

HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS!



Finding the Soul in Australian Shiraz

Look at Shiraz through regional lenses and rediscover the grape variety you used to love.

By Joe Czerwinski

Just out, Joe Czerwinski of Wine Enthusiast Magazine rediscovers Australian Shiraz and writes about the different characteristics found in each distinctly different region of this vast country. Here is an excerpt from his article which relates to those regions represented in The Country Vintner's Aust/NZ portfolio. For the full article, please go to [Shiraz Article](#).

"In recent years, it's become fashionable to bash Australian wines—especially Shiraz. Too big. Too alcoholic. Too jammy. Too confected. Too manipulated. In my few short years as Wine Enthusiast's lead reviewer of Australian wines, I've heard it all, from beginners bored by the sameness of the big brands to collectors turned off by mammothly extracted Shirazes that require knives and forks instead of wineglasses. The sad part is that to a large extent, I agree. There are a lot of boring Australian Shirazes and a lot of overripe and over-extracted monsters. But these mediocrities are found in any wine-producing country. More importantly, there are a lot of really interesting, unique expressions of Shiraz coming out of Australia. All that is required to find them is a willingness to dig a little deeper... there's a world of fine Shiraz to be rediscovered..."

STATE: SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australia is the world's epicenter of Shiraz production. Not only does it turn out enormous quantities, it is also home to some of the planet's oldest Shiraz vines... It's a safe bet that a blended South Australian Shiraz will have ripe fruit and some oak aging (possibly at an attractive price), but for a greater sense of place, drill down to the next level of GIs, which includes such well known regions as Barossa and McLaren Vale.

Barossa

*Barossa perhaps best fits the stereotype of Australian Shiraz: big, bold and often jammy. Because of the warm climate, tannins are generally fully ripe at harvest, imparting a seamless, creamy texture when not overextracted. The best wines (too many to list here) avoid extremes and add elegance and spicy, savory complexity to their rosters of positive attributes. Barossa itself is home to two smaller GIs: Barossa Valley and Eden Valley. Barossa Valley wines epitomize the Barossa style of richness and opulence, although subregions differ and are becoming an increasing topic of conversation among winemakers and connoisseurs. Viticulturist/ winemaker **Rob Gibson** describes some of Barossa Shiraz's regional characteristics: "Stockwell, anise; Moppa and Kalimna, nectarine; Greenock, very plummy."*

Eden Valley produces wines with a more savory character, firmer structure and often less alcohol and higher natural acids than those from other parts of the Barossa. Most are blended into Barossa wines to add complexity and structure, but a few are bottled separately.

HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS!

Clare Valley

*Further north of Adelaide is the small, rural oasis of Clare Valley. Clare Shirazes are characterized by ripe fruit that can tend toward prune and chocolate blended with savory elements of espresso, black olive and licorice. Cool nights help preserve natural acidity, giving Clare wines a harder edge than their Barossa counterparts, but acid adjustments are still routinely practiced. Recommended producers include **Pike's**.*

Adelaide Hills

East and south of Adelaide, the Adelaide Hills provide some fine examples of cool-climate Shiraz. These are savory, peppery renderings of Shiraz, lighter and more fragrant than other South Australian offerings.

McLaren Vale

The Shirazes of McLaren Vale vary markedly in their characteristics. In general, McLaren Vale Shiraz seems to have brighter berry fruit when compared to Barossa Shiraz, with a certain tartness often apparent on the finish.

STATE: WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The most established GI is Margaret River, better known for its Cabernets and Chardonnays. A half-continent away, Western Australia would be the world's tenth largest country in land area if it were its own country and not a state of Australia. The most established GI is Margaret River, better known for its Cabernets and Chardonnays

Margaret River

The maritime climate of Margaret River imparts a cool-climate tinge of pepper and herbaceousness into the region's Shiraz, but the best examples integrate those elements into layers of fruit and silky tannins.

*Elsewhere amidst the vast expanses of Western Australia, intrepid Shiraz hounds will find a few offerings from the GIs of Frankland River, Great Southern, Mount Barker and Pemberton, many of which combine distinctly spicy licorice overtones with plummy fruit. Look for offerings from **West Cape Howe**.*

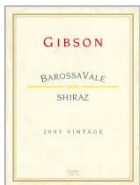
Once you've tried some of the exciting wines coming out of Australia's manifold Shiraz-producing regions, you'll understand that Australian Shiraz is not a very useful wine description—that more precision is required. With that precision, wine lovers can find individuality in the wines, perhaps even an elusive sense of place. And then we can talk more meaningfully about the intriguing Shiraz coming from different parts of Australia."



HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS!

Our Selection of Regional Australian Shiraz

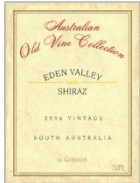
BAROSSA & EDEN VALLEY, SOUTH AUSTRALIA



GIBSON Barossavale Shiraz 2003

90+ POINTS Wine Advocate

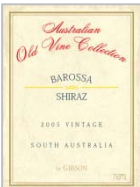
"...the full-bodied, ripe, well-endowed, heady 2003 Shiraz exhibits earthy blackberry/chocolate notes, a touch of sweet earth, and a full-throttle finish. Although it is the least complex of this quartet, it is substantial in the mouth." Robert Parker



GIBSON "Australian Old Vine Collection" Eden Valley Shiraz 2006

92 POINTS Wine Advocate

"... elegance and complexity... Racy, ripe, and spicy, this lengthy effort will evolve for 3-5 years and provide pleasure from 2012 to 2022". Jay Miller



GIBSON "Australian Old Vine Collection" Barossa Shiraz 2005

96 POINTS Wine Advocate

"It is purple/black with a big, brooding nose of smoky oak, bacon, grilled meat, blueberry, and blackberry liqueur. Tightly wound on the palate but oozing with spicy blue and black fruits, the wine is balanced, structured and very long in the finish." Jay Miller

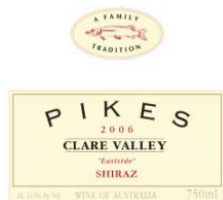


LOOSE END Shiraz 2006

90 POINTS Wine Advocate

Lifted fruit and spice aroma, with hints of perfumed fruit from the small addition of Viognier. A fleshy, soft structured palate with the roundness expected of Shiraz Viognier blends. A beautifully intense, mouth filling wine. Cherry flavors linger on the palate.

CLARE VALLEY, SOUTH AUSTRALIA



PIKES "Eastside" Shiraz 2006

95 POINTS James Halliday (Australian Wine Companion 2010)

"Deep purple; a voluminous bouquet of black fruits, spice and licorice; a medium- to full-bodied and rich palate, flooded with black fruit and spice flavours; great tannin and oak support." James Halliday

HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS! HOT OFF THE PRESS!

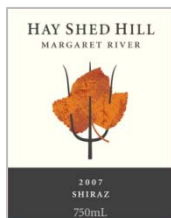


MCLAREN VALE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

VINACEOUS "Snake Charmer" Shiraz 2007

91 POINTS Nick Stock (WBM Wine 100)

"The label may scare a few - some it may entice. The wine inside is the agent of charm though, making heady advances of ripe dark cherry, plum and licorice with chocolate and toasty oak. Tannins grab firm but fair through finish." Nick Stock



MARGARET RIVER, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HAY SHED HILL SHIRAZ 2007

88 POINTS Tanzer's International Wine Cellar

"Bright ruby. Energetic scents of cherry, redcurrant, black pepper and Indian spices. Firm, focused and bright, offering zesty red berry and bitter cherry flavors and a hint of smoky tobacco. Tightly wound and a bit strict on the finish, which repeats the smoky note." Josh Reynolds

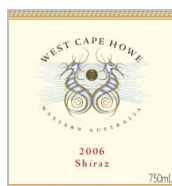


PEMBERTON, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PICARDY SHIRAZ 2004

90 POINTS Tanzer's International Wine Cellar

"Dark, bright-rimmed red. Smoky dark berry and cherry aromas are underscored by graphite, licorice and dried flowers; very syrah. A lush, sweet midweight with juicy black raspberry and bitter cherry flavors and velvety tannins. Leaves zesty white pepper and mineral notes behind on the suave, seamless finish." Josh Reynolds



GREAT SOUTHERN & OTHER, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WEST CAPE HOWE SHIRAZ 2006

90 POINTS Wine Enthusiast (Editor's Choice, Feb 2010)

"Roasted meat, floral notes, peppery spice...sounds rather nice. Add in silky tannins, hints of coffee and blueberry and a long finish, and you have a pretty wine at a realistic price. Drink now-2014." Joe Czerwinski