



WINEWISE

THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE

April 2013



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The 2013 Winewise Championship – Sauvignon Blanc blends

2011 Warner Glen Estate PBF Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon The decision came down to choice of style. By a narrow margin this complex, creamy-textured blend received the thumbs-up. “Like a top Graves blanc,” remarked one of the tasters. However, it’s not all complexity and no fruit. There’s abundant gooseberry flavour with no sign of under-ripeness. Very skilfully made. (\$30.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Watershed Shades Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon In the other corner we have the classic Margaret River dry white blend. It’s vibrant and packed with gooseberry/grass flavour supported by lively acidity. (\$16.95) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Warner Glen Estate PBF Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon One year further down the track from the class-winner, this wine is now fully developed. It’s rich and complex, showing some oak and baked pastry notes as well as ripe gooseberry fruit. (\$30.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Celestial Bay Margaret River Semillon Sauvignon Blanc The combination of passionfruit, grapefruit and honeydew melon on the nose is appealing, and the pleasing fruit weight is balanced by freshening acidity. (\$20.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 West Cape Howe Two Peeps Albany Sauvignon Blanc Semillon This is an herbaceous style that shows a little thiol sweaty complexity. The palate is vibrant and finishes with racy acidity. (\$19.00) *Highly Recommended*

2012 Windance Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon Very fresh, but shows some green characteristics and is almost tart on the finish. (\$18.00) *Recommended*

On the basis of this year’s Championship, the Adelaide Hills has become the home of Australian sauvignon blanc, and Margaret River has made blends of semillon and sauvignon blanc its own.

Barrel fermentation can provide a fascinating point of difference, introducing lees-derived texture and complexity, and wines like the Warner Glen Estate can provide a refreshing change when chardonnay is being considered.

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<http://www.winewise.net.au>**

The 2013 Winewise Championship - Chardonnay

What a joy it was to taste the chardonnays. The number of Outstanding ratings will show you just how “hot” the Burgundy white variety is in Australia.

Subscribers have often asked where some of our highly-rated wines can be purchased. Up until now we have been loath to name retailers, but we often use Wine Searcher to obtain realistic prices. For wines rated Outstanding, we'll now provide retailers of same listed on the Wine Searcher Pro Version.

<http://www.wine-searcher.com/>

Best value wines shown in **purple**.

GROUP ONE

2011 First Creek Wines Winemakers Reserve Chardonnay

Producers in the cool regions of Victoria would be amazed by this chardonnay. It's comparatively reserved, shows some matchstick complexity, and is delightfully creamy, with a lively acid finish. It delivers the goods with finesse not often seen in Hunter chardonnay. Although there's much on offer now, we foresee further positive development. (Not yet released) **Outstanding**

2011 Peter Lehmann Hill and Valley Eden Valley

Chardonnay The Lehmann team have long commanded our respect for their rieslings and semillons. Now it's chardonnay, and they didn't do it by halves. This trophy-winner from the National Wine Show is as funky as they come, with pronounced struck match aromas adding to the impact of rich white peach varietal fruit. It's a “take no prisoners” chardonnay that offers very rewarding, complex, short term drinking. (\$24.00) **Outstanding**

2011 Ross Hill Pinnacle Chardonnay

Here's a chardonnay from Orange where the fruit has been given full rein, with subtle barrel-derived support. Lees contact has provided texture to the fresh, grapefruity palate, and regional acidity adds considerably in terms of freshness and balance. This is a very classy chardonnay. (\$29.50) **Highly Recommended**

2011 Balnaves Of Coonawarra Chardonnay

This is chardonnay packed full of slightly buttery richness balanced by lively acidity. It's creamy, fresh and very enjoyable now. (\$28.00) **Highly Recommended**

2011 Pepper Tree Venus Block Reserve Orange Chardonnay

A big, rich chardonnay which, although it makes a strong impact, doesn't quite reach the heights in terms of texture and complexity. Short term. (\$35.00) **Recommended**

2011 Tyrrell's HVD Chardonnay

The nose and palate reflect ripe, peachy fruit which is fresh and varietal. Pleasant drinking, but a little forward and simple. (Sold out) **Recommended**

2011 Tassell Park Private Bin Margaret River Chardonnay
Certainly doesn't lack flavour, but, even so, the peachy fruit struggles to deal with the very obvious oak. If you're a fan of oak, you'll like this, but in our view balance is a major quality factor. (Not yet released) **Recommended**

GROUP TWO



2011 Paringa Estate Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay
This is the wine that swept all before it nine months ago in the Winewise Small Vigneron Awards. In that time it has taken a step up by integrating fruit, oak, acidity and complexity even better. The cool-area white peach and grapefruit characteristics are enhanced by struck match barrel ferment overtones, and the stunning palate is long and creamy. While this wine can be enjoyed now, we believe there is still scope for further improvement over at least a couple of years. (\$35.00 cellar door only. Call 03 5989 2669)
Outstanding
<http://www.paringaestate.com.au>

2011 Gralyn Wildberry Springs Reserve Margaret River Chardonnay Here's another 2011 chardonnay that impressed everyone on the panel. This Margaret River gem has a cool climate edge to it, and delivers intense long flavour backed by structure and acidity. There was so little between the top two wines that we sent both along to the final. (\$75.00) **Outstanding**
http://www.gralyn.com.au/shopping/catalogue_list.asp

2011 Seville Estate Yarra Valley Chardonnay A very attractive chardonnay offering hints of nougat and dough to complement the elegant varietal delivery. (\$33.00) **Highly Recommended**

2011 Swinging Bridge Reserve Chardonnay The melon/peach fruit is varietal, fresh and attractive, but the structure and complexity doesn't quite match that of the top pair. Nevertheless, this is a very appealing drink in its own right. (\$32.00) **Highly Recommended**

2011 Xanadu Stevens Road Chardonnay This wine is a little forward and the oak comes through quite strongly. Makes an impact, but the balance is questionable. (Not yet released) **Recommended**

2011 De Bortoli Yarra Valley Estate Chardonnay Has attractive white peach fruit, but the buttery overtones are pronounced in comparison. Seems to be entering its drinking window. (\$27.00) **Recommended**

GROUP THREE

The top three wines are classic examples of bringing together all the things that make chardonnay great. It's a pity they had to meet in one group because they all combine intense, fresh fruit and complex barrel ferment components beautifully. They also deliver the goods texturally and structurally.

2011 Seville Estate Reserve Chardonnay This wine shows impressive white peach, and hair-splitting by the judges focused on the multi-layered, textural nature of the palate. (Not yet released) **Outstanding**
<http://sevilleestate.com.au>

2011 Xanadu Reserve Lagan Vineyard Margaret River Chardonnay Here's a trimmed back, sportier style tending more to citrus/grapefruit than stone fruit. The oak is very classy, and needs a year or so to settle in, but it certainly will. (Not yet released) **Outstanding**
<http://www.xanaduwines.com>

2011 Dawson & James Chardonnay Of the top three, this is the one closest to Burgundy even though it comes from Tasmania. All the stops are out, but balance, texture and complexity are beyond reproach. (Not yet released) **Outstanding**
<http://www.dawsonjames.com.au/>

2011 Leura Park Estate Block 1 Reserve Chardonnay A tightly-framed chardonnay with persistent citrus-like fruit and excellent acidity. The oak is very well handled. Needs time. (\$45.00) **Highly Recommended**

2011 Mistletoe Reserve Hunter Valley Chardonnay Big and peachy. Has good texture, but seems to be developing quickly. (\$40.00) **Recommended**

2011 Jack Rabbit Vineyard Chardonnay Big and buttery, showing diacetyl character. Too much complexity for the fruit. (\$25.00) **Agreeable**

GROUP FOUR

2010 Barwang Estate 842 Tumbarumba Chardonnay The flow of brilliant Australian chardonnay continues. Tumbarumba has emerged as one of Australia's leading chardonnay regions, and McWilliams lead the charge with wines like this. All boxes ticked. This is an exceptional Australian wine that is over-delivering at its price point. (Sold out) **Outstanding**

2010 Xanadu Reserve Margaret River Chardonnay Looking good, but definitely in its drinking window. Funky, creamy, rich and carries its oak load quite well. (\$85.00) **Highly Recommended**

2010 Sidewood Estate Adelaide Hills Chardonnay Quite rich and peachy, with good underlying acidity. Drinking well now. (\$16.00) **Recommended**

2010 After Hours Margaret River Chardonnay Coming forward with a rush – rich and peachy – drinks well, but don't wait. (Sold out) **Recommended**

This group sends a cautionary note about Australian chardonnay. Like most white burgundy, it can spend a short time at the peak of its form.

GROUP FIVE

2010 Seville Estate Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay Yet another Seville Estate! What does that tell you? Obviously Dylan McMahon knows how to make chardonnay. This one is a gem, reflecting perfectly grown grapes which delivered flavours in the white peach spectrum, and it's supported by all the positives of skilled barrel work. (\$60.00) **Outstanding**
<https://securecellardoor.com.au/sevilleestate/wines/2010-seville-estate-reserve-chardonnay>
<http://www.winehouse.com.au/ShowWines.asp?pID=38851&c=25933>

2009 Wolf Blass White Label Chardonnay Treasury Wine Estate's big ticket chardonnay is Yattarna, but some of the others fly under the radar. This is one of them. At four years of age, this wine is now really shining. It has length and a pleasingly grippy texture that suits the intense fruit perfectly. (\$26.00) **Outstanding**
<http://www.qantasepicure.com.au/wines/wine-products/Wolf-Blass-White-Label-Adelaide-Hills-Chardonnay-2009/?wine-type=White&page=1>

2010 Evans & Tate Metricup Road Chardonnay A wine of energy, linearity and balance. The flavours tend to stone fruit, and the palate has both creaminess and grip. Very enjoyable drinking, and the perfect "house" white. (\$16.00) **Highly Recommended**
<http://www.nofrillswine.com.au/wines.php?ID=Evans%20Tate%20Metricup%20Road%20Chardonnay%202010&TY=All%20varieties&RE=All%20regions&PR=Any%20price&search=&page=825>
<http://www.winestar.com.au/prod2894.htm>

2010 Hutton Triptych Margaret River Chardonnay This is a well structured chardonnay which shows both grapefruit and peach characteristics. The finish is long and satisfying. Quality drinking. (\$40.00) **Highly Recommended**

2010 PHI Yarra Valley Chardonnay Last place is no disgrace in this group. This toasty, funky chardonnay has excellent fruit weight and grip, with commendable freshness. (\$45.00) **Highly Recommended**

Given the closeness, the top two went through to the final.

GROUP SIX

2008 Seville Estate Reserve Chardonnay Although this wine shows toasty development, it retains freshness and delivers impressive varietal flavour backed up by complexity. It's probably at its peak, but shows no sign of decline. (Sold out) **Outstanding**

2009 Hutton Triptych Margaret River Chardonnay A very appealing grapefruity style which offers a delicious, creamy palate with a long finish. It's beginning to drink very well indeed. (\$55.00) **Highly Recommended**

2005 Clyde Park Estate Bannockburn Chardonnay This chardonnay is a credit to producer and region. It's still full of life, and delivers excellent fruit intensity and texture. (Sold out) **Highly Recommended**

2009 Tyrrell's Vat 47 Hunter Valley Chardonnay Still fresh and varietal, with a good acid line. No doubt it has quite a few years ahead of it. (\$68.00) **Highly Recommended**

2006 Freycinet Tasmania Chardonnay This is a very impressive chardonnay that is still quite a way from the end of the road. It still shows white peach characteristics which are supported by texture and lively acidity. A classy wine. (Sold out) **Highly Recommended**

2006 PHI Yarra Valley Chardonnay A lovely, rich mouthful of complex chardonnay that appears to have reached its peak. (Sold out) **Recommended**

The taste-off was a pleasure for all, but it also presented challenges. How do judges place such a number of exceptional chardonnays into any meaningful order? In the end, the No.1 votes were shared among the top three wines, and it was a photo finish between the top two.

FINAL FINISHING ORDER

2011 Paringa Estate Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay
2009 Wolf Blass White Label Chardonnay
2011 First Creek Wines Winemakers Reserve Chardonnay
2010 Barwang Estate 842 Tumbarumba Chardonnay
2011 Seville Estate Reserve Chardonnay
2010 Seville Estate Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay
2011 Gralyn Wildberry Springs Reserve Margaret River Chardonnay

The 2013 Winewise Championship – Other White Varietals & Blends

In wine terms Australia is a young country, and we're sure some great sites for planting wine grapes remain undiscovered. We think this is especially true of white grape varieties that originate from Italy. Even the Italians may not have found the perfect environments for some of them. The impressive little collection in Group One provides us with indications of what we can expect more commonly in the future.

Tahbilk Marsanne made its presence felt to such an extent that we had to create an extra class for it. There's no doubt that it remains one of our iconic wines. Yalumba's adventurous, pioneering work with viognier deservedly continues to reap rewards.

Best value wines shown in **purple**.

GROUP ONE

2012 Fox Creek McLaren Vale Vermentino The sheer vibrancy of this wine played a major role in its top ranking. The judges liked the crisp acid finish that supported the apple-like fruit very well. Enjoy it for its youthful exuberance. (\$23.00) **Highly Recommended**

2012 Lerida Estate Pinot Grigio This is an excellent pinot gris from Lake George in the Canberra district, and it came very close to winning the group. Classic pear characteristics shone through, and the palate featured a creamy texture supported by excellent acidity. (\$24.00) **Highly Recommended**

2012 Mitolo Jester Vermentino The aromas and flavours are distinctly of tropical fruit, and very fresh. Lively acidity lifts a clean, persistent finish. (\$22.00) **Highly Recommended**

2012 Golden Grove Estate Vermentino It's always good to have Queensland wines in our competition, and this one shows how under-rated the Granite Belt wine region can be. This is a comparatively adventurous approach to vermentino in that it involves some barrel fermentation. There's also a little fruity sweetness to balance the attractive acidity. Well made. (\$22.00) **Highly Recommended**

2012 Westend Estate Calabria Pinot Bianco Non-mainstream varietals can be polarising. The Editor thought this was quite special – strongly textural with positive phenolics and good intensity of stone fruit flavour. A couple of the other judges differed. Nevertheless, at the price you can try it without risking many dollars. (\$14.95) **Highly Recommended**

2012 Lobethal Road Pinot Gris A viscous pinot gris with a touch of sweetness and a soft centre. However, there's plenty of pear and malt flavour. (\$22.00) **Recommended**

GROUP TWO

2010 Yalumba The Virgilius Eden Valley Viognier Much Australian viognier is planted in the wrong place and/or picked at the wrong time. The results can range from neutral, sultana-like dry whites to heavy, oily, unpalatable beverages. No such problems here. This wine offers subtle apricot aromas and flavours and a creamy, beautifully textured palate with excellent acidity. This is a world-class viognier. (Likely to be around \$43.00, but not yet released) ***Outstanding***

2012 Toppers Mountain Wines Gewürztraminer Speaking of planting grapes in the right place, here's a fine example. Not only is it grown in the coolness of the New England region near Armidale, NSW, it is clearly made in the Alsatian manner which is considered too "rough" for an aromatic varietal in Australia. The result is a wine of structure and texture bursting with the classic rose petal and spiciness of gewürztraminer. It's a ground-breaking wine worthy of your attention. (\$35.00) ***Highly Recommended***

2010 d'Arenberg The Last Ditch McLaren Vale Viognier This is a big, rich viognier which is packed with apricot and ginger. There's not much subtlety, but it can be enjoyed in the short term. (\$20.00) ***Recommended***

2012 Logan Weemala Gewürztraminer There's no lacking of varietal character here, but the obvious sweetness of this wine was distracting. We have no doubt of the wine's commercial appeal, but the question of balance was the major issue here. (\$17.00 but sold out at the winery) ***Recommended***

2010 Dalfarras Marsanne Roussanne Viognier Shows stone fruit characteristics, but is now too advanced and drying on the finish. (\$13.90) ***Agreeable***

2011 Xanadu Margaret River Viognier Has some apricot aroma and flavour, but lacks vibrancy. (Not available) ***Agreeable***

GROUP THREE

2012 K1 by Geoff Hardy Grüner Veltliner Has the classic apple, pear and spice varietal characteristics, and delivers good palate weight with a citrus twist. (\$28.00) ***Highly Recommended***

2011 Tahbilk Roussanne A rich, fresh white with stone fruit and citrus characteristics. Very satisfying drinking now. (\$13.45) ***Highly Recommended***

2011 Tahbilk Marsanne There's a little bit of grass/dry hay showing on the nose, and the palate is plain, but showing good acidity. Seems to be in an "in between" phase. Give it another year or two. (\$13.90) ***Recommended***

2011 Ducks in a Row Pandora's Amphora Well, we certainly can't say it's not interesting. However, cloudy, slightly oxidised wine isn't the best look. We mention texture a lot, but, if anything, there's too much of it here. Full points for good marketing and fashion statement. (\$80.00) ***Recommended (for the adventurous)***

If you're a fashionista or just curious about the amphora wine movement go to <http://pandorasamphora.com.au/pandoras.html> and <http://www.sedimentarywines.com/producer-gravner.php>

GROUP FOUR

It may seem strange making a group out of four wines from the same maker, but it seemed logical to us and the judges weren't told.

2006 Tahbilk Museum Release Marsanne The general consensus was that this wine was right at its peak and the others all had time to go. Rich honeysuckle aromas and flavours, absolutely typical of mature marsanne, are supported here by good acidity. (\$17.95) *Highly Recommended*

2004 Tahbilk 1927 Vines Marsanne Had the judges been told individual vintages rather than the vintage spread, this wine would have topped the group. It's mature, but still very fresh, with a couple of years ahead of it. (\$N/A) *Highly Recommended*

2008 Tahbilk Marsanne Powerful, varietal and fresh, but definitely showing obvious bottle development. Drink now – 2015. (\$N/A) *Highly Recommended*

2005 Tahbilk 1927 Vines Marsanne Nicely mature, but also surprisingly backward. Could outlast the 2004. (\$N/A) *Highly Recommended*

Some of the Marsannes may be available at the winery in mixed half-dozens.

When it came to the taste-off, the sophistication and freshness of the Yalumba Virgilius saw it just edge out the 2006 Tahbilk Marsanne, with a gap to the Vermentino and the Grüner Veltliner.

WINEWISE ALERT

In one October day in 2011, the 2010 St Huberts The Stag Pinot Noir came from "nowhere" to score gold medal points at an extensive Winewise 2010 Yarra Valley Pinot Noir tasting, and the Yarra Valley Regional Wine Show which was being judged only kilometres away. It was also awarded a trophy at the wine show which gained it entry to the 2012 Winewise Championship. The 2010 Stag continued its rise to glory by winning the prestigious Pinot Noir Medallion at the Championship, outdoing some of Australia's most famous labels.

I recently tasted the **2012 St Huberts The Stag Pinot Noir**, and feel, even at this early stage, that it surpasses the 2010. It's a satisfying, delicious, silky, strongly varietal pinot that is a joy to drink. I can't think of a better example in the \$20-\$30 price range.

Lester Jesberg

The 2013 Winewise Championship – Pinot Noir

Some readers may expect more entries in a prestigious class like pinot noir, but, when you think about it there aren't a lot of shows where pinot noirs fare well. The Burgundy red varietal simply isn't ubiquitous like shiraz. The fourteen that fought out this year's medallion represented the Adelaide Hills, northern and southern Tasmania, NSW Southern Highlands, Mornington Peninsula and the Bellarine Peninsula.

Best value wines shown in **purple**.

GROUP 1

2010 Riposte The Sabre Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir Tim Knappstein's Riposte pinots have consistently shown well in our tastings, and it was good to see that support continue when our guest panel members joined us. The Riposte narrowly reversed the decision of the Adelaide Hills Wine Show where the Shaw + Smith edged it out for the trophy. Its fragrance and opulent dark cherry palate won favour with the judges, as did the fine, firm tannins which provide balance and encourage cellaring. There are some ideal, cool pinot sites in the mosaic that is the Adelaide Hills, and perhaps a little too much media attention is focused on Victoria, particularly some small "cult" makers who are inconsistent at best. (\$30.00) **Outstanding**

2010 Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir Although this pinot is made from Adelaide Hills fruit, it is very different in character from the previous wine. The colour is lighter (no problem), and there's a delicate, spicy fragrance to the nose. The elegance of the nose carries through to the palate which delivers a long, satisfying finish. (Sold out at winery) **Highly Recommended**

2010 Pressing Matters Tasmania Pinot Noir We couldn't help but notice a little Nuits-St-Georges character in this wine in that it's a deeply coloured, firm, somewhat brooding pinot. The nose is closed, and not "pretty" like the Shaw + Smith's, but the palate really delivers in terms of intensity, length and varietal character. Like good examples from Nuits-St-Georges, this wine needs time. (\$49.95) **Highly Recommended**

2009 K1 by Geoff Hardy Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir It's certainly a pinot noir from the big end of town, but it is still very pinot. It has that strong dark cherry character that we associate with the Adelaide Hills, and the structure suggests that further cellaring is in order. This wine is living up to its 2012 Small Vigneron Awards trophy. (\$35.00) **Highly Recommended**

2010 Paringa Estate Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir This is a very stylish pinot showing the classic fresh red berries combined with high quality French oak. Although we already see a very attractive personality here, we have no doubt that this wine will deliver much more over the next 3-5 years. (\$60.00) **Highly Recommended**

2010 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Tasmania Pinot Noir There's plenty of everything here - tannin, oak and powerful cherry jam aroma and flavour to pull it all together. Built for cellaring and will reward same. (\$45.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Centennial Vineyards Reserve Southern Highlands Pinot Noir Shows attractive perfumed cherry characteristics, and is fresh and well made, but the fruit intensity doesn't quite cope with the structure right now. (\$30.00) *Recommended*

Given the closeness of the vote, both the Riposte and the Shaw + Smith went through to the final taste-off.

GROUP 2

2009 Paringa Estate Estate Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir Wow! The huge impression of great raspberry fruit and superb French oak swayed everybody except the editor (who rated it 2nd). Long and delicious on the palate, cradled by impressive, fine, lingering tannins. Cellar. (\$60.00) *Outstanding*

2010 Dawson and James Tasmania Pinot Noir Here we have a pinot noir that provides a glimpse into the future. The intensity of raspberry fruit and the faintly herbal complexity lift it into the top bracket. Follow this label. Two of Australia's great winemakers stand behind it. (\$49.00) *Outstanding*

2010 Clemens Hill Tasmania Pinot Noir Bright, light colour. The nose shows attractive cherry fruit with a suggestion of oak, and the palate delivers a satisfyingly long finish, with lingering fine tannins. (\$35.75) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Wombat Springs Tasmania Pinot Noir Deeply coloured. As the colour suggests, this wine is packed with flavour, showing dark cherries and plums. The tannins are firm, and need time to soften. (\$25.00) *Recommended*

2010 Clyde Park Reserve Pinot Noir The nose is quite fragrant, with a herbal complexity that is probably stems-related. The fruit doesn't quite have the power to cope with the complexity at this stage. Likely to build up middle palate with bottle age. From the Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria. (\$50.00) *Recommended*

2010 Mermerus Pinot Noir A fresh, fragrant Bellarine Peninsula pinot noir with reasonable fruit weight. The vegetal overtones are a little too prominent. (\$25.00) *Recommended*

2005 Clemens Hill Pinot Noir Certainly shows its age in colour, nose and palate, but retains attractively sweet fruit. Just starting to dry out on the finish. (\$N/A) *Recommended*

In the medallion taste-off, the Riposte edged out the 2009 Paringa Estate and the Shaw + Smith.