

Wine & Spirits

October 2014



Year's Best Red Burgundy

90 pts **Maison L'Envoye 2011 Morgon Cote du Py (\$20)**

This wine's tart cherry flavors are bright and light enough to complement fish. The acidity finds plenty of plush fruit to hold it in balance, while the aroma, slightly feral, keeps it rustic and gritty.

Year's Best Australian Shiraz

94 pts **Innocent Bystander 2012 Yarra Valley Mea Culpa Shiraz (\$60)**

Phil Sexton's team grows this wine at their Tarraford Vineyard, where Stuart Marshall is experimenting with low-impact, biodynamic practices. He hands the grapes off to Steve Flamsteed, who kicks over the fermentation with a "wild yeast pied-de-cuve" made from crushed harvest samples. All that attention to detail results in this glorious, sunny Shiraz, a wine I'd rather drink than sit and taste. The floral, red-fruited aroma has no apparent oak influence (it aged in 500-liter puncheons); the delicate spice revolves around a lasting buzz of fruit, with nothing sticking out. It's friendly and easy and it tastes real.

93 pts **d'Arenberg 2012 McLaren Vale Shipster's Rapture Single Vineyard Shiraz (\$85)**

Last replanted in 1969, this 3.7 acre, south-facing site is loam and sand over limestone. The minerality of the wine is compelling, pointing up scents of star anise, roasted meats and crushed stone. What's appealing about the wine is that it isn't dense or compacted, leaving some space within the structure for food. That's not to say it isn't juicy and complete, with bold flavors of peach and pomegranate to match all the meaty spice. Decant it for lamb on the grill.

93 pts **d'Arenberg 2012 McLaren Vale Tyche's Mustard Single Vineyard Shiraz (\$85)**

This comes from the lowest-altitude vineyard in d'Arenberg's collection, a ten-acre plot planted in 1995 close to the sea. It grew a cool and zesty wine in 2012. Black pepper spice races through it, as does anise and a savory herb scent. The fruit is velvety and plush, spreading out in a violet-hued finish, tightened up by pink grapefruit acidity. The tannins are almost mouth searing in their edgy mineral power, held in balance by the fruit: Pour it now with a grilled steak, or give it several years in the cellar to mellow.



92 pts d’Arenberg 2012 McLaren Vale The Amaranthine Single Vineyard Shiraz (\$85)

Planted in 1968, these vines grow at an east-facing vineyard where the loamy topsoil is nearly absent in a portion of the site, exposing limestone and clay. The fruit is consistently a part of The Dead Arm, d’Arenberg’s selection from top old-vine Shiraz sites. On its own, this 2012 is plush and polished, a rich, saturated red plum and beeswax flavor that cushions the meaty tannins. It feels integrated, harmonious, a wine of lovely depth.

92 pts d’Arenberg 2012 McLaren Vale Sardanapalian Single Vineyard Shiraz (\$85)

This steep, south facing vineyard has two different sand formations, one Chester Osborn describes a 2.6 million-year-old sand on sandstone, the other 50-million-year-old Maslin sand on clay. The vines are relatively young – planted in 1998 – and their southerly aspect produced a meaty, peppery shiraz in 2012. The tannins are austere dry, with a black, pomegranate-like fruitiness. The alcohol is in check and the wine is ready to pour with duck breast.

92 pts Jasper Hill 2012 Heathcote Georgia’s Paddock Shiraz (\$85)

Spicy and rich, this is intensely strawberry-red in flavor, with blacker layers of plum, oak and fruit-skin tannins, all based on an earthy, soil-driven power. It’s not the freshest vintage of Georgia’s Paddock, but it’s impressively structured and grand.

92 pts Kilikanoon 2010 Clare Valley Attunga 1865 Shiraz (\$235)

The fruit of five thousand plums and the torrefaction of an equal number of oak barrels come pouring out of the glass. If it is possible for a wine to be impacted with forward fruit, this is, along with clove and Christmas spice; even so, the wine is not sweet. Instead, it has the depth of old-vine fruit, presented with new-tech suppleness and mouthwatering freshness. Huge and powerful, this is built to cellar.

92 pts Leeuwin Estate 2011 Margaret River Siblings Shiraz (\$20) Best Buy

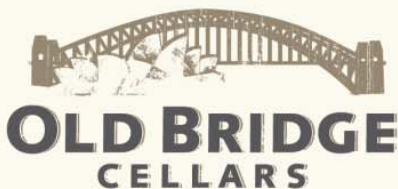
The 2011 vintage in Margaret River raised the game for wines like Siblings. It’s a relatively cool region for growing shiraz, except when a dry season and the hottest March on record creates a wine like this, taken to optimal ripeness, with bright, crunchy flavors of cherries and wild herbs. It has the scent of the karri forests along the Indian Ocean, a beautiful aroma that translates to something like thyme and lavender in stateside winespeak. This is fresh rather than complex and, at \$20, not to be missed.

90 pts d’Arenberg 2012 McLaren Vale The Eight Iron Single Vineyard Shiraz (\$85)

From an eight-acre block planted in 1960 on gray limestone soils, this is a heady Shiraz that’s showing its share of oak and alcohol in its youth. It’s fragrant with spicy fruit, dense and firm, a juicy, complete wine that will gain with a few years of bottle age.

88 pts Innocent Bystander 2012 Yarra Valley Syrah (\$20) Best Buy

Clean and fragrant with rose scents, this is tight up front and then broad in the finish, the flavors a little short. Serve it cool with anything off the grill.



88 pts John Duval 2011 Barossa Valley Entity Shiraz (\$40) Best Buy

This wine's youthful black fruit is stretched tight as a drum across a circle of tannic strength. The tannins read as cinnamon, root vegetables and bitter plum skin, a complex flavor that needs time to mellow into the fruit.

85 pts Shoofly 2013 Adelaide Shiraz (\$14) Best Buy

Black and juicy in its fruit, gentle and honeyed with a rose-like sweetness to its scent, this is firm, finishing light and tight. Sear a filet, grate some horseradish and serve this as a great party pour.

Imported New Releases – Australia

White Blends

91 pts Leeuwin Estate 2013 Margaret River Siblings (\$20) Best Buy

This blend of Sauvignon Blanc (65 percent) and Semillon shows some reduction in its tart pear flavors, their greenness opening to lime leaf, white flowers and poire Williams as it develops with air. The high acidity makes it a wine for shellfish, whether prawns or crab. Decant it.

90 pts d'Arenberg 2012 McLaren Vale The Hermit Crab (\$17) Best Buy

Named for some of the marine life that contributed their shells to the limestone soils of McLaren Vale, this blend of Viognier and Marsanne focuses on the fruit that grows out of that soil, with tart apple and juicy orange flavors riding a gentle, but it's tamed by the fruit and a little chill. For Dungeness crab.

Chardonnay

93 pts Giant Steps 2013 Yarra Valley Tarraford Vineyard Chardonnay (\$42)

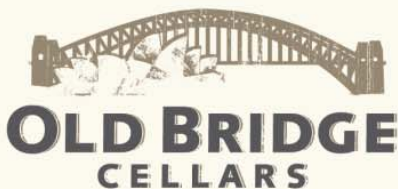
From its supple texture to its length of flavor, this takes Chardonnay in the direction of chamomile and fresh lemon cream. Pale floral notes and a gentle, nutty finish quiet the wine's power, rounding the firm acid structure in richness. Toasty graham cracker scents and generous spice notes make it substantial enough for blanquette de veau.

92 pts Leeuwin Estate 2011 Margaret River Art Series Chardonnay (\$89)

From Block 20 at Leeuwin Estate, where the vines are close to 40 years old, this barrel ferments and ages in the new French oak, adding hazelnut and smoky wood spice to the clean white-grapefruit flavors. The wine feels tightly knit and harmonious, suited to age for a decade or more, or to decant for crayfish, like the freshwater marron that thrive in the dams at Leeuwin Estate.

90 pts Giant Steps 2013 Yarra Valley Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay (\$42)

Flinty and tight when first poured, this opens to rich flavors of orange oil and smoky oak. It's an unctuous wine, powerful in alcohol, yet holding some tension to keep it focused. For pork chops roasted with delicato squash.



Riesling

92 pts Leeuwin Estate 2013 Margaret River Art Series Riesling (\$22) Best Buy

This is sweet citrus up front, then so tightly wound in potent lime acidity that it takes a day to relent and mellow. Coastal freshness becomes the primary factor as the wine opens toward clean refreshment, the pithy scents of orange peel ready to enliven any roast fish.

90 pts Kilikanoon 2013 Clare Valley Mort's Reserve Riesling (\$35)

Grown on 35-year old unirrigated vines, this is Kilikanoon's top Riesling selection. The juiciness of the wine appears in the finish, opening from a tight coil of white peppercorn into a sweeter white currant and lime flavor. The fruit has clarity, even at this unevolved stage. This should be at its best around ten years from the vintage.

Sauvignon Blanc

88 pts Plantagenet 2013 Great Southern Omrah Sauvignon Blanc (\$15) Best Buy

Bright lemon and sweet pink grapefruit flavors make this a simple, juicy white that will add a dash of salinity to grilled prawns.

Semillon

93 pts Brokenwood 2009 Hunter Valley Oakey Creek Semillon (\$32)

This transforms over the course of a day from broad, leesy scents of wheat and almond blossom into a racy white with succulent citrus fruit and fresh green apple acidity. It's smooth, creamy-rich and harmonious. Decant it for crab season, or cellar it to let the complexity develop.

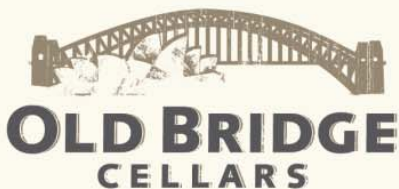
90 pts Brokenwood 2013 Hunter Valley Semillon (\$20) Best Buy

Rich and smooth, this is all texture for now, a whipped vanilla custard with the tangy bite of fresh farmer's cheese. Scents of cinnamon and toast come up, the flavors needing bottle age to fully develop.

Red Blends

93 pts Cullen 2012 Margaret River Diana Madeline (\$109)

The biodynamic calendar aligned with the ripening of Cullens' Diana Madeline Cabernet Sauvignon block in 2012; Vanya Cullen reports that all the grapes were harvested from the 7th to the 9th of March, three fruit days under a full moon. That block makes up 76 percent of the blend, the balance equal parts Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The wine's plump fruit takes a claret-like shape, Twiggy-thin but amply filling out the structure with fresh black currant flavor. There's plenty of oak tannin to capture the fruit intensity, framing herbal and cassis scents with resinous wood notes, suggesting long development ahead.



93 pts Jasper Hill 2012 Heathcote Emily's Paddock Shiraz Cabernet Franc (\$125)

Ron Laughton planted this 7.3-acre vineyard in 1975; he's never used synthetic chemicals and started developing biodynamic compost for the vines in the 1990's. If that farming has any impact on the expression of the wine in a blind tasting, it might be in a description like this: "Bright and juicy, with herbal edges and cool spice that keeps drawing you down to the earth." Or this: "An elegant and sleek juice of the earth." That raw footage from my tasting notes leaves off some of the comments on resinous scents of tobacco and the freshness of cool-climate syrah. Like the best vintages of Laughton's wines, this should age with grace.

93 pts Mount Mary Vineyard 2010 Yarra Valley Quintet (\$125)

Delicate and harmonious, this is old-school in the best sense. Its scents of black mushroom, leather, fresh blueberries and riper prune-plums last through a long trail of flavor, austere and firm, with touches of volatile acidity adding complexity. A legendary Aussie collectible, this is structured for long aging. It would also be delicious, decanted now, with roast lamb.

92 pts d'Arenberg 2010 McLaren Vale The Ironstone Pressings (\$65)

D'Arenberg's classic blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre hums with red-fruited warmth in 2010. Bright strawberry, persimmon and wild herb notes combine with the bitter chocolate tannins to form a gentle, round and juicy red. Balanced and substantive, this will augment the flavors of grilled lamb.

92 pts Kilikanoon 2012 Clare Valley Baudinet Blend (\$60)

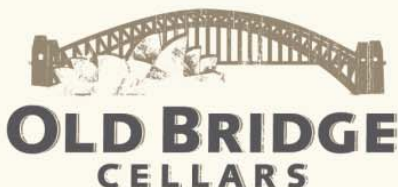
The scent of Mataro marks this blend with Grenache and Shiraz, bringing a bit of wildness – an earthen, feral aroma – to the spice mix of aniseed, mustard seed and green peppercorn. All that cool Clare complexity is in service of bright, crisp and delicious red fruit sweetness, lasting together with the spice. Think of pernil or a Cubano sandwich.

90 pts d'Arenberg 2011 McLaren Vale d'Arry's Original (\$20) Best Buy

Chester Osborn and his winemaking team foot-tread and basket press this blend of old-vine shiraz and Grenache, finishing the fermentation in a mix of old and new French and American oak barriques, then bottle it without fining or filtration. It's named for Chester's father, who developed the blend as d'Arenberg's Burgundy, and though it tastes nothing like Burgundy, it does taste like a traditional McLaren Vale red: as bright as strawberries and cherries made into permanent ink, its juicy, spicy shape defined by tannins. Touches of tobacco and eucalyptus add to the classicism, as does the sheer drinkability.

88 pts d'Arenberg 2010 McLaren Vale Sticks and Stones (\$29) Best Buy

Chester Osborn's ode to Iberia, this blend includes Tempranillo, Garnacha, Souzao and Tinta Cao. It's a strange wine with esoteric red fruit flavors and exotic ripeness, full bodied and a little bitter. Pour it with carne crudo.



Cabernet Sauvignon

94 pts Leeuwin Estate 2010 Margaret River Art Series Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60)

The purity of this Cabernet is impressive, its clear black currant flavors fresh and crisp, uninhibited by its oak aging, presented as a beautiful, unadorned claret. Herbal notes lift the aroma – it's not aggressively green, but the wine has the same clean sensation as biting into a parsley leaf. Young Cabernet fruit and gentle tannins come together in a structure that's elegant, lasting on freshness that will sustain it for a decade or more in the cellar.

Grenache

94 pts d'Arenberg 2010 McLaren Vale The Derelict Vineyard Grenache (\$29) Best Buy

It's rare to find this kind of elasticity in the fruit of Grenache, the earthy tannins snapping back on the concentrated old-vine fruit. This is supple and bold, with complex layers of flavor that touch on red fruit leather, strawberry seeds and dark, smoky notes of earth. The intensity of the wine's flavor loops back in the end, lasting for minutes in its clear, numinous beauty. Chester Osborn has been collecting ancient, derelict vineyards for more than two decades, restoring their vines to something like productivity. They performed remarkably well through the hot days and cool nights of the 2010 season.

93 pts d'Arenberg 2011 The Custodian Grenache (\$20) Best Buy

Yes, the wine is funky, but this is intoxicating grenache. The fruit is dynamic, with a bright red-berry flavor ringing out above intense umami, that brightness transformed into the taste of a sun-warmed morel. The tannins have an ancient vine character, rustic and grand. Decant a bottle for roast squab.

91 pts d'Arenberg 2012 McLaren Vale The Beautiful View (\$85)

You can tell this wine is saturated with old-vine grape skin tannins, from the purple color to the purple-black juiciness of the fruit (from 96-year old vines). The tannins capture its fruit and shepherd it down a long line of spice, all the power melding together into a graceful sense of completion. Delicious with mutton chop or a meat pie.

90 pts Kilikanoon 2012 Clare Valley Prodigal Grenache (\$30) Best Buy

This wine's bright red fruit flavors combine Grenache's strawberry notes and tomato-leaf spice. It has a warm/cool feel, like turning over a rock and exposing the earth to the sun. A simple, inviting mineral-driven Grenache for grilled fennel sausages.