

Cabernet & Shiraz – the Classic Australian Pairing

Back in the fifties and sixties, it was common practice to blend cabernet sauvignon and shiraz to produce Aussie “claret”. The components of the blends sometimes hailed from different regions, and even different states. One of the earliest, and most famous, was The Mildara Cabernet Shiraz Reserve Bin “Yellow Label” which was made from Coonawarra cabernet and shiraz from McLaren Vale and/or the Hunter Valley.

The 1962 Penfolds Bin 60A, crafted from Coonawarra cabernet and Kalimna shiraz, achieved legendary status, but, even though blends of cabernet sauvignon and shiraz remained readily available, fashion pushed the market towards 100% varietal wines.

Coonawarra producers may disagree, but sometimes I’ve felt that cabernet sauvignon from the Limestone Coast could be improved with the addition of shiraz or cabernet sauvignon from warmer regions. Some key producers of 50-60 years ago certainly agreed.

Recently, two exceptional blends of cabernet sauvignon and shiraz came my way, one in the Coonawarra plus warmer area mould, the other entirely from a special site in McLaren Vale.

2015 Yalumba The Cayley Coonawarra & Barossa Cabernet & Shiraz The 74% Coonawarra cabernet makes its presence felt in this stylish blend. The blackcurrant and red berry of variety and region match well with the French oak and hints of tobacco leaf. The Barossa shiraz component contributes dark berry aroma and flavour in a low-key manner. This is a silky, long-flavoured wine in which the fine tannins fold in beautifully, showing the magic that can be achieved with a classic Australian blend. (\$365.00) ★★★★★
<http://www.yalumba.com/shop/premium-wines/the-caley>

2018 Hickinbotham The Peake McLaren Vale Cabernet Shiraz The Hickinbotham Vineyard, at about 315 metres above sea level, occupies a lofty position in McLaren Vale. Its relative coolness influences the bouquet of this outstanding wine. The combination of violets, dark berries and blackcurrant is very much a signature of the site, and the high quality French oak is an ideal partner. This opulent red with super-fine tannins is a gem. (\$175.00) ★★★★★
<https://hickinbothamwines.com.au/wines>

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