WINEWISE

THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE

March 2015

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WINEWISE CHAMPIONSHIP

The Winewise Championship has allowed us to produce a detailed snapshot of the premium quality wine market in Australia. This riesling bulletin is the first of several parts of that snapshot.

About the Championship

To qualify for the Championship, a wine must have been awarded a gold medal at any of the following shows in the preceding twelve months:

Adelaide Hills Wine Show
Australian Alternative Varieties Wine Show
Barossa Wine Show
Canberra Regional Wine Show
Clare Valley Wine Show
Geelong Wine Show
Gippsland Wine Show
Hunter Valley Wine Show
International Riesling Challenge
International Sweet White Challenge
Langhorne Creek Wine Show
Limestone Coast Wine Show
Margaret River Wine Show
McLaren Vale Wine Show
Mornington Peninsula Vignerons Wine Show
Mudgee Wine Show
National Cool Climate Wine Show
National Wine Show
New England Wine Show (Incl. Granite Belt, Qld.)
New South Wales Wine Awards
Orange Region Wine Show
Tasmanian Wine Show
Victorian Wines Show
Wine Show of Western Australia
Yarra Valley Wine Show

Strong support from producers large and small meant that 437 wines were judged in the Championship. They were assessed in groups no larger than six by five judges over four days. The judging panel varied from day to day. Participating judges were:

Lex Howard	Winewise Magazine
Tim James	Dawson & James
Lester Jesberg	Winewise Magazine
Tim Kirk	Clonakilla
Nick O'Leary	Nick O'Leary Wines
Deb Pearce	Winewise Magazine
Chris Shanahan	Canberra Times
Nick Spencer	Eden Road Wines
David Yeates	Winewise Magazine

Unfortunately James Halliday was forced to withdraw because of book-publishing deadlines.

RIESLING

In this tasting riesling puts up its hand for the title of Australia's best white varietal. Although South Australia holds sway numerically, Victoria and Western Australia deliver ★★★★★ wines. New South Wales also gets close with the unique 2007 Pokolbin Estate Riesling. As you'll see, exceptional value is a recurring theme.

Best value wines in **red**.

2014

★★★★★

2014 Peter Lehmann H & V Eden Valley Riesling This is a richly flavoured, beautifully balanced riesling that is both floral and limey, with a beguiling hint of aniseed. Lively acidity drives the long finish. Drink now to 2018. ($22.00)
http://peterlehmannwines.com/buy.html

2014 Peter Lehmann Wigan Eden Valley Riesling Here we have both intensity and delicacy. Restraint is the key word in this perfumed long-flavoured riesling with linear acidity. It will remain in the cellars for a few years before release and is the epitome of the Eden Valley style. (Not yet released)

2014 Pikes The Merle Clare Valley Riesling Now we have the epitome of Clare Valley riesling. It's packed with fresh limey goodness backed by mouth-watering acidity, and has considerable cellaring potential – a decade or more. ($40.00)
http://www.boccaccio.com.au/buy/pikes-the-merle-riesling-2014/LQ506045

2014 Seppelt Drumborg Vineyard Riesling One of Australia's classic rieslings again delivers the goods. It's a compact, intense citrus style in which the steely acidity is perfectly balanced by a hint of residual sugar. However the finish is long and dry. Cellar as long as you like. ($29.95)
http://canterburywines.net/Categories/Riesling.htm

2014 Kerrigan + Berry Mt Barker Great Southern Riesling Bearing the names of winemakers Michael Kerrigan and Gavin Berry, both of whom have helped write chapters of Western Australian wine history, this riesling has established itself as one of Australia's best. The 2014 vintage is a riesling purist's dream, being floral, intense, long and dry. ($30.00)
http://www.hayshedhill.com.au/view/cellar-new

2014 Vickery Watervale Riesling This new label does justice to the illustrious name (John Vickery) that it carries. A restrained riesling that is blessed with the lime juice character of Clare. It's packed with flavour supported by lively acidity and is very enjoyable now but will take a few years in bottle. ($20.00)
http://www.eastendcellars.com.au/category-list/white-wine/vickery-riesling-2014-252516.html

2014 Jaeschkes Hill River Clare Estate Riesling We couldn't believe the price of this wine, so we had to check with the producer. This amazing bargain is richly limey in aroma and flavour, with delightful acid freshness. The essence of Clare. Stock up! ($120 per dozen)
http://www.hillriverclareestate.com.au/order-form/

★★★★

2014 Heemskerk Coal River Riesling An aromatic grapefruity riesling with some residual sugar well balanced by typical Tasmanian acid. In fact the acid provides structure and considerable drive to the long dry finish. It should age very slowly. ($34.00)

2014 Pikes Traditionale Clare Valley Riesling This is a very limey, richly-flavoured wine backed up by good acidity. It's Clare through and through. Drink now and over the next 2-3 years. ($17.70)
http://www.winestar.com.au/pikes-clare-valley-riesling-2014

2014 Peter Lehmann Portrait Eden Valley Riesling Rich, varietal and mouth-filling, finishing with freshness. The drinking window opens shortly. (Not yet released but should be under $20.00)

2014 Gilberts Mt Barker Riesling The Small Vigneron Awards winner acquits itself well in hot company. It's a pure, fragrant, dry riesling with length and elegance. ($22.00)
http://www.gilbertwines.com.au/wines.aspx?_ItemType=2

2014 Riposte The Scimitar Clare Riesling The regional imprint on this rich limey riesling is strong. It certainly delivers plenty of flavour and is beginning to reveal what it's all about. ($18.95)
http://www.huntforwine.com.au/white-wine/riesling/adelaide-hills-sa/riposte-scimitar-riesling-2014/

2014 Crabtree Watervale Riesling This is a rich lime juice style that is lively, aromatic and a pleasure to drink right now. ($19.95)
http://www.mycellars.com.au/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=1375&utm_source=winesearcher&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=March

★★★

2014 DiGiorgio Family Wines Kongorong Riesling A fascinating wine with complex aromatics reminiscent of some German rieslings. The palate is long, with low-level residual sugar balanced by acidity. ($19.00)

2014 Wirra Wirra The Lost Watch Adelaide Hills Riesling Lemons and limes show out in the aromatics, together with a grassy hint. A flavoursome, well balanced, short-term riesling. ($22.00)

2014 Mount Majura Vineyard Riesling This Canberra District riesling shows the typical lemony characteristics of the region and is well balanced. Good short-term drinking. ($27.00)

2014 Taylors Wines St Andrews Clare Valley Riesling The aromatics are citrus-like, with hints of hay. There's good intensity here, and the hay-like characteristics persist on a satisfying palate. ($35.00)

2014 Jeir Creek Riesling A fairly forward wine offering stone fruit aromas and flavours. It's fresh, balanced and ready to drink. ($25.00)

2014 Capital Wines Gundaroo Vineyard Riesling Quite reserved and fresh. Has some lemon blossom aromatics, but lacks the fruit intensity to match it with the top wines. ($28.00)

2014 Robert Stein Mudgee Reserve Riesling There's a touch of orange peel in the aroma, but it's not excessive. However, this richly flavoured wine is coming forward fairly quickly. ($50.00)

★★

2014 Naked Run Wines The First Clare Valley Riesling Definitely varietal, but it's developing quickly. Drink now. ($19.00)

2014 Carillion Wines Orange Riesling Quite forward, with stone fruit and tropical aromas and flavours. Ready. ($25.00)

2014 Bird in Hand Honeysuckle Riesling A little dull and biscuity, with obvious residual sugar. ($25.00)

2014 Gippsland Wine Company St Helier Vineyard Riesling An "out there" riesling showing complex funky sulphides on the nose. The palate, with a touch of residual sugar and balanced acidity, saves the day. ($28.00)

2014 Ferngrove Cossack Frankland River Riesling Surprisingly developed, showing kerosene overtones. ($23.00)

The wines of the 2014 vintage impressed us. However we counsel you to shop carefully if you seek wines to put away for more than two or three years. If you're looking for shorter term wines it's riesling paradise.

We pointed out some cellaring specials in the reviews but we'll mention them again – Pikes The Merle, Seppelt Drumborg, Kerrigan + Berry and Heemskerk Coal River – four different styles from four different states.

2013

★★★★★

MEDALLION WINNER

2013 Richmond Grove Limited Release Watervale Riesling Young dry riesling doesn't come much better than this. It's delicate, perfumed, intense, long and precise. What's more, the cellaring potential is considerable. ($18.50)
https://www.crackawines.com.au/product/2013-richmond-grove-limited-release-watervale-riesling

2013 Jacob's Creek Steingarten Riesling A very pure, floral Eden Valley riesling that lives up to its lofty reputation. It's wonderfully intense and linear, built for a long cellaring life. ($30.00)
https://www.crackawines.com.au/product/2013-jacobs-creek-steingarten-riesling

2013 Howard Park Great Southern Riesling This is a very elegant yet powerful riesling with faint complex enhancements of orange peel and aniseed. The palate is a delight – long and satisfying, with structural acidity. ($25.00)
http://www.graysonline.com/retail/hopgsrie613/wine/howard-park-riesling-2013?spr=true?partnerer

★★★★

2013 Paulett Antonina Polish Hill Riesling A very appealing rich limey expression of the Clare Valley. It's a wine of power and balance that will definitely benefit from cellaring. (Not available)

2013 Catlin Wine Co Clare Valley Dry Grown Riesling There's a touch of development but the intensity of fruit is impressive, as is the restraint. Enjoyable drinking now in the dry reserved style. ($30.00)

2013 Tim Adams Clare Valley Riesling Here's a riesling that is really yet to open up and reveal itself. The nose is very fresh, showing hints of lime and the palate is dry and linear. ($18.00)
http://www.winestar.com.au/tim-adams-riesling-2013

2013 Loom Long Yarn Eden Valley Riesling Although showing a touch of development, this wine provides very enjoyable drinking in a full flavoured style. It's fresh and delicious. ($15.00)

★★★

2013 Tar & Roses Lewis Riesling A riesling with plenty of stone fruit flavour. Pleasant drinking now. ($21.95)

2013 Waterton Tasmania Riesling Quite developed. Seems to show some botrytis. Certainly interesting. ($27.00)

★★

2013 Tahbilk Riesling Shows obvious development but retains enough freshness for current drinking. ($16.95)

2013 Snake and Herring Teardrop Riesling A very big, forward riesling with buttery overtones. ($25.95)

Older

★★★★★

2010 Paulett's Aged Release Polish Hill River Riesling
This is a delightful wine that combines the best of both maturity and youth. Lime and toast aromas presage a brilliant regional palate of great length and balance. (Not yet available) **MEDALLION WINNER**

2012 Jacob's Creek Steingarten Riesling There's a strong resemblance to the equally good 2013 Steingarten in that it's the essence of varietal purity and restraint. Another classic Eden Valley riesling with a long life ahead of it. ($24.00)
http://www.jimscellars.com.au/_product/view-product/jacobs-creek-steingarten-riesling?id=a7c9ed083c2e36887a602c04f6f5f0b5&key=1nESC2&sessid=61b4b720a0a0910ad8bc6f747ac8a619

2009 Peter Lehmann Wigan Eden Valley Riesling This is the current release of the Wigan which has quickly risen to AA status in the Australian wine lexicon. It's amazingly undeveloped and would pass for a much younger wine, showing very reserved floral aromas. The palate is long and fine, finishing with lingering acidity. It may seem odd to recommend a six year old riesling for cellaring, but we certainly do. ($28.00) http://www.winestar.com.au/peter-lehmann-wigan-riesling-2009

★★★★

2012 Peter Lehmann Wigan Eden Valley Riesling This wine is beginning to show some form in that the first elements of toasty maturity enhance the fresh intense florals. It's a very fine, stylish riesling that should be drinking beautifully when it's released in a couple of years. (Not yet available)

2007 Pokolbin Estate Hunter Valley Riesling We've previously reported on the Pokolbin Estate rieslings, and we hope the showing of this wine against Australia's elite convinces any doubters. It displays some honeyed maturity, but is full of life and varietal character. The palate is enlivened by clean acidity. ($28.00)
https://www.pokolbinestate.com.au/product-category/wines/riesling/

2012 Paulett's Aged Release Polish Hill River Riesling We've described Neil Paulett's rieslings as classics of Clare, and this wine is a good example why. Needless to say, limes are present in profusion and the lip-smacking acidity makes it a wine to wait for. (Not yet available)

2009 Pikes Traditonale Clare Valley Riesling The opulence and balance of this wine make it a real drink-now gem. Limey Clare flavour merges beautifully with a faint honeyed overtone and the acid-fresh finish is a winner. ($22.00)
http://www.tonyscellars.com.au/products/Pikes-Clare-Valley-Riesling.html

★★★

2009 Paulett's Aged Release Polish Hill River Riesling A rich, mature, honeyed riesling that is ready to drink. ($50.00)

2012 Naked Run Place in Time Clare Valley Riesling Full flavoured, showing citrus rind overtones. Drink now. (Not available)

2**009 Forbes & Forbes Cellar Matured Eden Valley Riesling** Mature but drinking quite well. Just a little lean on the finish. ($32.00)

2012 Waterton Tasmania Riesling Appears strongly botrytis-affected, but offers powerful stone fruit flavours with good acidity and some phenolic grip. A quirky wine. ($27.00)

★★

2006 Koonowla Clare Valley Riesling Deep colour. Fully mature. Just starting to dry out. (Not available)

2011 Half Moon Braidwood Riesling Shows a little residual sugar balanced by acidity. A slight cheesiness on the nose detracts somewhat. ($19.50)

There are so many outstanding wines under $30.00 in this line-up that it's almost an insult to one of the world's great wine grapes, but don't let that deter you. Now's the time to buy.

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WINEWISE CHAMPIONSHIP

PINOT NOIR

If there were any doubts that pinot noir had come of age in Australia they were dispelled by this group of wines. Two southern Tasmanians, one Mornington Peninsula and one Yarra Valley came out on top of a very strong group of wines with few weaknesses. There was very little between the top four, all of which have distinguished themselves in wine shows.

★★★★★

2012 Home Hill Estate Tasmania Pinot Noir A very impressive pinot noir in which the intense dark cherry aromas and flavours are enhanced by a suggestion of whole bunch complexity. The palate delivers everything we seek – intensity, balance, fineness and length. ($35.00) **MEDALLION WINNER**
http://www.nicks.com.au/2012-home-hill-estate-pinot-noir

2013 Montalto Main Ridge Block Pinot Noir This is a real Côte de Nuits style in terms of its structure and restraint. The firm, fine palate is crammed with dark cherry flavour. Cellar 3-5 years and allow this excellent wine to blossom. ($65.00) **MEDALLION WINNER**
http://montalto.com.au/product/main-ridge-block-pinot-noir/

2013 Dawson and James Pinot Noir This is a single site wine from Meadowbank in the Derwent Valley of Tasmania. It's a powerful pinot with a faintly gamey whole bunch overtone. The palate is deliciously opulent, but both skin tannin and oak provide just-right structure. (Not yet released)

2013 Yabby Lake Block 2 Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir Another top class pinot noir with intensity, floral, faintly herbal complexity and a velvety mouthfeel. It's a wine of structure and impressive length that will definitely age gracefully. ($95.00 cellar door only)

★★★★

2013 Seville Estate Yarra Valley Pinot Noir This is a fragrantly impressive pinot noir in which the red berry varietal flavour is well matched to the oak. The long fine palate is a delight. ($36.00)

2013 3drops Great Southern Pinot Noir This raspberry and strawberry-scented pinot made our jaws drop when we found out what it was. It has excellent weight, length and structure, and is beginning to drink well. ($26.60)
http://www.wineswarehouse.com.au/3drops-pinot-noir-2013.html?__store=wineswarehouse&utm_source=clixgalore&utm_medium=aff&utm_campaign=direct_link

2012 Coldstream Hills The Esplanade Yarra Valley Pinot Noir A very fragrant pinot with a slightly herbal note. The tannins provide excellent structure but are not assertive. Given its balance and length of flavour, long term cellaring would not be a risk. ($45.00)

2013 Montalto Merricks Block Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir
This is a fascinating, complex wine reflecting some whole bunch input. There's plenty of enjoyment to be had here. Drink now – 2018. ($65.00)

2013 Montalto Pennon Hill Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir We can't recall this label ever disappointing. This vintage shows raspberry and strawberry varietal character with a complex hint of dried herbs. The palate is finely structured and delicious. ($30.00)
http://montalto.com.au/product/pennon-hill-pinot/

2013 Coldstream Hills Deer Farm Pinot Noir Although it's not as perfumed as some, this Coldstream Hills single vineyard wine has the freshness, weight and structure we look for in a cellaring style. It may not be a showy wine but it won't let you down. ($50.00)

2013 Home Hill Kelly's Reserve Pinot Noir Lester was mightily impressed with this wine on his recent visit to Home Hill. It was narrowly edged out in its group and didn't make the final, but it has the intense dark cherry flavour and firm structure to develop well in bottle. Definitely cellar for best results. ($60.00)

2013 T'Gallant Juno Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir A complex pinot with herbal overtones. It has entered its drinking window and offers plenty of flavour and length, all supported by firm, fine tannins. (Not available)

2013 Montalto Tuerong Block Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir
Fragrant and intense, with well-judged oak input. It's a powerful, fresh pinot with structure to match. Cellar for a few years. ($65.00)

2013 Balgownie Black Label Yarra Valley Pinot Noir If you're looking for a pinot to enjoy now and over the next twelve months, here's one to consider. Strawberry and dried herbs aromas and flavours abound in a wine with very good weight and structure. ($25.00)
http://www.balgownieestatewines.com.au/Wine---Gifts/Black-Label-Rang

★★★

2013 Coldstream Hills Reserve Pinot Noir There's brooding pinot density in abundance, but plenty of oak as well. This wine is probably going through an awkward phase. (Not available)

2012 De Bortoli Riorret Ponderosa Vineyard Pinot Noir The colour is browning, but there's plenty of flavour and complexity. On this showing it's a risky cellaring proposition. ($42.00)

2013 Thicket Hill Pinot Noir This is a special bottling for 9/11 bottle shops in Hobart. It certainly delivers more than ample strawberry varietal character backed by a good tannin structure. ($17.00)
http://gasworkscellardoor.com.au/61-pinot-noir?&p=7

2013 Seppelt Drumborg Vineyard Pinot Noir Comparatively pale colour. Plenty of undergrowth complexity for the slightly light fruit to cope with. Probably drinking at its best now. ($40.00)

2013 Coldstream Hills The Esplanade Yarra Valley Pinot Noir This wine is quite the opposite to the Drumborg, and was probably penalised for its size and unreadiness. It's a big, firm, oaky pinot that needs plenty of time. ($45.00)

2013 Paringa Estate Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir A strawberry/raspberry style that shows some oak. It's quite firm, but will benefit from 2-3 years' cellaring. ($57.00)

★★

2012 T'Gallant Tribute Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir Beginning to show development. It is drinking ok now, but doesn't appear to have much future. ($35.00)

2012 d'Arenberg The Feral Fox Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir A solid, four-square style of pinot with plenty of flavour but little finesse. ($30.00)

2013 Wicks Estate Pinot Noir Quite a solid pinot that, in character, is more dry red than varietal. ($20.00)

★

2013 Philip Shaw Wines No.8 Pinot Noir Browning colour. Forward and quite light. ($40.00)

2013 Silkwood Pemberton Pinot Noir Very weak colour. Herbal and light. ($28.00)

Tasmania and the Mornington Peninsula triumph this year, but we're sure the Yarra Valley will be back.

CHARDONNAY

Margaret River and Yarra Valley are two of the strongholds of Australian chardonnay, but neither produced the best chardonnay of the Winewise Championship. That honour went to the region centred on the idyllic coastal town of Denmark in south-west Western Australia.

Such was the quality of the chardonnays this year that any of about a dozen wines could have taken the major award, and we haven't mentioned the Mornington Peninsula or Adelaide Hills yet!

The strong message to come from this and the next couple of bulletins is to see top-end Australian chardonnay for what it is – world-class wine.

MARGARET RIVER

★★★★★

2013 Deep Woods Estate Reserve Chardonnay Power, restraint, texture and length of flavour are all features of this exceptional chardonnay. There's also a hint of funkiness to add to the already impressive toasted cashew complexity. Don't miss this one when it's released. (Not yet released)

2012 Juniper Estate Margaret River Chardonnay Mark Messenger of Juniper Estate has been making wines of excellence for a long time, but hasn't received the recognition he deserves. Two ★★★★★ chardonnays address that. The '12 excels through richness, texture and oak handling. This great package of flavour is as fresh as the proverbial daisy. ($34.00)
http://www.wineseek.com.au/products/14-chardonnay/1344-juniper-estate-chardonnay-2012/?bc=no

2013 Juniper Estate Margaret River Chardonnay A year less age shows in the tightness of structure and comparative reticence of this wine. However that doesn't mean the intensity and mouth-feel of the 2012 aren't there. They are – and the fresh acid finish suggests that the 2013 may even surpass the excellence of the 2012. ($33.25)
https://www.juniperestate.com.au/products

2011 Devil's Lair Icon Ninth Chamber Margaret River Chardonnay This is a wall to wall chardonnay packed with varietal flavour backed up by complexity and classy new oak. It's a fascinating drop with real presence and attractive bottle age character. ($75.00)
http://shop.devils-lair.com/index.cfm?method=storeproducts.showDrilldown&productid=9c189788-d3ed-bc8c-d0bd-4b62886478ea&SearchProductCategoryID=&OrderBy=PXPC.DisplayOrder%2520Asc%2C%2520P.Price1

★★★★

2013 Snake and Herring Corduroy Chardonnay A very fresh chardonnay which benefits from a whiff of funk. It's vibrant and creamy, with a lingering finish enlivened by acidity. (Not yet released)

2013 Voyager Estate Project 95 Broadvale Block 6 Margaret River Chardonnay The appealing white peach and grapefruit varietal aromas and flavours work well with the French oak. The fineness and length of palate are big quality factors. (Not yet released)

2013 Clairault Margaret River Chardonnay Attractively fresh, with a hint of citrus playing a part in the aromatics. A wine of impressive balance, texture and long flavour. ($38.00)

2013 Watershed Awakening Single Block A1 Margaret River Chardonnay This is a very fresh chardonnay with new oak input and appealing white peach flavour. All the components are there. They just need another year or two to harmonise. (Not yet released)

2013 Devil's Lair Icon Ninth Chamber Margaret River Chardonnay Very backward at the moment, but it's impossible to miss the quality. It will build in richness and complexity as it awaits its time in the sun. (Not yet released)

OTHER WESTERN AUSTRALIA

★★★★★

MEDALLION WINNER

2013 Singlefile Denmark Reserve Chardonnay This is a sublime chardonnay which came out on top over very strong opposition. It's a textural delight with seamless oak integration and prodigious length. If you can find some you're very fortunate. (Not available)

★★★★

2013 Howard Park Western Australia Chardonnay (52% Mount Barker, 39% Margaret River, 9% Porongurup) A delightfully creamy chardonnay with structure and length. The fruit is enhanced by a complex lees-derived nuttiness and very well handled oak. ($40.00)

YARRA VALLEY

★★★★★

2013 Seville Estate Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay Two stunning chardonnays from Seville Estate went within a whisker of the medallion. The 2013 is powerful, long and complex, with a firmness on the palate that contributes to structure and balance. It is clearly influenced by the great whites of Burgundy, but has an identity which is all its on. This is one of Australia's finest chardonnays. ($59.95)
http://www.mycellars.com.au/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=1371&utm_source=winesearcher&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=March

2012 Seville Estate Reserve Yarra Valley Chardonnay The 2012 is no less a wine, and shares a strong family bond with the 2013. Again structure and texture play strong roles, but it is freshness and intensity which really star. ($70.00)
http://www.sevilleestate.com.au/buy-online/

2012 Coldstream Hills Reserve Chardonnay Although the classy French oak shows through at the moment, the nose is packed with white peach fruit and nutty lees complexity. The palate is long, very well structured and clearly needs a couple of years to fully open up. ($55.00)
http://www.boccaccio.com.au/buy/coldstream-hills-reserve-chardonnay-2012/LQ506239

2012 Oakridge Local Vineyard Series Guerin Vineyard Chardonnay White peach and grapefruit are in abundance, with comparatively subtle oak and a fine talc-like texture. The palate finishes with a refreshing twist of acidity. ($36.00)
http://www.oakridgewines.com.au/PurchaseWine/Local_Vineyard_Series.aspx

2013 Coldstream Hills Deer Farm Chardonnay The white peach fruit on nose and palate is impressively fresh, and the palate is very taut and textured, showing excellent acidity. ($35.00)

2013 Oakridge Local Vineyard Series Barkala Ridge Chardonnay An intense, coiled up chardonnay showing a touch of struck match funkiness. The nutty, creamy palate is long and impressively fresh. (Not available)

2012 A. Rodda Willow Lake Yarra Valley Chardonnay This is a fresh, long-flavoured chardonnay with a hint of struck match adding complexity. The creamy palate texture contributes considerably to the enjoyment. ($36.00)
http://www.cloudwine.com.au/shop/white-wine/chardonnay/a-rodda-willow-lake-vineyard-chardonnay-2012

2009 Oakridge 864 Van der Meulen Vineyard Chardonnay This wine is now at the peak of its powers and was rewarded with the medallion for best older chardonnay. It's rich, complex, creamy-textured and still impressively fresh. (Not available) **MEDALLION WINNER**

★★★★

2012 De Bortoli Section A5 Yarra Valley Chardonnay A powerful, fresh and funky chardonnay showing excellent restraint and staying power. The finish is freshened by lively acidity. It will be even better in another 1-2 years. ($47.00)

2012 Oakridge 864 Chardonnay Funder & Diamond Drive Block This impressive chardonnay has its share of sulphidic funk, which won't appeal to everybody, but the intense varietal fruit carries it easily, and the long creamy palate is a joy. ($75.00)

2013 Seville Estate Yarra Valley Chardonnay The varietal white peach fruit is fresh and attractive, and the palate offers plenty of flavour and length as well as a lash of new oak. ($30.00)

2013 Coldstream Hills Reserve Chardonnay This wine is still a little closed and showing its oak. However there's no lack of fruit, acidity and texture. All that's required is some time in bottle. (Not yet released)

The lofty standard of the wines can be clearly seen. All are either five or four star ratings. The Mornington Peninsula, Bellarine Peninsula, Gippsland and Tasmania are next. Will they fare as well?

CHARDONNAY

MORNINGTON PENINSULA

★★★★★

2012 Montalto The Eleven Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay This single vineyard wine is simply busting with flavour. Powerful varietal white peach merges beautifully with cashew lees character and a lick of new oak. A cracking good chardonnay. ($60.00)
http://www.princewinestore.com.au/Product/tabid/60/511160/Montalto-The-Eleven-Vineyard-Chardonnay-2012

MONTALTO
VINEYARD & OLIVE GROVE

2013 Montalto Estate Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay
We were mightily impressed with this one too. The vibrant fruit is matched to nutty complexity and a whiff of funkiness. Very few chardonnays at this price deliver more on the palate. ($39.00)

★★★★

2012 Montalto Estate Mornington Peninsula Chardonnay A fresh white peach style with oak and nutty lees inputs. The palate has excellent texture and balance together with a fresh acid finish. (No longer available)

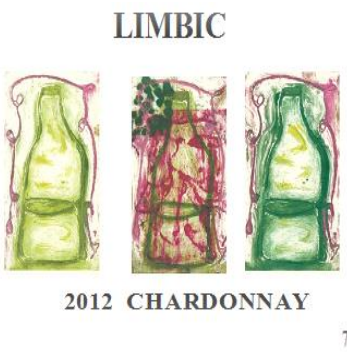
2013 Paringa Estate Chardonnay An intense white peach, nuts and butter style with a very creamy texture and structure partly contributed by oak. It's looking good now but another year in bottle will do no harm. ($35.00)

★★★

2012 Paringa Estate Chardonnay Richly flavoured and offering length and texture, but it's just a little too forward, and the oak is fairly prominent. ($38.00)

BELLARINE PENINSULA, PORT PHILLIP & GIPPSLAND

★★★★★



2012 Limbic Chardonnay Limbic winery is located at Pakenham Upper, about 10 km north-east of Cranbourne between the Mornington Peninsula to the south and Yarra Valley to the north. This is a very impressive chardonnay that unites white peach varietal flavour, lees complexity and oak seamlessly. It's beginning to drink well but is still on the rise. Don't miss this one. ($30.00) jenny@limbicwines.com.au

★★★★

2013 Cannibal Creek Chardonnay Very much a cool region (Gippsland) chardonnay in that the aromas tend towards grapefruit. There's some subtle lees input resulting in attractive complexity and palate texture. (Not yet released)

★★★

2013 Shadowfax Longest View Geelong Chardonnay There's a mountain of flavour here, backed up by a modicum of funkiness. This one is ready to drink now. ($25.00)

2011 Cannibal Creek Chardonnay Shows quite a bit of development, but there's no lack of varietal fruit backed by good acidity. ($32.00)

★★

2013 Clyde Park Single Block B3 Chardonnay Surprisingly developed in colour and flavour for its age. (Not yet released)

TASMANIA

★★★★

2011 Dawson & James Chardonnay A powerful, complex chardonnay that has developed well. The richness of flavour is supported by typical Tasmanian acidity. A stylish wine that is drinking well now. ($40.00)

2013 Dawson & James Chardonnay The intense yet restrained white peach aromas and flavours are supported by hints of cashew. Acidity drives the finish of a tight, impressive palate. (Not yet released)

★★

2013 Abel's Tempest Chardonnay Has good flavour and acidity, with a distinct sulphidic complexity on the nose. ($26.00)

WOLF BLASS YELLOW LABEL

I guess the number of cases of Yellow Label Chardonnay and Yellow Label Cabernet Sauvignon produced is in six figure territory. Any major producer can churn out wine in huge quantities, but to do so and achieve a more than respectable level of quality takes some doing. The quality:price ratio of both these wines is exceptional.

2014 Wolf Blass Yellow Label Chardonnay (Padthaway, Adelaide Hills) A lively, strongly varietal young chardonnay that reflects the modern Australian approach without straying too far into the field of complexity. There are subtle elements of oak and lees, and a fresh acid finish seals the deal. ★★★

2013 Wolf Blass Yellow Label Cabernet Sauvignon (Langhorne Creek, McLaren Vale) This is a very drinkable red that is unmistakeably varietal. The vibrant blackcurrant aroma carries hints of mint and leaf, and the tannins are very polished, balancing the satisfying flavour. ★★★

Recommended retail price for both wines is $16.00, but they should be available from the major retailers for anywhere between $10.00 and $15.00.

Lester Jesberg

CHARDONNAY

NEW SOUTH WALES

★★★★★

2011 Tyrrell's Old Vines Hunter Valley Chardonnay Made in very small quantity from vines planted in the original Tyrrell's chardonnay block in 1968, this is a landmark Hunter wine, and you will be very fortunate if you secure any. It's a chardonnay of great intensity, structure and balance, and we have no doubt that it will cellar very well indeed. (Not available)

2013 Tyrrell's Vat 47 Hunter Valley Chardonnay This is a richly flavoured chardonnay of great freshness and varietal character. The oak is low-key but adds positively to the structure of the palate. Lively acidity kicks in on the finish, and lingers with the strong chardonnay flavour. Cellar. ($58.50)
http://www.wineselectors.com.au/product/tyrre22113-tyrrells-vat-47-hunter-chardonnay-2013

★★★★

2013 Tyrrell's Belford Hunter Chardonnay The generous flavour of this chardonnay gives it immediate appeal, but there's much more to it than that. The creamy texture, length of flavour and acid balance definitely put it in gold medal territory and suggest that it will be showing at its best in 3-4 years. (Not yet available)

2013 Centennial Reserve Single Vineyard Chardonnay This wine from Orange came up against the eventual winner (Singlefile) in the first round of tasting and acquitted itself with distinction. The richness of flavour is impressive, and it carries the oak component well. The long, creamy palate is very seductive. It will be released shortly at an agreeable price and should drink very well for the next couple of years. (Not yet available)

2013 McLeish Estate Hunter Valley Chardonnay The flavour is mouthfilling, and the palate structure contains it very well, with nothing fat or overdone. Acidity also plays a key role in the long satisfying palate. (Not yet released)

2013 Eden Road Maragle Chardonnay This Tumbarumba chardonnay fought a brave battle against wines of greater substance, but the restrained grapefruit characteristics were outpointed by the riper, more peachy flavours of the higher-rated wines. There's an impressive spine of acidity in this wine, and the palate texture adds to the appeal. Cellar. ($50.00)

2013 Swinging Bridge Mrs Payton Chardonnay Here we have an impressive, richly flavoured chardonnay with a strong acid line running through it. The palate isn't as creamy and complex as some wines in this tasting, but the freshness and intense varietal fruit can't be denied. ($32.00)
http://www.swingingbridge.com.au/2013-swinging-bridge-mrs-payten-chardonnay/

2013 Burnbrae Mudgee Chardonnay This is a very restrained chardonnay which shows grapefruit varietal characteristics. The palate is dry and long, with a pleasing talc-like texture. (Soon to be released)

★★★

2013 Pepper Tree Wines Venus Block Single Vineyard Chardonnay A big, rich, peachy style of chardonnay from Orange that is drinking well now. (Not available)

2013 De Salis Wines Wild Chardonnay This wine is flavour-packed and forward in nature, and is delivering enjoyable peach, nuts and butter flavour now. ($38.00)

2013 McWilliams 842 Tumbarumba Chardonnay It's not showing much right now, and is fairly plain, however the freshness and length of palate are encouraging. (Not yet released)

2012 Coppabella of Tumbarumba Chardonnay Quite developed, but it is drinking well now. ($15.00)

2013 Bellbrook Friends Chardonnay Comparatively restrained, and is showing some complex sulphides. ($22.00)

★★

2013 Boree Lane Orange District Chardonnay Quite deep colour. Too forward and developed. ($22.00)

2012 Eden Road Tumbarumba Chardonnay We've tasted much better bottles than this one. It showed an unpleasant baggy character. ($40.00)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

★★★★★

2013 Penfolds Cellar Reserve Adelaide Hills Chardonnay This is a restrained chardonnay of great purity in which the secondary input from lees and oak is subtle but effective. The palate is a seamless textural joy. ($34.00)
https://shop.penfolds.com/penfolds/Cellar-Reserve/Cellar-Reserve-Chardonnay/Cellar-Reserve-Adelaide-Hills-Chardonnay-2013/bottle/2_225.action

2013 Shaw + Smith M3 Adelaide Hills Chardonnay There's plenty of peachy power to be enjoyed here. Add the excellent oak and acid balance, and the captivating creaminess and you have an utterly delicious chardonnay. ($40.00)

★★★★

2013 Jacob's Creek Reeves Point Chardonnay This multi-regional South Australian blend offers a real mouthful of varietal flavour. There's a hint of hazelnut and the finish is long and fresh. ($29.00)
https://www.crackawines.com.au/brand/jacobs-creek/reeves-point-chardonnay/

2013 Penfolds Bin 13A Adelaide Hills Chardonnay The oak is overt at the moment, but it's certainly French wood of the highest quality. Underneath is varietal fruit with a latent potency about it. This wine is building in power and texture, and all will be unleashed in 1-2 years. ($90.00)

2013 Wirra Wirra The 12th Man Adelaide Hills Chardonnay The best is yet to come from this vibrant, textural chardonnay. The intense fruit and quality oak over-deliver at this price. ($25.00)
http://www.winestar.com.au/wirra-wirra-12th-man-chardonnay-2013

2012 Bird in Hand Nest Egg Chardonnay This is a fresh chardonnay with plenty of flavour, nutty overtones and a creamy palate. It's drinking very well now. ($75.00)

★★★

2013 Balnaves of Coonawarra Chardonnay There's a buttery/yoghurt overtone to this chardonnay which combines with the substantial flavour to deliver a real mouthful of wine. Short term. ($28.00)

2013 Saltram Mamre Brook Eden Valley Chardonnay A rich chardonnay with hints of honeycomb. Early drinking. (Not yet available)

SHIRAZ

Shiraz is the red wine of Australia. No other grape variety produces high quality wine and expresses itself eloquently in locations ranging from southern Tasmania to the Hunter and Barossa Valleys and Margaret River. It makes excellent wine when totally destemmed, yet can also excel when fermented as whole bunches. It is truly a versatile grape.

McLAREN VALE & LANGHORNE CREEK

★★★★★

2012 Rosemount Estate Little Berry McLaren Vale Shiraz After tasting and comparing 100 shiraz covering a multitude of styles and vintages from 2004-2013, this is the one that gained the high spot on the podium. It's not your typical McLaren Vale Shiraz. Having made that statement, it's certainly a wine of substance, but there's a savouriness and a spiciness that sets it apart aromatically and texturally, and the vibrant flavour is very much in the blackberry zone. (The retail price for this wine is about $25.00 but it doesn't appear to be on sale anywhere, although we were informed by a subscriber that it is available to Treasury Wine Estates shareholders through the TWE web site.)

★★★★

2013 Geddes Wines Seldom Inn Shiraz This is a very powerful shiraz which is packed with fresh dark berry aroma and flavour. The tannins are firm but balanced, and a lick of oak fits the scenario well. (Not yet released)

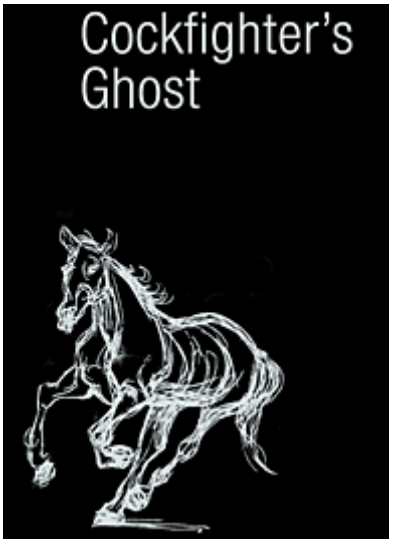
2013 Rosemount Estate District Release Shiraz Here's a young wine that is bursting with vibrancy. There's dark berry aroma and flavour in profusion backed up by firm, balanced tannins. Cellar 3-5 years at least. (Not yet released)

2012 Tatachilla Foundation McLaren Vale Shiraz This label has been waving the McLaren Vale flag for decades. It certainly doesn't lack ripeness or power, and ticks the boxes of a regional classic. If you're after a big rich shiraz, wait for this one. (Not yet released)

2012 Shingleback The Gate Shiraz Another substantial, truly regional style which makes a big blackberry impact. It's at the top end weight-wise, but can't be faulted in terms of freshness or balance. (Not yet released)

2013 Brokenwood Wade Block 2 McLaren Vale Shiraz If the blockbuster style isn't for you, here's one to consider. The nose and palate lean more to red berry than black, and there's a pleasing whiff of spice. A long, dry finish completes a very appealing picture. Cellar five years at least. ($65.00)

2012 Angas Plains PJs Langhorne Creek Shiraz A very impressive young wine offering generous varietal flavour and a captivating floral perfume. The tannins are fine and lingering, and will soften over the next five years or so. (Not yet released)



2013 Cockfighters Ghost McLaren Vale Shiraz There's plenty of regional and varietal flavour to be enjoyed here. It's rich, ripe, fresh and just about ready. ($18.00)
https://justwines.com.au/wineries/cock-fighters-ghost

SIDE BY SIDE

2012 Brothers In Arms Side By Side Langhorne Creek Shiraz A richly plummy shiraz that is vibrant and beautifully balanced. It's an enjoyable drink now but will take a few years in bottle with ease. ($27.00)
https://www.brothersinarms.com.au/wines/side-by-side/shiraz-side-by-side/

2012 Shingleback Unedited Shiraz Lots of dark berries and plums – even plum pudding – here. All that flavour is nicely encased by pleasantly firm tannins on a long, satisfying palate. (Not yet released)

2013 Bleasdale The Powder Monkey Shiraz A fascinating shiraz with whiffs of herbal and mint complexity. The oak shows at the moment, but the palate is long and intense. Cellaring required. (Not yet released)

★★★

2013 Shingleback Davey Estate Reserve Shiraz A solid but balanced shiraz which is fresh and appealing, but doesn't have quite the depth of those ranked above it. (Not yet released)

2013 Jericho Wines McLaren Vale Shiraz A big, fresh shiraz that is a little plain. Nevertheless there's no shortage of honest regional flavour. (Not yet released)

2012 Rosemount Estate McLaren Vale Collection Shiraz The colour shows a little development, but there's plenty of flavour for your dollar, although this wine is a tad simple. ($19.90)

★★

2012 Shingleback Haycutters Shiraz Offers adequate flavour, but is one-dimensional and a little too firm. ($15.00)

McLaren Vale is one of the go-to regions for the very popular Australian "bottled sunshine" shiraz. There's certainly no lack of flavour in this group from the Vale. Langhorne Creek for decades has provided rich blending red for producers in eastern Australia and is now beginning to make a strong statement with regionally labelled wines.

McLaren Vale continues to deliver the type of wines its fans demand, and quality has never been higher. However, the inevitable rise of Langhorne Creek will be fascinating to observe.

BAROSSA

★★★★

2009 Saltram No.1 Barossa Shiraz Saltram is one of the legendary Barossa brands, and Treasury Wine Estates, we're glad to observe, continues to treat it with great respect. This current release is quite perfumed, even a little spicy, and the long, intense palate is well served by savoury tannins. It's enjoyable now but can certainly be cellared. ($93.00)

2012 Wolf Blass Estates of the Barossa Moculta Shiraz This is a stylish dark cherry style with hints of dark chocolate. Although some oak shows through, it's the freshness, fragrance and intensity of fruit that win the day. ($89.00)

2009 Balthazar of Barossa Marananga Shiraz Another impressive shiraz of admirable freshness and intensity. At six years of age it still has a bright future, and we haven't yet seen the best of it. (Not available)

2010 Saltram The Journal Shiraz Here's a wine that's built for cellaring. It's tightly structured, fresh and intense, with an appealing hint of spice. The long palate is particularly impressive. (Not yet released)

2013 Saltram 1859 Barossa Shiraz With The Journal we saw a shiraz for the decades. Here we have one for now. It's packed with Barossa blackberry goodness with tannins that are just right for the short term. ($16.80)
http://shop.saltramwines.com.au/index.cfm?method=storeproducts.showList&productcategoryid=45e48c14-94bf-437c-f163-99f932338e00&maxrows=9

2012 Sieber Road Ernest Shiraz A ripe, well rounded shiraz which is quite perfumed and welcoming. The palate is packed with richness and regional character. ($20.00)
http://www.sieberwines.com/pages/wines.html

2013 St Hallett Faith Barossa Shiraz Those seeking plenty of shiraz for their money will be mighty satisfied with this fresh, approachable Barossa red. One of our most reliable labels delivers the goods again. ($17.00)
http://www.jimscellars.com.au/_product/view-product/st-hallett-faith-shiraz?id=eb4b916bb74a958cc40e98e7bfb6ba1a&key=FM6aTo&sessid=16056fd8bb4c7758122533fe865afb9e

2013 St Hallett Dawkins Eden Valley Shiraz There's no shortage of ripe shiraz flavour here. This wine is generosity plus, and will delight the fans of rich reds. (Not yet released)

2013 Sons of Eden Zephyrus Barossa Shiraz A very nicely rounded shiraz with plenty of blackberry flavour and balanced, polished tannins. Enjoy now and for the next few years. ($30.00)

2012 Peter Lehmann Moppa District Barossa Valley Shiraz No question about honest varietal character and regionality here. This wine is bursting with fresh blackberry flavour, and is an excellent full bodied style which can be enjoyed now or cellared. ($30.00)

2012 Calabria Family Wines Nine Stones Barossa Valley Shiraz This shiraz isn't as full-on as most, but it certainly delivers, with a hint of dried herbs, a long palate and fine, savoury tannins. (Not available)

CLARE

★★★★

2010 Tim Adams The Aberfeldy Clare Valley Shiraz Without doubt, this is a very classy Clare. It's a beautifully opulent wine in which the pristine fruit is backed up by high quality oak and fine, firm tannins. Cellar ten years. ($45.00)

The Barossa and Clare acquit themselves very well with a range of typically full flavoured wines.

Although some of the above are not available or yet to be released, the line-ups are punctuated by shiraz of exceptional value. It's a good time to be a fan of full-bodied reds.

BOOKS

Without doubt the book to have right now is **"Tongue & Cheek – explorations in food & life"** by Bryan Martin, with outstanding photography by David Reist. Bryan makes wine for his own label Ravensworth and works with Tim Kirk at Clonakilla. He also writes on food for the "Canberra Times," and this book is a collection of observations, recipes and sound culinary advice – all delivered with wit and good humour.

The best recommendation I can give you is that after purchasing a copy for myself, I bought another for a friend.

https://tongueandcheek.com.au/

Lester Jesberg