



WINEWISE

THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE

May 2013



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The 2013 Winewise Championship – Shiraz

After the appetisers and entrées we finally reach the main course - forty-eight of the top shiraz, as seen by wine show judges all over Australia. This session allowed us to absorb the vast number of guises assumed by shiraz in Australia. The differences in style also made assessment a challenge. Here's how it all unfolded.

GROUP 1

2009 Saltram No.1 Shiraz This esteemed wine was a clear winner, picking up three first and two second votes from the five judges. Its richness is matched by freshness, and the oak folds in very nicely with the with the intense, clearly defined varietal characteristics. Cellar 5-10 years at least. (Not yet released)
Outstanding

2006 Rojomoma Red Art Shiraz Genuine Barossa flavour with a touch of elegance – that's the story here. Dark berry, spice and oak characteristics intermingle to produce an impressive shiraz that has years ahead of it. (\$N/A) ***Highly Recommended***

2009 Henry's Drive Reserve Shiraz A powerful, bright Padthaway shiraz with a little bit of mint, and real mouthfilling quality. The oak shows at the moment, but will integrate, given time. (\$60.00) ***Highly Recommended***

2009 Serafino Sharktooth Shiraz This wine certainly delivers in terms of fruit and freshness, but the oak is a little too obtrusive. (\$70.00) ***Recommended***

2009 Schuetz Family Reserve Mudgee Black Syrah Shows signs of fading, and there's a slight herbal overtone together with a fairly hard finish. (\$22.50) ***Agreeable***

2009 Huntington Estate Special Reserve Shiraz Very firm and dry. (Not yet released) ***Agreeable***

GROUP 2

2009 Winburndale Solitary Shiraz Another runaway group winner, with four first-place votes. It's classic cool area Australian shiraz, showing fresh blackberry aromas and flavours together with suggestions of black pepper and powdered spices. The fine, firm tannins and beautifully handled oak complete an impressive picture. A landmark wine from Bathurst, NSW. Don't miss it. (\$30.00) ***Outstanding***
<http://www.winburndalewines.com.au/>

2009 Saltram Journal Shiraz This multi-layered shiraz is clearly made for cellaring. It's quite closed and solid at the moment, and shows its oak. However there's an amazing core of fruit that will come into its own as the years (decades!) pass. (\$175.00) ***Highly Recommended***

2009 3 Oceans Wine Company Vita Novus Shiraz The colour is fairly light and the white pepper aromas reflect this wine's relatively cool Frankland River origins. Fine tannins balance a long palate with red berry flavour and herbal notes. (\$35.00) *Recommended*

2009 Sons of Eden Romulus Shiraz A big, purple, mulberry style of shiraz that is packed with flavour. Traditional Barossa. (\$50.00) *Recommended*

2009 Blue Pyrenees Estate Reserve Shiraz This is an attractive, plummy style of shiraz with plenty of simple flavour. (\$32.00) *Recommended*

GROUP 3

2009 Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Shiraz It doesn't matter who is on the panel, the Shaw + Smith Shiraz nearly always rises to the top. This was a close contest, but the dark cherry, blackberry and rose petal aromas and flavours shone brightly to see it into first spot. The oak handling is exemplary and the tannins are very fine. (\$36.00) *Outstanding*
http://www.bellevuehillbottleshop.com.au/red_wine/sort_by_name/page_27

2009 Sons of Eden Remus Shiraz A rich, powerful shiraz which is crammed with blackberry varietal character and has a whiff of spice on the nose. This isn't simply a big wine. It has been skilfully finessed in every department. Cellar. (\$52.00) *Outstanding*
Contact

2009 Xanadu Margaret River Shiraz Lightish colour. Quite oaky for its fruit weight, but has length and is still very fresh. (\$28.00) *Recommended*

2009 Chalkers Crossing Hilltops Shiraz Surprisingly, this wine showed lean and peppery, with a clove-like overtone. (\$30.00) *Agreeable*

2009 Evans and Tate Redbrook Shiraz A drying, oaky finish tends to dominate the fruit. (\$43.00) *Agreeable*

GROUP 4

2010 Honey Moon Vineyard Adelaide Hills Shiraz A very seductive dark cherry/berry shiraz with lashings of spice. The palate balance is very good, and the freshness and acidity are impressive. (Not yet released) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Eden Road Gundagai Shiraz The complexity of this wine is the key to its success. There are hints of charcuterie-like reduction which add an extra dimension to the dark cherry fruit. The palate is fine and long. (\$25.00) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Provenance Geelong Shiraz Certainly interesting, but doesn't have quite the fruit weight to carry the funky complexity. (\$32.00) *Recommended*

2010 Amelia Park Reserve Shiraz Has good varietal fruit, but is too oaky. (\$24.50) *Recommended*

2010 Wicks Estate Shiraz Shows good fruit, but sulphidic elements are a little too pronounced. (\$20.00) *Recommended*

2010 Eden Road Hilltops Shiraz Light colour. Advanced, simple. (\$40.00) *Acceptable*

2010 Printhe Mt Canobolas Collection Shiraz Screwcap and all, this wine opened as only a shadow of its normal self. (\$31.00)

GROUP 5

2010 Wolf Blass Grey Label Shiraz Bright, deep, purple colour. This is a truly opulent red that luxuriates in its richness and silky tannins. Oak plays a role, but is well handled, contributing to the display of aromas and flavours. (\$29.00) *Outstanding*
https://www.1stchoice.com.au/Red%20Wine/wolf-blass-grey-label-shiraz-750ml-2010_574327

2010 Brands Laira Tall Vine Coonawarra Shiraz Here's a classy, spicy shiraz with intense red berry flavours, good acidity and fine tannins. It's a top-class example of variety and region. This is further evidence of the great resurgence of a famous Coonawarra label.
(Not yet released, but the 2009 is around \$25.00) *Outstanding*

2010 Juniper Estate Margaret River Shiraz A fresh plummy, dark berry style with plenty of fruit and structure. It needs at least 2-3 years to open up, but is a top-quality wine. (Not yet released)
Highly Recommended

2010 Sanguine Estate Heathcote Shiraz This is a very spicy shiraz that is packed with red fruits flavour, but the oak is just a little too prominent at this stage. (\$39.95) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Tinklers Vineyard U + I Hunter Valley Shiraz Fresh and simple, but just lacks some intensity. (\$35.00) *Recommended*

2010 Pokolbin Estate Reserve Shiraz It was clearly not a good time to taste this wine. It's in a closed, developmental stage, and looked firm and awkward in this line-up. It needs several years. (\$45.00) *Recommended*

2010 Malone Wrattenbully Shiraz The colour is comparatively light, and the nose and palate are tarry and oaky. (\$29.00)
Agreeable

The top two wines tied on points and went through to a taste off of the best of groups 4-6.

GROUP 6

2010 Rojomoma Red Art Barossa Valley Shiraz This is a fresh, tightly-packed Barossa shiraz with powerful blackberry aromas and flavours. It certainly needs time to soften the tannins, but the quality shines through brightly. (Can be purchased from the winery as part of a shiraz mixed dozen - \$380 per doz) **Highly Recommended**

2010 Fox Gordon Hannah's Swing Barossa Valley Shiraz It's certainly not mainstream Barossa, but this shiraz is packed full of interest. There's a fascinating savoury, charcuterie character about it; the palate is long and the tannins are very fine. It's not a huge wine (the alcohol is shown as 13.9%), but it's intense, very satisfying and will reward cellaring. (\$45.00) **Highly Recommended**

2010 Wynns Black Label Coonawarra Shiraz The dark berry fruit and supple tannins are impressive. The oak shows out at the moment. Give it a little time. (\$29.00) **Highly Recommended**

2010 Wolf Blass Gold Label Barossa Valley Shiraz A big, dense, concentrated wine with tannins to match. Definitely needs time. (\$26.00) **Recommended**

2010 First Creek Wines Winemakers Reserve Shiraz A fresh, but straightforward red fruits style. Shows some oak. (\$N/A) **Recommended**

2010 Eden Road The Long Road Shiraz A lean, leafy, white pepper shiraz. Lacks flesh. (\$26.00) **Acceptable**

2010 Tinklers Vineyard Shiraz Viognier Very light. Too much oak. (\$25.00) **Acceptable**

Another tie. The top two went through to the taste-off.

TASTE-OFF 1

Support was spread, but the Brands Laira prevailed.

2010 Brands Laira Tall Vine Coonawarra Shiraz

2010 Honey Moon Vineyard Adelaide Hills Shiraz

2010 Fox Gordon Hannah's Swing Barossa Valley Shiraz

2010 Rojomoma Red Art Barossa Valley Shiraz

2010 Wolf Blass Grey Label Shiraz

GROUP 7

2011 Voyager Estate Margaret River Shiraz Great vibrant colour. The richness and spiciness of this wine certainly capture the attention, and the fineness of the palate is equally impressive. This is a delicious shiraz that is remarkably easy to drink, but it has such depth, intensity and balance that it will age well. (Not yet released, but expected to be in the \$30-\$40 range) **Outstanding**

2011 Evans & Tate Margaret River Classic Shiraz A rich dark berry style with a hint of spice and a hint of reduced character that added or detracted, depending on the judge. Excellent young drinking. (\$13.00) **Highly Recommended**

2011 Smallwater Estate Shiraz (Geographe, W.A.) Has plenty of power, but is a bit raw and tannic. Needs time to soften. (\$22.00) **Recommended**

2011 Printhe MCC Shiraz Fresh, but slightly light. Shows some white pepper and oak. (Not yet released) **Recommended**

2011 Eden Road Canberra Shiraz Very light and vegetal, reflecting the wet vintage. (\$50.00) **Acceptable**

2011 Twisted River Wines Shiraz Very weak colour and flavour. Vegetal. (\$18.00)

GROUP 8

2011 Mandoon Old Vine Shiraz In this Swan Valley shiraz we have it all – ripe varietal character, richness and balance. The intense blackberry flavours are supported by fine, lingering tannins on a long palate. (\$19.50) **Outstanding**
<http://www.mandoonestate.com.au/shop/2011-old-vine-shiraz/>

2011 Rosemount Estate Balmoral Syrah The blackberry aromas and flavours are fresh and intense, and the palate delivers a satisfying, lingering finish. It's not a huge wine, but it still needs a few years in bottle. (\$75.00) **Highly Recommended**

2011 Galli Estate Camelback Shiraz A fresh, spicy red fruits style that drinks well, but is a little light. (\$20.00) **Recommended**

2011 Jamiesons Run Limestone Coast Shiraz Fresh and varietal, but on the simple side. (\$15.00) **Recommended**

2011 Sanguine Estate Progeny Shiraz A light, white-peppery style. (\$21.00) **Agreeable**

TASTE-OFF 2

The gloves were off, and the two 2011 Western Australian reds squared off. It couldn't have been any closer. The Mandoon came out on top by three votes to two.

FINAL FINISHING ORDER

2009 Winburndale Solitary Shiraz
2010 Brands Laira Tall Vine Coonawarra Shiraz
2009 Saltram No.1 Shiraz
2011 Mandoon Old Vine Shiraz
2009 Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Shiraz

It is well worth noting that the 2008 Winburndale Solitary Shiraz filled second place last year, making this year's win even more meritorious.

The 2013 Winewise Championship – Grenache & blends

Many wine drinkers don't give grenache a thought, and they are the ones missing out on some great tasting experiences. We can understand people eschewing grenache if their only experiences have been of the hot, alcoholic confection-like styles, but there is much more to grenache than that. Some poor souls with romantic notions call grenache the "pinot noir of the Mediterranean," but we feel that's going a little too far. However, grenache, particularly when teamed with shiraz and/or mourvèdre (mataro) often delivers the goods in terms of young reds that are made to drink with gusto rather than sip. We've found, not surprisingly, that grenache-based wines partner Mediterranean lamb dishes from France, Italy, Turkey and north Africa very well. Give them some thought when you're contemplating that sort of dish.

GRENAACHE BLENDS



2011 Rosemount Estate GSM Young grenache blends don't get much better than this. It's bright and intense, with plummy, spicy red berry overtones. The tannins are beautifully balanced and fine. Thoroughly enjoyable now, but likely to be even better in a couple of years. (\$45.00) *Outstanding*

2010 Sons of Eden Kennedy GSM It took an exceptional wine to top this one. Unquestionably gold medal standard, it shows red berry, licorice and spice, and the palate is suitably firm. Classy. (\$N/A) *Outstanding*

2011 Rosemount Estates Nursery Project GMG (Graciano Mataro Grenache) A fragrant, spicy wine with plenty of structure. It needs time to soften, but is highly likely to deliver the goods over time. (\$29.95) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Naked Run The Aldo Grenache Shiraz A big, dense wine that is very ripe and plummy. Lacks finesse. *Agreeable*

GRENACHE

2010 Rosemount Nursery Project Grenache This is a vibrant, full-on grenache that is simply bursting with flavour. However, it manages not to stray into the dreaded plum jam or Turkish delight territory. It leans more to raspberry, and the palate has length and structure. (\$29.95) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Yangarra Estate Vineyard Grenache Very fresh and raspberry-scented, with a positive earthy overtone typical of McLaren Vale grenache. Needs only a year or two in bottle. (\$25.00) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Wirra Wirra Absconder Grenache An attractive, fruit-driven style with an appealing savoury edge. It's by no means heavy on the palate, and offers raspberry-like flavour with a balanced, dry finish. (\$60.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Yalumba Barossa Bush Vine Grenache Fresh, bright and savoury, but simply outgunned by the powerful opposition from the Vale. Good drinking now in a lighter style. (\$17.00) *Recommended*

The 2011 Rosemount Estate GSM took the medallion easily, demonstrating just how good it is. Its recent wine show record is very impressive, and its quality speaks volumes for the Rosemount McLaren Vale team.

JIM CHATTO APPOINTED McWILLIAM'S CHIEF WINEMAKER

McWilliam's Wines has announced the appointment of Jim Chatto to the role of McWilliam's Chief Winemaker, based at Mount Pleasant in the Hunter Valley. Jim has become the fourth Chief Winemaker to be based at Mount Pleasant since Maurice O'Shea established the Hunter Valley winery in 1921.

Jim's appointment will see him responsible for the winemaking and stylistic direction of all McWilliam's wines across its Australian portfolio, and follows the retirement of Phil Ryan in 2012. Jim will be working with the key Senior Winemakers at each site and he joins the team following time spent as a consultant with McWilliam's throughout the 2013 vintage.

The 2013 Winewise Championship – Cabernet “Bordeaux” blends

They do it in Bordeaux, therefore we had to do it in Australia. That was the attitude 30-40 years ago. As is usually the case, blind pursuit of things French in Australia is often doomed to failure. Young vines, wrong clones, and inappropriate sites all mitigated against Australian-grown cabernet sauvignon working effectively with Australian-grown merlot.

As usual, there was a steady evolution in both thought and practice. Not surprisingly the regions which proved most successful with the blend are those with the closest affinity to Bordeaux – Margaret River and the Limestone Coast.

However, the Rosemount Estate Traditional proved in this tasting that, when conditions are favourable in the maritime region of McLaren Vale, the same magic can occur.

Best value wines shown in **purple**.

GROUP 1

2011 Rosemount Estate Traditional This wine packs plenty of punch, and is as vibrant as anyone would expect such a young wine to be. The nose shows hints of summer pudding, blackcurrant and leaf, all of which carry through to a palate enhanced by nicely toasted oak. (\$20.00) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Brands Laira Coonawarra August Tide The deep purple colour, firm structure and intensity of this wine suggest that cellaring is essential. It's packed with plums and blackcurrants. Worth waiting for. (\$28.00) *Highly Recommended*

2011 Knotting Hill Margaret River Cabernet Merlot The rich red fruits aromas and flavours are impressively fresh, but there's an overlay of oak that needs time to settle in. We're confident that time is all this wine needs. (Not yet released) *Highly Recommended*

2009 Smith & Hooper Wrattobully Cabernet Merlot Although this wine is the oldest in the bracket, the colour is too advanced. That development is reflected on the herbal-minty nose and the comparatively lean palate. (\$18.00) *Agreeable*

GROUP 2



2010 Mandoon Margaret River Cabernet Merlot Mandoon is clearly a producer to watch (the 2011 Shiraz distinguished itself as well). This is a very well made red that shows the classic cabernet blackcurrant. The mid palate is fresh and generous, and the tannins are fine and persistent. (\$21.50) *Highly Recommended*

2009 Voyager Estate Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot Style-wise this wine leans to the Médoc, right down to the fairly pronounced leafiness. However, the palate certainly isn't green, and the flavour follows through on a satisfying finish. (\$52.00) *Highly Recommended*

2010 South By Southwest Margaret River Cabernet Merlot The firm structure of this wine begs for some time to soften. Intense plummy, red fruits flavours match the tannins. A very good regional style. (\$24.95) *Highly Recommended*

2011 West Cape Howe Western Australia Cabernet Merlot This is a very impressive young wine which shows blackcurrant and red fruits. There's a hint of toasty oak, and the tannins are polished and fine. (\$17.00) *Highly Recommended*

2010 Singlefile Margaret River Cabernet Merlot The colour looks a little advanced in this line-up, and the aromas and flavours, although showing clear-cut cabernet characteristics, are a little forward as well. Short term. (\$37.00) *Recommended*

2011 Evans & Tate Margaret River Classic Cabernet Merlot Lacks the intensity to compete strongly here, and is decidedly herbal and leafy. (\$16.00) *Agreeable*

The taste-off between the Rosemount and the Mandoon was another close one, but the finesse of the latter edged out the precociousness of the McLaren Vale challenger.

The 2013 Winewise Championship – Red Varietals other than Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Shiraz, Tempranillo & Italian Red

It can be difficult to judge one red varietal against another. In this case the judges were told what varieties were in each group, and the age spread of the wines. We consider these “other” varieties to be important because a lot of work remains to be done, from planting in appropriate sites, to viticultural practices and winemaking techniques.

We admire wine producers such as those below because they are putting serious effort into the “other” varietals and making wines of genuine interest. A couple of years ago we decided that merlot didn't rate a class of its own, and our patience with tempranillo is being tried. Tempranillo is likely to join this group next year following a less than thrilling performance.

GROUP 1

2011 Rosemount Nursery McLaren Vale Mataro This wine is a real attention-grabber. It simply bursts with fresh dark red fruits aroma and flavour. Although it's already approachable, the tannins still need at least a year or two to soften. We're glad serious attention is being given to mataro (mourvèdre). (\$29.95) ***Highly Recommended***

2006 Scion Vineyard Rutherglen Durif Here we have a very well made durif. At seven years of age it retains excellent colour and is as fresh as the proverbial daisy. The aroma and flavour hint at ripe plums and there's a firm, but not overbearing tannin structure. (\$N/A) ***Highly Recommended***

2008 Rutherglen Estates Durif Just beginning to show some bottle-developed character in terms of cedar and freshly-tilled earth. Although there's still plenty of fresh flavour, the structure is very firm. (\$21.95) ***Recommended***

2009 Lowe Wines Mudgee Zinfandel There's no doubting the pronounced “Zin” raspberry varietal character, but the finish is very firm indeed. (Sold out) ***Recommended***

2010 Morgan Simpson Wines Plan B McLaren Vale Mataro It looked better at the Small Vignerons Awards, but high alcohol is making its hot, prune-like presence felt. (\$18.00) ***Recommended***

GROUP 2



Owner Ewan McPherson & winemaker Mike Hayes of Symphony Hill

2009 Symphony Hill Reserve Petit Verdot Right from the brilliant deep colour to the lingering finish, this Granite Belt (Qld.) wine impressed everybody. It shows characteristics of plum and leaf on the very fresh nose and palate, and the finish is firm and balanced. Australia's best petit verdot yet? Most probably. (\$45.00)
Highly Recommended

2010 Smith & Hooper Wratonbully Reserve Merlot This is a stylish merlot. Red fruits and leaf merge to create a very elegant, fine red, although it needs more middle palate to excel. (\$N/A)
Recommended

2010 Majella Coonawarra Merlot More plummy, more leafy than the Smith & Hooper. Pleasant drinking now. (\$32.00)
Recommended

2010 Mansfield Touriga Nacional Very weak colour followed up by nose and palate. Disappointing. (\$18.00) ***Agreeable***

The wines that topped each group locked horns in an absorbing final. By four first places to two, the Symphony Hill triumphed, doing Queensland proud.

Reports on the remaining Championship classes will be sent as part of our regular service. They will also appear in our July electronic issue.