

WINE News

*New Zealand, Australia,
and South Africa Defy
Expectations*



MAY 17, 2022 FEATURES

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Get Out There and Explore!

By Thomas Smith, Australian, New Zealand, and South African Buyer



I love the yearly task of writing our May newsletter. Here in California, it marks the start of long days and warm weather. Soon kids will be out of school for summer vacation, and, for the first time in years, we are finally starting to travel again. In our family, our daughter just turned five, and as soon as she's vaccinated we're ready to hop on a plane.

I love interconnected the world of wine and travel are. You can splurge for that expensive bottle of wine on your first date, and visit the property on your tenth wedding anniversary. You can fall in love with a bottle of Assyrtiko and find yourself on Santorini or follow the trail of a

Pinot Noir to Central Otago. What I love about wine is that it feeds our explorative nature. There is always a new story, a new flavor profile, a surprising fact to learn about what you're drinking and where it's from.

The past year has been busy for the wines of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. There have been a ton of new wines from exceptional producers making their way to the U.S. for the first time, and we are stocking our shelves full with their wares. There have never been more phenomenal wines at great prices to explore from these regions.

So, whether you're ready to book your tickets to a far-off location or relax at home with a brand new bottle, K&L is always here to share new stories, bring you to new places, and offer the best selection of wines from across the globe. Bon voyage!



2018 Ata Rangi Pinot Noir
Martinborough \$59.99 97SK
96BC 96JC The newest vintage of New Zealand's best Pinot Noir is here, and only available at K&L. Crafted by world-renowned winemaker Helen Masters for nearly 20 years, Ata Rangi is a global benchmark for Pinot Noir

and one of only two wineries granted Grand Cru status in New Zealand. The 2018 vintage is dark, powerful, and complex with notes of black cherry, cedar, and forest floor. This is a must-have for anyone who loves exceptional Pinot Noir.



2017 Tahbilk "Old Vines"
Cabernet-Shiraz Nagambie
Lakes Victoria \$29.99 95BC 95JH
There isn't a single wine at K&L that's more Australian than this. Made entirely from Tahbilk's considerable old-vine plantings, it displays powerful aromas of blackberry, black cassis preserves,

and complex spice box notes. Cab-Shiraz blends are classic Aussie, marrying the dark structure of Cabernet with spice and mid-palate roundness of Shiraz. With a level of concentration that's off the charts, this big, bold and ripe blend is one of Australia's best.



2021 TWR (Te Whare Ra) Rosé
Marlborough \$19.99 94BC 94SK
94VN Rosé season is here! Te Whare Ra's rosé was a smashing success last year, selling out in the first two weeks of summer. This year's follow up is just as good—if not better. With strawberry, watermelon, and pear fruit on

display above a lightweight frame with thirst quenching acidity, the TWR rosé is the first of the 2021 rosés—and it's also one of our best. Grown organically by Anna and Jason Flowerday in New Zealand's Marlborough region.

2021 Sauvignon Blanc Vintage in Marlborough: Small but Mighty

Every vintage has its trials and triumphs, but the 2021 vintage in Marlborough was anything but business as usual. It began with unseasonably warm temperatures in early spring. A mild and dry winter caused the vines to come out of dormancy at one of the earliest days on record, only to have temperatures dip soon after, bringing disastrous frost at a crucial moment. Vines were affected widely across Marlborough, with the frost damaging their infant buds—the structures which develop into the canes, leaves, and grape clusters.

Although the destruction was widespread, estimates have varied on the damage. While trade associations and larger producers cited a 20% reduction in yields, the producers I've spoken to for this newsletter put the number closer to 40%. A sense of panic began to kick in as the bulk market disappeared overnight. Grape contracts, if you could find them, set record prices. In the subsequent months, larger brands had to look for grapes from places as far as the Southern Island and even further. Several importers I've spoken to have "watered down" their Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc with SB from Chile, just to stay in business! Unfortunately, as long as less than 20% Chilean wine is used, the wine can still be labeled as Marlborough—making it more important than ever to trust your wine purveyor in this tough vintage!



But despite the fact that this was one of the most difficult vintages New Zealand has ever faced, the silver lining here is the quality. As the spring and summer progressed, the vines focused all their energy into ripening the clusters that remained. Late spring rains relieved the drought pressure from earlier in the year, and a warm, consistent temperature prevailed all summer long. The result: an extremely small, but very high-quality crop of Sauvignon Blanc that has critics calling it one of the best vintages in recent memory.

As for those Chilean/Marlborough blends, they're out on there—but not at K&L. We've worked exceedingly hard to make sure we can keep the beautifully crisp, aromatic, and thirst-quenching wines from the best producers in the region stocked all summer long.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Te Whare Ra is making the best wine in Marlborough. Hard stop, full stop. The **2021 TWR (Te Whare Ra) Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough \$19.99** is K&L's best-selling Sauvignon Blanc not just from New Zealand, but from anywhere. Made by Anna Flowerday, an award-winning winemaker,



Anna and Jason Flowerday of Te Whare Ra, our longest-running direct import producer from New Zealand.

and her husband, Jason, the most in-demand viticulture expert in Marlborough. They craft their wines from the best vineyards in Marlborough. Their 2021 Sauvignon Blanc is pure elegance: passionfruit, ginger and citrus abound with the tension of crisp acidity and profound depth; a stunning rendition of this exceptional year.

Another example of the phenomenal quality of this vintage is the **2021 Greywacke Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough \$19.99**

93BC 93VN. Greywacke is made by Kevin Judd, who spent 30 years as the winemaker for Cloudy Bay before leaving to found his own label. Remarkably concentrated and full for the style, it displays grapefruit, bell pepper, and stone fruit harmoniously intertwined above a powerful and focused palate. This is the best Greywacke Sauvignon Blanc I've ever tasted. An incredibly serious wine that strives to prove Marlborough is Sauvignon Blanc's greatest region.



Another one of my favorite winemakers in Marlborough is Simon Weghorn of Astrolabe. Named for the first European ship to reach New Zealand, the **2021 Astrolabe Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough \$19.99** **94 BC 92VN 91WS** is crafted from Simon's encyclopedic knowledge of vineyards throughout Marlborough. Sourced from over 20 different vineyards handpicked by Simon, the 2021 Astrolabe leans toward the fuller and riper end of the spectrum, with delicious flavors of orchard fruit, kefir lime, and ripened passion fruit. Astrolabe continues to be one of Marlborough's most consistently excellent producers and definitely worth checking out.

One of my newest discoveries is the **2021 Saveé Sea Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough \$12.99.** This is intensely tropical with aromas of pineapple, mango, and a slight green edge. Its bracing acidity is tempered by just a touch of residual sugar—making this a great wine for spicy Thai food. This is everything you want in an easy drinking, no-nonsense Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc.



If the 2021 vintage in Marlborough could be chalked up to a single phrase, it would be "small, but mighty." I hope you'll take the time to consider these exceptional wines—despite the size of the vintage, the wines of Marlborough have never been better.

Extraordinary Geelong: The Wines of Lethbridge

Earlier this year, an importer reached out to me with a problem.

Although they had been importing pet goods from Australia for over a decade, they'd decided to dip their toes into the wine industry and bring over wines made by a few close friends around the Melbourne area. The wines arrived in April of 2020, just as the pandemic was heating up and lockdowns began to fall into place. To make a long story short, after two years without sales, they asked if K&L was willing to purchase their entire portfolio at cost. When I saw that the wines were from Australian producer Lethbridge, my jaw nearly hit the floor.



I have been following Lethbridge wines for a number of years now. We nearly ended up importing the wines ourselves a few years back on the basis of their unique vineyard sites and extraordinary quality.

Lethbridge was founded in 1996 by three Ph.D.s: husband-and wife-team Ray Nadeson and Maree Collis as well as their good friend Adrian Thomas, all of whom had successful careers in science and medicine before pursuing winegrowing. Their goal was simple: to craft cool-climate wines with texture and complexity.

Lethbridge is located in Geelong, about an hour's drive east of Melbourne. One of the coolest growing sites in Australia, Geelong's climate is influenced by its proximity to Port Phillip Bay, the source of the region's persistent, year-round cold winds. The grapes ripen slowly here, allowing them to develop deep color and powerful aromatics while keeping low alcohols and reaching full phenolic ripeness. A historic winegrowing region, it was populated by Swiss immigrants as early as the mid-19th century, and winegrowing was practiced throughout Geelong for decades until Phylloxera annihilated the vineyards in the 1880s. It took nearly a century for winegrowing to recover in Geelong.

Today Geelong is known for a small number of producers creating exceptional Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Shiraz that are distinctive from the rest of Australia. With bright, soaring aromatics and powerful acidity, the wines are extraordinarily high in quality. Some of Australia's best producers, like Farr Vintners and Bannockburn, call the region home, and, along with Lethbridge, produce some of Australia's most acclaimed Burgundian varieties and beautifully balanced Shiraz and Riesling.

Lethbridge's estate vineyard is planted on a site that was established by the Swiss in 1850 and replanted when Lethbridge was founded. The soils here are volcanic black basalt over a limestone sea bed, with minimal fertility and excellent drainage. These soils, as well as the marginal climate, keep yields naturally low, resulting in tiny berries and excellent concentration. In order to maintain extremely high quality, they only produce about 7,000 cases per year. Their attention to detail and excellence has earned them a spot among the



elite producers on James Halliday's Five-Star Australian Wineries list. It's an absolute treasure to be able to have these wines in stock, and, for anyone who loves cool-climate wines, these need to be on your radar.

Named for Dr. Ray Nadeson, the driving force behind the winery, the **2017 Lethbridge "Dr. Nadeson" Riesling Geelong Victoria \$19.99 96JH** is a surprising, delicious bottle of Riesling that I absolutely love. With notes of pear, crisp apple, and a touch of Australian Riesling's classic petrol, the roaring acidity is beautifully balanced by a core of residual sugar that makes this the perfect pairing for spicy Asian cuisine.



Some of my favorite Australian Shiraz comes from Geelong, and the **2016 Lethbridge "Estate" Shiraz Geelong Victoria \$29.99 94JH** is an excellent example of the style. In the glass, it reads like Cornas: sour plum, black fruits, charcoal, and black pepper spice, luxuriously textured with ample weight and tannin. The palate follows up with tertiary notes of dried black cherry and leather. An incredibly unique Aussie Shiraz that is drinking at peak perfection.

The **2017 Lethbridge "Estate" Chardonnay Geelong Victoria \$29.99 93JH** is another favorite. There is a ton of precision and detail in the aromatic profile of this wine. There's a flinty, gunsmoke aspect reminiscent of Meursault, along with a generous fruit profile of peach, dried apricot, and pineapple juice balanced by laser acidity. Notes of marzipan and spice resonate on the finish that carries on and on. A dead ringer for warm-vintage white Burgundy.



Geelong is known more for Pinot Noir than any other variety, and the **2015 Lethbridge "Estate" Pinot Noir Geelong Victoria \$29.99 95JH** is the proof. Full of depth and complexity, it shows aromas of blackberry fruit, cranberry preserves, and cherry liqueur. Deeply colored and yet light on its feet, there's a powerful drive of more cranberry and Bing cherry on the palate with a sharp cut of acid and the barest whiff of tannin on the finish. An outstanding Pinot Noir—not just from Australia, but from anywhere.

Coriole: Heart and Soul in McLaren Vale

Unfortunately, it seems like everyday I read another story about a family-run winery known for perfect vineyards and extraordinary wine being sold off to multinational corporations who will inevitably raise prices and reduce quality. Despite this continuing trend, there are still places across the globe where there are dedicated, multi-generational families crafting exceptional wines with a sense of place and an obsession with quality. In Australia, it doesn't get much better than Coriole.

Coriole Vineyards was founded in 1967, when Hugh and Molly Lloyd purchased the Chaffey's Road Estate in the eastern end of McLaren Vale. The vineyard was 12 acres of dry-farmed Shiraz planted in 1919, which the family rehabilitated and used to craft



The original Coriole homestead.

their first wines. Over the following 50 years, the Lloyd Family renovated the original farm house, expanded plantings, and earned innumerable accolades for the quality of their wines. But that's not to say they have rested on their laurels. In 1985 they pioneered the planting of Italian varieties in McLaren Vale, starting with Sangiovese in '85, followed by Nero d'Avola and Fiano in '90. Today there are over 100 producers following in Coriole's footsteps, growing Italian varieties throughout Australia.

Today, the estate is run by brothers Peter, the general manager, and Duncan, the head winemaker, all under the watchful eye of their father, Mark. While their mainstays are their excellent Shiraz, Cabernet, and Rhône blends, they also produce an interesting and eclectic mix of Sangiovese, Nero d'Avola, Fiano, and Picpoul. There are few wineries in Australia today that have the heart and soul that Coriole has. They remain a pillar of the grape-growing community in McLaren Vale to this day and produce delicious wines that are incredible values.

One of my favorite wines by Coriole is the **2020 Coriole "Sparta" Shiraz McLaren Vale South Australia \$14.99**. Despite it being an entry-level wine for Coriole, this is an outstanding value. Made from the neighboring Galaxandia Vineyard, the Sparta is big, bold, and utterly brimming with black-cherry and blackberry fruit. For a full-bodied red at \$15, you're not going to find anything even

close to this in our entire store. Another fantastic value from Coriole is the **2020 Coriole "Dancing Fig" Rhône Blend McLaren Vale South Australia \$14.99**, a staple at our family's weekly pizza night! The Dancing Fig is equal parts Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre. This Rhône blend is soft, generously fruited, and an incredibly versatile food wine.



Sangiovese isn't necessarily the first grape you would associate with Australia, but the **2020 Coriole Sangiovese McLaren Vale South Australia \$14.99 94JH** is Australia's original and most classic expression of the variety. Coriole has crafted their magnificent Sangiovese with all estate fruit and minimal intervention for nearly four decades. With bold flavors of bright, Bing cherry and maraschino liqueur, this has softened tannins and a brilliant, linear acidity that sparkles right down the palate.

The **2019 Coriole "Estate" Shiraz McLaren Vale South Australia \$19.99 92JH** is not just a step up from the Sparta Shiraz, it's a whole different animal. Produced entirely from Coriole's 50-year-old block planted in 1967, it sees 10 days of skin contact before elevelage in hogshead French oak barrels, 25% new. The flavor here is reminiscent of their Sparta Shiraz, but darker, richer, and full of power. With concentrated black fruits among baking spices and savory undertones, this wine is dramatically more serious—and a steal for \$20.



Mark Lloyd sampling barrels back in the '60s.

Finally, the **2018 Coriole "Lloyd Reserve" Shiraz McLaren Vale South Australia \$49.99 96JH 95BC** is the signature family wine from Coriole. Made from the original 12-acre vineyard planted in 1919, this is a phenomenal example of old-vine Australian Shiraz, with flavors of ripe plum, juicy blueberries, and nuances of espresso. A classic, iconic Australian Shiraz from 100-year old vines for less than \$50? You won't find a wine like this anywhere but at K&L.

Australia's New Wave: Grenache from McLaren Vale

When it comes to Australian wine, I get why Barossa Valley continues to reign supreme. Undoubtedly, Shiraz is Australia's most iconic grape. Of the 22 wines included in the Langton's Classification (Australia's most elite wines) half the list is Shiraz. There are few grape varieties that have the ability to match Australian Shiraz in its power, richness, and concentration. But in the last decade or so, Grenache has begun to emerge as one of Australia's signature wines, with a level of quality on par with the best of Barossa. These wines, and the people who make them, are starting to gain wider attention and are making a headway for Australian Grenache across the globe. Not far from the Barossa Valley—just a two-hour drive south—is one of Australia's most exceptional regions for internationally recognized Grenache: McLaren Vale. Although making up only a tiny 5% of the region's total production, Grenache from McLaren Vale is widely considered the best throughout Australia—especially those from old-vine vineyards whose low yields and dry-farmed conditions create exquisite balance and drive in the wines.

McLaren Vale was first planted in 1838, when Australia primarily needed warm-climate varieties to add powerful fruit character to its fortified wines, which were the vast majority being made at the time. The region itself is perfectly suited to Grenache. Its warm Mediterranean climate and frequent winds are strikingly similar to the Southern Rhône, Grenache's ancestral homeland. But unlike the Grenache of southern France, which is typically blended with Syrah and Mourvèdre, the vast majority of McLaren Vale is 100% Grenache, allowing the purity of the variety to shine and its bright, effortless fruit character to sing.

Grenache is incredibly charismatic. Bright, generously fruited with a signature strawberry aroma, Grenache can range from a rich, concentrated, and full-bodied character to an ethereal lightness and elegance. It is cellar worthy to be sure but can be easily consumed with enjoyment in its youth. Grenache has an incredible range of styles that make it every bit as dynamic as Pinot and just as true to expression of its vineyard site. We've had a string of excellent Australian Grenache in our stores, and I'd love to share my favorites.



Bernice Ong and Julian Forewood are two wine industry veterans of McLaren Vale who founded their winery, Ministry of Clouds, in 2011. Their **2019 Ministry of Clouds Grenache McLaren Vale South Australia \$24.99 94JH** is an absolute winner. With a deep nose of blackberry, cherry, and black raspberry, a sip brings bright, fresh and vibrant fruit that hits every millimeter of the palate. Incredibly light on its feet, this has

elements of hard rock candy and bing cherry with a bracing crack of mouth-watering acidity. Finishing with a note of black cherry cola and crunchy tannin—this is a spectacular Grenache.

Another favorite is the **2018 Coriole "Estate" Grenache McLaren Vale South Australia \$24.99 95JH**. As you read on the previous page,



we're big fans of this third-generation family-run estate, and their Grenache is gorgeous. With floral notes of rose among pomegranate and cranberry, the Coriole Grenache is a perfect sour-meets-sweet profile backed by lavish red fruit expression on the palate and crunchy, dry tannins at the finish. More condensed and classically styled than the Ministry of Clouds, this is a perfect wine for those who love top-quality Côtes-du-Rhône.

One of McLaren Vale's top Grenache producers is Yangarra, who have received numerous accolades, including multiple 100-point scores for their Grenache.

The **2019 Yangarra "Ovitelli" Grenache McLaren Vale South Australia \$64.99 99JS 97WE 95WA 93JH** is top-of-the-line Grenache that over delivers, even at a premium price-point. With black tea, grapefruit, and cherry, Yangarra's Ovitelli is entirely fermented in ceramic eggs with nearly four months of skin contact. This is audacious, ground-breaking Australian Grenache that deserves its slot as #13 on James Suckling's top 100 wines of Australia for 2020. An incredibly serious wine that can hold its own against any example of Grenache made anywhere in the world.



Finally, despite the tragic, early passing of Taras Ochota in 2020, the **2021 Ochota Barrels "Fugazi" Grenache McLaren Vale South Australia \$69.99 96DC** is

proof positive that Amber Ochotas, along with the supporting winemaking community of McLaren Vale, can continue his legacy of exceptionally profound wines made with adherence to every aspect of the philosophy of the natural wine category. Now on its 13th vintage, they have again produced a wine that is full of depth, life, and vibrancy contained in an elegant frame. One of the pioneers of Australia's natural wine movement, what I love about Ochota Barrels is that, despite being the poster-child for Australian natural wine, their exacting flavor profile is true to the style of McLaren Vale Grenache and absolutely delicious.



Taras and Amber Ochota of Ochota Barrels.

A Star in the Dark: Minimalist Wines

Last year, I started hearing murmurs about a young South African winemaker who was producing spectacular wines from an unheard-of wine region at the very bottom of the world: the Cape Agulhas. This is the most southern point of South Africa, a windswept countryside where the Atlantic and Indian oceans meet. It is an inhospitable region that has few winegrowers due to its cold, marginal, and ocean-influenced climate. Doesn't sound like South African Syrah? Well it doesn't taste like South African Syrah either.

Neal Martin, who writes for *Vinous*, was the first person to get me excited about these wines. In his 97-point review of the 2019 Stars in the Dark Syrah, he calls it “a doppelgänger for Côte-Rôtie.” Made with a high percentage of whole-cluster fruit, sourced from an ultra-cool climate and aged in large-format,

neutral oak, this Syrah is crafted with an eye toward traditional practices in the Northern Rhône and an unflinching obsession to detail, exactly as it should be. There is no one making this kind of wine in South Africa. So my next thought was simple: Who is making this, and how do I get some?

It turns out Stars in the Dark is part of Minimalist Wines—whose name is equally suited to its winemaking style as well as the winery's size and

resources. Behind Minimalist is 25-year old Sam Lambson, a South African winemaker who graduated from Stellenbosch University's Enology and Viticulture program in 2018. His resume is impressive, having worked with South African winemaking all-stars Lukas Van Loggerenber, Chris Alheit, and Carl van Der Merwe. He released his first vintage of Minimalist Wines on his 21st birthday. Now, four vintages later, we were able to broker his wines into the U.S.

for the first time. “I really just wanted to do something that was the complete opposite of what everyone else in South Africa is doing,” he told me last fall. And trusting his instincts has served Sam very well. I couldn't agree more with Neal Martin when he says, “If this is a portent of what we can expect from winemaker Sam Lambson, then he will have to get accustomed to adulation and demand outstripping supply.”

We were able to secure two of Sam's wines exclusively for K&L and have them imported to the U.S. for the first time. The first is his **2020 Minimalist Wines “Connect the Dots” Syrah Western Cape South Africa \$29.99**. Connect the Dots is Sam's snapshot



of the vintage on the Western Cape. He sources his Syrah from four diligently selected sites: granitic soils from Stellenbosch's Polkadraai and Helderberg subregions; an iron-rich site in Darling; and a Table Mountain sandstone parcel in Elgin. Each site contributes its own unique aspect to the final wine. Elgin gives luxurious, spicy plum; Darling an austere and savory edge; while Stellenbosch gives tannic grip and violets. The sum result is a nuanced, beautiful Syrah that, at its price, is one of the very best I've ever tasted anywhere.

The real show-stopper here is the **2020 Minimalist Wines “Stars in the Dark” Syrah Cape Agulhas South Africa**

\$34.99. Not many wine drinkers in the U.S. have heard of this South African wine region because it is one of the most difficult places to grow grapes in the country. Low average temperature and vicious winds make Agulhas the coolest grape-growing region in South Africa. But this is exactly the type of environment where Syrah thrives, as the conditions slow the ripening process and increase its aromatic compounds. The result is incredibly concentrated flavors from smaller berries with thicker skins.



The fruit for Stars in the Dark is sourced from a small vineyard in the Agulhas district of Elim and two other parcels in the region. The Elim site is Triple X clone planted on shales soils and fermented with 100% whole clusters to maximize the peppery character. The other two sites are planted on Koffieklip and clay, with slightly less whole bunches and some parcels left unstomped to add carbonic character to the final wine. Aged in large-format, neutral oak, and bottled without any fining or filtration, this is the most exciting wine I've ever seen come out of South Africa.

This won't be the last you hear of Sam Lambson—I promise you that. With such accolades and a career that's only just begun, I suspect Minimalist Wines may be on its way to becoming one a world benchmark for Syrah.



World Class: The Best of Australia's Riesling

There's rarely a middle ground with Riesling. You either absolutely love it, or it's just not for you. But for Riesling lovers, it's an obsession. I fall into that latter category. Riesling has so much to offer: the bright, focused acidity, soaring aromatics, and a level of transparency to the vineyard site that no other white wine can offer. In Germany's Mosel Valley, there are literally thousands of wines made from this grape, in a variety of styles from hundreds of vineyards—and no two alike.

Yet, with as many questions as I receive from customers regarding German and Alsatian Riesling when I'm on the retail floor, I am almost never asked about Australian Riesling. I find this to be such an oddity. Australian Riesling isn't just good—it's incredible. Made in a variety of cool climates and grown on a multitude of different soil types, Australian Riesling provides incredible variety, a profound sense of place, and stunning quality. These wines are always dry, have gorgeous minerality, and showcase their diverse climates and regions. Whether from Eden Valley, Clare Valley, or elsewhere, Australian Riesling is undeniably a global benchmark.

And although one of my favorite things about Australian Riesling is the variety of excellent values, I'd rather take some time to showcase some of the absolute best Rieslings being made in Australia today. The following wines equal, and, in some cases, even exceed their best counterparts in Germany and France.



The Team at Rieslingfreak are not messing around with their love for this grape.

It's hard to understate a love for Riesling when your winery is called Rieslingfreak. When winemaker and proprietor John Hughes talks about Riesling, it's with great reverence. In 2009, he founded Rieslingfreak out of sheer will and passion, and received accolades from its inaugural vintage. It took another decade to finally be imported to the United States, but the **2021 Rieslingfreak No.33 Clare Valley South Australia \$19.99 93JS** and the **2021 Rieslingfreak No.44 Eden Valley South Australia \$19.99 92JS** were worth the wait. Both are beautifully balanced and make for a study in the differences between Eden and Clare. The No.33 has more power and richness, the 44 more elegance and minerality.

One of Australia's most iconic Riesling producers is Grosset, founded and led for five decades by Australian winemaking legend Jeff Grosset.



He produces transcendentally beautiful Riesling, focused on unique soil types and microclimates of the Clare Valley. I was astounded by how good the wines were when I first tasted the

2021 Grosset "Springvale" Riesling Clare Valley South Australia \$44.99 97JS 96JH.

Planted to red loam over limestone just outside the Watervale subregion, the Springvale packs power with flavors of lime and red apple skin.

On the other hand, the **2021 Grosset "Polish Hill" Riesling Clare Valley South Australia \$64.99 98JS 97JH** is an exercise in elegance and class. Planted on silt and shale over a bed of blue slate, the Polish Hill is unequivocally one of Australia's greatest Rieslings, with flavors of jasmine, white pepper, and fennel. An astounding, ageable, collectible Riesling representing Australia's best.

Another top-tier producer of Australia is Frankland Estate, founded in an isolated region of Western Australia, Frankland River, in 1988 by Barrie Smith and Judi Cullam. Frankland Estate's family has been crafting stunning Riesling from their cool-climate estate for three decades. Their flagship Riesling is the **2019 Frankland Estate "Isolation Ridge" Riesling Frankland River Western Australia \$39.99 97JS 94JH.** Explosively aromatic with fuji apple, white flowers, lime zest, this is full and textured with an impact of broad acidity that wraps around the palate.

Frankland Estate also produces a single-vineyard Riesling from the neighboring Poison Hill vineyard, a tiny seven-acre hillside slope with near perfect aspect. The **2019 Frankland Estate "Poison Hill" Riesling Frankland River Western Australia \$39.99 97JH 96JS** is bigger and bolder, receiving more sunshine than Isolation Ridge. This is a generously full and ripe expression of the variety with weight, balance, and a stony minerality from first to last sip.

No discussion of Australian Riesling would be complete without Pewsey Vale. Founded in the Eden Valley subregion of High Eden in 1847, Pewsey Vale has been producing some of Australia's best Riesling for over a century. Currently under the stewardship of the Smith-Hill Family (Yalumba), Pewsey Vale crafts a diverse range of Rieslings across all price points—and all of them delicious. The **2013 Pewsey Vale "Contours" Riesling Eden Valley South Australia \$34.99 97DC 95BC 94JH 94WE 90WS** always packs a huge punch for its price. Sourced from the best block on the estate and certified organic, Pewsey Vale bottle ages their Contours at the winery and releases the wines from their library just as they are coming into maturity. The 2013 Contours is stunning with notes of baked brioche, lime juice, and honeycomb above a lighting strike of acidity. Beautifully balanced, incredibly complex and effortless to drink, this bottle is one of the clear reasons that Pewsey Vale is one of Australia's best Rieslings.



Off-Color: Exciting New Rosés... and Beyond

There's no doubt about it: it's a great time to be a wine drinker! The variety of wine styles on the shelves is broader than ever before. Across the globe, winemakers are experimenting with techniques driven by curiosity, technology, and tradition. The wine world is now filled with buzz words like amphorae, skin contact, native yeasts, and the like. And the great influx of options has driven consumer interest, as well. With each passing week I encounter more customers who are curious about everything from biodynamic farming to skin-contact wines.

Beyond just white and red, there's an exciting range of colors, flavors, and styles—from classic profiles to absolute palate shockers. And with rosé season just around the corner, I want to highlight some of the most chillable, refreshing, innovative wines from the Southern Hemisphere—that come in a rainbow of colors. Anyone looking to dive deeper into the rosé category, these are worth your time to check out!



Andrew Donaldson visited us in Hollywood, pre-pandemic, and staffers were smitten with his singular Pinots from Central Otago. He's taken Pinot to a new level with an elegant blanc version.

Andrew Donaldson of Akitu is a master of Pinot Noir—in fact, it is the only variety planted on his family's estate in one of the world's most beautiful wine regions: Wanaka, Central Otago. When he decided to try his hand at making white wine, he had to work with what he's got. Fortunately, he knows what he's doing: the **2021 Akitu Pinot Noir Blanc Central Otago \$24.99 92VN** is outstanding. Made by directly

pressing the grapes as quickly as possible after being hand harvested, the Akitu Pinot Noir Blanc has the slightest rose gold hue. With aromas of rose, pomegranate, citrus, and red cherry, this is an explosively aromatic and incredibly distinctive white.

Pinot Meunier is not a variety you see often outside of Champagne. This expressive, full-flavored red grape is often used to bring fruitiness to some of the world's most well-known sparkling wines, but you'll rarely see it grown elsewhere, and even less so as a single variety. That's what I love about the **2021 Middle-Earth Rosé Nelson \$14.99 93BC**. This rosé is 100% Pinot Meunier, lending the wine a garnet color and aromatics of nectarine, melon, and white flowers leading to an incredibly fruity palate. There's a crisp snap and clean finish to balance out the act. A hugely popular staff favorite, this off-beat and delicious rose is perfect for summer sipping.

South Africa has been producing some exciting, off-beat rosés of its own. The **2021 Craven Wines Pinot Gris (Ramato) Stellenbosch South Africa \$29.99** is the most striking example out there. Ramato is a traditional wine style that hails from northern Italy, where pink-skinned Pinot Grigio grapes are crushed and left to seep their color into the juice. The result is a copper-hued wine with a unique texture and aroma. It's not quite a rosé, it's not quite an orange wine—it's Ramato. The Craven Pinot Gris is a beautiful example with aromas that are incredibly floral, with supporting notes of succulent watermelon and crisp red apple. With just a hint of skin tannin at the finish, this is a delightful and distinctive wine that'll make you rethink what South African is all about.

So if you find yourself getting stuck in a rut with your favorite rosé—branch out! We've got plenty of fun and funky wines that are surprising, exciting, and refreshingly delicious.



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