

MARGARET RIVER REPORT

PART I

Our panel relished the opportunity of tasting 112 Margaret River chardonnays, cabernet sauvignons and cabernet blends. Not only were we keen to try some of the best wines that the key Western Australian wine region had to offer, we looked forward to seeing how a few of the “sacred cows”, rarely tasted blind in other forums, fared.

Here’s Part 1. Part 2, covering cabernet blends together with more cabernets and chardonnays, will follow shortly.

CHARDONNAY



2014 Stella Bella Serie Luminosa Chardonnay Very much a cutting edge Australian chardonnay showing restrained white peach, oatmeal and lemon overtones. The palate has a fine, chalky texture and that, combined with powerful varietal flavour and freshening acidity, makes it a special chardonnay. (Yet to be released. The 2013 is \$65.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.stellabella.com.au/Margaret-River-Wine/Serie-Luminosa>

2014 Voyager Estate Margaret River Chardonnay A beautifully restrained white peach style with a nutty lees overtone. It’s tightly structured, creamy and very classy. A bargain. (\$45.00) ★★★★★
http://www.voyagerestate.com.au/component/com_platform/Itemid,327/layout,productdetails/productId,240145/view,crm/

2013 Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay This modern classic is right back at the peak of its form. The combination of white peach, lees inputs and oak creates an outstanding bouquet. The palate is a textural delight, teaming creaminess with just-right grip. (\$85.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.nicks.com.au/2013-leeuwin-estate-art-series-chardonnay>

2014 Pierro Margaret River Chardonnay It's slightly funky on the nose, and the grapefruit aromas work well with that background complexity. The palate is intense, creamy and acid-fresh, with good grip. Another exceptional regional style. (\$70.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.nicks.com.au/2014-pierro-chardonnay>

2014 Higher Plane Reserve Margaret River Chardonnay An intense, comparatively restrained white peach/grapefruit/apple style, with subtle complexity and some positive grip. It offers excellent fruit weight, freshness and acidity. Another bargain. (\$37.00) ★★★★★☆
<https://www.higherplanewines.com.au/products>

2015 Windows Estate Margaret River Chardonnay A fresh white peach style with subtle complexity. The palate is one of excellent length and texture. Give this wine time. (\$40.00) ★★★★★

2014 Sittella Margaret River Reserve Chardonnay Intense white peach with good oak backup together with a touch of development. Plenty of flavour and texture. (Sold out) ★★★★★

2014 Voyager Estate Broadvale Block 5 Chardonnay The nose shows a grapefruit pith character plus a hint of funk. It's a fresh, textured wine with good acidity and grip. (\$55.00) ★★★★★

2014 Voyager Estate Broadvale Block 6 Chardonnay The subdued peach nose leads to a flavour-packed palate with some texture. It's drinking well. (\$55.00) ★★★★★

2015 Juniper Estate Chardonnay Fresh white peach with a nutty almond meal background. Quite taut and reserved but it has texture and length. (\$39.00) ★★★★★

2015 Edwards Margaret River Chardonnay Slightly forward and peachy, with some barrel input. The palate offers good weight, texture and acidity. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2015 Vasse Felix Margaret River Chardonnay Fresh and varietal. The creamy palate and lively acid finish provide good value. (\$22.00) ★★★★★☆

2015 Leeuwin Estate Prelude Vineyards Chardonnay Quite peachy and slightly forward, offering enjoyable drinking now. (\$30.00) ★★★★★☆

2015 Sittella Margaret River Reserve Chardonnay The nose is honeyed and nutty, but a slightly green overtone shows on the creamy but slightly acid palate. (\$27.20) ★★★★★☆

2015 Watershed Awakening Single Block A1 Margaret River Chardonnay Rich, complex and nutty, showing some oak. A flavoursome chardonnay that is drinking well. (\$46.95) ★★★★★☆

2016 Sandalford Estate Reserve Margaret River Chardonnay A forward rich nose with a slight nuttiness. Good weight, acid, structure and texture. (\$35.00) ★★★★★☆

2016 Juniper Crossing Margaret River Chardonnay Rich honeysuckle and stone fruit with a hint of shortbread biscuit. Round easy drinking. (\$25.00) ★★★

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2013 Sittella Margaret River Reserve Chardonnay Has good peachy varietal character, but is showing development. (Sold out) ★★★

2015 Sandalford Estate Reserve Margaret River Chardonnay This wine shows honeyed characteristics and prominent oak. Substantial but quite oaky. (\$35.00) ★★★

2016 Howard Park Miamup Chardonnay Forward, peachy, and fairly simple but has weight and structure. (\$23.00) ★★★

2015 Rosabrook Single Vineyard Estate Chardonnay Varietal but slightly light and straightforward. (\$45.00) ★★★

2015 Higher Plane Forest Grove Chardonnay Rich but peachy and plain. Ready now. (\$25.00) ★★★

2014 Stormflower Vineyard Margaret River Chardonnay Slightly buttery, tending flabby. (\$35.00) ★★☆

2015 Grace Farm Margaret River Chardonnay Showing development, with a slight silage undertone. Just a touch under-ripe. (\$30.00) ★★☆

2015 Churchview Margaret River Chardonnay Too forward and honeyed. Reasonable fruit, but it's on the plain side. (\$20.00) ★★☆

2014 Woody Nook Margaret River Chardonnay Showing some development. Simple but has fruit and acidity. (\$40.00) ★★☆

2016 Rosabrook Chardonnay Peach with a hint of passionfruit. Adequate flavour. (\$25.00) ★★★

2015 Vasse Felix Filius Chardonnay Shows melon rind under-ripe aroma. A bit lean and simple. (\$21.00) ★★☆

2015 Woody Nook Margaret River Chardonnay Plain peach together with development. Adequate fruit weight. (\$40.00) ★★☆

2015 Cherubino Margaret River Chardonnay Big rich butterscotch milkshake plus vanilla oak. Too much artifact. (\$40.00) ★★

2015 Sandalford Prendiville Reserve Margaret River Chardonnay Big and too developed, showing pineapple and other tropical fruits. (\$75.00) ★★

2016 Miles from Nowhere Margaret River Chardonnay Rich and peachy. Plain and too advanced. (\$20.00) ★★

2014 McHenry Hohnen Hazel's Vineyard Margaret River Chardonnay Forward honeysuckle aromas and oak. This bottle showed obvious volatility. (\$55.00) ★

Thirty-three chardonnays and more to come in Part 2. There's no doubt that the best of Margaret River chardonnay stands alongside the finest Australia has to offer.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON



2012 Juniper Estate Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The strong blackcurrant varietal character is backed up by Médoc-like tobacco leaf notes. The palate is classic cabernet sauvignon – long, fine and firm. (\$70.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.juniperestate.com.au>

2014 Stella Bella Serie Luminosa Cabernet Sauvignon The fresh, powerful cassis aroma and flavour clearly indicate this wine's varietal roots. The tannins are firm, but not coarse and overpowering, and the oak is beautifully integrated. (Not yet available) ★★★★★

2012 Leeuwin Estate Art Series Cabernet Sauvignon An intense blackcurrant style with classy French oak. It's a substantial, firm, balanced cabernet that will definitely age well. (\$55.00) ★★★★★
<http://nillumbikcellars.com.au/nillumbik.php?group=21&page=240>

2014 Sandalford Prendiville Reserve Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The nose is fragrant, showing cassis, cedar and tobacco leaf. It's an elegant, long-flavoured cabernet with a pleasantly firm finish. (\$120.00) ★★★★★
http://www.sandalford.com/index.php?option=com_f2signupmjb&view=products&task=view&product_id=697&product_category_id=0&flatt=1&Itemid=389

2014 Sittella Berns Reserve Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The blackcurrant/mint/leaf aroma and flavour are enticing, and the palate delivers the intensity, structure and the balance for cellaring. (\$46.95) ★★★★★
<https://www.sittella.com.au>

2012 Moss Wood Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The nose is fresh, ripe and fragrant, showing plum and blackcurrant. French oak also makes its point, albeit quietly. A coiled up red that is fine and firm. Cellar. (\$105.00) ★★★★★

2012 Cape Mentelle Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon It's slightly developed on the nose but shows the typical cassis, tobacco etc. The palate is impressively powerful and long. (\$76.00) ★★★★★

2012 Voyager Estate Project U12 North Block Cabernet Sauvignon Here we have plenty of blackcurrant/plum aroma and flavour. The tannins are a little furry but provide appropriate structure. (\$90.00) ★★★★★

2014 Windows Estate Basket Pressed Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The fragrant cassis aroma is backed up by classy oak. There's no lack of flavour and freshness, and the tannins are firm but fine. This wine needs time. (\$34.00) ★★★★★

2014 Rosabrook Single Vineyard Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Quite ripe but still shows fresh cassis aromatics. The oak is nicely integrated on a powerful, long palate. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

2014 Grace Farm Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon The intense cassis aromas and flavours are backed up by quality oak. A substantial but balanced wine. Cellar. (\$30.00) ★★★★★

2011 Houghton Gladstones Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon This wine shows a little maturity, but the blackcurrant, tobacco and cedar aromas are very appealing. The palate is fine, long and satisfying. (\$64.00) ★★★★★

2012 Voyager Estate Project V9 Old Block Cabernet Sauvignon A good meld of slightly developed blackcurrant and cedary complexity. It's a classy cabernet, but is more mature than we expected. (\$72.00) ★★★★★☆

2012 Fuddling Cup Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Fairly developed, but has pleasant cedar/tobacco overtones. The palate offers enough fruit and a firm structure. (\$30.00) ★★★★★☆

2012 Saracen Estates Reserve Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon This wine offers vibrant blackcurrant aromas with a layer of classy oak. Although there's good fruit weight, the finish is fairly hard. (\$60.00) ★★★★★☆

2014 Suckfizzle Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Abundant cassis plus slightly smoky oak. It's quite firm and puckering, but has good fruit. (Not yet released) ★★★★★☆

2014 Vasse Felix Filius Cabernet Sauvignon Light red berries plus leaf. Adequate fruit, balanced savoury tannins. (\$21.00) ★★★★★☆

2012 Higher Plane Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Quite plummy, with firm, furry tannins. Could soften if given time. (\$50.00) ★★★★★

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2014 Cherubino Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Menthol overtones. More plum than blackcurrant. Plenty of flavour with quite pronounced tannins. (\$70.00) ★★★

2014 Miles from Nowhere Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Red fruits with a touch of cassis. Slightly toasty oak supports the varietal flavour. (\$22.50) ★★★

2014 Stella Bella Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Shows ripe fruit, but is quite oaky. (\$32.00) ★★★

2014 Sittella Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Blackcurrant, menthol and leaf aromas. There's plenty of varietal flavour within a firm structure, plus a hint of greenness. (\$24.00) ★★★

2014 Woody Nook Gallagher's Choice Cabernet Sauvignon Shows ripe fruit with a green leafy background. The tannins are quite firm. (\$55.00) ★★★ Diam cork

2012 Flowstone Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Weak colour. On the green side. Light fruit. (\$36.00) ★★

2014 Sandalford Estate Reserve Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Lacks vibrancy. Stewed and minty. Dominant tannins. (\$33.00) ★★★

2014 Fuddling Cup Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Quite stewed and developed. Very dry. ★★

2014 Rosabrook Cabernet Sauvignon Light bright colour. Shows sulphides and has a leafy edge. (\$25.00) ★★

2012 Victory Point Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Verging on jammy. Very firm. (\$40.00) ★★

2014 Howard Park Leston Cabernet Sauvignon Developed colour. Ripe but dull and advanced. (\$46.00) ★★

Margaret River cabernet sauvignon reigns supreme. Sure, excellent cabernet is made elsewhere in Australia, particularly in Coonawarra, but Margaret River not only has quality, it has the numbers.

And there will be more in Part Two.

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