

HOLIDAY SEASON POTATIONS

It's mid December and that means we're well into the holiday social season. For readers of Winewise some carefully chosen drinks are in order. Here are a few suggestions, some of which are a step or two out of the mainstream.

Riesling

A dry one for the purists

Weighing up all the factors, including price and availability, we can't go past a riesling reviewed on 12 November.

2016 Peter Lehmann Portrait Eden Valley Riesling Once again Peter Lehmann Wines turns out a classic perfumed Eden Valley riesling with great fruit and acid cut. A bargain. (\$16.00) ★★★★★
https://www.danmurphys.com.au/product/DM_911472/peter-lehmann-portrait-eden-valley-dry-riesling

One for everybody

2016 Pewsey Vale Prima Eden Valley Riesling With 24 gm/litre sweetness backed up by lip-smacking acidity, this wine is the perfect all-rounder. The delightful aromatics, freshness and balance will appeal to the riesling fan, and the casual drinker will love it because it's "fruity". (\$26.00) ★★★★★

There has to be some chardy

Versatile & quaffable

2015 Oakridge Over The Shoulder Yarra Valley Chardonnay A very well made white peach varietal style that is most definitely fruit-driven, but also offers textural enjoyment. (\$19.00) ★★★★★

Thought-provoking

You could simply refer to Part One of our recent Margaret River feature from which the value pick would be the 2014 Voyager Estate, but here's another that graced the tasting table.

2015 Tapanappa Tiers Vineyard Piccadilly Valley Chardonnay

When intensity, freshness and varietal character are enhanced by just the right amount of complexity we're getting near the top of the tree with chardonnay. This is a wine of great power and structure that delivers in all respects. (\$80.00) ★★★★★

<http://www.armadalecellars.com.au/All-Products/Tapanappa-Tiers-Chardonnay-2015.aspx>

The Alternatives

2016 Laissez Faire (Larry Cherubino) Pemberton Pinot Blanc Any Alsatian winemaker worth his or her salt would be over the moon if they made this wine. It's about peaches and pears with a lemon twist, and is certainly textural in terms of viscosity and grip. All in all it's a very satisfying drink. The only place we can find to buy it is the winery.

(\$29.00) ★★★★★☆

<https://www.larrycherubino.com/Wine/Laissez-Faire>

2016 Collector Lamp Lit Marsanne This Canberra District wine made by Alex McKay demonstrates a deft hand with a variety that can deliver wines that verge on coarseness. This one is as far from being coarse as one could imagine. It's a fresh, lively dry white with hints of honeysuckle and apricot, backed up by faintly nutty complexity. The creamy mouthfeel is a delight and the long finish is very impressive. (\$32.00) ★★★★★☆

<http://www.collectorwines.com.au/>

Pink & Frivolous

2016 Wirra Wirra Mrs Wigley McLaren Vale Grenache Rosé I apologise to the Wirra Wirra team for using the word “frivolous”, because a lot of work goes into making good rosé. I'm referring to the circumstances in which most pink wine is consumed. Serve this one very chilled so the sweetness isn't quite as obvious. You'll still be able to enjoy the rose petal aroma and vibrant varietal flavour. Perfect with cold ham and turkey. (\$16.00) ★★★★★



Supreme Finesse

2015 Tolpuddle Tasmania Pinot Noir This isn't really a red for the barbie (unless you have a few wine-enthusiast friends around and are grilling butterflied quail) but it would grace any serious table. This is cutting-edge pinot noir from a great vineyard in the Coal River Valley. Aromas of cherry mingle with those of hedgerows and wisps of sandalwood smoke. The palate delivers lessons in length and elegance.

(\$76.00) ★★★★★

<http://www.randalls.net.au/store/tolpuddle-vineyard-pinot-noir-2015-p-26728.html>

Fuller of Body

2014 Koomilya McLaren Vale Shiraz Put McLaren Vale in a glass capsule. Inhale it. Drink it. What more do we need to write about this poised, enticing 13.2% alcohol shiraz that is delicious now, but will age for decades? (\$70.00) ★★★★★☆

<https://edcellars.com/sc-pannell-koomilya-shiraz-14.html>

2013 Koomilya DC Block McLaren Vale Shiraz This gem of a shiraz comes from 80 year old vines and represents the very pinnacle of McLaren Vale red wine. It's vibrantly voluptuous, in the ideal ripeness zone, and the structure is provided by perfectly integrated tannins. There's also a subtle complexity which could be described as spicy or earthy, but it's much more than that. A great Australian red that will be talked about for many, many years to come. Only 351 dozen made. (\$103.00) ★★★★★

<http://www.veno.com.au/sc-pannell-koomilya-dc-block-shiraz.html>

Both of these wines were made by Steve Pannell, but they speak much more of their origins than they do of winemaking. When tasting them I was reminded of something Steve said to me years ago. "One of the most important things a winemaker can learn is when to do nothing."

Steve has an intimate understanding of McLaren Vale, but of equal importance is his grasp of balance in wine. McLaren Vale won a lot of supporters among red-wine drinkers via reds that were decidedly unbalanced – over-oaked, over-alcoholic etc. Wines like that still sell well to fans of the bloody obvious, but McLaren Vale's destiny lies not with thinly disguised vintage port, but with wines like the two Koomilyas. Steve Pannell isn't the only one in McLaren Vale who makes red wines that eloquently express the region, and we look forward to tasting an increasing number of wines that not only take McLaren Vale red back to its roots, but surpass the quality of 60 years ago.

And don't forget a Winewise all-time favourite.

2014 Shaw + Smith Adelaide Hills Shiraz A classically perfumed nose of rose petal, cherry and sweet spice leads to a balanced, flavoursome palate full of red and dark fruits. The tannins are fine but firm, and support the fruit through to a long finish. (\$38.00) ★★★★★☆

<http://www.winestar.com.au/shaw-smith-shiraz-2014>

Alternatives

We can't go past the Tar & Roses duo which are available from the big two for \$22.00 a bottle, though we note that Boccaccio Cellars in Melbourne is offering the Tempranillo for \$18.00.

2015 Tar & Roses Heathcote Sangiovese There's more than a hint of chianti in this stylish spicy red. The palate features intense, medium-weight fruit backed up by just-right dry tannins. It's impressively Tuscan-like, but Heathcote through and through. (\$22.00) ★★★★★☆

2015 Tar & Roses Heathcote Tempranillo Another varietal gem from the Tar & Roses team. The delightful loganberry and licorice aromas are confirmed by a succulent, utterly delicious, firm, fine palate. In Spain we'd drink a wine like this with lamb from an asador. In Australia, good old roast lamb leg will do. (\$22.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.tarandroses.com.au/our-wines/>

It's Not Christmas without Fizz

For sheer value we must recommend the NV Piper Heidsieck which is readily available for just under \$40.00, but when it comes to something red and bubbly we give the big thumbs up to the:

2013 Seppelt Original Sparkling Shiraz It's blackberries, cherries and spices, with intensity, balance and a fine mousse. What's more, it's at the "serious" dry end of the scale. Perfect with the Christmas turkey, duck, ham and cheeses. (\$19.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.winestar.com.au/seppelt-original-sparkling-shiraz-2013>
<http://www.boccaccio.com.au/buy/seppelt-original-sparkling-shiraz-2013/LQ08398>

And to Finish

Two very different beverages with a lot in common.

Fresh fruit and cheeses play major roles in Australian holiday celebrations. Peaches, apricots, cherries, berries and mango are all perfect partners for the **2015 Yalumba FSW8B Wrattontully Botrytis Viognier**. It's a wonderfully fresh, pale-coloured sweet white abounding in apricot and grapefruit marmalade characteristics. The conjunction of sweetness and acidity is seamless, and in style it can be compared with a German beerenauslese. (\$26.00/375 ml) ★★★★★
<https://www.wineselectors.com.au/product/yalum50715-yalumba-fsw-8b-botrytis-viognier-2015>

Finally, after over-indulgence on food, the European custom of the digestif or digestivo could be worth adopting. **Yalumba V De Vie** is a 40% alcohol spirit distilled from Eden Valley viognier. It's a unique Australian version of the popular high-quality Italian varietal grappas. The term grappa may bring to mind rough, fiery alcohol to some, but this is a smooth, sipping delight, with an aroma that relates to its grape of origin. (\$61.50/375 ml) ★★★★★

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all. Please feel free to pass on this bulletin to your friends in the spirit of the Christmas season.

The Winewise Crew

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