



tastingnotes

Welcome to the 100 Best Australian Wines list for 2011. As always, this century of greats is the result of exhaustive tastings over the last twelve months and it represents the finest one hundred Australian wines available on the shelves in the UK this year. 2011 sees the evolution of my Hall of Fame initiative and I congratulate the names below for making this imperial grade. Firstly, these twelve magnificent producers have been the most consistent wineries in the 100 Best Australian Wines list since its inception in 2004, being included in every single list and they are to be applauded.

**DE BORTOLI, FOX GORDON, JACOB'S CREEK, MCWILLIAM'S, MITOLO, PENFOLDS,
PETER LEHMANN, ST HALLETT, THE LANE VINEYARD, TYRRELL'S, WIRRA WIRRA, YALUMBA**

In addition, the concluding eleven members of the Hall of Fame have made it into all bar one of the 100s and they are:

**CHAPEL HILL, CULLEN, GROSSET, HARDY'S, JANSZ, KNAPPSTEIN, LEEUWIN, MAJELLA,
MOSS WOOD, MOUNT HORROCKS, STONIER**

It is fascinating to see that boutique operators rub shoulders with giants and while large portfolios like Penfolds have notched up a massive 29 wines over the years, with De Bortoli (24), Yalumba (23) and Peter Lehmann (21) there are also a few notable names like Jim Barry (13), Tim Adams (13), Petaluma (12) and Tamar Ridge (10) who have missed out on two years of lists and so narrowly miss receiving the HoF accolade, but still have performed at a massive run rate more recently.

So twenty-three estates gain Hall of Fame status (between them hauling 40/100 spots in this year's list!) and their portfolios of wines, along with this year's 100 Best, will be used as the vanguard of my continued push to celebrate and educate the world about fine Australian wine. They reflect what is truly exciting, engaging, passionate and essential about Aussie wine and they have all gained a well-earned place in the very highest echelons of the world of wine.





NV Jansz, Tas

£14

Australia's finest value, party glugger kicks cheap Champagne, Cava and Prosecco in the proverbials with its breeding and balance. Watch out for the similarly priced spectacular NV Rosé and brand new 2006 vintage cuvée which is the finest offering from this specialist producer to date. The Aussie dollar has slightly hurt the price at which these wines hit the shelf, but both the owner and the UK agent have done all that they can to ameliorate this pain and Jansz still looks scintillatingly irresistible.

Agent: *Negotiants*

Stockists: *Camber Wines, Fraziers, Eagles Wines, Free Run Juice, Selfridges, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Tankerton Wine Room, Everywine, Hanging Ditch, Nidderdale Fine Wines, Reserve Wines, Rhythm and Booze, House of Menzies*

NV Pirie, Estate Brut, Chardonnay/Pinot Noir, Tas

£21

Beautiful, lusty, rich and aromatic, this bold, weighty fizz shows a more intense and brooding side to this category, making it as fantastic with food as without it. Tassie is proving to be a stunning source of fizz-worthy grapes and beyond the basics of making the stuff it is interesting to see how some of the pioneering brains are loading flavour, complexity and class. It reminds me of somewhere else in the world.

Agent: *Stratford's*

Stockists: *Addison Wines, Old Butcher's Wine Cellar*

2007 Croser, Piccadilly Valley, Adelaide Hills, SA

£21

Typically tight in its youth but this time with a creamy texture and a beautiful, lively, mid-palate, this rare Adelaide Hills sparkler uses 70% Pinot Noir and this provides it with considerable backbone offset by a bright, lime juice acidity finish. One of the most consistently brilliant Australian fizzies, Brian Croser planted the original vineyards for this wine in 1979, safe in the knowledge that people would be inadvertently raising a glass to his name for many years to come. I bet that feels good!

Agent: *Bibendum*

Stockist: *Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk*

SEMILLON & SAUVIGNON BLANC



2005 McWilliam's, Mount Pleasant, Elizabeth Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW

£10

Last year I featured a brand new 2009 Elizabeth and her precocity and charm was there for all to see. I promised you that four more years down the track these wines were nothing short of delectable and so this year, in a 'here's one I made earlier, sleight of hand' I have delivered you one of these Grand Vin incarnations. '05 Elizabeth is an enchantress without quite gathering as much regal baggage as '03 Vat 1 (qv) quite yet.

Agent: *PLB*

Stockists: *Cambridge Wine Merchants, Peter Green, House of Menzies, Majestic, New Forest Wines, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Wine Society*

2010 Vasse Felix, Sauvignon Blanc / Semillon, Margaret River, WA £12

Virginia Willcock further enhances her stylish reputation with this incredible, edgy SBS. By attacking, head on, Cullen's time-honoured (100 Best alumni) more macho style of this blend, any other winemaker might be afraid of the fall. On this occasion this extraordinary wine transcends its near neighbour's benchmark creation by layering excitement and nervous tension to the spectacular grapefruit and lime flavours. It is ready to drink, but I expected that it will age fairly well in the short term, too. The reason that I picked it for the 100 this year is that it makes your mind whirlwind from the moment the very first molecules of scent puncture your olfactory bulb.

Agent: *Negotiants*

Stockists: *Majestic, Estbek, Wine Rite, Tanners, Free Run Juice, Waitrose*

2007 Arrowfield Estate, Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW £13

A newcomer to 100 Best, this top class Hunter Valley Semillon has four years under its belt and this makes it slap bang in the middle of its optimum drinking period. Calm and controlled on the palate, with considerable beauty and poise, this classy offering should encourage newcomers to this category with open arms. The laser-driven lime juice flavours will root you to the spot, like no trendy sauvignon (from over the ditch) will ever do!

Agent: *Vinicon*

Stockists: *contact adrian@vinicon.com*

2010 Shaw & Smith, Sauvignon Blanc, Adelaide Hills, SA £13

Martin and Michael nail their trademark white again in 2010 with this sniper-sighted Sauvignon Blanc. It's a perennial favourite, but this year it has even more taut and nervy herbal notes than usual. This wine has proved to be a massive hit on my 100 Best Roadshow and the comments that I hear time and time again are that the elegance of AH Sauvignon is so much better suited to our experienced, 'European palates' than the majority of the wines from NZ. This always provokes heated debate – over a glass or two of wine, *comme d'habitude*.

Agent: *Liberty*

Stockists: *Waitrose*

2010 Hart & Hunter, Oakey Creek Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW £17

Winemaking couple Damien Stevens and Jodie Belleville are the astute minds and dextrous hands behind the brand new Hart & Hunter label and this newly released, single vineyard Semillon is an absolute result. With 30 year-old vines and perfect vintage conditions, this beautifully balanced, 11.5% alc wine is set to be a star performer in the UK market. If you have never taken a dip in the thrilling Semillon plunge pool then start here.

Agent: *Enotria*

Stockists: *Great Western Wine, Tivoli, SWIG, Secret Cellar, Great Northern Wine Co, Ann et Vin, Direct Wine Shipments*

2009 Mount Horrocks, Semillon, Clare Valley, SA £18

Imagine my surprise when a wine made from something other than Riesling makes the grade from the Mount Horrocks portfolio. This extraordinarily beautiful, dry Semillon has staggering depth and smart fruit and it provides a daring counterpoint to the lighter, unoaked versions from the Hunter. Without the weight of a full bore Chardonnay this cunning wine allows you to dine accurately (and less expensively) and so you ought to reward chicken and serious fish with a grape that they rarely have the pleasure of accompanying – it will provide you with a delicious swerve in your wine diet. I have given Steph's Cordon Cut Riesling a year off in this 100 but I can assure you that the 2010 vintage is up to its usual stellar standard.

Agent: *Liberty*

Stockists: *Tesco.com*



2010 Tower Estate, Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW

£19

Sam Connew's opening volley of wines at Tower Estate signals the arrival at this historic property of a truly mercurial talent. 2010 Semillon is virtually ready to drink which might seem confusing for this long-living variety, however it is simply because Sam has imbued hitherto unknown balance and glittering joie de vivre into this youthful wine. So, whether you drink it today or in five years' time, you are guaranteed a white-knuckle ride. Keep your eyes peeled for a thoroughly delicious 2010 Chardonnay, too.

Agent: Hallowed Ground

Stockists: SWIG



2009 The Lane, Gathering, Sauvignon Blanc / Semillon, Adelaide Hills, SA £20

Australia's definitive SBS, Gathering, manages to expertly tread the line between joyous aperitif and mind-bendingly complex food wine. The oak used here is so subtly employed that it is incredible and yet without it this wine would not have the wondrous amplitude that it does throughout. Mind-bending quality, unerring commitment and the result is that it leaves you feeling astonishingly violated.

Agent: Corney & Barrow

Stockists: Corney & Barrow www.corneyandbarrow.com



2003 Tyrrell's, Winemaker's Selection, Vat 1 Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW £30

It is extraordinary to think that I can list Hunter Valley Semillon over a period of seven vintages in this collection of wines and that 2003 Vat 1 is the current release of this iconic wine! It is a monumental work of fully mature art and it boasts a flavour palette which defies belief for a single varietal, unoaked white wine. This is the sort of wine that you should be drinking more often when you tire of top flight white Burgundy. Just to show that Tyrrell's is way more than a one grape pony seek out 2010 Marks & Spencer Hunter Valley Chardonnay. Whatever you expect from £8.99 Aussie Chardonnay, it is time to recalibrate your thoughts because Tyrrell's has just put a cat among the pigeons with this new wine. Just six months in French oak is, as we all know, all that is needed to bless top flight Chardonnay fruit and so it is the restraint and control that this wine uses which makes it such an unmitigated success.

Agent: Fells

Stockists: Eagles Wines, Philglas and Swiggot, Planet of the Grapes, Roberts and Speight, Whalley Wine Shop, The Wine Library

WEIRD & WONDERFUL WHITE



2010 Jacob's Creek, Pinot Grigio, SEA

£8

Thank goodness for the reality check that Jacob's Creek gives this over used variety's style pretensions. Pinot Grigio should lead with tangy, spritzy fruit and uplifting aperitif-style excitement – very few do. As always you can rely on JC to get its message right and so this year, it is no surprise to me that my favourite version resides in their stable. It is also worth pointing out that the 2010 Riesling and 2010 Shiraz Rosé are also truly wonderful wines this year.

Agent: Pernod Ricard

Stockists: Tesco, Tesco Wine by the Case



2010 Yalumba, Y Series Viognier, SA

£9

This year, no less than four Viogniers from Louisa Rose's pipeline could have made this Viognier slot. I have plumped for the incredibly well-priced Y Series not least because of its perfect balance and succulence on the palate. However, 2009 Eden Valley Viognier with its reserved demeanour and tighter stone fruit splendour is a valid, beauty, too. 2009 Virgilius is perhaps the finest Viognier that Dame Louisa has ever made but it is still belligerently youthful, so I expect to see it in next year's roll call. Finally, FSW8B is Australia's finest ever botrytised version of this grape and with kumquat and wild honey exploding all over your gob it is thoroughly mesmerising and hilarious in equal measure.

Agent: *Negociants*

Stockists: *Noel Young, Kibworth Wines, Houltts, GR Wines, Nidderdale, Fraziers*



2010 The Lane, Single Vineyard Pinot Gris, Adelaide Hills, SA

£14

Pinot Gris only merits three mentions this year as my annoyance with this variety grows. Luckily, all three are unmissable for distinct and crucial reasons. 2010 SVPG is, by a long stretch, the most chiselled and devastating of the wines with exotic pear and violet notes on the nose all tightening to a breathtaking, acidic finish. The temptation might be to cellar this wine for a year or two waiting for it to put on weight, however, my instinct is to attack now. This silky, smooth elixir is beautiful. It will never be more ravishing that it is today - so you must follow its siren song and drink your fill.

Agent: *Corney & Barrow*

Stockists: *Corney & Barrow www.corneyandbarrow.com*



2010 Fox Gordon, Fiano, Adelaide Hills, SA

£16

Australia's leading Fiano producer, Tash Mooney, happens to be better versed in making mighty red wines and yet before tackling a bottle of Tash's wondrous 2008 Eight Uncles Shiraz perhaps, because it is a veritable sensory marauder, prepare your palate with her thirst-quenching yet mightily intellectual Fiano. Having spent two weeks in Southern Italy last year I can assure you that this wine is truly world class.

Agent: *Hallowed Ground*

Stockists: *SWIG, Noel Young*

2009 Kooyong, The Beurrot Pinot Gris, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£19

Kooyong missed the party with its Pinots this year when this heady, greengage, sponge cake and peach-scented PG caught my attention. Unapologetically broad and with bustling fruit under its skirts this is an old school, buxom beauty which should take the place of modern, overly-made-up Chardonnays whose ephemeral beauty will never match the sex appeal of this wine. Coming from two small parcels of PG on the property this is a rare and charming wine.

Agent: *Enotria*

Stockists: *Great Western Wine, Theatre of Wine, Harvey Nichols*

2009 Petaluma, Viognier, Adelaide Hills, SA

£19

I have been waiting for a wine like this to emerge blinking into the sunlight from the Petaluma cellar for an eternity. Only six months ago, 2009 Viognier did something that it has never done before and that is to have all of the intoxicating allure of the Viognier variety on the nose, but do it transplanted onto a Chardonnay-shaped chassis. This means that Petaluma Viognier is one of the most drinkable and least heady or gloopy Viogniers in Australia. I love this grape, but I favour the gymnast-shaped versions and not the Mad Men-shaped, hourglass models. The same sort of manoeuvre has occurred with 2008 Petaluma Shiraz, too, making it an equally lithe and less ponderous fellow. Good Work Ox and Team.

Agent: *Bibendum*

Stockist: *Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk*

2010 John Duval, Plexus Marsanne / Roussanne / Viognier, Barossa Valley, SA

£22

JD breaks into the 100 with a white wine – shock horror. I love his polished, muscular reds, but when I spotted the glamorous trim and marvellously lush cut of this beauty's jib I was transfixed and his reds seemed to evaporate before my eyes. It's lovely to see Viognier and her girlfriends at play and the balance is just this side of vulgar, so it makes it all the more enticing. I can't wait to pour this wine on the Roadshow. It will pick up where 2009 Mitchelton Airstrip left off last year – which was with masses of new fans, all panting for more.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Philglas & Swiggot, Farr Vintners, Harper Wells

RIESLING



2010 Knappstein, Handpicked Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£9

This is the most forward of my 2010 Rieslings and with them being a slightly juicier vintage than 2009 I would suggest that you squirrel away any '09s in your cellar now and promote 2010s ahead of them. The sherbety lemon fruit, excellent length, flesh and freshness mark this as a terrific Handpicked Riesling and it will inevitably be available at a bargain price at some stage this year so keep your eyes super-peeled. This is one wine that you can hose down by the case so be sure to go 'long'. 2010 Ackland Riesling, HP's big brother is another unmitigated success, too, so load up with this wine as it has the ability to age beautifully.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockist: Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk

2010 Petaluma, Hanlin Hill Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£11

Hanlin Hill was blessed with not just one wine in 2010, but two. Alongside this stunning, dry, marksman accurate wine there is a 2010 Cane Cut Riesling sweetie of which we will get only tiny quantities in the UK. Winemaker Andrew Hardy tells me that they could make more of it if we get a taste for it, so I encourage you to track down a few bots, skull them and report back to Petaluma directly! As for this year's dry candidate - it is a ripper. With tart minerality and firm fruit notes, this is a more forceful, dominant Riesling and one which should not be drunk as an aperitif, but as the main show.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockist: Waitrose, Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk

2010 Pewsey Vale, Riesling, Eden Valley, SA

£11

Like many of the other 2010s, Pewsey Vale Riesling has boundless joy and energy on the nose, and this liveliness and innocence is thoroughly engaging. Impale your tongue on this wine. It's as forward-drinking as you could possibly imagine yet with delicacy and intricacy to boot. This is the most succulent Eden Valley Riesling release this year and if you want to remind yourself of the grandeur of Pewsey's Museum Reserves then look no further than the 2006 The Contours with its incredible lemon curd on buttered toast aromas and terrifyingly stern minerality on the finish. It's a baby, but it already shows signs of greatness.

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Selfridges, General Wine Co, SH Jones, Oliver & Bird, Camber Wines, Free Run Juice, Hand Picked, Reserve Wines



2005 Peter Lehmann, Reserve Wigan Riesling, Eden Valley, SA

£14

I was lucky enough to pour 2004 Wigan Riesling on a number of occasions on my 100 Best Roadshow last year and it didn't fail to entrance every single person that it touched, confirming that dry Aussie Riesling, with a few years under its belt, is every bit as compelling as the great wines of Alsace. '05 Wigs is even more aromatic and captivating so this message will continue to gather momentum everywhere I go.

Agent: *Enotria*

Stockists: *Great Western Wine, Harper Wells, Slurp*

2010 Skillogalee, Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£14

With a little more grip on the back palate than both the Knappstein and the Pewsey Vale, Skilly manages to cut through trickier dishes with its rapier sharp acid/minerality assault. In spite of its diminutive structure this is a hauntingly aromatic wine which wears its heart on its sleeve and in spite of its forward drinking brio it still has enough gravitas to age for five years.

Agent: *Enotria*

Stockists: *Great Western Wine, Australian Wines Online*

2009 Kilikanoon, Mort's Block Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£18

A lone 2009, Mort's Block is a majestic, muscular Riesling, with power and intensity which is frankly unnerving beside the expressive youthful 2010s. For this reason, it is crucial to track down this wine in order not only to highlight the wonderful differences between the two vintages at the highest level, but also to counterpoint the vivacity of the 2010s with the nobility and structure that this wine brings to the table.

Agent: *Thorman Hunt*

Stockists: *Palmer Wine Store, Highbury Vintners, Harvey Nichols*



2010 Grosset, Springvale Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£20

In 2010, Springvale is perfectly suited to the vintage conditions with a little less complexity than in 2009 but a far more genial and welcoming outlook. This means that, for once, you can crack on with a Grosset Riesling without feeling that you have committed a vinous sin and without me encouraging you too much, 2010 Polish Hill is also a stunner and I wouldn't blame you if you unscrewed a bottle of this wine too. Jeff's wines always act as a true barometer of the vintage and it is great to see that he has not built these 2010s up too much allowing them to flow effortlessly across the palate. They are a magical pair.

Agent: *Liberty*

Stockists: *Wine Society, Wimbledon Wine Cellar, Noel Young, South Downs Wine Cellars, Wine Direct*



2009 The Lane, Single Vineyard Unwooded Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, SA £12

This wine is a lesson in top quality fruit handling and also in the mystical art of losing nothing from the vineyard to the table in terms of class, elegance and character. Balance is born – never has this been truer. I was amazed by the wondrous aroma on this unwooded wine. It begs the question, ‘Why add it if you don’t need it?’ The layers of silky stone fruit, wild flowers and patisserie are truly incredible. Fast establishing themselves as one of the greatest Chardonnay exponents in the country, The Lane proves that it can handle any discipline with this variety. Look to the singularly stunning 2010 Prominent Hill Block 1A Single Vineyard Chardonnay (in Waitrose at around a tenner) and also to their top wine, 2009 Reginald Germein Chardonnay, which competes against Yattarna and Leeuwin for top chardy dog. These guys are very switched on indeed.

Agent: *Corney & Barrow*

Stockists: *Corney & Barrow www.corneyandbarrow.com*



2010 Chapel Hill, Unwooded Chardonnay, McLaren Vale/Adelaide Hills, SA £13

2010 Unwooded Chardonnay is as near to perfect as this wine gets combining crisp, grapefruity Adelaide Hills Chardonnay perfectly with juicy, mandarin-kissed McLaren Vale fruit. This wine has for years led the pack in this category, and in 2010 it has moved the bar even higher. No one really tries to compete though because like the great Sergei Bubka, it is capable of breaking its own records many times over.

Agent: *Berkmann*

Stockists: *Barrica Wines, Food & Fine Wine, Lightfoot's Wine Line, Last Drop Wines*

2009 Xanadu Estate, Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA £13

After last year's Reserve Chardonnay '08 bulldozed its way into our hearts, in 2009, the more junior cuvées have caught my attention like never before. Below this wine, the 2009 Exmoor Chardonnay, at less than a tenner, is a jolly useful little number and this estate wine, at a fiver more, looks extraordinarily good value for money. With only a little bit more richness, but twice the length and complexity, Xanadu has managed in a very short space of time, to put its wines on the same 'page' as Vasse Felix and Leeuwin. Cheers.

Agent: *Enotria*

Stockists: *Slurp, AG Wines*

2009 Vasse Felix, Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA £13

I did not think it possible for this wine to get any better, but the 2009 trumps the spectacular 2008 in my notes with me giving it a score usually reserved for so-called 'icon' wines. I nearly dropped my glass at the ADTs when I tasted this wine and so I hope that you manage to hold on to yours. In addition to this estate wine, 2008 Heytesbury Chardonnay is only a few pounds north of £20 and for a super cuvée this wine looks very good value indeed. It will not be priced like this for long one assumes.

Agent: *Negotiants*

Stockists: *Noel Young, Wine Direct, Everywine, JW Lees Oliver and Bird, Premier Vintners, Camber Wines*



2009 Stonier, Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Vic £14

It's hard to imagine an estate Chardonnay at this price being any more complete. While I adore both the Reserve and KBS Chardonnays at Stonier, this estate wine is now, without doubt, the most engaging. Mike Symons builds his wines with molecular precision and his care and attention is evident in every sip. If you have forgotten just how delicious Stonier wines are then this Chardonnay will shame you into catching up immediately.

Agent: *Bibendum*

Stockist: *Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk*

2009 Mountadam, High Eden Chardonnay, Eden Valley, SA £15

Con Moshos (ex-Petaluma) has finally managed to crack the code of Mountadam's extreme Chardonnay vineyards. This is the first time that a Mountadam wine has made the grade and on this showing I expect them to become regulars from now on because this is a spectacular, cool and classy offering which embraces minerality and acidity with open arms making it a thoroughly modern Chardonnay which will appeal to a vast range of classical palates.

Agent: *Justerini & Brooks* **Stockists:** *www.justerinis.com*

2009 Yabby Lake, Red Claw Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Vic £16

He has done it again – Tom Carson is on a roll (does he stop rolling?) at Yabby Lake. Red Claw, in 2009, has extraordinary minerality and depth which tightens its body, corseting the fruit into a drop dead gorgeous hourglass shape. The estate Chardonnay is one of the finest of its kind in the country and Block 6, sadly only available in miniscule quantities, is set to be a cult wine in no time at all, too.

Agent: *SWIG* **Stockists:** *Harvey Nichols, Jeroboams, WoodWinters*

2009 Petaluma, Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, SA £19

2009 Petaluma Tiers Chardonnay is the finest vintage of this wine I have ever tasted and it is clearly related to this wine, the much cheaper estate version, in aroma, texture and length. Gone are the medieval oak notes and brooding, clunky Chardonnay nuances – open your arms (and mouths) to welcome in a new era of innate and intrinsic balance and momentum.

Agent: *Bibendum* **Stockist:** *Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk*

2009 Stella Bella, Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA £20

Two years in a row for Stella Bella, so congratulations to this superb estate for beating hundreds of other wines to this spot. The trademark apple crumble and marmalade notes are once again present on this 2009 vintage and while the oak is still in its nutty/praline stage this is a beautifully forward wine with classic WA freshness on the finish. You would be hard pushed to find anything from the Mâconnais to compete with its seamless delivery of flavours at this price. If you would like some added frivolity after dinner then track down 2010 Stella Bella Pink Muscat and let the rib tickling commence.

Agent: *Alliance* **Stockists:** *Ann et Vin, Cooden Cellars, everywine.co.uk, The Fine Wine Company, New Forest Wines, Noel Young, Planet of the Grapes, Selfridges, SWIG, VH Wines, The Vineyard, Highbury Vintners, Wine Society*

2008 Giant Steps, Tarraford Chardonnay, Yarra Valley, Vic £20

Giant Steps has had so many near misses in my 100 Best so, when Groundhog Day didn't happen this year, I was absolutely delighted. Sexton and Tarraford Vineyards have both made fabulous Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs of late with this wine being my top pick. I adore the firm fruit and spiciness in the palate, once again, marking out my predilection for fit, energetic, mineral-soaked versions of this grape variety. If you want to dip your toe into the Giant Steps Chardonnay pool, then do keep your eyes out for their entry level wine 2010 Innocent Bystander Chardonnay, because it shows just how much élan this company has.

Agent: *OW Loeb* **Stockists:** *OW Loeb, Philglas & Swiggot, The Good Wine Shop, Pont de la Tour Wine Shop*



2008 Leeuwin Estate, Prelude Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA

£24

Unfortunately Prelude Chardonnay has been bumped up in price of late. However, this only acknowledges the fact that it has been woefully under-priced since the dawn of time. So, it now sits alongside its peers at the 'right price' and with this in mind it focuses our attention on what is in the glass like never before. '08 is a superb vintage for both Prelude and Art Series and both wines, seem remarkably evolved already. Either would be a to-die-for treat, the only difference being the exchange rate between the two labels is now two-to-one not three-to-one.

Agent: *Domaine Direct*

Stockists: *Domaine Direct, Beaconsfield Wine Cellars, Secret Cellar, Uncorked, Wine Direct*

2010 Ocean Eight, Verve Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£25

Mike Awlyard's early picked, brand new vintage release signals a new wave of high tensile Chardonnay in Australia. The aromas and flavours of this wine make you treble check the label in order to confirm its provenance such is the staggering freshness and explosion of fruit experienced when you open this bottle. With a Chardonnay as masochistic as this, you might expect Mike's 2009 Pinot Noir to be even more punitive. However, nothing could be further from the truth, as it is a lesson in elegance and approachability. Dive into both to shock your senses.

Agent: *Hallowed Ground*

Stockists: *SWIG*

2009 Shaw & Smith, M3 Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, SA

£25

Shaw & Smith's robust M3 shows another mood to this hugely important variety in Australia and it manages to seem forward and juicy already. Finer and more oak-balanced than ever before this is a succulent style and it's the sort of wine that you crave in posh restaurants so that you don't have to spend a fortune on dreary, over-price white Burgundy!

Agent: *Liberty*

Stockists: *Majestic*



2009 Penfolds, Reserve Bin 09A, Adelaide Hills, SA

£42

The Adelaide Hills Bin Series has matched only one other Chardonnay in Australia over the last five years with its peerless and consistent perfection and that is Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay. And, although this wine is inextricably related to Yattarna, it has been the more consistent performer of late. Admittedly these are all completely different styles of wine, however the skill and talent involved in making them is identical and this exclusively sourced Adelaide Hills wine is totally and utterly world class. '09A is an easier wine to understand than Yattarna, however, it isn't any less grand in this regard, focussing nail-bitingly dramatic fruit and fusing it to the subtlest oak nuances imaginable. For the nerds – only 9 months in 2/3 new oak barriques – nice tidy stats if you ask me!

Agent: *Treasury Wine Estates* **Stockists:** *Tesco.com*



2008 Penfolds, Yattarna, Tasmania / Adelaide Hills

£58

Bin 144 '08 Yattarna parades more lime juice fruit than ever before and the green gold colour alone is completely hypnotic. Gone are the days of fat, mouth-filling Chardonnay in Australia and wines like Yattarna show that you can load them with masses of high-tensile fruit and then treat them to the poshest of barrels and the results are simply the most intense wild flower and sophisticated lemon and nut flavours but without seeming remotely over-oaked at all. Only half a point off perfection, this wine is now truly worthy of its 1985 working title, White Grange.

Agent: *Treasury Wine Estates* **Stockists:** *Berry Bros*

2010 Turkey Flat, Rosé, Barossa Valley, SA

£13

It must be the Dolcetto in this otherwise predictable blend which brings the je ne sais quoi to Turkey Flat Rosé. Never has this pervasive brew had such style or drinkability because in 2010 TFR is beautifully balanced and less combative of late and this observation can also be levelled at the two 2009 Butcher's Block wines, too, which if you haven't seen them before are pinpoint accurate Southern Rhône remixes.

Agent: *Mentzendorff*

Stockists: *Selfridges, Mullwood Wines, Christopher Piper Wines, Four Vintners, Oxford Wine Company, Hailsham Cellars, Edencroft Fine Wine, Australian Wines Online*

PINOT NOIR

RRP

2009 Pirie South, Pinot Noir, Tas

£12

Dr. Andrew Pirie has just made his greatest Pirie South Pinot to date. With less overt fruit ripeness and a cool lingering finish, this sensual side of Pinot appeals to palates who have cut their teeth on the more mineral wines of Mercury and Santenay. I adore this side of Pinot Noir and welcome its recalibration of my taste buds whenever I taste it. Congratulations to Australia, Tasmania and Andrew for delivering such diversity.

Agent: *Stratford's*

Stockists: *Old Butcher's Wine Cellar, Jeroboams*

2010 Riposte by Tim Knappstein, The Dagger Pinot Noir, Adelaide Hills, SA

£14

I am a massive fan of 2008 The Sabre Pinot Noir from Tim's cellar and it would have waltzed its way into this list were it not for the deft skills of 2010 The Dagger. Forward drinking, unapologetically youthful and desperately dashing, d'Artagnan himself must surely be the model for this flashing blade. Every bloke needs a bottle of this in his briefcase for emergency purposes.

Agent: *Enotria*

Stockists: *Great Western Wine, Slurp*

2009 Tamar Ridge, Kayena Vineyard Pinot Noir, Tas

£18

2009 Devil's Corner Pinot Noir sneaked into this list last year and so it can't claim the position in this year's list even though it is still around, so don't forget this budget beauty because it, Pirie South and The Dagger are the top cheapies of the year. In its spot, however, is its big brother KVPN and it's easy to see where the cheeky Devil got its intensity and class from. With irresistible texture and length this is an amazingly attractive wine in its youth and in value for money terms there is not a Kiwi Pinot Noir to touch it.

Agent: *Awin Barratt Siegel*

Stockists: *Harrods, Haslemere, Bowland Forest Vintners, Dorset Wines, Connollys, Noel Young, Charles Steevenson, Luvians, Wine in Cornwall*



2010 De Bortoli, Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley, Vic

£18

With a darker fruit flavour spectrum than many of the Mornington wines, De Bortoli's savoury yet exotically spiced black cherry '10 Pinot is heady, ethereal and seductive. In spite of its crisp, youthful finish this is already an overwhelmingly attractive proposition but I bet that its peak is still twelve months away. In the meantime track down the tremendous 2008 which will give you an idea of what lies in wait for this even more expressive wine. Its sibling estate Chardonnay is always a gripping piece of work, exercising gorgeous, praline scents and oodles of panache over a juicy Yarra Valley core.

Agent: De Bortoli

Stockists: Theatre of Wine; Wine Society, Cornhill Wines, RS Wines



2008 Stonier, Windmill Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£25

'08 Windmill was Stonier's entrant in the famous Stonier International Pinot Noir Tasting earlier this year and up against the most daunting list of competitors it walked away with not only its head held high but also a phalanx of new admirers. This is because where other wines use oak, alcohol and extract to add lustre, Windmill employs subtlety, nuance and integrity. This incredible work is underlined by the fact that the 2009 Estate Pinot Noir is only £12.99.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockist: Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk

2009 Yabby Lake, Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£26

2009 Yabby Pinot has a sleek chassis and very fine lines making it less flamboyant than its previous vintage. This interpretation of Pinot serves to calm the senses, and alert you to the fact that this is truly the most beguiling of all red varieties. That Mr Carson can do this without losing any of the calibre of his imperial fruit is a testament to how much he can successfully conceal subtlety and complexity in a glass. Still a year or two off drinking but with a heart-achingly sexy nose I use this wine more than any other to convert Aussie Pinot sceptics.

Agent: SWIG

Stockists: Swig, Oxford Wine Company, Noel Young, Luvians, Harvey Nichols

2008 Ten Minutes by Tractor, Wallis Single Vineyard Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£51

TMBT Wallis is a turning point for this catchily named vineyard. Until now, the wines have grabbed our attention by fruit purity alone. 2008 signals a sea change with terroir and more ethereal notes playing an equally important role in the finished item. Wallis has soaring black cherry nuances coupled with true earthy spice and genuine tannins complete the package warning you off for a year or two. While you wait, slot down 2009 10X PN with its immediate hit of joyous fruit, safe in the knowledge that you have secured some of the Grand Vin.

Agent: Bancroft

Stockists: Wine Library, Trinity Square, Eric Laan Fine Wines (The Vine King), Noel Young

2008 Paringa Estate, Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£66

If are looking for a more sedate and masterful Pinot Noir experience then look to Paringa Estate Pinot where the quality of oak and sheer weight of flavour astounds the senses. Still youthful, this majestic wine usually sends in its little brother 2009 Peninsula Pinot first to soften you up before delivering its own devastating coup de grace. As you can imagine, 2009 Peninsula is raring to go, with helter skelter cherry and mulberry fruit coming at you from all angles. The palate is silky and smooth and this makes you want to hunt down this more serious quarry even faster.

Agent: Hallowed Ground

Stockists: SWIG



2009 Jacob's Creek, Cabernet Sauvignon, SEA

£8

The worrying absence of entry level Cabernet in the Aussie market must be having a detrimental effect. In the old days, a handful of the larger companies made superb, honest, accurate, rascally Cabs but this year the only example that I can find, which lives up to my standards and yours, too, is this sterling effort from Jacob's Creek. Once again hats off to this standard-bearer.

Agent: *Pernod Ricard*

Stockists: *Ocado*



2009 Moss Wood, Amy's, Margaret River, WA

£14

Amy's has always been a sly way of drinking a wine like the big boy but for a much more everyday style of price. This tenet still holds true, but is it me or is this wine becoming very serious indeed? The connection between Moss Wood Cab and Amy's these days is that the Grand Vin is more tannic, more monolithic and less ready to drink. All good things, but what happens if you are thirsty? I am beginning to really fall for Amy's – it might just be the best 'second wine' in the country!

Agent: *Laytons*

Stockists: *Jeroboams, Waitrose, Wine House of Penrith, Bin 21 (Morpeth)*

2008 Hollick, Cabernet Sauvignon / Merlot, Coonawarra, SA

£17

Welcome back Hollick to the 100 with your terrific, juicy, nostalgic interpretation of a Coonawarra classic. I adore the vampiric appeal of this wine, sinking my teeth into the flesh is a true guilty pleasure and its fabulous to see that Coonawarra can still turn out wines which are fantastic value for money. Accurate to a tee, this wine could not be from any other region and for that it gets a gold star for honesty as well as deliciousness!

Agent: *Seckford Wine Agencies* **Stockists:** *Gerrard Seel, Great Grog, Abbey Wines, D Byrne*

2008 Hay Shed Hill, Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, WA

£18

A first appearance in this list for Hay Shed Hill. This is a cracking Margaret River Cabernet and for once it is eminently affordable. With enough depth and texture of dark plum and fresh, green leaf notes to keep even the most fervent purist happy I hope that this wine opens the floodgates for Michael Kerrigan and his undoubted talent in years to come.

Agent: *Bancroft*

Stockists: *Bacchanalia, the Food Company, Noel Young*



2008 Chapel Hill, Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, SA

£19

With the '08 The Vicar Shiraz and the Estate Shiraz getting a mention last year, I have turned my attentions to other varieties in the spectacular Chapel Hill portfolio. McLaren Vale Cabernet has an enormous attraction to me and this 2008 vintage is utterly mesmerising. It is also fabulous value for money, too. I have recently been treated to a full portfolio tasting and we, in the UK, would be over the moon if Michael Fragos's single varietal Mourvèdre and Grenache made it over here because they are both stunners. And from a level above this – in 'The Chosen' series – there is further proof that Cabernet can perform as well as Shiraz in The Vale in the form of Gorge Block Cabernet. This wine is set to blow people's minds and I would be more than happy put it up against any Coonawarra and Margaret River's offerings.

Agent: *Berkmann*

Stockists: *Planet of the Grapes, Barrica Wine, Nidderdale Fine Wines*

2008 Petaluma, Coonawarra, SA

£22

60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 31% Merlot and 9% Shiraz is the magical recipe behind this decadent red wine. With more obvious, enigmatic fruit and an unusually plush texture this is an atypical Petaluma Coonawarra particularly as last year's '07 was such a compact offering. I adore this move towards more approachability and applaud the decision to release a junior version of this wine in the form of 2008 The Hundred Line Cabernet which will no doubt attract an enormous amount of followers, no doubt converting many of those with deeper pockets to my eponymous statesman-like featured wine.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Majestic, Bibendum

2006 Parker, First Growth Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra, SA

£39

Sound the klaxon, expensive wine alert, this baby is Bordeaux priced but please don't worry because even at nearly £40 it satiates every Cabernet nerve ending in your being. In addition to this you get Las-Cases-like dimensions and Cos-like tannins to boot. No need for a long note here – I know that you are already tempted!

Agent: Enotria

Stockists: SWIG, Slurp, Hic

2008 Moss Wood, Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, WA

£40

I tend to get a little too overexcited every time the new vintage of Moss Wood Cab arrives on my doorstep. This time I tried to keep control of myself, but it was too little too late because from the very moment that this all-pervading wine was poured it transfixed my wife and me and we were powerless to refuse its divine right to a position in this 100. Is this the finest Moss Wood Cabernet ever? Yes.

Agent: Laytons

Stockists: Jeroboams, Wine Society, House of Menzies



WEIRD & WONDERFUL RED

RRP

2009 St Hallett, Gamekeeper's Shiraz / Cabernet, Barossa Valley, SA

£9

An almost 50/50 blend of Cab and Shiraz, I love this impudent little clown because of its unabashed fruit qualities. Forward, fruit-stuffed, crowd-pleasing and ever so slightly comedic, GSC might make you think that it lacks a few IQ points, however, it is fiendishly difficult to make wine seem this effortlessly delicious.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockist: Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk

2009 Willunga 100, Cabernet / Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA

£9

This cracking value producer seems to combine varieties with unerring accuracy. Last year's '08 made the grade and this year's '09 improves on its visionary recipe. For some reason I always spot this wine in wine bars and given the lottery one is compelled to play in these establishments these days this wine and its 2009 Shiraz/Viognier sibling get an awful lot of my business!

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: The Butlers Wine Cellar, Noel Young, Wine Direct

2008 Wakefield, Promised Land Shiraz / Cabernet Sauvignon, SA £9

This is a wonderful work horse red from the massive overachievers at Wakefield (Taylor's). With sweet damson Shiraz and firm, adroit Cabernet playing off each other in this blend it is a little like two martial artists, with differing weapons, putting on a stunning display of their skills. Affordable, drinking now and impressive, particularly to fans of say Rioja or claret, this is a wine which should play Pied Piper to the uninitiated and welcome thousands of fans to honestly made, deeply satisfying Aussie wine.

Agent: *Louis Latour*

Stockists: *Nidderdale Fine Wines, Taste Fine Wines, Victor Hugo Wines, Ballantynes, Windermere Wines, Penistone Court Cellars, Thorold Wines, Shenfield Wine Co, Les Caves de Pyrene*



2009 Penfolds, Koonunga Hill Seventy Six Shiraz / Cabernet Sauvignon, SA £10

This is one of the best value wines that Penfolds has ever made and when I tasted it blind I was in orbit with the density of fruit, terrific use of oak and lip-smacking tannins. When the label was revealed I was delighted and amazed to see that my mental image of the wine was one of £20 plus and not £10 minus.

Agent: *Treasury Wine Estates* **Stockists:** *Tesco.com*



2009 Wirra Wirra, Church Block, McLaren Vale, SA £12

With more control and poise than last year's excellent 2008, '09 Church Block comes back down to earth and focuses on delivering the essence of McLaren Vale in a glass. This it does at an incredible price, so I once again take my hat off to the exceptionally talented and incredibly professional, fun-loving team at Wirra Wirra. I must also take this opportunity to highlight 2010 Scrubby Rise White and 2009 Scrubby Rise Red because for sub-tenner, complex, yet happy-go-lucky blends these are second to none.

Agent: *Stevens Garnier* **Stockists:** *Waitrose, Co-op, Wine Society*

2009 Heartland, Dolcetto / Lagrein, SA £12

Ben Glaetzer's quirky blend boomerangs back into the 100 with its 2009 vintage. Sadly, the unpredictable nature of these two chimpanzee varieties means that it doesn't always kick a goal, however I can assure you that oddball wine fans out there will be delighted with the plum, liquorice-stick, oba leaf and mulberry pie notes in this wine! Drink it with a rogan josh and let your mind boggle away!

Agent: *Enotria* **Stockists:** *Great Western Wine, Noel Young, Bacchanalia, Cambridge Wine Merchants, SWIG, Tanners*



2009 Majella, The Musician, Coonawarra, SA £13

Year in year out, this wine notches up gongs at my The Great Australian Red competition. With a silver medal this year, this 77% Cab and 23% Shiraz blend is a seamless knit taking blackcurrant and spice to a hitherto unknown level of excitement at an incredibly affordable price. The Musician has one other string to its bow and this is that it is the only one of the cheaper Cab / Shirazes on this list that you can drink right now and also age with impunity.

Agent: *Alliance* **Stockists:** *Cooden Cellars, everywine.co.uk, Fine Wine Co, Harrogate Fine Wines, Luvians, Nidderdale Fine Wines, Noel Young, Wadebridge Wines, VH Wines, Woodwinters, Wine Direct, York Wines*

2009 Bremerton, Tamblyn, Langhorne Creek, SA

£14

Everyone's favourite wine on last year's 100 Best Roadshow, 2009 Tamblyn takes Cabernet, Shiraz, Malbec and Merlot and magics it into an irresistible potion which grabs and then holds onto your attention. With berry and spice jousting for attention, hearty tannins and aromatic American and French oak all in the mix, it's no wonder that this classy specimen has made so many friends of late.

Agent: Seckford Wine Agencies **Stockists:** Great Grog, Halifax Wine Co, SH Jones, Waples Wines, D Byrne



2008 Yalumba, FDR1A, Barossa Valley, SA

£23

Yalumba's 2008 Scribbler has made legions of fans during my Roadshow tour and it is still luckily in stock. 2006 Signature is another magnificent Cabernet / Shiraz stalwart on the Yalumba hit parade. However, the wine that sends me into raptures is this modern reworking of a classical formula. Fine Dry Red 1A is all of the above, and way way more, but surely it deserves a more exciting name? Your challenge this year is to come up with something for Robert Hill-Smith to give his blessing to. Five numbers or letters only! And it must reflect the genius flavour in the bottle. I love a bit of sport...

Agent: Negotiants **Stockists:** Slurp, Wine Direct Hanging Ditch, Nidderdale, Reserve Wines, Wine Buffs



2008 Penfolds, Bin 389, SA

£25

This is my favourite Bin 389 in years on account of its overt juiciness. I know that I should act responsibly and champion the more classically built, savoury, heroic vintages (and there are plenty of those) but this broad, enthusiastic 2008 is incredibly hard to put down. The vintage is responsible for this and while other companies dropped the ball Penfolds did what it does best and selected only the most regal fruit for this legendary wine.

Agent: Treasury Wine Estates **Stockists:** Majestic

2009 Greenstone, Sangiovese, Heathcote, Vic

£30

I elucidated on the merits of Greenstone Sangiovese last year, thinking that it could conceivably be confined to the one hit wonder spittoon. So, when this '09 Sangiovese gate-crashed my genteel selection of weird and wonderful reds again this year I had to admit that I was surprised. A confirmed Italian-in-Australia sceptic, it will take a decade for me to change my opinion I am sure, but with wines like this captivating my palate I look forward to having to eat my own words.

Agent: Liberty **Stockists:** Liberty Wines

2006 Jim Barry, PB Shiraz / Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley, SA

£30

Is Jim Barry Wines the most improved estate in the last five years in Australia? I reckon that it is and when I hear that '06 PB was making its way over to the UK I could barely control myself. 19/20 in my notes on the very first sniff and improving on that after half an hour in the glass this is arguably the finest red wine made for £30 imaginable.

Agent: Negotiants **Stockists:** contact Negotiants

2008 Elderton, Ode to Lorraine Cabernet / Shiraz / Merlot, Barossa Valley, SA

£35

I would like to think that it is the dribble of Merlot in this Cab/Shiraz that gives it its peculiar appeal. Look past the label (and its endearing ugliness) and focus your powers of deduction on the magical fruit assemblage within. Some palates may find this wine too velvety and mouth-coating, however, I am a disciple. Elderton's portfolio has never looked better and at the top of the tree 2006 and 2007 Command Shiraz are both my wishes, too.

Agent: *Fields Morris & Verdin* **Stockists:** *Berry Bros*



2005 Jacob's Creek, Johann Shiraz / Cabernet Sauvignon, SA

£38

This is the finest Jacob's Creek red wine that I have ever tasted. While we are all used to spending less than a tenner on these wines I urge you to find £35 or so to drop on this incredible creation. A near perfect wine, Johann's is a worthy figurehead to this deservingly successful wine company. It is crafted from some of the finest fruit on earth and it is welded together by really strong chaps all called Johann, hence the name. Amazing really.

Agent: *Pernod Ricard* **Stockists:** *tbc*

2009 Glaetzer, Anaperenna, Barossa Valley, SA

£40

2009 Bishop Shiraz is a triumph and it would have been the only wine to make the cut this year were it not for a miraculous return to form for Anaperenna. Shiraz-dominant but still parading an incredible squadron of Cabernet cassis flavours, this great wine harks back to an era when it was known as Godolphin – and it picked up the Trophy for The Great Australian Red. The 2009 gained a near perfect score in my notes and I have no doubt that it will in yours, too.

Agent: *Enotria* **Stockists:** *Great Western Wine, Noel Young*

2006 Wolf Blass, Black Label, Barossa Valley, SA

£50

With a challenging price tag I expect that the audience for this wine will always be somewhat restricted. However, there is no doubt that Black Label is the peak of Wolfie's wines and it is worth every penny. As I taste backwards and forwards along the vintages, Black Label never misses a beat and with an ageing potential that rivals even the longest lived clarets, this is a wine that the true connoisseur simply must have in his cellar.

Agent: *Treasury Wine Estates* **Stockists:** *Slurp*

SHIRAZ, GRENACHE, MOURVÈDRE

2009 Willunga 100, The Olive Branch Grenache, McLaren Vale, SA

£9

Steve Pannell misses out on one of his own wines making my roll call this year because the vintages in the UK are out of kilter, but he has landed two Willunga 100s, and they thrum with his singular talent. With a perfect, hashpipe and mulberry pie aroma and a creamy, mousse-like texture The Olive Branch will not only signal friendship to all who encounter it, but might even kick off full-on grappling and canoodling such is the all-encompassing, generous flavour hug it gives every one of your senses.

Agent: *Liberty* **Stockists:** *Sainsbury's*



2008 St Hallett, Garden of Eden Shiraz, Eden Valley, SA

£10

Sub-regional Shiraz is suddenly all the rage! Cool climate Shiraz has also been all the rage for the last five minutes, too. With more prescience than Nostradamus, Toby Barlow set out on his own sub-regional, 'cool' series three years ago in order to counterpoint, but not replace, his existing, masterful Barossan cuvées. With fragrance and poise this is a mesmerising wine, reflecting site and soul. It will astound sceptics – which is presumably what Toby set out to do.

Agent: *Bibendum*

Stockist: *Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk*



2009 Yalumba, Bush Vine Grenache, Barossa Valley, SA

£11

A perennial favourite, in 2009 Yalumba's most popular red wine among the cognoscenti has gone up not one but two notches in its brilliance. The crimson, Pinot-esque hue is more enticing than ever before and the ridiculously concentrated strawberry scent would baffle even the most celebrated of perfumers. What's even more gripping is the length. I don't usually expect this cheeky BVG to perform miracles on the finish, it being a jolly nice drinker and not a furrowed brow sort of fellow, but in this vintage the length is truly preposterous. How they do it I do not know and if it can remain around the tenner mark then it is surely one of the world's most treasured bargains.

Agent: *Negociants*

Stockists: *Majestic, Wine Society, Houltts, ND John, Taurus Wines*

2007 Tahbilk, Shiraz, Nagambie Lakes, Vic

£12

I am a huge fan of the ESP Shiraz from Tahbilk and the 1860 label is a legendary wine, too. If you get the chance to track down the 2005 vintage of either of these wines then grab all you can carry. But for a third of the price of the ESP you can drink a cut-price leviathan with more than enough brooding within its walls to satisfy even the sternest of curmudgeons. Like all Tahbilk wines this incredible model reeks of site and history. It send shivers down my spine – I like wines that do this!

Agent: *Ehrmanns*

Stockists: *Bon Coeur Fine Wines, Oxford Wine Company, Philglas & Swiggot, Theatre of Wine, Bowland Forest Vintners, Cambridge Wine Merchants, The Wine Society, Jeroboams*



2009 Knappstein, Shiraz, Clare Valley, SA

£12

Offering a completely different flavour spectrum to the other South Australian wines this year, the mulberry and blueberry notes in Knappstein offer a more immediate hit of juiciness and some fresh leafy notes, too. Not profound perhaps, but joyful and frivolous and more of a valid everyday proposition for the dinner party brigade. It just shows you that in many cases less oak equals more wine.

Agent: *Bibendum*

Stockist: *Majestic, Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk*

2008 Reynella, Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA

£13

It is becoming increasingly hard to find wines like this these days, which is a shame because there is such a sense of history and nostalgia on the nose and palate in this '08 Reynella Shiraz it reminds us that they got this wine style right over one hundred and fifty years ago. Nothing has changed here – the vineyards are the same, the techniques identical, too. Fashions come and go, but class remains.

Agent: *Constellation*

Stockists: *Waitrose*



2009 Mitolo, Jester Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA

£13

Frank Mitolo is justifiably proud of his record in the 100 Best. This top notch operation is one of the most impressive in the country and the wines never fail to impress. I have long been a fan of the value attached to the Jester Series, which has a very sprightly Vermentino in its numbers these days. The Shiraz is always a cracker and he always keeps the concentration, silkiness and wow factor ratcheted up to a max. This vintage is no exception. With Turkish Delight, briary, fresh-picked berries and succulent steak au poivre meatiness this is a true star and it's still a cracking price.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Bentley's of Ludlow, Noel Young, Liberty Wines



2008 St Hallett, Blackwell Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA

£18

2008 was a warm one in South Australia and most of the clever people got their fruit off before the mercury melted. Usually in these vintages big red wines taste soupy and heady – not my bag. But the talented estates seem to effortlessly shift mode into crafting silky-smooth, deliciously juicy wines that drink well early and really offer the sort of excitement that we all usually have to wait years for. This is exactly what Blackwell has done in 2008 and I love it. Another rock star from the St Hallett stable is the clumsily named 2009 Marks & Spencer Ebenezer & Seppeltsfield Shiraz – here is the definitive 'left it too late to go home on my way to a dinner party wine' for the coming season.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockist: Bibendum www.bibendum-wine.co.uk

2009 Torbreck, Cuvée Juveniles, Barossa Valley, SA

£19

Named after Tim Johnston, a lifelong pal of mine, owner of the fantastic Juveniles wine bar in Paris and therefore the inspiration for this joyous wine. Like Tim there are moments of insanity in this wine, matched perfectly with others of unbridled hilarity. The nose alone is worthy of a Mexican Wave in the way that it obliterates inept oceans of middling Côtes-du-Rhône in a trice, with its soaring Grenache-driven splendour. The palate is invigorating, bright, rich and long and it never stops challenging the senses with its pagan demeanour. See if you can find 2009 Les Amis, too, which is a stunning 100% Grenache made for a Singapore resto of the same name! It is a deranged, brooding, daring and elemental wine and it sports a flashing blade like an assassin so don't take your eyes off it for a moment.

Agent: Fells

Stockists: Alfred the Grape, Harrods, Mr Lawrence Wine Merchant, Planet of the Grapes, The Wine Library, Nickolas Corke Fine Wines, The Good Wine Shop, Richard Dawes Fine Wines

2009 Glaetzer, Bishop Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA

£25

The sheen encountered when you pour this wine into your glass carries to the aroma and flavour, such is the mercurial polish and skill of its eponymous winemaker. Modern, vital, but not posturing or bullish, this is a style of Shiraz which amazes palates new to Aussie wine. Wines like Ben's are the most likely to destroy the top competition in Chile and Argentina, so let's bring on a tasting and send in the big guns.

Agent: Enotria

Stockists: Great Western Wine, Noel Young

2007 Paringa Estate, Peninsula Shiraz, Mornington Peninsula, Vic £26

Much lighter than any other wine in this section, Lindsay McCall's Peninsula Shiraz is a lithe, sensual wine with a texture more akin to a Pinot Noir. Its overtly peppery nose, gentle palate spice and tart red berry finish are mouth-watering, measured and deft. If you want to rev up to one of the more stately wines in his portfolio then look to another Shiraz – 2007 Estate Shiraz. The combination of a mesmeric aroma and then a Pinot-esque palate, but this time think Clos de la Roche, has meant that Lindsay has notched up no less than five Trophies for this awe-inspiring creation. This Holy Grail estate seems to be leading the wine judges in Australia to seek out texture and aroma without brawn and overt alcohol and if this is the case then cooler sites will have their day in the sun.

Agent: *Hallowed Ground* **Stockists:** *SWIG*

2005 Ulithorne, Frux Frugis Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA £28

This devastating wine is a wonder to behold. I met the owner of the vineyard, Rose Kentish, many moons ago and have tracked every wine made from its grapes. Every single bottle has moved me. These are impressive wines with ever so slightly demonic labels and they grip you, shake you and invade your very core. Nearing full maturity and with leather, pelt, spice and wild berries dancing dementedly on the tongue Frux Frugis gives your taste buds a thorough seeing to and it leaves you reeling.

Agent: *Hallowed Ground* **Stockists:** *SWIG, North and South Wines*

2008 Charles Melton, Nine Popes, Barossa Valley, SA £29

Charlie is at it again. First he makes a really tidy, under the radar '08 Shiraz cuvée called Grains of Paradise, which shows really tight minerality and poise – I love this wine and will try it again in two years' time when the 'drink from' date arrives. Then he sells out of 2010 Rose of Virginia six months earlier than he is allowed to by the UK's 'summer of gluttony law' and offers me a taste of the 2011 vintage (back in March) which must mean that he's got a time machine hidden somewhere on his property, because surely the fruit was still on the vine? To cap it all Nine Popes is a stunner again in 2008 (I worshiped at the feet of the 2006, too). Go Charlie – you are a legend. You are the Tenth Pope.

Agent: *Liberty* **Stockists:** *Oz Wines, Bennetts Fine Wines, Philglas & Swiggot, Villeneuve Wines*

2006 Peter Lehmann, Stonewell Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA £33

Stonewell directly sings of the season and it clearly resonates with the intricacies of the harvest and its own source material. This is a sensationally well-balanced wine with clarity of message and freshness on its not inconsiderable finish. As you all know, I described the 2004 vintage of this wine as perfect. It looks even better today! But this 2006 is only half a pace behind its bigger brother. This is a great Stonewell and its one which won't scare the uninitiated, too, and we don't want to do that do we?

Agent: *Enotria* **Stockists:** *Harper Wells, Great Western Wine, Slurp, Noel Young*

2008 Penfolds, Bin 150 Marananga Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA £35

A new release from the Penfolds conveyor belt and this time it's a terrific, single region Barossa Shiraz. This, I suppose, goes against the grain for them – being skilled cross-region and cross-State blending dudes. Anyway, Bin 150 is a delightful wine which is very nearly drinking and it gives us a glimpse at a single area in the vast patchwork that is the Barossa. Peter Gago says that this wine has a 'house signature', and it does – it couldn't come from anyone else, but it also speaks of the soil and that is the main point. I am expecting this wine to fly, too, because it will not have the dizzying prices of some of the others!

Agent: *Treasury Wine Estates* **Stockists:** *Slurp*



2006 Mount Langi Ghiran, Shiraz, Grampians, Vic

£40

One of the leading lights in Australia, Mount Langi is a superstar estate with visionary winemaking in the glorious form of Dan Buckle. This is one wine to serve blind when pouring ultimate Shirazes for your Mensan pals. I can guarantee amazement when the label is revealed because Langi captures everything that is raw and real about the soil in which it is grown and that alone is too thrilling to describe in words - so the wine has to do it for me such is its elemental force.

Agent: *Enotria*

Stockists: *Harper Wells, Great Western Wine*

2008 First Drop, Fat of the Land Greenock Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA

£40

There are signs that Matt Gant is managing to control his beast-like ways and in this vintage they come in the form of a beautifully well put together Fat of the Land Greenock Shiraz. Matt has been surfing the 'district series wave' for ages and this vogue is set to grow (see Penfolds first dip in the pond in this 100). So, with a massive and yet staggeringly accurate red wine which is both sexy, layered and controlled I urge you to taste this sensational lesson into what happens when you drill down into Greenock's ancient soils and strike wine.

Agent: *New School Wines*

Stockists: *Harvey Nichols*

2009 Clonakilla, Shiraz / Viognier, Canberra

£55

2009 Hilltops would have made the grade this year had it not sold out before the New Year's chimes kicked in last Jan! Anyway, the main event in wine lord Tim Kirk's squad steamrolled down my front door instead and I am honoured to inform you that the clarity of iodine, cracked pepper and blackberry juice has never been as perfect as it is in this stunning 2009. Creator of the SV blend (ok, there are a few others...) and still the best exponent of its mystery, the sheer amplitude of flavour and lingering vinous memory left by this wine have never been so profound, nor have they engendered such desire.

Agent: *Liberty*

Stockists: *Slurp, Fortnum & Mason, Noel Young*

2006 Jim Barry, The Armagh Shiraz, Clare Valley, SA

£90

Peter and Tom Barry have a Shiraz portfolio which puts them at the top of the pile in the Clare Valley. With 2009 Lodge Hill summoning up a paddock of berries and violets in every glass and still being sold for a song and a brooding, solemn, sensational 2006 McRae Wood building on the massive success of the staggering self-assured 2005 (which was a runaway success on the Roadshow) it is so exciting to see that The Armagh can raise its game, too. With more truffles and well-hung game than a Piemontese banquet and so much latent power that it makes me feel bashful to even type its name, 2006 The Armagh is a perfect expression of its site and it is also an awe-inspiring encapsulation of the paradise that is the Clare Valley. For me this means that it is a rare 20/20 wine. I have sneaked a look at the 2007, too, and it is a very different beast. I will reveal all next year!

Agent: *Negociants*

Stockists: *Harrods, Slurp, Premier Vintners, Planet of the Grapes, Tanners, ND John, Taurus Wines*

2007 Torbreck, The RunRig, Barossa Valley, SA

£150

With unique dimensions and more beauty and charm than this macho wine has ever had before this is a moment of levity in a career of swashbuckling. There is true beauty here and for those of you who have been lucky enough to taste this wine before, it is sensually textured and half an hour long on the finish. In last year's Roadshow 2006 The RunRig blew people's minds. This year it will put them back together again. It is a sensational vintage and one which will undoubtedly unite the world in its praise. While you are loading up your car with Torbreck goodies grab 2008 The Struie, the slinky supermodel Shiraz made from both Eden Valley and Barossa Valley fruit. This calm, glossy, polished wine shows the feminine side of this testosterone fuelled empire and it also makes the most beautiful date for the masterly The RunRig.

Agent: Fells

Stockists: Fells



2006 Penfolds, Bin 65 Grange, Barossa Valley / Magill, SA

£245

Before I talk about Grange I would like to highlight a wine that I have never before really understood. 2008 Magill Estate Shiraz is the finest version of this monopole wine that I have ever tasted. It is incredibly glossy and slippery on the palate and the balance, for a pretty rich wine, is pinpoint accurate. It will drink well long before any of the other current 'icon' releases, too, so I would urge you to taste it if, like me, it has never hit the spot before. '06 Grange is a 20/20, perfect wine. This wine and The Amargh are the only two perfect wines of the year and that makes only three since the 100 Best began ('04 Stonewell was the other). Lots of wines come close – Australia is at the top of its game these days and I regularly have to pinch myself when I realise just how stellar the talent is in this country. But in order to gain a perfect Jukesy score you have to have more than just sensational wine in the glass. 2006 Grange is perfect in every way – density, tannins, balance, energy, volume, aroma, weight, control, oak and length. It also has style and character, it is living and it challenges you. It changes in the glass like a panther pacing up and down in a cage. It is very well made (not as glib as it sounds), but it also gives the impression that it knows and shapes its own destiny outside of our control. I say this because I felt under observation when I tasted this wine and not the other way around. It was unnerving. I sensed when the wine allowed me in and when it pushed me away. In this regard it is like the truly great Burgundies, clarets, Barolos and Syrahs from the Northern Rhône. This is a very important wine. It is a Titan. I believe that if you drink it, it will inevitably change your outlook as it has done mine.

Agent: Treasury Wine Estates *Stockists: Berry Bros*

SWEET & FORTIFIED

2009 Brown Brothers, Orange Muscat & Flora, Vic (half bottle)

£8

Brown Bros is an imperial operation. I visited last year and conducted a tasting of legions of wines that sadly don't make it over to the UK, but it showed innate understanding of a plethora of varieties and how to make each and every one of them with sensitivity and charm. So I have decided to go back to my roots in honour of this truly inspirational family business and celebrate the Orange Muscat & Flora. I first tasted this wine on 10th April 1987, on my very first day in the wine trade, and it is still a figurehead in the pud wine dept. today. Now in my 25th year in the business this estate is one of only four or five in Australia who has kept me transfixed for a quarter of a decade with its wines.

Agent: PLB

Stockists: Christopher Piper, Rodney Densem, Tanners

2008 Plantagenet, Wyjup Vineyard, Ringbark Riesling, Great Southern, WA (half bottle)

£13

Plantagenet is on fire (not literally I hope) at the moment. The 2008 Chardonnay and 2008 Cabernet are both world class, but it is this sweetie which really entrances the palate. Smooth, decadent, dreamy and long it is not too vinous and navel-gazing – unless you are looking at a beach babe! – so you can happily let it luge over your palate pricking up the hairs on the back of your neck as it does so. The 2009 vintage which follows is a stunner, too. Get this wine in your cellar, on your list or on your shelves today. It is a guaranteed winner.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Eton Vintners, Liberty Wines

2009 Tamar Ridge, Botrytis Riesling, Tas (half bottle)

£17

This creamy, rhubarb fool-scented wine shows just how much skill there is both in the vineyards and in the winery at Tamar Ridge. This is a wine which shows less intensity than say Mount Horrocks, but it has a very long, fine, mineral finish and so it can be used as a super-chic aperitif AND with delicate, fruit-based puddings. I know that I wouldn't be able to take my hands off it if there was a half bottle in my fridge – any excuse would do – yay, it's twenty-five past four, let's raise a glass!

Agent: Awin Barratt Siegel

Stockists: Connollys, Noel Young, Charles Steevenson, Adnams, Waitrose, Philglas & Swiggot, Ellis of Richmond, Theatre of Wine, Secret Cellar

NV Campbells, Classic Topaque, Rutherglen, Vic (half bottle)

£19

Topaque is the ludicrous new name for Tokay, so once you are over this moment of incredulity bathe your palate in this heavenly, indulgent Muscadelle. Lighter and more fragrant than some of the stunning Campbells Liqueur Muscats, this is a candied peel, almond paste and butterscotch-scented sticky and it is a delicious way to finish a dinner party. Bual-sized, but more openly floral this will be an instant hit at any gathering and it is stunning value, too.

Agent: Awin Barratt Siegel

Stockists: Adnams, Philglas & Swiggot, Peckham & Rye, Fortnum & Mason, Berry Bros

2007 De Bortoli, Noble One, Riverina, NSW (half bottle)

£19

De Bortoli's Noble One is a great wine. This 2007, sealed with a screwcap, is a baby and it probably needs five years minimum to truly express itself, but it is already detailed enough and tart enough on the finish to signal a very good vintage indeed. I don't like attacking grand wines like this too young, but there is a guilty pleasure here that is hard to refuse. To my mind, this is a smartest young Noble One in a decade. Buy it, drink some, keep lots.

Agent: De Bortoli

Stockists: Majestic, Waitrose, Theatre of Wine, Planet of the Grapes, Philglas & Swiggot, Reid Wines, Wine Society, Topsham Wines, Wadebridge Wines, House of Townend



I would like to thank Wine Australia for their help and support in organising the launch event for this year's 100 Best Australian Wines.

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