



The annual Penfolds Collection preview tasting was as thought-provoking as usual. There appears to be a reversion to overpowering oak in some cases, but there's no doubting the excellence of some of the other wines. Discussions about prices and value will inevitably take place, but I was there to taste and assess the wines as impartially as possible. Here are my findings.

2022 Penfolds Bin 311 Chardonnay Very much aromas of white peach, lemon and nougat with a touch of barrel ferment funk. It has good fruit drive initially, but that's overtaken by acidity on the finish.

(\$50.00) ★★★★★

Tasmania, Tumbarumba, Adelaide Hills

Eight months in French barriques (34% new)

2022 Penfolds Reserve Bin A Adelaide Hills Chardonnay This wine shows white peach and a lick of oak. It's textural, with a fresh acid lift on the finish, but lacks the intensity and complexity of the preceding couple of vintages. (\$125.00) ★★★★★

Eight months in French barriques (75% new)

2021 Penfolds Yattarna Chardonnay Whiffs of beurre noisette and quality French oak. It's a little disjointed on the palate – butteriness and acidity aren't quite merged - but it has the quality and intensity to age well. (\$175.00) ★★★★★

Tasmania, Tumbarumba, Adelaide Hills

Nine months in French barriques (70% new)

2020 Penfolds FWT 585 Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot/Petit Verdot Vin de France Ripe dark berry aromas with cedary overtones. Firm, drying tannins tend to dominate at the moment. (\$120.00) ★★★★★

Bordeaux

52% cabernet sauvignon, 41% merlot, 7% petit verdot

Twelve months in barriques – 20% new French, 9% new American, the remainder one year old

NV Penfolds II Dourthe Cabernet Merlot Full-on red berry nose. The tannins are quite chewy and puckering, dominating the palate. Pencil-like overtones as well. (\$500.00) ★★★
South Australia, Bordeaux
French barriques and hogsheads

2020 Penfolds Oakville Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Prominent, slightly pencilly oak shows strongly on the nose, and the rich plum pudding fruit has a slightly volatile edge. Tight, firm and oak-driven. (\$450.00) ★★★
Sixteen months in new French barriques

2020 Penfolds Bin 600 California Cabernet Shiraz The ripe red plum/dark berry fruit fights a successful battle with oak. Firm, but fresh, long and satisfying. (\$90.00) ★★★★★
Napa Valley, Paso Robles
68% cabernet sauvignon, 32% shiraz
Sixteen months in American barriques (32% new)

2020 Penfolds Bin 704 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon The intense, vibrant red fruits carry a hint of cassis. This time the oak is integrated and the tannins are fine. A long-flavoured, comparatively elegant red. (\$125.00) ★★★★★☆
Sixteen months in French barriques (40% new)

2020 Penfolds Bin 149 Cabernet Sauvignon Classic Penfolds nose – ripe dark fruits with faintly toasty oak. The palate is intense, but lacks clear-cut varietal definition, and oak shows through on a firm finish. (\$250.00) ★★★★★
Napa Valley, South Australia
Sixteen months in French barriques (80% new) and American barriques (20% new)

2019 Penfolds Bin 98 Quantum Cabernet Sauvignon A brilliant fresh nose showing mulberries, blackcurrants and oak toastiness. The tannins are fine, and the oak settles into the intense palate well. Needs at least ten years, assuming that you're patient and wealthy. (\$1,000.00) ★★★★★
Napa Valley, South Australia
Sixteen months in French barriques (80% new) and American barriques (20% new)

2022 Penfolds Bin 23 Tasmania Pinot Noir The perfumed strawberry nose carries a hint of spearmint. A comparatively light and simple pinot noir. (\$50.00) ★★★
French barriques

2022 Penfolds Bin 21 Barossa Valley Grenache The fresh, fragrant raspberry nose is varietal and appealing, as is the finely structured palate. Made with a delicate touch. (\$60.00) ★★★★★
French oak (6% new)

2021 Penfolds Bin 138 Barossa Valley Shiraz Grenache Mataro Red berry aromas with faint overtones of mint and star anise. Good fruit weight - medium-bodied - fine tannins. (\$60.00) ★★★★★
French oak (6% new) and American oak (2% new)

2021 Penfolds Bin 128 Coonawarra Shiraz Fresh red berry aromas with a suggestion of spices. There's more than adequate fruit weight but the tannins could be finer. (\$65.00) ★★★★☆
Twelve months in French hogsheads (21% new)

2021 Penfolds Bin 28 Shiraz Very fresh blackberry perfume with a suggestion of milk chocolate. Excellent fruit backed up by fine, firm tannins. A lovely expression of mainstream Australian shiraz. (\$50.00) ★★★★★☆
*McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Padthaway, Wrattenbully, Clare
Twelve months in American hogsheads (7% new)*

2021 Penfolds Bin 150 Marananga Shiraz A big, bold dark berry shiraz with a whiff of oak. Quite solid in structure. Needs to soften. (\$100.00) ★★★★★
Eighteen months in French hogsheads (29% new) and American hogsheads (29% new) and puncheons.

2021 Penfolds Bin 407 Cabernet Sauvignon Dark fruits and mint. Not a strong varietal expression. Adequate fruit, and there's a twist of bitterness to the tannins. (\$120.00) ★★★★☆
*Coonawarra, Wrattenbully, McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills
Twelve months in French hogsheads (25% new) and American hogsheads (12% new)*

2021 Penfolds Bin 389 Cabernet Shiraz Impressive freshness and intensity of blackberries and plums. The oak is in check, as are the fine, firm tannins. "Baby Grange"? It's a different style these days, with its own identity. (\$110.00) ★★★★★☆
*McLaren Vale, Coonawarra, Barossa Valley, Wrattenbully, Padthaway
Twelve months in American hogsheads (37% new)*

2020 Penfolds St Henri Shiraz The intense blackberry/spice nose is captivating - shiraz through and through. The palate delivers freshness, fruit weight and length, with balanced tannins. Cellar this one ahead of the oaky wines. (\$135.00) ★★★★★☆
*McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Clare
Twelve months in old oak vats*

2021 Penfolds Magill Estate Shiraz The nose is complex, with a slightly charry/meaty oak influence. It's a case of big rich fruit meets obvious oak. It should age well, but I'd prefer to see less wood.

(\$165.00) ★★★★★

Nineteen months in French hogsheads (90% new) and American hogsheads (10% new)

2021 Penfolds Bin 169 Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon A powerful blackcurrant style with minty notes and unsubtle oak. The palate is fine, firm and long, but oak plays a strong role. (\$300.00) ★★★★★

Sixteen months in French hogsheads (51% new, 49% one year old)



2021 Penfolds RWT Bin 798 Barossa Valley Shiraz The intense, fresh blackberry/violet nose is captivating. Oak certainly shows in this wine, but in a balanced, integrated manner. This is an intense, fine, firm cellaring style. (\$200.00) ★★★★★

Fourteen months in French hogsheads (80% new, 20% one year old)

2021 Penfolds Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon The powerful dark berry/blackcurrant fruit is submerged under a layer of oak which imparts coconut characteristics. A very solid red with a decidedly dry finish.

(\$800.00) ★★★

Coonawarra, Barossa Valley, Wrattenbully

Sixteen months in American hogsheads (100% new)

2019 Penfolds Grange The colour is an eye-catching vivid purple/red. This is a rich, ripe wine showing toasted oak and a suggestion of volatility. Nevertheless, it's fresh, well rounded, intense and long.

Although it pushes the ripeness-volatility boundaries, it has a lot to offer as a cellaring prospect. (\$1,000.00) ★★★★★☆

Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, Coonawarra, Clare

Sixteen months in American hogsheads (100% new)

The Penfolds winemakers follow a definite stylistic agenda, but I feel that, at times they carry the pursuit of "Penfoldsness" too far. After this tasting I'm convinced that, for some wines, they need to rethink their oak regimes. When the first thing that shows on the nose of a wine, and the "farewell" from the palate, are both obvious oak, there's an issue worthy of addressing. The argument that dominant oak will come into balance over time is a fallacious one, and Australia (and the world), in general, have moved on from "look at me" woody wines.

The Penfolds team often includes a surprise with the annual tasting, and this year it was three vintages of Grange. I've included my reviews because I'm sure some of our readers will be cellaring at least one of the following.

2009 Penfolds Grange Elegant red berry/cedary nose. Drinking surprisingly well, and retaining fruit freshness. Tannins have softened.

Now – 2033. (Approximate auction price \$720.00) ★★★★★☆

1999 Penfolds Grange Still holding red colour. Fresh, appealing red fruits with some leathery complexity. Oak still noticeable but it folds in well. Drinking beautifully, but still has time to go. Why shell out \$1,000 for the 2019 when you can pay less for a delightful Grange that is 20

years older? (Approximate auction price \$800.00) ★★★★★★

1989 Penfolds Grange Mature colour and nose. Leather and mushroom. Still retains some fruit sweetness. Just past its peak, but offers enough drinking pleasure. (Approximate auction price \$720.00)

★★★★☆

Lester Jesberg

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