

Not Quite Mainstream

Here are a few tasting notes from the last week that don't quite fit into the normal boxes. In each case the producer has gone for something to make a point of difference. When that move succeeds, and it has in the cases below, we have something of interest that is certainly worth exploring.

The **2020 Down to Earth Wrattenbully Sauvignon Blanc** has a personality of its own, created at least partially, by 39% fermentation in large French oak and extended lees ageing. The result is a lively, complex, textural wine showing scents of greengage plums and gooseberries. Excellent drinking now and through the summer. (\$32.00)

★★★★☆

<https://terreaterre.com.au/product/2020-down-to-earth-sauvignon-blanc/>



Mention the word amphora to some wine drinkers and the response is likely to be raised eyebrows, references to “natural” wine or hostile comments alluding to oxidation or volatility. I assume they equate amphoras with the wines of ancient Roman times. In reality the modern clay amphora is an ideal vessel for fermenting and ageing wine because it allows constant, even micro-oxygenation. The **2019 De Bortoli Melba**

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Amphora Cabernet Sauvignon is a classic medium-bodied Yarra cabernet. It's a vibrant red with the finest of tannins derived from 150 days on skins. The delicate red berry/blackcurrant perfume is captivating, and the palate delivers long-lasting flavour. It's a joy to drink now but can be cellared for a decade a least. (\$80.00) ★★★★★
<https://shop.debortoli.com.au/price/price-50-plus/melba-amphora-2019.html>

I guess if the **2020 NX Gen McLaren Vale Grenache** was made in Spain, it would be sold as Garnacha Joven. Be warned! This delightful rose petal/violet scented red is dangerously drinkable. It's one of those wines where the bottom of the bottle is reached remarkably quickly. (\$24.00) ★★★★★
https://www.danmurphys.com.au/product/DM_141970/shingleback-nx-gen-grenache

Now for something so far out of mainstream it's not wine.



The **Bass & Flinders Heartbreak Pinot Noir gin** is a bright light red colour which is an immediate clue that it's not traditional gin. At only 38%, it's lower in alcohol, and a slight sweetness makes it a very pleasant drink with ice. In the name of research I experimented with mixers and came up with a winner – the “pseudo negroni”. Forget the vermouth, simply combine the gin with a dash of Campari, add some ice and a slice of orange and you have a negroni look-alike and taste-alike. Delicious! (\$88.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.bassandflindersdistillery.com/products/heartbreak-gin-700ml>

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