SHIRAZ

Over the past decade a resurgent Hunter Valley has scaled the heights from which McWilliams (courtesy of Maurice O'Shea) and Lindemans once viewed the Australian wine landscape. Gone is the "Hunter stink" and the all-pervading leatheriness beloved by a few and shunned by the majority.

Here we have some of Australia's best red wines.

HUNTER VALLEY

★★★★★

2011 Ridgeview Impressions Hunter Valley Shiraz The sheer elegance and fineness of this wine saw it rise to the top of the Hunters. Coupled with classic regional medium-bodied fruit which persists on a long palate, the polished tannins provide ideal balance and structure. ($40.00)
http://www.ridgeview.com.au/#!IMPRESSIONS%20SHIRAZ

2011 Thomas Wines Kiss Hunter Valley Shiraz There was nothing between the Kiss and the Impressions as far as the panel was concerned. It's a stunning wine that even shows hints of pepper and spice. The vibrant fruit merges well with a dash of new oak. ($59.95)
http://www.wineseek.com.au/products/10-shiraz/4433-thomas-'kiss'-shiraz-2011/?bc=no

2011 Pepper Tree Wines Coquun Single Vineyard Shiraz A very powerful shiraz of considerable depth, showing hints of tilled earth and toasted oak. The palate is one of great intensity, with fine, firm tannins to match. Long term cellaring advised. (Not available)

★★★★

2013 Thomas Wines Kiss Hunter Valley Shiraz This is the current release from Andrew Thomas, and it's another gem. There are floral and spicy hints to the nose together with a whiff of new oak. Although the wine is backward and yet to evolve, it has everything required for cellaring. ($60.00)

2013 Thomas Wines Sweetwater Hunter Valley Shiraz A reserved but attractive wine, showing more red fruit than black in a true medium-bodied style. The tannins are fine and the finish is long and fresh. ($35.00)
https://www.thomaswines.com.au/shop/

2013 First Creek Premium Shiraz The fresh red fruits aromas are captivating, and the palate is long and lively, with supple well balanced tannins. ($35.00)
http://www.firstcreekwines.com.au/wines.php?id=123&sub=1

2011 Elbourne Wines Shiraz Elbourne isn't a long-established name in the Hunter Valley, but it's made a quick impact. There's a hint of spiciness, and the vibrant medium-bodied palate is enhanced by savoury tannins. ($44.00)

2013 Briar Ridge Stockhausen Signature Release Shiraz A very well made, lively shiraz that offers prodigious length of flavour. It just needs some time to soften. (Not yet released)

2013 Brokenwood Verona Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz Here's a wine that says "cellar me" loud and clear. The weight of fruit and length of flavour are very impressive, and are supported by well managed tannins. ($75.00)

2013 Tyrrell's Vat 9 Hunter Shiraz Here's one for the fans of the classic Hunter "Burgundy" style. It's slightly spicy and shows mixed berry aromas. The high point is the long, silky palate that will seem more French than Hunter in a decade or so. ($85.00)

2011 Tyrrell's Vat 9 Hunter Shiraz This Vat 9 is just starting to evolve, and shares the fineness and elegance of the 2013. It's a wine that definitely needs time. ($85.00)

2013 Brokenwood Mistress Block Hunter Valley Shiraz Yet another elegant regional classic that is spicy and perfumed. Although there is plenty to enjoy now, this wine definitely needs time. (Not available)

2011 Pepper Tree Wines Tallawanta Single Vineyard Shiraz There's a fascinating mintiness to this powerful, savoury shiraz. It's relatively closed, but the quality and cellaring potential are undeniable. ($90.00)

Not only were we deeply impressed with the overall quality of this group of wines, there isn't a single one of them that won't be better after 7-8 years' (and more) cellaring.

Thomas wines

We retasted the 2013s of Andrew Thomas this week, and they confirmed the quality we recognised in the Championship. The bargain of the line-up is the **2013 Two Of A Kind Shiraz** which brings together Hunter Valley and McLaren Vale material to great effect. It will drink well from now until about 2020 and is a bargain at $24.00.

SHIRAZ

New South Wales is abuzz when it comes to shiraz. The Hunter Valley has reclaimed its place of prominence, but there's a lot of excitement up in the mountains. Shiraz reflecting the coolness of altitude is creating great excitement, and winemakers are stamping their personal style imprints with confidence.

CANBERRA DISTRICT

★★★★

2013 Nick O'Leary Bolaro Shiraz Obvious whole-bunch complexity shows in the impressive perfumed bouquet. The red fruits palate is silky and persistent, with everything in its place. ($55.00)

2013 Nick O'Leary Shiraz Again, the bouquet is distinguished by whole-bunch brambly character. Allied with the vibrant fruit, it makes quite an impression and the palate follows through deliciously. ($30.00)

2013 Eden Road Wines Canberra Syrah An appealingly spicy shiraz that is the epitome of medium-bodied fineness and length. It will undoubtedly cellar very well indeed. (Not yet released)

2013 Lerida Estate Lake George Shiraz Viognier This is a perfumed, spicy shiraz with a very satisfying palate which features polished tannins and generous fruit that is full of life. (Not yet released)

★★★

2012 Nick O'Leary Shiraz A vibrant shiraz with distinctive herbal notes. The freshness is exemplary but the palate is slightly lean. ($28.00)

2013 Audrey Wilkinson Canberra District Shiraz This is a fresh, spicy red berry style that doesn't have quite enough palate weight. (Not available)

★

2013 Shaw Vineyard Estate Winemakers Selection Shiraz Surprisingly dull, lacking freshness. ($14.40)

The typical perfume and spice of Canberra District shiraz is evident in most of these. We believe that this region produces wines that come as close as any in Australia to those of the northern Rhône.

HILLTOPS

★★★★

2013 Moppity Vineyards Lock & Key Reserve Hilltops Shiraz This wine drew the toughest of the 2013 heats and had to do battle with the Thomas Kiss and Oakdene William – both exceptional wines. It was edged out, but is a gold medal shiraz through and through. It's powerfully and fragrantly blackberry-like, with firm balanced tannins and a lick of oak. Cellar about five years. ($27.00)
http://www.moppity.com.au/index.php?route=product/product&path=20&product_id=71

2013 McWilliam's Appellation Series Hilltops Shiraz There's obvious blackberry flavour here, and it's quite dense, but fresh. The tannin grip matches the fruit intensity, making it a very good cellaring proposition for the price. ($22.00)
http://www.mcwilliamscellar.com.au/products/3307-mcwilliam-s-appellation-hilltops-shiraz/

2012 Chalkers Crossing Hilltops Shiraz This is a very different style to the previous pair. It's spicy and savoury, with hints of pepper, but it certainly has length and structure. Cellar 4-5 years. ($30.00)
http://www.chalkerscrossing.com.au/wines/red/2012-hilltops-shiraz

2013 Moppity Vineyards Eclipse Hilltops Shiraz Here we have layers of blackberry flavour supported by firm, fine tannins and oak. The mysteries of this wine are yet to be unravelled, and that will definitely take time. ($108.00)

★

2013 Barwang Hilltops Shiraz Quite raw and firm. There's a hard edge to this wine. ($15.00)

The Hilltops wines have a more obvious fruitiness than those from the Canberra District. They tend to be firmer and less spicy, but certainly on a par. Vive la différence.

ORANGE/CENTRAL RANGES

The Orange wine growing region has altitude. Vineyards must be higher than 600 m above sea level to produce wine of Orange, and although some Canberra District vineyards are at heights greater than 600 m, the Orange vineyards are, on average, higher and cooler. The Central Ranges "appellation" appends that of Orange, but is below 600 m.

★★★★★

2013 Twisted River Central Ranges Shiraz Viognier This wine came up against the 2013 Shaw + Smith Shiraz and the SVA-winning 2013 Credaro Beach Head Shiraz early in the judging and eliminated both of them – three first votes for the Twisted River and one each for the other two. It's spicy, intense and slightly funky, like many northern Rhônes. The fine, savoury structure is a winner, as is the magnificent varietal expression of the medium-bodied palate. ($22.00)
http://twistedriverwines.com.au/buy-wines/

★★★★

2013 Angullong Crossing Reserve Shiraz A vibrant medium-bodied shiraz with very appealing red fruits characteristics. Acidity features on a long palate in a freshening rather than dominating way. Cellar 3-5 years for best results. (Not yet released)

★★★

2013 Angullong Orange Shiraz Fresh but a little one-dimensional. The red berry fruit has immediate appeal. ($19.00)

2013 Centennial Reserve Single Vineyard Shiraz Viognier Shows attractive fragrance and is well endowed with flavour, but is a little oaky. ($33.00)

★★

2012 Logan Weemala Shiraz Viognier The colour is a little weak and there's a herbal edge. It lacks mid palate weight. ($18.00)

2013 Centennial Reserve Single Vineyard Shiraz Fairly light colour. On the lean side and not as vibrant as some. ($30.00)

2013 Montoro Pepper Shiraz Weak in colour. Too much stemmy character for the fruit. ($38.00)

★

2013 Boree Lane Orange District Shiraz Developed colour. Pronounced green stemmy overtones. (Not yet released)

The tastings demonstrated that a panel of five struggles to reach unanimous agreement on reds with obvious whole bunch character. The Canberra District wines, in general, suffered from that lack of agreement and deserved higher rankings in some cases.

Others simply didn't have the fruit intensity to cope with the artifact derived from whole bunches and/or stems.

TASTED THIS WEEK

Two whites from Voyager Estate demonstrated deft winemaking.

If you like dry chenin blanc, or want to discover what it should taste like, the **2014 Voyager Estate Margaret River Chenin Blanc** is one you should try. It has the typical varietal baked apple character, and is fresh and quite textural. ($20.00) ★★★

The **2014 Voyager Estate Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon** fortunately has none of the typical green semillon character we frequently encounter in wines from the West. There's plenty of ripe gooseberry aroma and flavour, and the palate is attractively long and creamy. ($24.00) ★★★★

Lester Jesberg

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SHIRAZ

Victoria is a small state with a wide range of grape-growing environments. Stylistically the top three wines reflect that (and winemaker input) perfectly. We have declared for years that the Sanguine Estate Progeny is the best-value shiraz in Australia, and we obviously have no reason to change our mind.

VICTORIA

★★★★★

2013 Sanguine Estate Progeny Shiraz Substance and freshness are nicely bundled together here. The ripe varietal fruit carries a hint of spice, and the tannins are well managed, providing just-right structure. Enjoy this Heathcote shiraz now and for the next five or more years. ($20.00)
http://www.nicks.com.au/2013-sanguine-estate-progeny-shiraz

2013 Oakdene William Shiraz This is a vibrant wine made with considerable flair. There's a hint of whole-bunch bramble to the nose, and a touch of toasty French oak combines beautifully with the red berry fruit to add depth to the picture. A classy representative of the Geelong region. ($35.00)
http://www.oakdene.com.au/product/2013-William-Shiraz?pageID=06E5A2CF-FA5B-3AD2-9833-CF9644D7A5A9&sortBy=DisplayOrder&maxRows=20&

2013 Tuck's Ridge Mornington Peninsula Shiraz A captivating spicy, peppery, blackberry shiraz with fine tannins and impressive length. A cool region red with substance. (Not yet available)

★★★★

2012 Sanguine Estate Progeny Shiraz A rich, ripe, perfumed shiraz with plenty of middle palate. The tannins are firm but match the fruit weight very well indeed. (Not available)

2012 Oakdene William Shiraz We suggest you pay great attention to the wines of Oakdene from now on. Like the 2013, this one combines the complexity of stems with intense medium-weight fruit very well indeed. Although it's most enjoyable now, cellaring is recommended. ($33.00)

2012 Nick O'Leary Pyrenees Shiraz Canberra-based Nick O'Leary went to the trouble of obtaining a batch of Pyrenees fruit in 2012, and it was worth the effort. There's a bouquet garni of stems enhancing the nose, and the palate has all the richness one expects of Pyrenees shiraz. A savouriness adds pleasure to the long finish. ($32.00)

2012 Sanguine Estate Kindred Shiraz This shiraz really has some substance for its price, and hints of leather and spice add to the bouquet. Very enjoyable drinking. ($18.00)
http://www.heathcotewinehub.com.au/shop/sanguine-kindred-shiraz-2012/

2013 Harcourt Valley Sightings Heathcote-Bendigo Shiraz This is a spicy, complex, approachable red that is quite delicious. (Not available)

2013 Dinny Goonan Shiraz The spiciness of shiraz interacts with the perfume of viognier to great effect in this striking Bellarine Peninsula wine. The oak is very well handled, enhancing a silky, medium-bodied palate. ($29.00)

2013 Trofeo Estate Mornington Peninsula Shiraz There's great depth of dark berry flavour here, and the nose is vibrantly varietal. A very well made shiraz that will age gracefully. ($55.00)

2012 Balgownie Black Label Heathcote-Bendigo Shiraz The perfumed spiciness of this wine is an attention-grabber, and the palate delivers plenty of varietal honesty for your $$. ($25.00)
http://www.balgownieestatewines.com.au/Wine---Gifts/Black-Label-Range

★★★

2013 Mermerus Bellarine Peninsula Shiraz Quite perfumed plus a hint of funky reductive character. The varietal fruit on the palate is pure and delicate, with acidity showing through on the finish. (Not yet released)

2004 Seville Estate Old Vine Reserve Yarra Valley Shiraz Quite mature, as one would expect, with gamy overtones and a dry, savoury finish. (Not available)

2013 Devil's Cave Vineyard Heathcote Shiraz There's plenty of flavour to be enjoyed, but the oak is quite prominent. ($30.00)

★★

2012 Montara Grampians Shiraz Rich, ripe and faintly tarry. Showing some oak as well. ($25.00)

2012 Blue Pyrenees Estate Shiraz Has plenty of flavour, but is quite oaky. ($20.00)

★

2012 De Bortoli Yarra Valley Estate Grown Shiraz Too lean and herbal for everyone on the panel. ($25.00)

Such a small state; such great diversity.

WINE & COMPASSION

Four Winds Vineyard, Collector Wines and Eden Road Wines have taken four tonnes of surplus shiraz grapes and turned them into wine to raise funds for Canberra's Companion House. Companion House provides support to asylum seekers and refugees living in Canberra.

Four Winds Vineyard's business manager Sarah Collingwood said that they were pleased that the grapes would go to such a good cause.
"We have had a great season and fulfilled all our needs, but there were still grapes in the vineyard," she said.

Four Winds Vineyard was not able to fit another berry into their winery, but discussions with neighbours Alex McKay from Collector Wines and Nick Spencer and Hamish Young from Eden Road saw the wineries collaborate to produce a finished product.

There will be approximately 200 cases of wine available to purchase now for $200 a case, and $174 from each case will go to Companion house. The wineries donated the grapes, winemaking and bottling machinery needed for the project, while $26 a case will go to covering costs such as bottles, labels, cartons and postage.

The wine will be bottled and sent to supporters by November this year.

More details can be found and the wine can be purchased online at http://fourwindsvineyard.com.au/the-4-tonne-project/

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SHIRAZ

Now we get to the "other" South Australian shiraz. "Other" because many consumers of red wine think that South Australia starts and finishes with regions like the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale. It's cooler in the Hills and Limestone Coast, and the milder summers produce grapes with higher acidity, leading to wines that are often more elegant.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA (Other than Barossa, McLaren Vale, Langhorne Ck.)

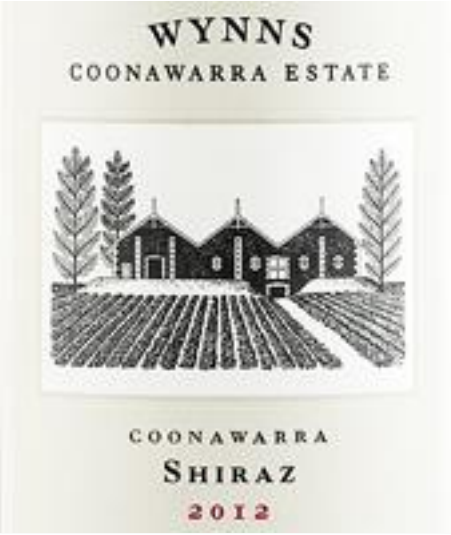
★★★★

2013 Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Shiraz Vintage after vintage the S + S continues to impress us. The nose on this one is spicy and slightly brambly, yet packed with red berry aroma. The tannins have been skilfully finessed and the finish is long. Now – 2020. ($38.00)

2012 Bowen Estate Coonawarra Shiraz A richly flavoured, but not over-ripe, shiraz which is very fresh and flashes some oak to dress up the dark berry/cherry fruit. It's enjoyable now but can be cellared for several years with confidence. ($26.00)
http://www.bowenestate.com.au/OrderForm-CellarDoor.html

2013 Murdoch Hill The Cronberry Adelaide Hills Shiraz This is a vibrant wine with an interesting touch of what the French call garrigue. It's a term covering things herbal – from bushy plants and juniper to rosemary. The flavour leans to red berry and the palate is fine and medium-bodied. ($22.00)
http://www.wineexperience.com.au/product/Murdoch%20Hill/murdoch-hill-cronberry-shiraz-adelaide-hills

2012 Honey Moon Vineyard Adelaide Hills Shiraz A very perfumed dark cherry style of some substance. The structure and intensity suggest that cellaring will be rewarded. ($85.00)



2012 Wynns Coonawarra Estate Shiraz There aren't many Australian wines with an illustrious decades-long history like this one – and the price! It's so low, it's scandalous. The 2012 upholds the reputation of the line. The dark berry fruit is vibrant, the savoury tannins are beautifully integrated and fresh regional acidity lifts the finish. ($14.00)
http://www.jimscellars.com.au/_product/view-product/wynns-shiraz?id=6f61d42e26208b24789e07e44bc2c914&key=6NK5Tz&sessid=f00b02eab103d85c3d65136e18c9dc2c

2010 Wyndham Estate Best of Vintage Padthaway Shiraz This shiraz certainly packs plenty of blackberry varietal flavour. It's supported by a firm tannin structure and nicely handled oak. (Not yet released)

2012 Hahndorf Hill Single Vineyard Adelaide Hills Shiraz The aromas and flavours are very much at the red berry part of the spectrum, and the fresh palate is very well balanced. ($36.00)

2013 Anarchist Mount Benson Shiraz A vibrant young blackberry-scented shiraz backed up by firm, fine tannins and lifted on the finish by fresh acidity. (Not yet released. The 2012 was around $20.00) sam@brandgroup.com.au

★★★

2013 Murdoch Hill The Landau Adelaide Hills Syrah The perfumed herbal whole-bunch character is a little strong, but the palate is quite silky. ($45.00)

2007 Malone Wrattonbully Shiraz There's still some pepper and spice here, and the palate is quite generous. Good drinking. (Not available)

2012 Riposte The Cutlass Adelaide Hills Shiraz The colour is a little weak at the edges, and this wine, although enjoyable now, appears to be developing fairly quickly. ($22.00)

2012 Wyndham Estate Best of Vintage Padthaway Shiraz Big, rich and ripe, with a serve of new oak. It seems to be a wine with a future, but it's quite solid right now. (Not yet released)

2010 Orlando Lawson's Padthaway Shiraz Somewhat mature and leathery, with a hint of gum leaf. The palate is quite savoury, offering plenty of flavour. (Not yet released)

2010 St Hugo Barossa Shiraz Concentrated classic old school Australian with some obvious oak. ($35.00)

2013 Catlin Wine Co Adelaide Hills Shiraz Shows some spice and has good fruit intensity. The tannins are quite furry. ($45.00)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

★★★★

2013 Credaro Beach Head Margaret River Shiraz This is an extremely likeable young wine. The red fruits varietal character absolutely shines and the tannins are fine and savoury. ($21.00) http://www.credarowines.com.au/products-page/beach-head/

2012 Mandoon Estate Frankland River Reserve Shiraz A powerful shiraz in which black cherry and dark chocolate aromas and flavours combine to great effect. Can be aged for 10+ years. (Not yet released)

2012 Credaro Shiraz A fresh medium-bodied style that is attractively spicy and savoury, with excellent length of flavour. ($40.00)

2013 Mandoon Old Vine Swan Valley Shiraz The intense blackberry fruit merges beautifully with some new oak, and the palate is long, fine and firm. (Not yet released)

★★★

2011 Mandoon Estate Frankland River Reserve Shiraz A big, rich blackberry jam style that is quite solid and needs time. (Not yet released)

STELLAR SHIRAZ

The pick of 97 shiraz tasted in the Championship are as follows – in alphabetical order.

2013 Oakdene William Shiraz

2011 Pepper Tree Wines Coquun Single Vineyard Shiraz

2011 Ridgeview Impressions Hunter Valley Shiraz

2012 Rosemount Estate Little Berry McLaren Vale Shiraz

2013 Sanguine Estate Progeny Shiraz

2011 Thomas Wines Kiss Hunter Valley Shiraz

2013 Tuck's Ridge Mornington Peninsula Shiraz

SEMILLON

Semillons young and not so young shone brightly in the Championship tastings. Though it has much in its favour, including low alcohol, longevity and liveliness, semillon sadly struggles to win the hearts of Australian wine drinkers.

2014

★★★★★

2014 Thomas Wines Cellar Reserve Braemore Hunter Valley Semillon Here we have a wine that is the epitome of classic Hunter semillon in its early days. It's super-fresh, restrained, and shows hints of grass and lime. The palate is pure and acid-fresh. (Not yet released)

2014 Silkman Semillon This is a classic regional style showing vibrant, captivating lemon grass aromas. The palate is intense, dry and linear – absolutely typical of outstanding Hunter semillon. (Not yet released)

2014 Pepper Tree Wines Rhodes Limited Release Semillon Fresh, limey, grassy and full of life. This is a very impressive young semillon that can be enjoyed now or cellared for 3-5 years. ($28.00)
http://www.peppertreewines.com.au/our-wines-and-shop/product-detail/?ProductID=101

★★★★

2014 Audrey Wilkinson The Ridge Semillon Slightly forward but strongly varietal, with a good acid line. Excellent drinking over the next few years. (Not yet released)

2014 Gundog Estate Poacher's Hunter Valley Semillon Very fresh, showing some lemon grass aromatics, and there's plenty of varietal flavour. Drink now – 2020. ($30.00)

2014 Briar Ridge Dairy Hill Hunter Valley Semillon There's a very impressive lemony component amid the aromas, and the palate is long and acid-fresh. ($35.00)

2014 First Creek Black Cluster Semillon This wine is already delivering plenty of rich varietal flavour. Fresh acidity lifts the finish. Short term. (Not yet released)

★★★

2014 Tyrrell's HVD Hunter Semillon A little forward but has interesting complex components which possibly stem from lees contact. A lively, flavoursome wine. (Not yet released)

2014 Thomas The OC Hunter Valley Semillon Fresh but a little too much towards stone fruit than citrus. The palate is well supported by acidity. ($23.50)

2014 The Willows Vineyard Barossa Valley Semillon There's plenty of varietal flavour to be enjoyed in this well proportioned semillon. Although it's comparatively forward, it's fresh and very drinkable. ($16.00)

2014 First Creek Winemaker's Reserve Semillon A richly flavoured style with adequate acid support. Drink now – 2018. (Not yet released)

★★

2014 Robert Stein Mudgee Semillon Quite deep colour. Although this wine shows obvious development, it still has the freshness for current drinking. ($25.00)

A couple of months can make a difference to recently bottled young white wines. The Audrey Wilkinson The Ridge in particular showed as a much tighter and less sulphury wine than it did in our December semillon feature.

OLDER

★★★★★

2005 Tyrrell's Vat 1 Hunter Semillon As you can see from the bottle image this wine has won a few gold medals and trophies. It's a semillon that appears to have reached the top of a gloriously honeyed plateau which it will undoubtedly hold for years to come. An Australian classic. If you find this wine on any auction house list, don't miss it. (Not available) **MEDALLION WINNER**

2009 Meerea Park Alexander Munro Semillon Here's another wine of the highest quality. The fresh lemon curd aromas are captivating, and the palate is rich and long, with a great line of acidity. If you wish to try a brilliant Hunter semillon in the prime of its life, buy this one without hesitation. ($32.95)
http://www.mycellars.com.au/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=1244&utm_source=winesearcher&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=April

2009 Coolangatta Estate Semillon Once again wines from this showpiece vineyard on the Shoalhaven Coast rise to the top. This one is rich, intense and toasty, but very fresh indeed, with a clean acid finish. (Not available)

2007 McLeish Estate Hunter Valley Semillon A very impressive semillon that is at or near the peak of its powers. The intense honeyed flavour is supported by lively acidity. ($55.00)
https://www.topaustralianwines.com.au/white/mcleish-estate-semillon-2007-white-wine

2006 Coolangatta Estate Semillon Another semillon that has reached a glorious toasty peak. It's a beautifully balanced, satisfying wine that is acid-fresh. (Not available)

2013 Two Rivers Stones Throw Hunter Valley Semillon Here's the bargain, and you won't have to wait ten years to taste it at its best. The lemony nose is enhanced by a complex hint of hay, and the palate is quite mouth-filling, supported by lively acidity. An excellent user-friendly varietal white. ($16.00) **MEDALLION WINNER**
http://fromtheproducer.com/wine/two-rivers-stones-throw-semillon.html

★★★★

2009 Brokenwood Latara Vineyard Hunter Valley Semillon This wine is entering an ideal drinking phase, combining the first signs of toasty maturity with youthful freshness. The palate is balanced and satisfying. ($55.00)

2009 Tyrrell's Belford Hunter Semillon A little gem which is vibrantly lemony, with a hint of toastiness. At 5-6 years of age, quality Hunter semillon starts to show what it's all about, and this is a great example. ($25.00)

2011 Pooles Rock Semillon Delightfully lemony and mouthfilling, with excellent acid back-up. This wine is drinking very well indeed. (Not available)

2011 Tyrrell's Stevens Hunter Semillon Here's a 2011 with considerable promise. It's still quite restrained and needs a couple of years to emerge from its primary stage. (Not yet available)

2013 McLeish Estate Hunter Valley Semillon Comparatively forward, but packed with varietal richness supported by fresh acidity. Good drinking. ($30.00)

2013 Silkman Semillon This wine is beginning to really deliver. The lemony aromas and flavours are building up, and there's plenty of freshness and life. ($22.50)

★★★

2009 Mistletoe Reserve Hunter Valley Semillon Quite toasty and ready, but still fresh. Enjoy it now. ($30.00)

2013 Brokenwood Oakey Creek Vineyard Hunter Valley Semillon Plenty of colour and flavour. Fresh acidity makes it good short term drinking. ($40.00)

2012 Peter Lehmann Margaret Barossa Valley Semillon Has plenty of varietal character and is very rich and honeyed. (Not yet released)

2011 First Creek Winemaker's Reserve Semillon Quite forward and ready to drink. ($45.00)

2005 Meerea Park Alexander Munro Aged Release Semillon It's mature and complex, but the palate is showing signs of drying out. (Not available)

★★

2009 Bunnamagoo Mudgee Semillon Shows some grassiness but is also quite developed. Definitely ready. (Not available)

2011 Mistletoe Reserve Hunter Valley Semillon Deep colour. Too developed for its age. ($28.00)

The Hunter Valley dominated this class both numerically and in quality terms. However, since 2009 there has been a string of vintages which yielded earlier-maturing wines. There's no problem with that, but if you are cellaring Hunter semillons, monitor the progress of post 2009 examples closely.

WINEWISE 30th ANNIVERSARY

It's difficult for me to believe, but Winewise turns 30 this month.

We couldn't let this year pass without some form of celebration, so Adrienne and I are heading off on a road trip in May during which we'll visit some of our favourite wine producers and report on their best.

First in line will be Giaconda, Curly Flat, Seppelt Great Western, Wynns Coonawarra, Penfolds, Peter Lehmann and Henschke, but we're not stopping there. It will be fun – especially as Winewise Correspondent at Large, Bob Clancy will be with us. **LJ**

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Had someone framed a betting market on the cabernets, we suspect that Coonawarra and Margaret River would have disputed regional favouritism. But in a close tussle, the Victorian Pyrenees district stole the show, and McLaren Vale almost scored an upset victory.

Nevertheless, Margaret River and Coonawarra were far from disgraced, and there are a number of wines to tempt the bargain hunters.

★★★★★

2012 Blue Pyrenees Estate Richardson Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon This really is a cabernet in the classic sense. Blackcurrant and cedary characteristics show out on both nose and palate. The oak is well integrated and firm, powdery tannins balance the powerful fruit. A cellaring special. ($50.00)
MEDALLION WINNER
http://www.bluepyrenees.com.au/product-category/reservewines/

2013 Graham Stevens McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon
The purity and intensity of blackcurrant varietal character in this vibrant wine are stunning. Add the fine, firm tannin structure and length of flavour and you have a cellaring prospect par excellence. (Not yet released)

2012 Brand's Laira Coonawarra One Seven One Cabernet Sauvignon This is a Coonawarra of substance and varietal character. Although it's packed with flavour, it remains loyal to its regional roots and demands a few years' patience before it reveals all. (Not yet released)

★★★★

2010 Mandoon Estate Research Station Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Although the colour shows some maturity, this wine has plenty of power and length. The firm, fine tannins complement the slightly leafy cabernet flavour very well. ($45.00) **MEDALLION WINNER**

2012 Blue Pyrenees Estate Cabernet Sauvignon We agreed that the Richardson Reserve was superior to this wine, but not $33.00 superior. It isn't quite as intense, and the oak isn't as showy, but it is still very similar. A bargain. ($17.00) http://www.aussiewines.com.au//wine_Growing_Regions.php?pid=2533&page=36&s=&f=&wines=Victoria

2012 Deep Woods Estate Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon Here's a Margaret River producer that is, justly, attracting a lot of attention of late. This is a superb young cabernet - perfumed, long, firm and fine – that just begs for time in the cellar. ($55.00)

2012 Bowen Estate Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon Emma Bowen and father Doug quietly get on with making some of the best reds in Coonawarra. This one combines intensity with elegance in the true regional fashion. Oak complements the impressive fruit and the tannins are very fine. ($27.00) http://www.nicks.com.au/2012-bowen-estate-coonawarra-cabernet-sauvignon

2012 Deep Woods Estate Yallingup Cabernet Sauvignon This is a powerful red that is bursting with blackcurrant varietal character. The firm but balanced palate is vibrant and satisfying. (Not yet released)

2012 Flint's Of Coonawarra Gammon's Crossing Cabernet Sauvignon An intense cabernet with no shortage of blackcurrant aroma and flavour. There's a touch of oak which enhances the nose, and the palate is firm but very well balanced. ($30.00)

2012 Clairault Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The Margaret Rivers keep coming. Here's another very classy wine showing all the qualities that make cabernet sauvignon great, and it's built for the long haul. (Not yet released)

2012 Grace Farm Reserve Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Although it has its share of oak, there's no lack of varietal flavour either. This is a firmly structured wine that needs time. ($50.00)

2010 Wynns Coonawarra Estate Alex 88 Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon This wine is just beginning to show some bottle age. The classic Coonawarra mint and leaf are evident, and the palate is long and fine, with a regional acid twist. ($80.00)

2011 Higher Plane Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Quite mature colour. Shows varietal leafiness and plenty of cabernet flavour on a long palate. Although the colour caused a little concern, both nose and palate impressed with their varietal intensity. ($45.00)

2012 Wynns Coonawarra Estate Siding Cabernet Sauvignon A very fresh red that is unmistakeably varietal and offers more than pleasant short term drinking. ($12.00)
http://www.jimscellars.com.au/_product/view-product/wynns-the-siding-cabernet-sauvignon?id=9009bda064dfe3b40f7f77e82c4162f7&key=kQNSsy&sessid=9537b60c1a37ef610a0a69b147394a93

2012 Ross Hill Tom & Harry Cabernet Sauvignon A very appealing cabernet which leans more to redcurrant than black. The palate is very "juicy", fine and supple. ($20.00)
http://www.tonyscellars.com.au/products/Ross-Hill-Cabernet-Sauvignon---Family-Series-Tom-and-Harry-Cabernet-Sauvignon.html

2011 Devil's Lair Icon Ninth Chamber Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon A complex, slightly leafy cabernet with a Bordeaux leaning. There's a lot of secondary input here. (Not yet released)

2012 Rosily Vineyard Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The richness and ripeness of this cabernet are attention-grabbers. It's packed with mulberries matched with oak and firm, fine tannins. ($25.00)
http://www.rosily.com.au/order/

2012 Maygars Hill Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon An attractive cabernet which shows ripe fruit together with a classic Médoc-like herbal overtone. The palate has a savoury dryness that adds to the "Euro" effect. ($36.00)

2013 Moppity Vineyards Estate Hilltops Cabernet Sauvignon Obvious blackcurrant varietal character shines out of this cabernet, and the impressive flavour is balanced by spot-on tannins. Drink now – 2020. ($20.00)
http://www.tonyscellars.com.au/products/Moppity-Estate-Cabernet-sauvignon.html

2013 Moppity Vineyards Reserve Hilltops Cabernet Sauvignon A restrained, youthful style showing cabernet leafiness along with intense fruit. Definitely needs time. (Not yet released)

2012 Wolf Blass Gold Label Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon Rich and ripe, with a wealth of blackcurrant goodness. It may not be everyone's idea of classic Coonawarra, but there's no doubting the flavour hit. ($22.00)
http://www.aussiewines.com.au//wine_Growing_Regions.php?pid=1918&page=1152&s=&f=&wines=SouthAustralia

2012 Saltram Winemakers Selection Barossa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon This is a big, richly flavoured cabernet, but despite the weight and ripeness, it packs plenty of cassis varietal character ($40.00)

★★★

2013 Grace Farm Cabernet Sauvignon Like the 2012 Reserve, this wine isn't shy about its oak, but the fruit is just too impressive to deny. ($30.00)

2013 Rosemount Estate District Release Cabernet Sauvignon Although it's crammed with red fruits and plums, this wine is a little simple. Short term drinking. ($17.00)

2012 Wolf Blass President's Selection Cabernet Sauvignon A big, slightly plain, cabernet with plenty of ripe flavour. (Not available)

2013 Moppity Vineyards Lock & Key Hilltops Cabernet Sauvignon Obviously varietal but a little too lean and leafy. ($15.00)

2012 Karrawatta Christo's Paddock Langhorne Creek Cabernet A big, rich blackcurrant jam style with a goodly dash of oak. ($54.00)

2010 Saltram Mamre Brook Barossa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon A very big cabernet with considerable varietal richness, but lacking a little in finesse. ($28.00)

2011 Mandoon Estate Research Station Cabernet Sauvignon Strongly varietal, but shows obvious development. (Not yet released)

2012 Mandoon Estate Research Station Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Shows very ripe fruit and the tannins are a little chewy. A substantial red. (Not yet released)

★★

2012 Pepper Tree Wines Elderslee Road Single Vineyard Wrattonbully Cabernet Sauvignon Rich and ripe, tending jammy – with a firm finish. (Not yet released)

2012 Dutschke Sami Barossa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon A big mulberry style which is an impressive red, but isn't "cabernet" enough. ($30.00)

2012 De Bortoli Yarra Valley Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon Developed colour. A light, leafy style. ($20.00)

2013 Jack Estate Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon Very big and ripe. Closed and firm. (Not yet released)

2012 Rosemount Estate Diamond Label Cabernet Sauvignon Fresh and simple, with a hint of leaf. ($12.00)

2012 Ross Hill Pinnacle Series Cabernet Sauvignon Colour lightish. Shows blackcurrant varietal character and dry powdery tannins. ($40.00)

★

2013 Snake and Herring Dirty Boots Cabernet Sauvignon Hollow and leafy. ($22.00)

2012 Taylors St Andrews Cabernet Sauvignon Weak colour. Already showing development. ($65.00)

2012 Chalkers Crossing Hilltops Cabernet Sauvignon Herbal and hollow. ($30.00)

2012 Terramore Wines Cabernet Sauvignon Mature colour. Drying finish. (Not yet released)

2012 Carillion The Volcanics Orange Cabernet Sauvignon Developed, herbal, thin. ($45.00)

2012 St Hugo Vetus Purum Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon Very oaky. Caramel overtones. (Not yet released)

2012 Terra Felix Yarra Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Poor colour. Advanced. Drying out. ($45.00)

Some of the cabernets were simply too big and ripe, lacking finesse. At least wines like that deliver in terms of flavour. We were much less forgiving of lean, mean wines and those looking and tasting much older than they actually were.

The road trip begins. On Friday afternoon, 1 May we'll be with Rick Kinzbrunner at Giaconda, conducting the first of our anniversary tastings. You'll read about that very shortly after. There will be more on the Championship, new releases and, of course, more "road" tastings coming up.