

McLaren Vale Grenache

Cannonau, garnacha, garnatxa, grenache noir, Roussillon tinto, - call it what you will, grenache, as we know it, is widely planted across the globe. For about half a century it was the workhorse of the Australian wine industry, used mainly for the production of fortified wine. By the 1970s the demand for fortified was in decline and plantings of grenache took a dive.

Grenache is now being rediscovered in Australia, and McLaren Vale can claim to be the ideal home for its new coming. Given that regions close to the Mediterranean are cradles for the variety, McLaren Vale, with its proximity to the sea and benign climate, ticks all the boxes.

However, McLaren Vale is far from homogeneous. Soils vary dramatically, as does height above sea level. Vineyard sites vary from about 50 m to nearly 200m up around Clarendon and Kangarilla. The topographical difference plays a significant part in influencing wine style.



2017 S.C. Pannell Smart Clarendon Grenache This isn't what many people would expect McLaren Vale grenache to be. The Clarendon sub-region encourages a more elegant style, and that's what we have here. Rose petal and cranberry aromatics are enhanced by a beguiling suggestion of green herbs. The palate is intense and silky, but in no way heavy. A ground-breaking style. (\$60.00) ★★★★★
<https://pannell.com.au/product/2017-smart-grenache-2>

April 1, 2019

2017 S.C. Pannell Old McDonald McLaren Vale Grenache We found it impossible to split the top two wines. They certainly stood out in a bracket of nine 2017 grenache. This one is all about raspberries and cherries with a faint hint of Turkish delight thrown in. The vibrant palate is plush, fine and “juicy”. (\$60.00) ★★★★★

<https://pannell.com.au/product/2017-old-mcdonald-grenache-2/>

“The 2017 Old McDonald Grenache is quite possibly the best Grenache I have ever made.” **Stephen Pannell**

2016 d'Arenberg The Derelict Vineyard McLaren Vale Grenache Ripe blackberry/mulberry aromas and flavours. Vibrant, long flavour backed up by fine, firm balanced tannins. Should be even better in 2-3 years. (\$29.00) ★★★★★

<https://www.darenberg.com.au/the-derelict-vineyard-2016>

“In our opinion, grenache is the variety with which McLaren Vale may well stand proudest. Many regions fashion great shiraz (of which McLaren Vale is one), but with grenache we have the opportunity to deliver something clearly unique. Dry summers and shallow, rocky or sandy soils allow us to “bonsai” the naturally strong grenache plant and impart some concentration and flavor to the fruit.”

Toby Bekkers

2016 Willunga 100 The Tithing McLaren Vale Grenache The varietal raspberry and dark cherry aromas have considerable appeal, and the palate follows on well, delivering length of fresh flavour backed up by balanced tannins. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

<https://www.willunga100.com/shopwillunga/2016tithing>

2015 Bekkers McLaren Vale Grenache An impressively rich style, packed with fresh blackberry and red berry fruit. backed up by subtle dried herbs characteristics. Throw in hints of licorice as well. The tannins are fine and firm. A multi-layered cellaring style. (\$79.00) ★★★★★

<https://bekkerswine.com>

“In the winery we walk the fine line between capturing fragrance and aromatic spice while also delivering enough structure to ensure the wine has the capacity to age. Our methodology is to select parcels of fruit with specific attributes and then blend prior to bottling to achieve a balance between density and aromatics. We look for fruit in the “red” end of the spectrum teamed with aromatic Asian spice (cloves, star anise etc.) We use some whole-bunch fruit and mature in older French puncheons.” **Toby Bekkers**

2018 Geddes Seldom Inn McLaren Vale Grenache Bright red fruits nose. The palate is supple, varietal and “juicy”. A very enjoyable fresh drink. Comparable to quality beaujolais. (\$20.00) ★★★★★

<https://geddeswines.com.au/>

2018 Chapel Hill McLaren Vale Bush Vine Grenache Very fragrant. Rose petals and violets. Fine savoury tannins with good fruit. Nicely balanced. (\$33.00) ★★★★★

<https://www.chapelhillwine.com.au/products/22433-bush-vine-grenache/>

2010 Wirra Wirra The Absconder McLaren Vale Grenache Mature and complex, showing what the French call “garrigue” – Provence herbs juniper, rosemary, thyme and lavender. Drinking beautifully. (N.A.)

★★★★

2017 S.C. Pannell McLaren Vale Garnacha Basso Fresh raspberry with faintly spicy/peppery overtones. A very supple enjoyable drink. (\$28.00) ★★★★★

2013 The Old Faithful Northern Exposure McLaren Vale Grenache Attractive mushroom maturity with plenty of red fruits. Ripe and ready. (\$60.00) ★★★★★

2017 d'Arenberg The Custodian McLaren Vale Grenache Fresh ripe raspberry nose with some bramble complexity. Persistent, dry palate with an acid lift. (\$20.00) ★★★★★

2017 Willunga 100 The Hundred Clarendon Grenache Shows attractive red berry characteristics and is still quite primary in nature. Very appealing drinking. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2017 Mr Riggs The Magnet McLaren Vale Grenache Perfumed, substantial and plummy. Makes up in richness what it lacks in elegance. A good example of “old school” McLaren Vale grenache. (\$30.00) ★★★★★

Bear in mind that grenache is often “touched up” with up to 15% of a more powerful grape variety like shiraz. Such wines are legally labelled as grenache, but can be significantly richer and firmer than a 100% grenache.

2016 Willunga 100 McLaren Vale Grenache A lively, spicy raspberry style with an interesting earthy touch. The palate is dry, balanced and persistent. (\$25.00) ★★★★★

2016 Geddes Seldom Inn McLaren Vale Grenache Spicy blackberry aromas introduce a mouthfilling firm palate. Flavoursome drinking without the finesse of the top wines. (\$20.00) ★★★★★

2017 Bekkers McLaren Vale Grenache The nose shows red berries with a hint of dried herbs. It's not quite as vibrant as some, but the lingering, savoury palate is a winner. (\$85.00) ★★★★★

2018 Gemtree Small Batch McLaren Vale Grenache Fresh, spicy mulberry aromas with floral overtones. Good weight and structure. Acid a touch obvious. (\$50.00) ★★★★★

2016 Bekkers McLaren Vale Grenache Comparatively advanced colour. Complex spice, dried herbs and earth, pinot-like nose. Showing development, but is very much an individual. (\$80.00) ★★★★★

2016 Fox Creek Limited Release McLaren Vale Grenache Redskins confectionary together with blackberry. Slightly advanced, but still offers sufficient fruit, although it's somewhat sweet & sour. (\$38.00) ★★★★★

2016 Clandestine Vineyards McLaren Vale Grenache Ripe aromas without the vibrancy of some. Flavour tending to blackberry on a firm palate. (\$40.00) ★★★★★

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2018 Grancari Estate Old Vine McLaren Vale Grenache Ripe and flavoursome but lacks the expected freshness. Drink now. (\$15.00) ★★★

2016 Blackbilly Single Vineyard McLaren Vale Old Vine Grenache Offers raspberry aroma and flavour, but is just starting to fade. Drink now while the flavour is there. (\$24.00) ★★★

2015 Geddes Seldom Inn McLaren Vale Grenache Light, almost browning, colour. Tiring nose. Better fruit on the palate, but fading. (\$20.00) ★★★

2014 La Curio Reserve McLaren Vale Bush Vine Grenache Light colour. Slightly advanced red fruits. Dry on the finish. (\$32.00) ★★★

2014 Pirramimma Old Bush Vine Ironstone McLaren Vale Grenache Shows obvious bottle age. There are hints of rhubarb and licorice, but the palate is starting to dry out. (\$50.00) ★★★

2015 Grancari Estate McLaren Vale Grenache Developed colour and red fruits nose. Jammy, hot, fading. (\$20.00) ★★★

2017 Oliver's Taranga McLaren Vale Grenache Small Batch No. 11266 Weak colour without youthful redness. Lacks freshness. (\$30.00) ★★★

2016 Shottesbrooke Single Vineyard Bush Vine McLaren Vale Grenache Pale advanced colour. Light, developed, slightly green edge. Warm finish. (\$32.50) ★★

2017 Oxenberry Doringo Valley McLaren Vale Grenache Weak colour. Sweet fruit with a touch of volatility. (\$25.00) ★★

2018 Heirloom Vineyards Alcalá McLaren Vale Grenache Slightly forward and jammy. Showing acetone volatility. (\$80.00) ★★

HOW THINGS CAN CHANGE IN FIFTY YEARS

“ Grenache wines mature at an early age and because of this it is favoured by Australian winemakers for ‘commercial’ grade dry reds and ports. It is also commonly used for rosés for which it is well suited. Grenache dry reds are pleasant when young, having a light, fresh style and a grapey palate. However, when compared with the better quality varieties, its wines are lacking in colour, tannin and character. ”

Australia and New Zealand Complete Book of Wine 1973

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