

Distinctive Varietal Whites

Chardonnay and riesling lead the world, and Australia, when it comes to white varietal wine. Australian sales figures strongly support sauvignon blanc and pinot gris, but they are not what old world scribes term “noble” grape varieties. Semillon has definitely made its mark in Australia courtesy of an ideal environment in the Hunter Valley, but it remains a grape variety beloved by a relatively small number of wine enthusiasts (including yours truly).

I found these wines, made from “other” varieties, to be some of the most enjoyable and fascinating in the recent Winewise Championship.

2024 MMAD Vineyard Blewitt Springs Chenin Blanc Fresh stone fruit aromas with attractive notes of vanilla custard and subtle barrel influence. This is a very impressive dry white wine with both texture and length. Here’s an example of what chenin blanc can deliver when treated with respect. (\$48.00) ★★★★★
<https://kentstreetcellars.com.au/products/mmad-chenin-blanc-2024>

2025 Ziliotto Wines Hunter Valley Pecorino Slightly floral, with a hint of green ginger and limon rind. Excellent fruit weight and balance. The panel members were amazed when this wine was revealed to be pecorino. All agreed that it was the best example they’d tasted. This wine has sold out at \$30.00, but we advise you to follow Ziliotto. ★★★★★
<https://www.ziliotto.com.au/product/2025-pecorino/>

2024 Weathercraft Barrel Fermented Beechworth Albariño In Spain, albariño rarely sees the inside of a barrel because winemakers strive to capture the varietal perfume. In this case, barrel fermentation has been skilfully employed to create texture and complexity. The barrel work enhances the fragrant pear/lime/floral nose and imparts just-right structure to the very satisfying varietal palate. (\$45.00) ★★★★★
<https://www.weathercraft.com.au/wine/2024-albarino-barrel-fermented>

2025 Pike & Joyce Separe Adelaide Hills Grüner Veltliner

Fresh pear floral spice with crunchy apple peel notes. This is a wine of intensity and length, but, most importantly, balance. Many Wachau smaragd Grüns are very powerful, but too big and alcoholic. This one has lower alcohol and a raciness that suits the variety – like Austrian federspiels. (\$32.00) ★★★★★

<https://pikeandjoyce.com.au/collections/our-wines/products/2025-separe-gruner-veltliner>

2025 Billy Button Alpine Valleys The Honest Fiano

One of so many varietal wines from Jo Marsh and Glenn James. Fresh stone fruit, red delicious apple and baked plum show out. The palate offers texture and length. Best of all, this wine doesn't stray into the tropical fruit and honey lane. Beautifully crafted. (\$32.00)

★★★★★

<https://billybuttonwines.com.au/product/2025-billy-button-the-honest-fiano>

2023 Yalumba Samuel's Collection Eden Valley Viognier

Louisa Rose of Yalumba led the way with viognier in Australia – from when it was “flavour of the month” until now - and she continues to do so. The Virgilius is one of Australia's great under-rated wines, and this Samuel's Collection puts big-name northern Rhône examples to shame, particularly in terms of value for money. The fresh apricot/ginger aromatics have great appeal, and the long palate is balanced by acidity and textural grip. (\$28.00)

★★★★★

<https://www.yalumba.com/samuel%27s-collection-eden-valley-viognier-2023/YALGVN236.html>

Lester Jesberg