



BEST NEW WINES FROM AUSTRALIA

Josh Raynolds | Jul/Aug 2013

Producers across the southern band of Australia would probably just like to forget the 2011 vintage, a year that presented a biblical array of plagues on the vineyards. Cold and wet weather was the rule for the entire year and into harvest, which resulted in the double whammy of immature fruit and disease pressure. The most conscientious producers ultimately made wines in minuscule quantities, and from certain vineyards they didn't make any at all.

I did find a number of high-quality '11s, especially whites and particularly rieslings, from the Clare Valley, along with many successes from Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, Adelaide Hills and greater Victoria. Fans of racy, pure chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and riesling will find plenty to like from 2011, but quantities are way down. All of the best wines from 2011 were the result of draconian selection in the vineyards, on sorting tables and in the cellars. Reports from a number of producers indicate that production of wine was off by anywhere from 50% to 100%, which is truly painful to contemplate, but releasing lousy wine with a hard-won name and reputation behind it can be even more damaging.

The bright spots in this year's tastings (which included 25% more wines than I tried last year, an encouraging sign for exports to the U.S.), aside from the whites mentioned above, were wines from the bookends of the Australian landmass. The Hunter Valley, on the far eastern side of Australia, enjoyed a spectacular vintage, as did the Great Southern region and especially the Margaret River on the western side of the country, where many superb reds will be coming up.

In a nutshell, the 2011 vintage is one to choose from very carefully if you're exploring anything from the greater south coast of Australia. I'd focus exclusively on the very best producers because if they were willing to put their name on it, it wasn't a decision they made lightly.

American importers had put on the brakes hard in the past few years, but I've seen a few recent glimmers of hope for a return to health for Australian wines in the U.S. market. A surprising number of wines from Australia's cult wineries are available here now, albeit at predictably high prices. According to their American agents, these wines are finding an audience among ambitious sommeliers and retailers who have made their reputations by getting behind small, high-quality producers from mostly ignored regions of Europe, so their venture into Australia is a logical next step. I spoke with a few of those producers, who explained that while they had waiting lists at home, where they can easily charge more money for their scarce wines, the American market holds out too much potential for them to ignore, even if their colleagues think they're crazy. On the other hand, some of the most rabidly followed Australian producers have given up entirely on the U.S. market or significantly cut back allocations and time spent here in favor of pursuing the red-hot Asian market, which appears to have a serious yen for high-end Aussie wines, especially shiraz.



BALGOWNIE ESTATE

91pts 2010 Balgownie Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Bendigo

(\$25) Inky ruby. Complex aromas of cassis, cherry, smoky minerals, black pepper and dried herbs. Ripe and smooth in texture, with appealing sweetness to its dark berry and floral flavors. Finishes smoky and long, with a dusting of fine-grained tannins and a lingering hint of sweet oak.

90pts 2010 Balgownie Estate Shiraz Bendigo

(\$25) Opaque ruby. Ripe dark berries and plum on the fragrant nose and in the mouth. Broad and fleshy, with a smoky element coming up with air and carrying through a sweet, gently tannic finish.

BROKENWOOD WINES

93pts 2011 Brokenwood Wines Shiraz Graveyard Vineyard Hunter Valley

(\$125) Lurid purple. An exotically perfumed bouquet displays scents of candied black and blue fruits, licorice, sandalwood and spicecake. Fleshy and seamless on the palate, offering intense blueberry and bitter cherry flavors and a touch of lavender pastille. Closes with impressive energy and focus, leaving smoke and dark fruit preserves on the palate.

91pts 2012 Brokenwood Wines Semillon Hunter Valley

(\$20) (10.5% alcohol): Bright straw. Lively, pungent scents of lime zest, quinine and jalapeno, with a subtle floral nuance. Racy, firm and crisp in the mouth, with deeper suggestions of pear and fig and a waxy note. Closes dry and precise, with excellent clarity and lingering spiciness. This wine is destined for a long, slow evolution and represents remarkable value.

91pts 2011 Brokenwood Wines Shiraz Hunter Valley

(\$36) Bright purple. Lively black and blue fruit aromas are deepened by notes of licorice and pipe tobacco. Peppery and precise on the palate, offering sharply focused cassis and boysenberry flavors and a slightly meaty quality. Closes sweet and long, with slow-building tannins and lingering hints of smoke and cracked pepper.

90pts 2012 Brokenwood Wines Pinot Noir Beechworth

(\$22) Dark red. Fresh red fruit and floral aromas are complemented by notes of gingerbread and smoky minerals. Juicy and taut in the mouth, offering zesty redcurrant and dried cherry flavors and a touch of allspice. Closes with very good length, silky tannins and lingering florality.

90pts 2011 Brokenwood Wines Shiraz McLaren Vale/Hunter Valley

(\$27) Deep ruby. Musky blackberry, cherry pit and underbrush on the nose, with a subtle floral quality gaining strength with air. Youthful cherry and dark berry compote flavors are initially wound up but slowly flesh out, gaining sweetness and a smoky mocha quality. Finishes with peppery spice and cherry flavors and very good, sweet persistence.

CHAMBERS ROSEWOOD WINERY

96pts NV Chambers Rosewood Winery Rare Muscadelle Rutherglen (half bottle)

(\$300) Deep amber, with a glimmer of orange. Spice- and floral-accented aromas of toffee apple, singed orange, ginger candy and quince paste, with a smoky overtone. Intensely sweet but sharply delineated, offering palate-staining pit and citrus fruit preserve flavors and a touch of turbinado sugar. Finishes with stupendous persistence, leaving candied citrus fruit and apricot nectar notes behind.

96pts NV Chambers Rosewood Winery Rare Muscat Rutherglen (half bottle)

(\$300) Mahogany brown color. Potent, deeply pitched aromas of cherry pit, fig syrup, fruitcake and dried currants, with toffee and orange marmalade qualities emerging with air. Reaches every square inch centimeter of the palate, offering intensely sweet caramelized orchard and pit fruit flavors and strong coffee, roasted fig and bitter chocolate nuances. Unctuous and broad on what can't really be called a "finish", because it refuses to let up, and I doubt that anybody who has the good luck to try this wine would call that a bad thing.



95pts NV Chambers Rosewood Winery Special Muscadelle "Grand" Classification Rutherglen

(\$140) Deep amber color. A wild, highly perfumed bouquet evokes brown butter, candied fig, spiced cake, orange pith, dried flowers and woodsmoke. Intensely sweet but lively, offering an array of candied pit and citrus fruit flavors and notes of toffee, caramel and quince paste. Clings with superb tenacity on the finish, which strongly echoes the orange, toffee and fig notes. As rich and intense as this wine may be it's almost shockingly lithe and precise as well.

94pts NV Chambers Rosewood Winery Grand Muscat Rutherglen (half bottle)

(\$100) Amber-rimmed brown. Deeply pitched aromas of caramel, fig paste, honey and candied dates, with smoke and exotic spice overtones. Rich, creamy and intensely sweet, offering an array of poached and singed fruit flavors accompanied by toasted nut and toffee qualities. Like some sort of liquified nut tart, with a sweet, clinging finish that shows superb persistence.

91pts NV Chambers Rosewood Winery Muscat Rutherglen

(\$16) Orange-hued amber. Smoky aromas of dried pit fruits, fruitcake, anise and toffee, with a hint of mocha in the background. Fleshy, sweet and broad, with deep candied orange, cherry and cola flavors and a touch of molasses. Closes smooth, sweet and long, with lingering spiciness and a lip-smacking note of bitter orange.

90pts NV Chambers Rosewood Winery Muscadelle Rutherglen (half bottle)

(\$16) Bright orange-amber. A highly perfumed nose displays scents of dried pit fruits, fig paste and toasted nuts. Rich but surprisingly lively, offering sweet apricot and toffee flavors complemented by a gingerbread nuance. Finishes smooth and long, with lingering nuttiness and a strong note of candied pit fruits.

CHAPOUTIER & LAUGHTON

92pts 2010 Chapoutier & Laughton Shiraz Cluster M45 Heathcote

(\$89) Inky purple. A heady bouquet displays scents of candied dark berries, cherry-vanilla and incense, along with a smoky topnote. Lush and creamy in texture, offering palate-staining blackberry and cherry compote flavors and a hint of olive. Soft tannins build on the clinging finish, which leaves notes of blue fruits and licorice behind.

CULLEN WINES

94pts 2011 Cullen Wines Diana Madeline Margaret River

(\$105) (80% cabernet sauvignon, 12% merlot, 4% malbec, 3% cabernet franc and 1% petit verdot; 12.5% alcohol): Inky ruby. Spice- and smoke-accented red fruits, vanilla and rose on the highly perfumed nose. Juicy, focused and lithe, offering deeply concentrated but tangy redcurrant, bitter cherry and mocha flavors and a smoky note of black tea. A silky sweet and strikingly persistent finish features vanilla and bitter cherry pit.

93pts 2011 Cullen Wines Chardonnay Kevin John Margaret River

(\$109) Pale gold. Fresh pear and melon on the nose, with ginger, honeysuckle and mineral notes adding lift. Juicy, penetrating and focused, offering zesty orchard and citrus fruit flavors and suggestions of sea salt and bitter quinine. Shows an intriguing blend of richness and vivacity and finishes with outstanding clarity and length. This wine improved a lot with aeration, which bodes well for its cellaring potential.

93pts 2012 Cullen Wines Mangan East Block Red Wine Margaret River

(\$55) (made from 54% petit verdot and 46% malbec): Bright ruby. An exotically perfumed bouquet evokes candied dark fruits, Indian spices and potpourri, with a bright mineral note gaining strength with air. Round, expansive and seamless, offering lively black raspberry and bitter cherry flavors and a suggestion of candied violet. Shows excellent clarity and lift on the gently tannic finish, leaving notes of dark berry liqueur and floral pastilles behind.

92pts 2012 Cullen Wines Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon Ephraim Clarke Cullen Vineyard Margaret River

(\$35) (made from a 73/27 blend and a very low 11% alcohol): Light yellow. Vibrant citrus fruit and floral aromas are complemented by notes of quinine and pungent herbs. Tangy, focused and pure, with superb depth to its lemon/lime and green apple flavors. Dry and nervy on the finish, with a note of bitter lime zest on the lingering aftertaste. This wine could stand toe-to-toe with most any similar blend from California and many big name bottlings from Bordeaux.



91pts 2012 Cullen Wines Mangan Margaret River

(\$29) (made from a blend of 55% merlot, 29% malbec and 16% petit verdot; 13.5% alcohol): Deep ruby. Lively and precise on the nose, displaying scents of redcurrant, cherry, pipe tobacco and fresh rose. Juicy and focused, with very good depth and sweetness to its red berry and bitter cherry flavors. Shows a refreshingly tangy quality on the long and energetic finish.

D'ARENBERG

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz The Piceous Lodestar Single Vineyard McLaren Vale

(\$85) Bright purple. Black and blue fruit scents are complicated by notes of candied licorice and incense. Sweet and expansive on the palate, offering vibrant blueberry and cherry-cola flavors and a hint of espresso. Finishes sweet and long, with youthfully grippy tannins and excellent focus. The pH is here 3.34.

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz The Swinging Malaysian Single Vineyard McLaren Vale

(\$85) Glass-staining ruby. A complex, highly perfumed bouquet displays raspberry preserves, cherry-cola, potpourri and minerals. Energetic and precise on the palate, offering vibrant red and dark berry flavors of excellent depth and focus. Gains weight and spiciness with air while maintaining its vivacity, finishing sweet, seamless and very long. This is the most elegant of the vintage's set of single vineyard shirazes.

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Single Vineyard The Other Side McLaren Vale

(\$85) (carrying a very low pH of 3.39): Bright purple. Pungent, smoke-accented aromas of dried cherry, candied licorice, black tea and smoky herbs. Sappy and penetrating, offering sweet dark fruit flavors and showing impressive depth. Closes spicy and long, with slow-building tannins and a sexy floral pastille quality. These vines are reportedly 96 years old.

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz The Sardanapalian Single Vineyard McLaren Vale

(\$85) Opaque ruby. Black raspberry, potpourri and black pepper on the intensely fragrant nose. Fleshy yet lithe, offering sweet red and dark berry preserve flavors along with notes of sweet chewing tobacco and candied flowers. A jolt of dusty minerals adds energy and cut to the long, sappy finish, which shows just a hint of tannins. An intriguing blend of richness and tension.

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Single Vineyard Blind Tiger Scarce Earth McLaren Vale

(\$85) Dark purple. Strikingly perfumed aromas of dark berry liqueur, incense and candied flowers, with a spicy topnote and a sneaky vanilla quality. Velvety and round, with densely packed dark berry compote flavors and bright mineral and floral elements adding lift. Finishes with impressive energy and snap for its richness, leaving a sexy floral note behind.

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Vociferate Dipsomaniac Single Vineyard McLaren Vale

(\$85) Inky purple. A powerful bouquet of inky blackberry, blueberry and licorice is complicated by notes of dark chocolate and vanilla. Round, deeply pitched flavors of cherry-vanilla and dark berries are leavened by bright acidity and lifted by a spicy nuance. Finishes sweet and very long, with supple tannins and a hint of cola.

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Single Vineyard The Fruit Bat McLaren Vale

(\$85) Dark purple. Explosive blackberry and cassis aromas are complicated by sexy oak spices and candied flowers. Lush and round, offering sweet blackberry and candied licorice flavors and a zestier note of white pepper. Finishes sweet and very long, with a supple, velvety texture and smoky blackcurrant and cherry-cola flavors.

93pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Single Vineyard The Other Side McLaren Vale

(\$85) Glass-staining purple. Deeply scented aromas of blackberry, boysenberry and violet, with an exotic spicy overtone. Deep, alluringly sweet dark berry preserve flavors are lifted by juicy acidity and pick up a floral pastille quality with air. Focused and seductively sweet on the gently tannic finish, which shows excellent clarity and floral-driven persistence. This shiraz gained power with aeration while maintaining wonderful freshness and energy.



92pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Single Vineyard Garden of Extraordinary Delights McLaren Vale

(\$85) Inky purple. Sexy, oak-spiced aromas of dark berry liqueur, vanilla and candied flowers. Silky and open-knit, offering sweet blueberry and boysenberry flavors that become spicier with air. Really stains the palate but comes off energetic. Candied violet and spicecake qualities dominate an impressively long, seamless finish, showing just a hint of tannins.

92pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Tyche's Mustard Scarce Earth Single Vineyard McLaren Vale

(\$85) Opaque purple. Pungent, smoky and expansive on the nose, displaying scents of candied black and blue fruits, violet and black pepper. Fleshy and sweet on the palate, presenting intense blueberry and cassis flavors lifted by a spicy topnote. The floral note comes back on a finish that features fine-grained tannins and a hint of bitter chocolate.

91pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz The Eight Iron Single Vineyard McLaren Vale

(\$85) Deep ruby. Black and blue fruits on the nose, with suggestions of cracked pepper and allspice adding lift. Broad and chewy on the palate, offering gently sweet boysenberry and cassis flavors and a touch of bitter chocolate. Finishes on a smoky note, with firm, building tannins and very good length.

91pts 2011 d'Arenberg Single Vineyard Shiraz Shipsters Rapture Scarce Earth McLaren Vale

(\$85) Opaque ruby. Deeply scented, powerful aromas of dark berries, singed plum, bitter chocolate and black pepper, with a subtle floral quality gaining strength with air. Juicy and intensely fruity, with plush blackberry and blueberry flavors and a velvety texture. Becomes smokier in the glass, picking up a meaty quality and a touch of decadent sweetness that lingers on the finish.

91pts 2010 d'Arenberg The Sticks & Stones McLaren Vale

(\$29) (made from a blend tempranillo, grenache, souzao and tintacao): Saturated ruby. A seductively perfumed bouquet offers dark berry preserves, potpourri and peppery spices, along with a smoky overtone. Ripe but graceful on the palate, with impressive focus to its spicy black raspberry and boysenberry flavors. Finishes sweet, sappy and floral, with sneaky tannins and lingering spiciness.

91pts 2012 d'Arenberg Riesling The Dry Dam McLaren Vale

(\$17) Bright straw. A complex, floral-dominated bouquet presents honeysuckle, yellow rose, green tea, lemon curd and lime, plus a hint of white pepper. Racy and pure, with lively citrus fruit and mineral flavors and a richer note of pear coming up in the mid-palate. Incisive and focused, showing surprising power, excellent finishing thrust and cut.

90(+?)pts 2011 d'Arenberg Shiraz Single Vineyard The Amaranthine McLaren Vale

(\$85) Bright purple. An exotic, intensely perfumed bouquet exudes blackberry, plum preserves, black cardamom, espresso and smoked meat. Round, succulent and sweet, the dark berry flavors showing excellent concentration and a hint of gaminess. Finishes luscious, smoky and long, with firm tannins and lingering smokiness. The wildest of this set of single-site shirazes, by far.

90pts 2010 d'Arenberg Shiraz The Love Grass McLaren Vale

(\$20) Dark purple. Smoky, spice-accented aromas and flavors of cassis and blueberry, with a suave incense nuance building with air. Fleshy but light on its feet, offering tangy dark fruit flavors that gain sweetness in the glass. Closes with very good energy and focus, trailing notes of peppery spice.

90pts 2012 d'Arenberg Roussanne The Money Spider McLaren Vale

(\$25) Light, bright gold. Fresh pear, honey and chamomile on the deeply scented nose. Dry and chewy in texture, with good heft to its orchard fruit and herb flavors. Closes with real power and grip, on a lingering note of bitter pear skin.

90pts 2011 d'Arenberg Chardonnay The Lucky Lizard Adelaide Hills

(\$32) Light yellow. High-pitched aromas of lemon, pear skin and chalky minerals. Fresh orange and honeysuckle flavors, complemented by a spicy quality, show a chewy, tactile quality and very good focus. Finishes dry and long, with lingering floral and spice notes and firm grip. No excess fat here.



90pts 2011 d'Arenberg Pinot Noir The Feral Fox Adelaide Hills

(\$32) Light red. Highly fragrant, displaying scents of red berries, dried rose and Asian spices, plus a hint of white pepper. Lithe, focused strawberry and raspberry flavors blend sweetness and energy, with tangy acidity adding lift. Finishes at length on a refreshingly bitter orange pith note.

89pts 2011 d'Arenberg Viognier/Marsanne The Hermit Crab McLaren Vale

(\$17) (made from a 74/26 blend): Light, bright yellow. Peach, melon and ginger on the nose, with floral and lemon pith nuances emerging with aeration. Shows good heft and creamy texture, with sappy pit fruit flavors brightened by a citrus note. Finishes spicy, with a touch of warmth and good cling.

89pts 2012 d'Arenberg Sauvignon Blanc The Broken Fishplate Adelaide Hills

(\$17) Green-hued straw. Pungent lemon, green apple and herb aromas are complicated by notes of white pepper and anise. Light-bodied, linear citrus flavors are a bit tart but clean and focused, displaying refreshing bitterness and zesty back-end lift. Finishes with hints of lime zest and quince and a touch of bitterness.

88pts 2012 d'Arenberg Riesling The Stump Jump McLaren Vale

(\$13) Pale gold. Dusty, incisive aromas of dried citrus fruits and white flowers. Dry and tight on entry, then fleshier in the mid-palate, offering zesty lemon/lime flavors and a hint of bitter pear skin. Closes spicy and precise, with a lingering note of ginger and good persistence.

88pts 2011 d'Arenberg Grenache/Shiraz/Mourvedre The Stump Jump South Australia

(\$13) Vivid ruby. High-pitched, peppery aromas of redcurrant and cherry pit, with a smoky overtone. Bright and energetic on the palate, offering sharply focused red fruit, licorice and bitter chocolate flavors, plus a hint of candied rose. Closes with firm cut and good, spicy persistence, on a lingering note of anise.

87pts 2012 d'Arenberg Sauvignon Blanc The Stump Jump McLaren Vale

(\$13) Light yellow. Fresh lemon and pear on the nose, with notes of ginger and dried flowers adding complexity. Taut, sharply focused orchard fruit and lemon curd flavors are brightened by a jolt of white pepper and firmed by juicy acids. Shows good definition and finishing thrust, leaving a tart citrus note behind.

87pts 2011 d'Arenberg The Stump Jump White McLaren Vale

(\$13) (made from a blend of riesling, sauvignon blanc and marsanne): Light yellow. Spicy green apple and lemon pith aromas are deepened by a honeyed nuance. Smooth and open-knit, offering orchard fruit and melon flavors. Finishes on a peach note, with good grip and decent persistence.

87pts 2011 d'Arenberg The Stump Jump Lightly Wooded Chardonnay Adelaide

(\$13) Bright straw. Peach, melon and tangerine aromas and flavors, with a hint of pungent herbs. Plump and supple in texture, with straightforward fruity appeal and good finishing cling.

87pts 2011 d'Arenberg Cabernet Sauvignon The Stump Jump McLaren Vale

(\$13) Bright purple. Dark berries and peppery spices on the nose and in the mouth. Picks up a bitter chocolate nuance with air and finishes with good clarity and smooth, harmonious tannins.

FRISK WINES

88pts 2012 Frisk Wines Riesling Prickly Victoria

(\$11) (73% of this fruit was grown in Victoria; 9.5% alcohol): Bright straw. Fresh melon and peach aromas are given a bright edge by notes of white pepper and ginger. A touch of CO2 adds spritziness and a pleasing bitterness to the wine's juicy fruit. Supple and open-knit, with good breadth and finishing cling. This is a remarkable value.



88pts 2012 Frisk Wines Rosso Victoria

(\$11) (made from 51% merlot and 49% dolcetto, in a quasi-Lambrusco style; 12.4% alcohol): Very light, bright red. High-pitched aromas of strawberry and redcurrant, with an earthy rhubarb nuance and a hint of white pepper. Juicy and taut on the palate, offering tangy red fruit and spicecake flavors and a hint of bitter herbs. Closes on a tangy note, with good cut and lingering spiciness. This would be a great match for rich pasta sauces or red meat curries and it delivers serious bang for the buck.

GIANT STEPS

92pts 2012 Giant Steps Pinot Noir Gladysdale Vineyard Yarra Valley

(\$42) (made with 50% whole clusters): Pale red. Spicy redcurrant, raspberry and underbrush on the perfumed nose. Silky, spicy and aromatic in the mouth, with energetic red berry flavors showing very good depth and no rough edges. Finishes silky and long, with a repeating note of redcurrant and a touch of smokiness.

92pts 2012 Giant Steps Pinot Noir Applejack Vineyard Yarra Valley

(\$42) (made with 90% whole clusters): Bright red. High-pitched aromas of redcurrant, strawberry, cinnamon and star anise. Racy and precise, offering intense red fruit and Asian spice flavors that gain weight with aeration. Silky tannins come on late and fold smoothly into the wine's sappy fruit. Pure, focused and alluringly spicy, with excellent finishing cut and length.

91pts 2012 Giant Steps Pinot Noir Sexton Vineyards Yarra Valley

(\$42) Light, bright red. Bright aromas of red berries and Asian spices, with a hint of potpourri. A suave, silky midweight that features zesty raspberry and cherry flavors and a hint of white pepper. Energetic and nicely balanced on the long, sweet and seamless finish. Distinctly elegant in character and balanced to age over the mid-term.

INNOCENT BYSTANDER

91pts 2011 Innocent Bystander Chardonnay Mea Culpa Yarra Valley

(\$60) Light, hazy yellow. Pungent, mineral- and ginger-accented aromas and flavors of poached pear, melon and white flowers. Brighter citrus fruits come up with air, adding vivacity and back-end cut. Closes spicy and long, with excellent clarity and drive. Very successful for the vintage.

91pts 2011 Innocent Bystander Shiraz Mea Culpa Yarra Valley

(\$60) Bright purple. Spicy and exotically perfumed, displaying intense cassis and fresh violet aromas complicated by a peaty, smoky quality. Sappy yet firm on the palate, with intense flavors of bitter cherry, dark berries, cured meat and espresso. The smoky, peaty note lingers on the taut, sharply focused finish, showing just a hint of dusty tannins.

89pts 2012 Innocent Bystander Pinot Gris Yarra Valley

(\$18) Pale yellow. High-pitched, smoke-accented aromas and flavors of lemon, pear and anise. Juicy and precise, with very good finishing clarity and spicy length. Strikes a nice balance between the Alsace and northern Italy renditions of the variety, with great flexibility at the table.

88pts 2012 Innocent Bystander Pinot Noir Yarra Valley

(\$20) Light red. Aromas of dried red fruits and black tea are complemented by a deeper licorice nuance. Offers bitter cherry and redcurrant flavors that gain sweetness with air. Slightly pinched on the finish, which is given grip by fine-grained tannins that slip smoothly into the fruit.

89pts 2012 Innocent Bystander Pink Moscato Victoria

(\$14) Vivid pink. Fresh strawberry and tangerine on the nose, with pungent floral and white pepper qualities adding lift. Juicy and intensely fruity on the palate, with sweet red berry flavors buoyed and sharpened by gentle acidity. Finishes smooth and long, with repeating red berry and floral notes. This is way too easy to drink but at just 5.5% alcohol, go nuts.



JOHN DUVAL WINES

93pts 2010 John Duval Wines Shiraz Eligo Barossa Valley

(\$100) Bright purple. Potent black and blue fruit aromas are brightened by notes of smoky minerals, cracked pepper and fresh flowers. Rich but focused and pure, offering vibrant blueberry and boysenberry flavors and suave vanilla and floral pastille qualities. Supple and broad on a long, gently tannic finish that leaves allspice and dark fruit preserve notes behind.

92pts 2012 John Duval Wines Plexus White Wine Barossa Valley

(\$30) (made from 55% marsanne, 35% roussanne and 10% viognier; 5% new oak in large format): Pale yellow. Intensely perfumed nose offers fresh and dried pit fruits, jasmine and floral honey. Bright minerality adds lift and cut to the ripe orchard and pit fruit flavors, which are given a refreshingly bitter edge by a note of lime zest. Gains flesh with air and finishes with pliant, very persistent orange and nectarine flavors. An appealing blend of richness and nerve.

92pts 2011 John Duval Wines Shiraz Entity Barossa Valley

(\$40) Bright violet. Fresh black and blue fruits on the nose and palate, with peppery spice and floral notes adding complexity. Lithe and precise, with strong lift and back-end cut. Picks up a smoky quality with air and finishes sweet, seamless and long. Approachable now, especially with an hour or so in a decanter.

91pts 2011 John Duval Wines Plexus Red Wine Barossa Valley

(\$40) (made from a blend of shiraz, grenache and mourvedre): Ruby-red. Spice- and floral-accented aromas of candied red berries and bitter cherry. Bright and refreshing, with strong finishing cut, supple tannins and a late jolt of peppery spices. I really like this wine's pinot-like focus and texture.

KILIKANON WINES

94pts 2010 Kilikanon Wines Shiraz Attunga 1865 Clare Valley

(\$235) Inky purple. An exotic bouquet presents black and blue fruit preserves, vanilla, licorice and potpourri. Sweet, deeply pitched blueberry and cherry-vanilla flavors stain the palate and gain spiciness with aeration. Shows superb energy and power on the finish, with lingering touches of smoke, cracked pepper and floral pastille. This sweet, seamless wine should be left to rest for at least another five to seven years and probably much longer.

93pts 2010 Kilikanon Wines Shiraz Oracle Clare Valley

(\$70) Dark purple. Sexy aromas of cherry-cola, blueberry, potpourri and woodsmoke, plus a hint of anise. Pliant, deeply concentrated black and blue flavors are complemented by bitter chocolate and licorice and given snap by zesty acidity. Velvety tannins add support and grip to the sappy, alluringly sweet finish, which strongly repeats the blueberry note.

93pts 2010 Kilikanon Wines Shiraz Miracle Hill McLaren Vale

(\$70) Bright purple. Wild, highly perfumed aromas of blackberry, candied licorice, violet, espresso and Indian spices. Sweet and fleshy on entry, then tighter in the mid-palate, with bright acidity lifting flavors of blackberry liqueur, mocha and allspice. Lively and precise for such a rich wine. Finishes smooth and very long, with resonating dark berry and floral pastille qualities.

93pts 2010 Kilikanon Wines Shiraz Green's Vineyard Reserve Barossa Valley

(\$70) Inky purple. Lush, oak-spiced aromas of cassis, cherry-cola and licorice, with a vanilla nuance gaining power with air. Broad and alluringly sweet dark fruit compote flavors stain the palate and are lifted and sharpened by juicy acidity. Floral pastille and spicecake qualities come up on the subtly tannic finish, which lingers with superb tenacity.

92pts 2010 Kilikanon Wines Shiraz Crowhurst Reserve Barossa Valley

(\$105) Inky ruby. Seductive cherry-cola and blackberry aromas, with a bright mineral component adding vibrancy. Sappy, densely packed dark fruit liqueur flavors are bolstered by juicy acidity and pick up a smoky nuance with air. Rich but surprisingly lively, finishing at length with excellent focus and sweetness.



92pts 2010 Kilikanoon Wines Shiraz Covenant Clare Valley

(\$40) Inky purple. Deeply pitched, smoke-accented black and blue fruits and spicecake on the nose and in the mouth. Fleshy and broad, with impressive power and surprising vivacity and back-end lift. Closes supple and very long, with supple tannins and resonating spiciness. I find this big, extroverted shiraz to be quite appealing now but it's clearly built to age.

92pts 2010 Kilikanoon Wines Shiraz Exodus Barossa Valley

(\$40) Bright purple. Smoky, deeply pitched aromas and flavors of blackberry and dark cherry compote, with a licorice note building in the glass. Fleshy and broad, with excellent clarity and energy for its size. Closes sweet, smoky and long, with lingering touches of black pepper and violet pastille.

92pts 2012 Kilikanoon Wines Riesling Mort's Block Reserve Watervale Clare Valley

(\$35) Bright straw. Fresh grapefruit, agave, chalky minerals and ginger on the nose. Sappy and penetrating, with impressive intensity to its bitter lime zest and grapefruit flavors. Lively, tactile and pure, finishing spicy and long, with lingering citrus and mineral character.

91pts 2012 Kilikanoon Wines Riesling Mort's Block Watervale Clare Valley

(\$20) Bright straw. Fresh citrus fruits and white flowers on the assertively perfumed nose and in the mouth. Dry and incisive, with a silky texture and strong back-end cut. Closes with very good energy and lift, leaving grapefruit and floral notes behind.

91pts 2010 Kilikanoon Wines Cabernet Sauvignon Blocks Road Clare Valley

(\$30) Vivid ruby. Ripe, sappy aromas of cherry, blackcurrant and fresh flowers. Sappy and fruity, with very good ripeness and energy to its bitter cherry and cassis flavors. Supple in texture, with soft tannins and a peppery nuance on the long, smoky finish.

90pts 2010 Kilikanoon Wines Shiraz Kavel's Flock Barossa Valley

(\$20) Saturated ruby. Ripe blueberry, boysenberry and incense aromas are accented by subtle oak spices and a touch of licorice. Lush, sappy and viscous, with deep but surprisingly energetic flavors of blackcurrant, vanilla, mocha and violet pastille. Shows appealing sweetness and power, finishing on a smoky note and with good cling.

90pts 2010 Kilikanoon Wines The Medley Clare Valley/Barossa Valley

(\$30) (45% grenache, 42% shiraz and 13% mataro): Bright ruby. Vibrant, spice-accented dark berry aromas show good clarity and focus. Juicy, penetrating blackberry and bitter cherry flavors gain sweetness with air and pick up a subtle floral pastille nuance. Sweet and seamless on the clinging finish, featuring gentle tannins and a zesty, spicy kick.

88pts 2011 Kilikanoon Wines Shiraz/Grenache Killerman's Run South Australia

(\$20) Bright purple. Black and blue fruit, violet and cracked pepper on the nose and in the mouth. Bright and lively, with a hint of black olive adding depth. Finishes smoky and gently sweet, with a lingering note of bitter chocolate.

88pts 2011 Kilikanoon Wines Shiraz Killerman's Run South Australia

(\$20) Vivid purple. Highly perfumed aromas of blueberry, blackberry, cracked pepper and violet. Displays classic shiraz flavors of smoky dark berries, olive and peppery spices. Approachable right now, with gentle tannins adding shape to the juicy, gently sweet finish.

88pts 2011 Kilikanoon Wines Cabernet Sauvignon Killerman's Run South Australia

(\$20) Bright purple. Fresh cherry and dark berry aromas are deepened by notes of licorice and espresso. Round and fleshy, with smooth cherry-vanilla and blackberry flavors lifted by tangy acidity. Closes spicy and firm, with good tangy cut and lingering spiciness.

87pts 2011 Kilikanoon Wines Shiraz The Lackey South Australia

(\$15) Bright ruby. Fresh red berries and peppery spices on the nose and in the mouth. Juicy and tight, with good back-end cut and lift. Dusty tannins add finishing shape and grip. Much of the fruit that's normally designated for Kilikanoon's top shiraz bottlings wound up in this wine in this difficult vintage.



LEEUWIN ESTATE

94pts 2010 Leeuwin Estate Chardonnay Art Series Margaret River

(\$89) Pale, green hued-yellow. A pungent, mineral-driven bouquet exudes orange zest, fresh pear, lemongrass and chamomile, with a note of iodine coming up with air. Deeply pitched, taut orchard fruit and mineral flavors stain the palate, with zesty minerality providing lift. The iodine note repeats on the finish, which leaves suave mineral and floral notes behind. Noteworthy for its blend of power and finesse; this bottling's track record for aging is very impressive.

92pts 2009 Leeuwin Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Art Series Margaret River

(\$60) Bright ruby. Red fruit liqueur, pipe tobacco and mint on the highly perfumed nose. Offers sweet redcurrant and cherry flavors that pick up spiciness and smokiness with air. Pliant, focused and energetic on the finish, with good cut and lasting notes of mocha and candied rose.

91pts 2012 Leeuwin Estate Riesling Art Series Margaret River

(\$22) Bright straw. Lively, mineral-accented aromas of citrus zest, white flowers and candied ginger. Vibrant and precise, offering incisive lime and green apple flavors that put on weight with air. Richer on the very long finish, with its clinging notes of pear and melon.

91pts 2010 Leeuwin Estate Shiraz Art Series Margaret River

(\$35) Bright purple. Lively dark berry and violet aromas are lifted by a peppery element. Sappy, focused and nicely concentrated, offering fresh blackberry and bitter cherry flavors that pick up an exotic floral quality with air. Closes on a gently sweet note, with very good length and silky tannins making a late appearance.

90pts 2011 Leeuwin Estate Chardonnay Prelude Vineyards Margaret River

(\$36) Light yellow. Nectarine, honey and white flowers on the pungent nose. Broad and fleshy but dry, with focused orchard and pit fruit flavors and complicating notes of anise and mace. Packs a solid punch but shows very good structure, finishing spicy and long, with a lingering note of dried fig. Nicely balanced, with no excess fat.

90pts 2010 Leeuwin Estate Shiraz Siblings Margaret River

(\$20) Bright ruby. Cherry, blackberry and floral aromas and flavors are brightened by a note of cracked pepper. Juicy, focused and refreshingly tangy, with strong finishing cut and soft, harmonious tannins. In a graceful style, with no rough edges and real upfront appeal.

90pts 2009 Leeuwin Estate Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot Prelude Margaret River

(\$29) Dark ruby. Spicy, high-toned aromas of cherry, redcurrant and cracked pepper. Juicy and tightly focused on entry, then smooth and silky in the mid-palate, offering sweet red fruit flavors and a deeper licorice quality. A floral note emerges with aeration and carries through a long, supple, seemingly tannin-free finish. I'm sure this wine will reward patience but it drinks awfully well right now.

89pts 2012 Leeuwin Estate Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon Siblings Margaret River

(\$20) (made from a 60/40 blend): Light yellow. Spicy citrus and pear on the nose, with a subtle floral undertone. Fresh and precise, with lively lemon and orchard fruit flavors complemented by succulent herbs. Finishes dry, with lingering notes of bitter citrus and a gentle bite.

MOUNT MARY

94pts 2010 Mount Mary Vineyard Quintet Yarra Valley

(\$100) (made from 47% cabernet sauvignon, 30% merlot, 14% cabernet franc, 5% petit verdot and 4% malbec; 12.7% alcohol): Inky ruby. Primary aromas of dark berries, cherry pit, chocolate and candied rose. Densely packed and sharply delineated, with bright acidity adding lift and cut to the wine's bitter cherry and cassis flavors. Finishes with thoroughly silky, sweet tannins, a jolt of peppery spices and excellent tangy persistence.



93pts 2010 Mount Mary Vineyard Chardonnay Yarra Valley

(\$75) Green-tinged yellow. Pear skin, melon, white flowers and anise on the highly perfumed nose. Juicy and precise, offering vibrant orchard and citrus fruit flavors and deeper honey and lees qualities. Becomes spicier and smokier with air and finishes with superb clarity, energy and length. Benefits quite a bit from aeration, which is no surprise as this wine has an admirable track record for aging.

92pts 2010 Mount Mary Vineyard Pinot Noir Yarra Valley

(\$100) Light red. A smoky, complex bouquet evokes fresh red berries, potpourri and allspice, with a hint of dried herbs coming up with air. Juicy and precise, offering lively raspberry and cherry flavors that gain energy with aeration. Finishes sweet and long, with silky tannins coming on late. Quiet suave and surprisingly approachable now.

PENLEY ESTATE

92pts 2010 Penley Estate Shiraz Special Select Coonawarra

(\$50) Vivid ruby. Fresh blackberry, cherry-cola and smoky oak on the highly perfumed nose. Sweet, lush and expansive, with deeply pitched dark berry fruit flavors and smooth, seamless texture. Shows a suave blend of richness and energy, finishing with sweet, fine-grained tannins and excellent persistence.

92pts 2010 Penley Estate Chertsey Coonawarra

(\$50) (made from a blend of 39% cabernet sauvignon, 31% merlot and 30% cabernet franc): Opaque ruby. Pungent, spice-accented cherry and dark berry aromas are lifted by notes of mint and cracked pepper. Ripe but lively, offering tightly focused cassis and bitter cherry flavors that gain flesh and sweetness with air. The minty note comes back strong on a finish distinguished by silky tannins and a subtle floral quality.

92pts 2010 Penley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Tolmer Coonawarra

(\$75) Inky ruby. Powerful, expressive scents of cassis, blackberry and vanillin oak. An intense cherry quality dominates the palate, with its additional components of Indian spices and candied flowers. Showing a distinctly exotic character right now. Focused, sweet and long on the youthfully tannic, floral finish.

92pts 2009 Penley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Tolmer Coonawarra

(\$75) Bright ruby. Assertive aromas of cassis, minerals, pipe tobacco and bitter chocolate. Sweet and supple on the palate, offering concentrated dark fruit and spicecake flavors accented by a bright, peppery quality. Closes spicy and long, with excellent clarity and sneaky tannins.

91pts 2010 Penley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Coonawarra

(\$50) Dark purple. Sexy aromas of cassis, blackberry, mocha, cured game and rose oil. Densely packed but juicy, with a surprisingly light touch to its bitter cherry and dark berry flavors. Penetrating and refreshingly bitter on the persistent finish, which features silky tannins and lingering spiciness.

88pts 2011 Penley Estate Chardonnay Aradia Coonawarra

(\$20) Pale gold. Pungent aromas of citrus fruits, jasmine and ginger, with a deeper melon nuance gaining strength with air. Juicy and subtly smoky on the palate, which offers pliant tangerine, honeydew and candied citrus fruit qualities. Closes on a spicy note, with good clarity and persistence.

88pts 2011 Penley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Phoenix Coonawarra

(\$20) Bright ruby-red. Zesty redcurrant and cherry aromas show good focus and a hint of white pepper. Clean and taut, offering light-bodied red fruit flavors and a touch of musky herbs. Finishes brisk and dry, with good cut and soft, harmonious tannins.



87pts 2011 Penley Estate Merlot Gryphon Coonawarra

(\$20) Bright purple. Lively redcurrant and cherry aromas, with a minty nuance building with air. Slightly tart red berry fruit flavors show good energy but a hint of dryness on the back half. Closes tangy and tight, with good length but modest depth.

PLANTAGENET WINES

91pts 2012 Plantagenet Wines Riesling Mount Barker

(\$21) Green-tinged yellow. High-pitched aromas of pear skin, honeysuckle and chalky minerals. Dusty, focused and energetic on the palate, offering tangy lemon/lime flavors that take on weight with air. Finishes on a refreshingly bitter quinine note, with very good cut and length. Reminds me a bit of a Clare riesling for its nerviness and citrus character.

90pts 2012 Plantagenet Wines Chardonnay Mount Barker

(\$21) Light yellow-gold. Poached pear, chamomile and honeysuckle on the nose, complicated by a hint of lemon curd. Energetic citrus and orchard fruit flavors are softened by notes of toasty lees and vanilla bean. Turns spicier and brighter on the finish, which features juicy citrus and melon notes and light smokiness.

91pts 2010 Plantagenet Wines Shiraz Mount Barker

(\$29) Inky ruby. Sexy, oak-accented aromas of blackberry, boysenberry and cracked pepper. Smooth and sweet on the palate, offering an array of dark fruit flavors that pick up spiciness with air. The very persistent finish shows sweetness, supple tannins and a lingering note of vanilla.

89pts 2010 Plantagenet Wines Shiraz Omrah Great Southern

(\$13) Dark purple. Black raspberry, licorice and pipe tobacco on the pungent nose. Smooth and open-knit, offering plump dark berry flavors that pick up a spicy nuance with air. Closes on a gently sweet note, with good clarity and soft tannins.

88pts 2010 Plantagenet Wines Shiraz Hazard Hill Western Australia

(\$13) Deep ruby. Spicy, perfumed aromas of black and blue fruits are complemented by a soft floral element. Supple and sweet, offering jammy cassis and blueberry flavors and a touch of cracked pepper. Shows a spicy quality on the smooth, tannin-free finish.

88pts 2012 Plantagenet Wines Sauvignon Blanc Omrah Great Southern

(\$15) Pale straw. A highly aromatic nose displays scents of citrus pith, mint, white flowers and minerals, with an exotic touch of passion fruit emerging with air. Juicy, shapely and precise, with vibrant flavors of grapefruit, tropical fruits and bitter quinine. Finishes with good grip, length and a hint of warmth. This deeply fruity wine will be very flexible with a variety of spicy Asian foods, especially Thai, Laotian, Vietnamese or Cambodian.

87pts 2012 Plantagenet Wines Hazard Hill Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon Western Australia

(\$13) Pale yellow. Musky aromas of ginger, quinine and lemon zest, with a smoky overtone. Supple and nicely focused, with very dry citrus fruit flavors that show a refreshingly tangy edge. Notes of bitter herbs and ginger linger on the dusty, somewhat firm finish.

SHOOFLY WINES

90pts 2012 Shoofly Wines Pinot Noir Yarra Valley

(\$14) Bright red. Fresh red berries, rose and allspice on the perfumed nose and in the mouth. Lithe and precise, with appealing sweetness that carries through the finish. Quite sexy, with upfront appeal but the balance to reward at least another three years or so of patience. This suave wine represents one of the best pinot values I've seen from anywhere in some time.



89pts 2011 Shoofly Wines Chardonnay Adelaide Hills

(\$14) Light yellow. Melon, mint, ginger and floral honey on the fragrant nose, plus a hint of smoky minerals in the background. Taut and refreshingly dry, with flavors of orange zest and candied ginger that become fleshier with air. Finishes smooth and spicy, with good clarity and a touch of buttered toast.

89pts 2011 Shoofly Wines Aussie Salute Red Wine South Australia

(\$14) (made from 50% shiraz, 45% grenache and 5% viognier): Bright ruby. Spice-accented aromas of red and dark berries, violet and licorice. Smooth and open-knit, offering juicy black raspberry and cherry flavors lifted by a zesty, peppery nuance. The spicy note builds with air and carries through a sweet, gently tannic finish. Drinking quite well now and probably best drunk in the near term, for its energetic fruit.

89pts 2011 Shoofly Wines Shiraz South Australia

(\$14) Bright purple. Scents of black raspberry, blueberry and violet, along with subtle notes of cracked pepper and licorice. Lush, spicy and smooth in texture, offering sweet black and blue fruit compote flavors and a candied floral quality. Clings nicely on the gently tannic finish, with the blueberry and licorice notes repeating.

YERINGBERG

92pts 2012 Yeringberg Chardonnay Yarra Valley

(\$60) Pale yellow. Aromas and flavors of poached pear, anise, buttered toast and honeysuckle. Pliant and expansive, with good depth and subtle mineral lift on the back half. Closes on a spicy note, with impressive clarity and mineral-driven persistence.

91pts 2012 Yeringberg Marsanne/Roussanne Yarra Valley

(\$60) (a 57/43 blend): Light, bright yellow. Fresh melon and pear aromas are deepened by suggestions of honey and smoky lees. Spicy, focused and racy on the palate, which offers intense orchard fruit and citrus zest flavors and a hint of white pepper. Closes tangy and long, with resonating spiciness and a touch of bitter herbs.

91pts 2012 Yeringberg Viognier Yarra Valley

(\$60) Green-tinged gold. Pure, high-pitched aromas and flavors of nectarine, orange zest, mint and white flowers. Juicy, brisk and light on its feet, with impressive finishing clarity and lingering mineral and floral notes. Very elegant for the variety, especially for one from the New World.

90pts 2011 Yeringberg Shiraz Yarra Valley

(\$80) Bright ruby. Zesty cherry and dark berries on the nose and in the mouth. Shows good energy and focus, with a peppery nuance building in the glass. Reminds me of a pinot, with silky texture, soft tannins and suave floral and spicecake notes lingering on the finish.

90pts 2011 Yeringberg Red Wine Yarra Valley

(\$90) (56% cabernet sauvignon, 15% cabernet franc, 14% merlot, 8% malbec and 7% petit verdot): Deep ruby. Blackberry, sassafras, toasty oak and rose oil on the perfumed nose. Juicy, spicy and light on its feet, with zesty acidity lifting bitter cherry, licorice and peppery spice flavors. Starts off tight but gains flesh and sweetness with air time. Finishes with a light dusting of tannins and very good, smoky persistence. I also had the chance to taste the 2004 version of this wine--it bears an uncanny resemblance to a serious Graves of similar age, with impressive energy and a smoky, spicy, red fruit character; it's drinkable now but appears to have plenty of life left in it.

87pts 2011 Yeringberg Pinot Noir Yarra Valley

(\$90) Light red. Slightly dull aromas and flavors of raspberry and dried cherry, with a smoky overtone. Fleshy and smooth in texture but lacking vivacity. Finishes on a sweet note, with good breadth and decent length. A pretty lackluster showing for what is normally one of my favorite pinots from Australia.