

Wine & Spirits

October 2012

Year's Best – Australian Shiraz

New South Wales

- 91 Brokenwood 2010 Hunter Valley Shiraz (\$36)**
Black scents of anise follow through on the palate, where the wine gives a lasting impression of spicy licorice and rose. It's an elegant take on a peppery shiraz, with bright and darker tones creating some youthful tension in the finish. Decant it for lamb, or hide the bottle for ten years in the cellars.
- 92 d'Arenberg 2009 McLaren Vale The Dead Arm Shiraz (\$65)**
Named for the eutypa fungus that kills off one side of a bush vine, leaving the fruit on the other side that much more concentrated, The Dead Arm is d'Arenberg's top selection from their old-vine shiraz. The 2009 is dense but not jammy, the rich black cherry juiciness lifted by tannins that fall somewhere between silk and satin. There's a generosity to the wine that's tied as much to its earthiness as to its fruit. Appealing now with lamb, this will gain from several years in the cellar.
- 92 John Duval Wines 2010 Barossa Valley Entity Shiraz (\$40)**
John Duval created this wine after leaving his long-time post as chief winemaker for Penfolds. It's a blend of old-vine fruit from vineyards in Krondorf, Tanunda and Light Pass with Eden Valley providing some of the freshness that's apparent in the cool feel of the wine. Black pepper scents of the grape combine with intriguing herbal notes of tobacco and sage, which add dimension to the zesty dark fruit. This should age with grace.
- 91 d'Arenberg 2010 McLaren Vale Footbolt Shiraz (\$20)**
Chester Osborn named this flagship shiraz after the racehorse his great grandfather sold to buy the vineyards that established d'Arenberg - now ranging over 1,200 acres of vine in McLaren Vale. The wine has the gaminess of kangaroo meat, along with plenty of cracked black peppercorn spice and violet florals. Completely wrapped in tannins, this is austere and savory, needing cellar time to mellow. An intense young shiraz and a great buy.
- 91 Zonte's Footstep 2010 Langhorne Creek Lake Doctor Shiraz (\$18)**
This wine is named for the cool afternoon breeze that arrives from Lake Alexandrina, sustaining the freshness in the grapes for this blend, which includes five percent Viognier. It has a bitter chocolate scent and plenty of umami backing up the finish, edgy and mouthwatering in its black fruit flavors. The savory complexity will meld with cumin-rubbed lamb off the grill.
- 90 d'Arenberg 2010 McLaren Vale Laughing Magpie Shiraz-Viognier (\$29)**
A plump and easy picnic wine to pour with charcuterie, this has rich flavors of black and blueberries while remaining completely savory. The tannins have a cool mineral feel and, as much as magpies may like to get right in your face, this wine keeps a more comfortable distance.
- 90 Penley Estate 2009 Coonawarra Special Select Shiraz (\$50)**
This vibrant shiraz has a tangy blue fruit richness along with spicy scents of clove and lavender. The ripe, gentle tannins add density to its structure, but don't diminish the wine's refinement or block its lasting floral spice. Serve it with lamb couscous.
- 92 Yeringberg 2010 Yarra Valley Shiraz (\$80)**
The dePury family resurrected their 19th century heritage of grape growing in the 1970s. Their latest release is a lean wine with the rasp of peppery tannins that keeps the blue-black fruit feeling cool and brisk. A meaty shiraz, this will meld with lamb sausages off the grill.

Western Australia

- 91 **Plantagenet 2009 Mount Barker Shiraz (\$29)**
This savory red seems dense at first, with a spark of energy in its tannins that feels refreshing. The scent shifts from dried to fresh flowers, the delicacy of the flavors becoming apparent with air. Grown on the gravelly loam soils at two of Plantagenet's oldest vineyards, including vines planted in the late '60s and early '70s, this is an intriguing shiraz to follow and enjoy as it develops in the cellar.
- 90 **Plantagenet 2009 Great Southern Omrah Shiraz (Best Buy) (\$20)**
A fragrant and zesty shiraz, this has the scent of crushed green peppercorns and the stark beauty of flowers growing directly out of rock. Its red fruit lasts with an earthy tension, the wine approachable now and over the next several years. For grilled lamb.

Imported New Releases – Australia White

Chardonnay

- 91 **Cullen 2010 Margaret River Kevin John Chardonnay (\$109)**
Whole bunch-pressing creates a floral greenness in this wine, its flavors bringing lemon curd and hibiscus to mind. It is both generous in texture and tense in acidity, the wine broadened by its time in oak. A rich chardonnay with elasticity and snap to its fruit, this should develop over the next five years in bottle.
- 90 **Giant Steps 2010 Yarra Valley Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay (\$35)**
Phil Sexton planted this vineyard on a north-facing slope in the Warramate hills, near Yarra Yering. He grew an elegant chardonnay there in 2010, a cool, soil-infected wine with leasiness delivered through the spice, smoke and hazelnut tones of oak. The wine's fine acidity keeps it lifted and bright. For a heritage port chop or other light, gamey white meats.

Riesling

- 91 **Plantagenet 2011 Mount Barker Riesling (\$21)**
Tony Smith planted his first Riesling vines for Plantagenet in 1971 and the brand has since built a track record for Rieslings that develop for decades in bottle. These are completely different wines from the limey Rieslings of Clare; instead of citrus, their flavors inhabit an apple and pear realm. This 2011 has a youthful floral note of grape skin and persistent acidity balanced by a touch of fruit sweetness. It's an earthy wine with a long life ahead.
- 88 **d'Arenberg 2011 McLaren Vale The Dry Dam Riesling (Best Buy) (\$17)**
There are some touches of petrol in the aroma of this rich Riesling, melding with the lemon-lime scents into a clean finish. A juicy white for scallops tossed with sautéed leeks.

Sauvignon Blanc

- 88 **Plantagenet 2011 Great Southern Omrah Sauvignon Blanc (Best Buy) (\$15)**
A delicate white for pan roasted sole, this has clean lemongrass notes and a little capsicum spice. It's simple, juicy and refreshing.

Verdelho

- 90 **Zonte's Footstep 2011 Langhorne Creek Sea Makeover Verdelho**
Led by Zar Brooks and Ben Riggs, the Zonte team grows this wine in a vineyard on the shores of Lake Alexandrina, cooled by the Great Southern Ocean. It's a mouthwatering white with soft scents of white flowers and fresh yellow tree fruit. Alcohol rounds it with nutty bitterness, adding dimension to the clean, supple feel. Chill this for meaty fish or grilled abalone.

Cabernet Sauvignon

- 92 **Leeuwin Estate 2008 Margaret River Art Series Cabernet Sauvignon (\$45)**
This cabernet grows within four miles of the Indian Ocean, where the ancient granitic soils have weathered into well-drained gravels. There may be no karri forests in Bordeaux, but the proximity to the sea and the gravelly soils find some interesting parallels for cabernet, which develops here into a plump red with cool scents of the neighboring forest. The flavors range from blackberry to caraway and the gaminess of partridge, with which it would likely match well as it ages.
- 91 **d'Arenberg 2010 McLaren Bale The High Trellis Cabernet Sauvignon (\$20)**
An intense, floral cabernet with red fruit ripeness, this wine balances the powerful grip of tannins with vibrant, juicy richness. It's young and sleek, likely to grow more savory as it ages.
- 90 **Penley Estate 2009 Coonawarra Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$50)**
From Kym Tolley's estate on Coonawarra's narrow band of terra rossa soil, this is a cabernet with clean lines and earthy refinement. The fruit is ripe, in a black cherry and blueberry mode; the alcohol is not shy. But the wine feels finely tailored, a style Tolley picked up, perhaps, from his earlier career at Penfolds.

Grenache

- 93 **d'Arenberg 2010 McLaren Vale The Blewitt Springs Grenache (\$85)**
This is vibrant, almost startling red in its strawberry ping of fruit, while earth tones come up in waves underneath. It feels as soft as velvet without the heavy cushioning to weigh it down. From old bush vines in the northeastern hills of McLaren Vale, this wine should age into a grand old complexity, though it would be delicious decanted for braised rabbit.

Pinot Noir

- 90 **Yarra Yering 2009 Yarra Valley Pinot Noir (\$95)**
From dry-farmed vines on a northern slope below the Warramate Hills, this is one of the more idiosyncratic wines created by Baily Carrodus. The wine is as much about stem character and mineral-inflected tannins as it is about raspberry-scented fruit. The wine is now made by Paul Bridgeman, who took over after Carrodus passed away in 2008, and it still has the structural integrity and quirky style that makes these pinots intriguing wines to cellar.

Red Blends

- 90 **Cullen 2010 Margaret River Mangan (\$46)**
Grown at a vineyard planted in 1995, this is an unusual blend of malbec, petit verdot and merlot. The combination creates a gentle wine, its structure firm and supple, its fruit lasting with a dark berry flavor. Harmonious and balanced, this will likely develop more complexity with a year or two of bottle age, although it's easy to enjoy now with a salad of duck confit.
- 90 **d'Arenberg 2009 McLaren Vale Sticks & Stones (\$29)**
Tempranillo brings green herb edges to this blend with Grenache, roughing up the tannins to contrast with the bright, juicy red fruit. It's a mouthwatering match for braised tripe or other offal.
- 90 **d'Arenberg 2009 McLaren Vale Ironstone Pressings (\$29)**
d'Arenberg's classic blend of grenache, shiraz and mourvedre is packed with the spice of McLaren Vale. Mourvedre's rustic character dominates the blend, laying a scratchy camel blanket over blackberry fruit. Youthfully reduced, this needs cellar time to show its best.
- 90 **Plantagenet 2009 Western Australia Omrah Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot (\$29)**
Delicate scents of mint, sage and roasted meats develop out of this wine's bright red fruit, ranging from red plum skin to strawberry, finishing soft, plush and gentle. This takes cabernet in a pretty direction, rather than serious or somber. For filet mignon.

Australia Dessert

- 93 Chambers Rosewood Vineyards (\$100 / 375 ml)**
Rutherglen Grand Muscat blended from wines that are up to 70 years old in the Chamber's family cellars. This is a dark beauty with a seemingly everlasting flavor of honey and beeswax, along with an acidic sting that deepens the sweetness in check. It's complex and mouthwatering, to sip on its own or serve with an apple tart a la mode.
- 90 Chambers Rosewood Vineyards (\$300 / 375 ml)**
Rutherglen Rare Muscat Stephen Chambers blends this from his oldest stock, reaching back more than 100 years in the family solera. It is super-concentrated, a dense black wine with scents of raisins and balsamic. Spiciness builds through the finish, almost too much to take on its own. Drizzle it over vanilla ice cream.
- 90 Yarra Yering 2008 Yarra Valley Potsorts (\$75 / 500 ml)**
Bailey Carrodus extended his vineyard in the 1990s by purchasing a west facing slope where he planted Douro varieties including touriga, tinta cao, tinta amarelo, rotiz and souzao. He used them to develop a dry red (No. 3) and this intriguing style of fortified wine. It has a tart, plummy fruit character and a lot of edgy tannin, the purple fruit lasting with that tartness suggesting a range of cheese to match it.
- 89 Chambers Rosewood Vineyards (\$16 / 375 ml)**
Rutherglen Muscat (Best Buy). Dark and smoky, this wine offers scents of oak, orange peel and maple syrup. Its flavors are tight and juicy, liqueur-like in the middle, finishing clean.