching its peak. Hints of toastiness enhance the richness. Excellent drinking now. (\$27.00) *Highly Recommended*

2008 d'Arenberg The Dry Dam Riesling A little sweetness goes a long way. Mature honeyed characteristics are just starting to take over, but there's still plenty of fruit there, helped by residual sugar. We don't think this wine belongs in a dry riesling class, and we discussed a downgrade, but it came from a dry class in a regional show and it's a darned good drink. (\$N/A) *Highly Recommended*

2007 Peter Lehmann Wigan Eden Valley Riesling This is a big, rich, toasty riesling that offers a lot, but is at or near its peak. (\$31.00) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Halfmoon Riesling Still quite restrained, not offering much fruit. The finish is quite tart, but there may be a future for this wine from Braidwood, NSW. At the moment it's a little sweet and sour. (\$19.50) *Recommended*

2010 Eldredge Clare Valley Riesling Becoming quite broad already, in some respects showing as much development as the older wines. (\$17.00) *Agreeable*

2007 Pressing Matters R9 Riesling Shows quite a lot of toasty development and tends to fade after a big initial impact. (\$23.00) *Agreeable*

GROUP SEVEN

2006 Peter Lehmann Wigan Eden Valley Riesling Oh, what a magnificent riesling this is! There's a hint of toasty maturity, but this wine is still youthful and vibrant. Enjoy now and over the next few years. (\$31.00) *Outstanding*

2006 Pewsey Vale Contours Eden Valley Riesling Another gorgeous riesling that combines the positives of age and youth. The slightly honeyed, limey palate is long and acid-fresh. (\$26.00) *Outstanding*

2006 Stone Bridge Clare Valley Riesling This riesling has hit its peak and is just beginning to dry out on the finish. Enjoyable mature drinking now, but don't keep. (\$28.00) *Recommended*

2006 Tertini Crossroads Riesling (Southern Highlands) Still offers fruit flavour, but age is wearying it. (\$33.00) *Agreeable*

GROUP EIGHT

2005 Pewsey Vale The Contours Riesling And so the parade of classic, bottle-aged Australian rieslings continues – much to our delight. This 2005 is drinking right at the peak of its rich, toasty, limey form. (\$35.00) *Highly Recommended*

2003 Pewsey Vale The Contours Riesling Two years older, and showing only slightly more maturity, this wine provides yet further proof of the excellence of Australian riesling from great sites. Don't wait much longer. Drink it now. (\$N/A) *Highly Recommended*

2003 Freycinet Riesling Tasmanian rieslings take on a character all their own, and that character is closer to Europe than it is to mainland Australia. Some tasters even saw some "slatey" Mosel character, and there's no doubt that this is a complex riesling that still has plenty to offer. (\$N/A) *Highly Recommended*

2003 Kimbarra Great Western Riesling An attractive, peachy style that still retains plenty of fruit backed up by clean acidity. Drink now. (\$N/A) *Recommended*

2001 Wolf Blass Icon Riesling Shows considerable development, and, although it retains some fruit, is fading fast. (\$N/A) *Agreeable*

2005 Eldredge Riesling A very mature, dried out riesling. (\$N/A) *Acceptable*

FINAL

As you can imagine, tasting off the top seven rieslings was an immensely enjoyable, yet challenging, task. The voting was very close indeed, and to be completely honest a different day or a different panel would most likely have produced a different result. However, as it turned out, we gave the thumbs-up to 2012 in South Australia. Try any of our highly rated rieslings. Australia should be proud of them.

Here's how the judging finished up.

2012 Leo Buring Clare Valley Riesling (Medallion winner)

2012 Orlando St Helga Eden Valley Riesling

2011 Richmond Grove Watervale Riesling

2006 Peter Lehmann Wigan Riesling

2005 Pewsey Vale The Contours Riesling

2011 Gilberts Mount Barker Riesling

2008 d'Arenberg The Dry Dam Riesling

WINEWISE HALF-DOZEN

We're very happy to announce the return of the Winewise half-dozen. The wines below were selected from the 2013 Winewise Championship

2012 Leo Buring Clare Valley Riesling

2012 Orlando St Helga Eden Valley Riesling

2012 Fox Creek McLaren Vale Vermentino

2009 Xanadu Margaret River Shiraz

2011 Smallwater Estate Shiraz (Geographe, W.A.)

2012 Cirami Estate Lagrein

\$125.00 plus freight

NSW/ACT \$11.00 per carton

VIC \$8.00

SA \$11.00

QLD to Mackay \$19.00 QLD north of Mackay \$22.00

NT \$30.00

WA \$27.00

TAS \$15.00

To order, contact:

**Phillips Cellars and Regional Wine Centre, 119 Corio St,
Shepparton Vic 3630 Telephone: 03 5821 2051**

Fax: 03 5831 5173

Payment by cheque or credit card

The 2013 Winewise Championship – Sauvignon Blanc

Copious amounts of sauvignon blanc, most of it from New Zealand, is swilled in restaurants and cafés. It's in fashion, it's unsubtle, and it's popular with the masses. That doesn't mean it can't be good. It doesn't have to be vegetal, sweet and sour. Here are a few that could brighten your luncheon table.

Best value wines shown in **blue**.

GROUP ONE

2011 Sidewood Estate Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc

Shows some attractive citrus, grass and tropical fruit characteristics. At its peak. (\$20.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Stella Bella Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc An impressive wine with concentrated gooseberry/grass aromas and flavours together with interesting, lees derived complex notes. Good drinking. (\$21.00) *Highly Recommended*

GROUP TWO



2012 Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc

Absolutely text book regional sauvignon blanc bursting with ripe gooseberry aroma and flavour with a citrus twist. Lively acidity balances a long, satisfying palate. (\$23.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Knotting Hill Estate Vineyard Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Shows strong gooseberry varietal character together with a goodly whiff of Margaret River grass. A vibrant, satisfying wine. (\$10.00) We can't believe the price, but that's what it is at <http://www.knottinghill.com.au/> *Highly Recommended*

2012 Wicks Estate Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc A bright, clean, expressive wine with aromas of freshly-cut grass and white flowers. The palate is long, built around a strong line of acidity. (\$18.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Johnson Oakbank Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc There's a suggestion of tropical fruit here, and clean, fresh, grassy varietal aromas and flavours as well. Good, well balanced drinking. (\$18.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Hahndorf Hill Winery Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc A very fresh, lively sauvignon blanc showing passionfruit and freshly-mown grass aromas. The palate is long and refreshing, with a good acid finish. (\$23.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Clemens Hill Sauvignon Blanc The other wines in this class are examples of precise winemaking – sauvignon blanc made like riesling if you like. Nothing at all wrong with that, but this one is far more edgy and complex, walking a tightrope over volatility and sulphides. It doesn't fall, and the result is a genuinely interesting wine. The judges took the "safe" course, but we feel this wine is still well worth trying. (Not yet released) *Recommended*

This was a very close contest, and the sheer intensity of the Shaw + Smith got it over the line for the medallion. We're very happy to see that the great success of this wine over a number of years hasn't led to any taking the eye off the ball.



Ian McKenzie, doyen of Australian Wine Show judges