

NEWS

Ignore Shiraz at your peril

WBM100 reviewer Tyson Stelzer says an interest in all things new has seen Shiraz somewhat glossed over in recent times. But his tastings for this issue of WBM100 demonstrated that to lose focus on this variety—which has done more for Australia's reputation as a fine wine producer than any other—is to lose focus on the future of wine in this country.

"I tasted more wines for this edition of WBM100 than I have for any other, by a full order of magnitude. Australia continues to produce a remarkable array of Shiraz under all manner of guises," Tyson said.

"My picks this month span the length and breadth of the Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills, Eden Valley, Clare Valley, McLaren Vale, Coonawarra, Bendigo, Yarra Valley, Heathcote, Geelong, Macedon Ranges, Margaret River, Great Southern, Canberra and Hunter Valley."

Tyson said Shiraz could take on many personalities. "And herein lies its strength and its weakness. There is a style of Australian Shiraz to handle all manner of culinary obstacles. But this also puts the consumer at risk of being unsure of what style he or she should expect," he said.

"It seems that reading the alcohol level from the bottle provides a much less reliable clue of where the wine falls on the elegance/richness scale than it did in years past. Some cool climate zones are producing some quite alcoholic wines while some producers in warmer regions are working hard to keep alcohol levels low.

"The solution to the confusion is better education of the consumer in Australian regionality. The diversity of Australian Shiraz necessitates that there will also be a diversity in quality. However, it remains that the very best wines at all price points outperform virtually all other varieties grown in this country. Just skim though my scores this month—the standard is epic."

Heggies a winner

The Heggies Vineyard Riesling 2008 has taken out the trophy for best white wine at the Royal Queensland Wine Show, reinforcing the Eden Valley's reputation for the variety.

Heggies Vineyard winemaker Peter Gambetta says the Queensland Show is a litmus test for new vintages.

"To recognise an Eden Valley Riesling again in a class of this calibre presents an honest argument that Eden Valley is the premium Riesling producing region in Australia," he said.



\$17 sticky triumphs

The Royal Queensland Wine Show's trophy for Best Sweet White Wine has gone to the Gramp's 2006 Botrytis Semillon. This win follows the 2005 Gramp's Shiraz being awarded Champion Wine of Show at the Royal Cairns wine show in June this year.

The grapes used to produce the 2006 Gramp's Botrytis Semillon were sourced from the Riverina in NSW. Gramp's wines are distributed throughout Australia by Pernod Ricard and are available at leading fine wine retailers and restaurants and selected Liquorland stores.

Union Bank Wine Store opens in Orange

August sees the opening of The Union Bank Wine Store in Orange, a unique retail space featuring local wines as well as a carefully selected range of boutique brands from around Australia and the world. Each wine is hand-picked by Peter Bourne and Nick Butler. An extension of Orange's popular Union Bank Wine Bar, the store will include:

- In-store tastings of new arrivals, vintages and specials every Saturday;

How does the 100 point system work?

A 100 point system is used by the world's leading wine judges. As a guide the rating is as follows:

- 94-100** Exceptional in every way. The pinnacle of the style.
- 90-93** Excellent quality. A wine of style and character, with all components in balance.
- 87-89** Good quality, with sound varietal character.
- 84-86** Ordinary and affording little drinking pleasure.
- 80-83** Poor quality, lacking balance or fruit integrity.
- 75-79** Faulty or distinctly lacking in some way.

- Monthly wine suppers in conjunction with the Wine Bar, matching wine styles with chef Scott Want's food; and
- Regular wine education classes and tastings with Peter Bourne.

Two wines from Merrill

Two new wines have been released under the Wickham Park Vineyard label from the Geoff Merrill stable—an '04 Sangiovese and an '05 Merlot.

The 110 acre property, nestled in the southern Adelaide foothills, was originally used as a sheep station and was planted to Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Sangiovese, Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot in 2000. The Sangiovese in particular has a special meaning for Geoff Merrill, as his great grandfather Joseph Cileo immigrated to Australia from Italy in the late 1800s.

Meanwhile, Geoff participated in the successful Taste of Cooloom at the Hyatt Cooloom in June with several other winemakers. Taste of Cooloom is a weekend of golf, wine dinners and an outdoor wine and food tasting on the Sunday, which was attended by more than 1,200 people.

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WBM100 is published by WBM - Australia's Wine Business Magazine. WBM is owned by Free Run Press Pty Ltd. ISSN 1835-8144.