

2017 Hunter Valley Shiraz

Hunter Valley shiraz is at its best when the ripening period is hot and dry. In 2017, the Hunter vignerons were blessed with just those conditions, and the wines are, for the most part, generously flavoured. High temperatures demand precise picking decisions because of fast ripening and drop-offs in acidity. Those who harvested at precisely the right time were in the box seat to make some outstanding wines.

Some appear to have waited just that little bit too long, and/or didn't make the appropriate acid adjustment. The resultant wines lacked the freshness we desired.

On the subject of acid adjustment, there's the question of too much, too little or just right. It's essential that juice from grapes grown in warm environments be acid-adjusted to control pH. Wines that aren't acidified quickly become flabby, lack balance and freshness, and turn brown. Too much acid produces vividly coloured, very fresh wines that are uncomfortably tart on the finish.

With 64 wines to taste, we are in an ideal position to paint an accurate picture of shiraz from the Hunter Valley 2017 vintage. Here it is.



2017 De Iuliis LDR Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz The vibrant floral aromas are irresistible, and the pristine medium-bodied fruit is balanced by fine tannins. A brilliant young wine that expresses region, variety and vintage very eloquently. (Not yet released. 2016 currently available at \$40.00) ★★★★★

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



2017 Andrew Thomas Elenay Shiraz Superb bright colour. The rose petal and dark cherry nose is particularly engaging, and the intense medium-weight flavours are matched by very well managed tannins. (\$55.00 - To be released 4 May, 2019 along with the entire Thomas 2017 range) ★★★★★
<https://www.thomaswines.com.au/>

2017 Tintilla Estate Reserve Hunter Valley Shiraz This wine features blackberry fruit of considerable depth plus a touch of oak. It's a wine of freshness and power, supported by a firm structure, and can be cellared with confidence for a decade or two. (Not yet released. 2016 currently available at \$40.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.tintilla.com.au/>

2017 Mount Pleasant Rosehill Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz Here's a wine that casts a long shadow. The aromas and flavours are examples of varietal power without over-ripeness, and the palate intensity, length and balance suggest that this wine will attain classic status within a couple of decades. (\$60.00 - \$45.00 in 6 bottle purchase) ★★★★★
<https://www.summerhillwineshop.com.au/product/2017-mount-pleasant-rosehill-vineyard-shiraz-hunter-valley/>

2017 Hungerford Hill Epic Hunter Valley Shiraz Rich & toasty, offering a real blast of fresh varietal aroma. The oak certainly plays a prominent role, but the power of the fruit keeps it under control. A well-named wine. (Not yet released but will be about \$150.00) ★★★★★
<https://hungerfordhill.com.au/>

April 25, 2019

2017 Tamburlaine Reserve Hunter Valley Syrah Rich and plummy, with firm, but kind-to-the-palate, tannins. It's medium-bodied, long & satisfying, with just a caress of oak. (\$44.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.tamburlaine.com.au/product/2017-Reserve-Hunter-Syrah>



2017 Mount Pleasant Mountain D Full Bodied Dry Red This one stands side by side with the Rosehill Vineyard Shiraz. It's rich, plummy, spicy and firm, with great fruit and freshness. It has real staying power. (\$75.00) ★★★★★
<https://mountpleasantwines.com.au/our-wine/our-range/mountain/mount-pleasant-mountain-d-full-bodied-dry-red-2017>

2017 Audrey Wilkinson Winemakers Selection Hunter Valley Shiraz A full-on blackberry style at the top end of the richness scale. In an impressive tightrope act, the ripeness is matched with freshness and poise. (\$40.00) ★★★★★
<https://audreywilkinson.com.au/product/winemakers-selection-shiraz-2017/>

2017 Margan White Label Hunter Valley Shiraz A youthful berry-scented, slightly spicy shiraz that is full of life. The acid and tannins merge beautifully with the persistent regional flavour. (\$40.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.margan.com.au/>

2017 Tyrrell's Hunter Valley Shiraz Light but bright colour. A shiraz in the red berry spectrum that is faintly earthy in the true regional style. It's a lively "Hunter Burgundy" that has supple tannins and a pleasant acid lift on the finish. Great value. (\$25.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.tyrrells.com.au/product/hunter-valley-shiraz/>

2017 Mount Pleasant Mountain A Medium Bodied Dry Red Eye-catching purple colour. The red fruits nose is attractively perfumed and the palate certainly fits the label description. A classy wine with fine, savoury tannins. (\$75.00) ★★★★★
<https://fromtheproducer.com/wine/mount-pleasant-mountian-a-medium-bodied-dry-red-2017/>

2017 Andrew Thomas Belford Shiraz Bright purple colour. Fragrant, fresh, dark berry nose. The palate is vibrant and long, but shows a little too much acid at the moment. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

2017 Andrew Thomas Kiss Shiraz Fresh, rich, ripe, and offering red plum aromas. The palate is long and powerful, showing its oak at the moment. Needs time. (\$85.00) ★★★★★

2017 Tyrrell's Old Hut Single Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz A very appealing perfumed red fruits style of medium-weight. Although it's quite easy to drink, there's certainly cellaring potential. (\$45.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.tyrrells.com.au/>

2017 Andrew Thomas Sweetwater Shiraz Very much in the blackberry range of aromas and flavours, this time with a slight bacon/char overtone. The palate is plush and very appealing. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2017 Brokenwood Tallawanta Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz The red fruits aromas are enhanced by a hint of spice. This is a fresh, well balanced shiraz that just needs a little time to open up. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

2017 De Iuliis Hunter Valley Shiraz The vibrant dark cherry nose leads to a finely structured, accessible palate with an acid lift on the finish. Good value. (\$25.00) ★★★★★
<https://dewine.com.au/>

2017 Tyrrell's Stevens Single Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz Vibrant colour. Captivating purity of dark cherry aromatics. This shiraz is full of life, but the acid appears to be tweaked just a little high for the fruit weight. (\$45.00 but not yet released) ★★★★★

2017 Hungerford Hill St Vernay Hunter Valley Shiraz Charry oak challenges the bright red fruits at first sniff. The palate is intense enough to carry the oak, but the components need time to knit together. (\$65.00 but not yet released) ★★★★★

2017 Andrew Thomas The Cote Shiraz The perfumed dark cherry fruit is fresh and of good intensity. The tannins are firm but fine, and the acidity is prominent on the finish. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2017 Andrew Thomas The Dam Block Shiraz Very fresh blackberry and red berry aromas and flavours. The palate offers pristine fruit and fine tannins together with well managed oak. Acidity asserts itself on the finish. (\$45.00) ★★★★★

2017 Margan Hunter Valley Ripasso * Fresh rose petal/cherry aromas feature on an attractive nose. The palate is one of considerable weight and structure, but, at the same time is full of life, if a tad closed. Cellar. (Not yet released) ★★★★★

**Ripasso is the Italian term used in reference to the re-passing of a wine from one ferment over the skins of another. In our case we have passed some of our 2017 vintage shiraz from our Timbervines vineyard over the skins of a number of different varieties from the 2018 vintage. The mystery for the drinker is to figure out what skins we have used for the re-fermentation.* Margan Family Winegrowers

2017 Briar Ridge Dairy Hill Hunter Valley Shiraz Very fresh dark cherry aromas which are faintly spicy and show integrated oak. There's more than adequate fruit weight and fine tannins. (\$70.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.briarridge.com.au/product/2017-Dairy-Hill-Shiraz>

“ There’s definitely a heightened level of excitement among Hunter Valley winemakers as the shiraz from the first of a hat-trick of warm and dry vintages are hitting the market.

The 2017 vintage growing season experienced average rainfall to December 2016, but then warm and dry conditions prevailed throughout from veraison to harvest. We did experience some heat spikes (low to mid 40s) during January and February, which in itself can create some challenges, but most Hunter vigneron would much prefer it stinking hot than pissing down with rain....

The results as we now see in the glass, are wines with beautifully ripe yet vibrant blue/dark fruit, and a concentration that sits them in the slightly fuller end of the medium-bodied spectrum. While most of these wines are deliciously approachable as youngsters, the very best of the vintage will be regarded as classics in the years to come... ”

Andrew Thomas

2017 Two Rivers Reserve Shiraz Attractive plummy aromas with a faint touch of spice. Well balanced palate, delivering fine tannins and a touch of oak. (Not yet released) ★★★★★
<https://www.tworivers.com.au/>

2017 Pepper Tree Tallavera Hunter Valley Shiraz Fresh dark berries show on the nose, together with bay leaf and tilled earth. The intense, firm palate needs time to soften. (\$65.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.peppertreewines.com.au/product/2017-tallavera-single-vineyard-shiraz/>

2017 Gartelmann Wines Diedrich Hunter Valley Shiraz The fresh dark cherry aromas have considerable appeal. The palate is lively, but firm, showing some oak. It needs a little time to integrate all the components. (Not yet released) ★★★★★
<https://www.gartelmann.com.au/>

2017 Tyrrell's Vat 9 Hunter Valley Shiraz This wine isn't made to be a show-stopper, but it embodies everything that the region is about – medium-bodied dark berry fruit, fine tannins and a hint of earthiness. It will age well. (Approx. \$85.00 but not yet released) ★★★★★

2017 Brokenwood Verona Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz There's a slight reduction on the nose at the moment, but the intense blackberry and blackcurrant aromas and flavours are impressive. A firm wine that will impress, given time. ★★★★★

2017 Briar Ridge Stockhausen Hunter Valley Shiraz Full of life, and certainly medium-bodied, but at this early stage looks a little one-dimensional. ★★★★★

2017 De Iuliis Limited Release Hunter Valley Shiraz Has a brilliant colour and shows vibrant dark berry aromas and flavours, but is the fruit intensity up to the acidity? ★★★★★

2017 Pepper Tree Limited Release Venator Hunter Valley Shiraz The nose shows powerful blackberry aromas and reflects skilful use of new oak. The tannins are fine, but the acid is surprisingly prickly. ★★★★★

2017 Gundog Estate Rare Game Hunter Valley Shiraz Very much at the ripe end of the scale, but it's still fresh. The palate is satisfying, teetering on the edge of jamminess. ★★★★★

2017 Two Rivers Thunderbolt Shiraz A pleasing wine that is straightforward, fruity and easy to drink, with a hint of toasty oak. ★★★★★

2017 Elbourne H.A.E. Hunter Valley Shiraz A rich, ripe blackberry style of shiraz which is quite solid, with slightly furry tannins. (\$50.00) ★★★★★

2017 De Iuliis Steven Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz Plummy and fresh, but the acid sticks out a little too obviously. ★★★★★

2017 Brokenwood Hunter Valley Shiraz Dense and plummy. There's even a hint of dark chocolate together with a whiff of oak. This is a firm red of good intensity, but it needs time to soften. ★★★

2017 Dalwood Estate Hunter Valley Shiraz Fresh dark berry aromas with a chappy note. This wine has good fruit and balance, with a firm finish. ★★★

2017 Vinden Estate Fountainhead Hunter Valley Shiraz The fresh, ripe, dark berry and rose petal aromatics also show some oak. Although the palate offers plenty of flavour, the oak is prominent at the moment. ★★★★★

2017 Sweetwater Single Estate Hunter Valley Shiraz A very fresh wine showing floral and dark cherry characteristics. However there's a surprising herbal character in the background. ★★★

2017 Mount Pleasant High Paddock Shiraz Fresh blackberry aromas are followed up by satisfying fruit weight. However, the acid shows obviously. ★★★

- 2017 Ridgeview Effen Hill Vineyard Impressions Shiraz** A ripe fresh blackberry-scented shiraz that is big and rich. The tannins are somewhat coarse and furry. ★★★
- 2017 Pepper Tree Coquun Hunter Valley Shiraz** It's a big mouthful of wine, but it lacks the essential vibrancy, and the tannins are chewy. ★★★
- 2017 Pepper Tree Limited Release Claude Hunter Valley Shiraz** A ripe, rich shiraz that is forward, without the desired liveliness. ★★★
- 2017 Andrew Thomas DJV Shiraz** A simple, fresh, approachable red fruits style that appears to be entering its drinking window. (\$35.00) ★★★
- 2017 Gundog Estate Hunter's Hunter Valley Shiraz** Ripe, fresh, dark fruits show on the nose together with charry oak. A solid shiraz with slightly furry tannins. ★★★
- 2017 Krinklewood Broke Fordwich Basket Press Shiraz** Powerful dark cherry aroma and flavour with herbal and bay leaf overtones, suggesting whole-bunch fermentation. A ripe, solid style. ★★★
- 2017 Pooles Rock Centenary Block Hunter Valley Shiraz** There's plenty of flavour here, but it's not as fresh as some. Time will tell. ★★★
- 2017 Andrew Thomas Synergy Shiraz** A simple red fruits style. Fresh, but a bit light. (25.00) ★★★
- 2017 The Little Wine Company Little Gem Shiraz** Although this wine certainly doesn't lack fruit, it doesn't show a lot of life or potential. ★★★
- 2017 Carillion Fenestella Hunter Valley Shiraz** A slightly forward blackberry/spice style with an acidic finish. ★★★
- 2017 Pooles Rock Post Office Shiraz** Rich and ripe. A solid, slightly pruny shiraz. ★★★
- 2017 Audrey Wilkinson Hunter Valley Shiraz** Substantial and forward, with furry tannins. ★★★☆
- 2017 Vinden Estate Basket Press Hunter Valley Shiraz** Intense dark berry aromas, showing some oak. Firm and closed. ★★★☆
- 2017 Saddler's Alessandro Reserve Hunter Valley Shiraz** Richly flavoured, but not quite fresh enough. ★★★☆
- 2017 Mistletoe Hunter Valley Shiraz** Dull and over-ripe, with coarse tannins. ★★★☆
- 2017 Ryan's Reserve Vanessa's Vineyard Shiraz** Red berry/earthy. Savoury. An old world Hunter that lacks vibrancy. ★★★☆
- 2017 Draytons Vineyard Reserve Pokolbin Shiraz** Shows red berry fruit, but is quite oaky. ★★★☆

2017 Hanging Tree Signature Series Shiraz Certainly offers ripe fruit, but it's on the dull side. ★★★

2017 Saddler's Hunter Valley Shiraz Shows ripe fruit that lacks freshness, and the tannins are quite furry.. ★★★

2017 Wombat Crossing Hermit's Block Single Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz Has plenty of dark berry flavour, but lacks freshness. ★★★

2017 Draytons Bin 5555 Hunter Valley Shiraz Comparatively light and somewhat reductive. ★★

2017 Mistletoe Reserve Hunter Valley Shiraz Lacks freshness. ★★

2017 Mistletoe Grand Reserve Hunter Valley Shiraz Ripe, substantial and oaky, but very dull. ★★

2017 Mistletoe Home Vineyard Hunter Valley Shiraz Dull and jammy. ★★

In any vintage, the importance of picking grapes at precisely the right time cannot be underestimated. When conditions are scorching, the picking decision becomes even more critical. Grapes can go from perfect and fresh to “baked” and dull very quickly indeed.

The 2017 red wine vintage in the Hunter Valley was indeed a successful one, but that doesn't mean that every wine is great. If you're looking for a 2017 Hunter red to drink now, we'd suggest the Tyrrell's Hunter Valley Shiraz which, at \$25.00, is a steal. There are any number of wines that will reward 10-15 years' cellaring, but if you're seeking reds for the ages, the Mount Pleasant duo, Rosehill and Mountain D, are the ones we'd go for.

RATING SCALE

★★★★★	Outstanding	97-100 pts	Gold medal
★★★★☆	Highly Recommended	93-96	Gold/silver
★★★★	Recommended	90-92	Silver
★★★☆☆	Recommended	87-89	Bronze
★★★	Agreeable	85-87	Bronze
★★☆☆	Agreeable	82-84	
★★	Acceptable	80-82	
★☆☆	Acceptable	77-79	
★	Barely Acceptable	74-76	
☆	Unacceptable	71-73	
No stars	Undrinkable	<71	

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