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## AUSTRALIA

*“The people are immensely likable— cheerful, extrovert, quick-witted, and unfailingly obliging....The food is excellent. The beer is cold. The sun nearly always shines. There is coffee on every corner. Life doesn't get much better than this.” Bill Bryson, In a Sunburned Country.*

Subsequent to my trip to this immense, beautiful and extraordinary country, I was not entirely sure whether I should I feel relief or disappointment that someone had already summed up, pretty eloquently, my thoughts and feelings about it. Then, on re-examining Bill Bryson's astute words, I realised that one key element was missing; wine.

My first thought was more holistic and all encompassing; how could anyone forget about wine? However, my second was a little more focused on the matter in hand – is it feasible to state or suggest that wine from Australia could add to the quality of one's life and have the potential to make it at least a little better?

To elaborate on this slightly grand notion, I feel that many growers are producing wines that will, in equal doses, delight and defy expectations. This is certainly true of the producers that we represent. A sense of place and precision was a common thread that ran through all the wines I tasted during my visit. Almost without fail, they managed to balance ripe fruit with freshness and definition, while embracing the different challenges that each vintage inevitably brings.

Generosity and approachability were also common likenesses. I appreciate that this is perhaps a more predictable response, but it does have a counterbalance. Indeed, this factor does not and should not cloud the innate ability of so many Australian wines to stand the test of time. The potential to gain increased complexity with age, while potentially offering drinking pleasure in the meantime, is no mean feat. In fact, it is something to be celebrated, along with the cold beer, great coffee, expansive, breath taking swathes of land and mind-boggling enormity of this unique country.

Katherine Dart MW

## Frankland Estate, Frankland River, Western Australia

There is a spirit of endeavour and a desire for constant improvement at this family-run estate. Small changes and innovations continue to help push the quality of the wines with each vintage. Evidence of this can be seen in the decision to change the training system in the Riesling vineyards to a double guyot in order to improve the canopy cover and provide more protection for the fruit. In the winery, they are tailoring ferments to suit the varieties and vintage, with the aim of expressing fruit and promoting the elegance that is ever present in their wines.



### Rocky Gully Riesling 2013

There are hints of herbs reminiscent of sage, with wet stone and taut acidity that are typical of the Rocky Gully Riesling. Exceptional length and intensity for the price point.

### Isolation Ridge Riesling 2013

Tangy, mineral and scented on the nose and palate. The acidity is fresh and bright, layering with fruit concentration on the core. The finish hints at grip adding to the texture of the wine and drawing out the finish. Delicious now, but has amazing potential to age.

### Poison Hill Riesling 2013

Stoniness and herbal notes are evident on the nose and palate where they are woven with chalky, clear acidity and floral topnotes. The finish is scented and persistent.

### Netley Road Riesling 2013

Amazing sense of energy and bright attack. This wine is inflected with more savoury notes than the Isolation Ridge. The minerals are more spicy and there is a tangible density across the mid palate, with the freshness of citrus pith adding to the complexity. Good length.

### Isolation Ridge Chardonnay 2013

The fruit is toned and tight with classic citrus notes balanced with cashew and a restrained spice. The clarity of the acidity adds to the definition and mineral profile – there is an underlying, but persistent note of gunflint. Deceptively concentrated.

### Rocky Gully Shiraz

Bright berry fruit and supple phenolics, the fruit on the mid-palate is fresh and toned. The finish is rich with notes of blackberry.

### Isolation Ridge Shiraz 2010

The aromas are savoury, with coal, black olive and pepper. On the palate these elements are layered with precise acidity and ripe tannins. The finish is rich and dark.

### Isolation Ridge Shiraz 2011

The aromas of the 2011 are more overtly ripe, moving away from the savoury elements toward cassis and blackberry. The tannins are defined. The finish is laced with dark fruit and minerality.

### Olmos Reward 2010

Aromas of violet, blueberry and classic cassis notes run through the wine. The palate is finely-textured and the tannins provide grip and tone. Concentrated and long.



### Elderton, Barossa Valley, South Australia

Alister and Cameron Ashmead manage, with distinct aplomb, to successfully produce a selection of wines that embody exceptional quality, commercial accessibility and fine wine status. The basis to this success is the quality of their vineyards, which represent the very image of vine health and vitality. They also play to their strengths and the wines balance a ripeness of fruit that one readily associates with the Barossa, but with a freshness, definition and structure that clearly sets them well apart from, and above, the crowd.

*Elderton Eden Valley Vineyards*

### E Series Unoaked Chardonnay 2014

The majority of fruit going into this blend is Estate fruit. The 2014 vintage has a greater weight of fruit and density on the core than the 2013. The peachy, stone fruit notes are layered with freshness and the finish is attractively pure and clean.

### E Series Cabernet Shiraz 2014

The nose is full of bright berry fruit and the palate continues this theme. It is accessible and fruity, but there is also a prevailing sense of control and clarity to the acidity and tannins. Good length.

### Golden Semillon 2013

The fruit for this wine now comes entirely from the Barossa Valley, from the Greenock property. A small proportion of the Semillon is picked early to retain acidity in the final wine and the balance is

cordon cut and left for 7–10 days on the vine to desiccate. Sultana and candied peel contribute to a very pretty nose. The attack is fresh and the acidity brings desired freshness balance. There is a lovely lightness of touch here. Delicately sweet. Offer exceptional value. RS 130g/l.

#### Western Ridge Barossa Valley 2012

A blend that is predominantly Grenache with a little Carignan, this wine is made from stunning vines that are at least 100 years old. The tannins in this wine are smoothly-textured and form a clear structure with the defined acidity. The finish has a scented quality.

#### Greenock Two 2012

A blend of Shiraz, Mourvedre, Grenache. They would like to do a rolling ferment with this wine, starting with the Shiraz, then adding the Grenache, then the Mourvedre, but this is dependent on the timing of the harvest. Aromas of liquorice and black fruit with hints of spice. Dark fruits dominate the attack, but more fresh red berries emerge with crisp acidity. Hints of earthiness add complexity.

#### Greenock One 2012

100% Shiraz. Chocolate richness is met by savoury tar-like mineral and damson fruit. The attack feels more muscular than that of the Greenock Two, with more black olive and garrigue notes. Overall this a more serious proposition; the tannins are densely packed and the acid is well woven into the structure of the wine.

#### Estate Shiraz 2012

Plum, blackberry and brambles dominate here. The palate is smoothly-textured and although the concentration is equal to the Greenock One, the wine is more opulent with a rounder, velvety more approachable feel. Fruit and spice linger on the finish.



*The Greenock property*

#### Command Shiraz 2010

This single block, as many already know, was planted 120 years ago and these very old vines produce the most unashamedly concentrated, quality fruit. Open fermented, it spends 30–36 months in American (c. two thirds +) and French puncheons (500 litre). The richness, density and intensity of this wine is incredible. It soaks up oak and allows the fruit to shine, the former adding complexity and texture to the core. Astoundingly persistent.

### Command Shiraz 2007

We have a small parcel of this vintage with a little more bottle age. The wine is dense concentrated with ample fruit swathing the tannins. There is an underlying freshness that lifts the wine and adds to its innate complexity.

### Command mixed case 2005–2010

This mixed case has been released to celebrate 120 years of the Command Vineyard.



### Hewitson, Barossa Valley, South Australia

Dean Hewitson is a lucky man, in part because he is the custodian of a truly incredible vineyard in the form of the Old Garden, but also because the ongoing potential of all the sites he works with should be obvious to anyone tasting the wines. There is a feeling of controlled concentration and varietal awareness, as well as an elegant expression of the benefits that the Barossa Valley can offer. In general terms, the fruit is ripe, but never at the expense of structure and

*Old Garden vineyard*

freshness. The wines have the capacity to age, and though this is most obvious when you taste the Old Garden, the Riesling and Baby Bush, as well as others, also have the capacity to reward those who leave them in bottle.

### Lulu Sauvignon Blanc, Adelaide Hill

This single vineyard is located about 10km behind Mount Lofty at 500–600m altitude. The aromatics of the Sauvignon are scented with a mere nod to the varietal; orange blossom is balanced with a hint of gooseberry. The palate is lively, elegant and defined.

### Gun Metal Riesling 2013

This single vineyard site is located just to the north of the Eden Valley. The soils here are incredibly stony and the vines benefit from the morning sun, avoiding the heat and sun in the afternoon and evening. These elements contribute to the lime blossom and sherbet character evident throughout the wine. Long and clean with excellent concentration.

### Miss Harry 2012, Barossa Valley

Predominantly a blend of Grenache, Shiraz and Mourvedre, with smatterings (up to 2.5%) of Carignan and Cinsault. Made in this vintage with 10–15% whole bunches. Vibrant fruit on the nose, which layers with more savoury characters on the palate. The tannins are fine and ripe, the acidity brings clarity.

### Baby Bush Mourvedre 2011

This vineyard is planted with cutting taken from the Old Garden vineyard. Blackberry and spice characters dominate the nose and palate. However, the underlying notes of coal and the graphite add complexity. Fresh and toned, with a long finish.

### Old Garden Mourvedre 2010

100% Mourvedre. The clarity and finely-wrought texture of the fruit is evident from the start. Immensely concentrated throughout, but also elegant with smooth, ripe tannins and fresh acidity. Complete, unabashed and intense.



### Giaconda, Beechworth, Victoria

Situated just outside the town of Beechworth in the foothills of the North East Victorian Alps, this is a special place. The vineyards around the property are made up of Chardonnay, Shiraz and Pinot Noir. A recent planting of Nebbiolo is a short drive away on an exceptional site called Red Hill. Production here is small, but the quality is undeniably high: each vintage aiming to express the terroir of the site and achieve balance. The wines are all about nuance, there is sense of subtlety,

*View over the vineyards*

restraint and defined delicacy in all the wines, but the concentration of fruit never waivers. Attention to detail starts in the vineyards and continues through the winemaking and élevage, not ceasing until the wine is safely in the bottle. This exactitude and desire to produce the very best makes the range from Giaconda a benchmark for many to aspire to. Sadly, volumes preclude us from having any Pinot Noir and Nebbiolo for the current release, but hopefully we will be able to get small parcels in the coming years.

### Giaconda Chardonnay 2012

Characteristic flint, citrus and minerals dominate the nose and palate of this wine. The attack and mouthfeel are precise and direct, the core is dense and elegant, with immense concentration. Excellent balance between richness and depth; a lesson in restraint and composure.



*The amphitheatre of Shiraz*

### Giaconda Shiraz 2012

The aromas are amazingly floral and hints of violets and peppery spice. The palate is laden with bright purple fruit and glorious freshness. The phenolic structure provides structure and form. Long, pure fruit finish.

### **Craiglee, Sunbury, Victoria**

This vineyard has an amazing history – it was first planted in 1863 and happily bore fruit until the 1940s when it was grubbed up. Pat Carmody moved to the property in the 1970s and found an old bottle of Shiraz from the 1870s. He opened it and was amazed by the wine, so in 1976 the estate was replanted. Currently, there are 10ha under vine, all ungrafted, planted for the most part on sandy loams. Pat is uncompromisingly traditional in how he makes the wines. They are barrel fermented, with a maximum of 20% new oak and they undergo no malolactic fermentation. Pat believes the absence of malolactic encourages greater evolution in the wine as it ages.

### Chardonnay 2012

Lively, intense and elegant aromas, with mineral notes underpinning the fruit. There is a richness on the attack and glossy fruit layering with clean acidity on the mid palate. The oak is subtle and adds an extra dimension to the wine. The finish is scented and fresh. Delicious now, but will reward those who have the restraint to leave it in the bottle for a little longer.

### Shiraz 2012

2011 was a cold vintage with ample rain that increased vine vigour, 2012 was a much less eventful year, but the vines benefited from the water bestowed by the preceding season. The nose is laden with plum and spice, the freshness on the attack is immediately evident and continues across the palate. Elegant and persistent.



### **Crittenden Estate, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria**

The theme of the family-run estate definitely continues with Crittenden, with two generations involved in the running of this ground-breaking property on the Mornington Peninsula. Garry Crittenden is still involved, but his son Rollo is now at the helm in the winery. There is much to be excited about here, though one element really stands out for me; they manage to successfully balance experimentation, constant development and evolution of styles with wines that embody their history (the Estate dates back to the early 1980s) that are commercially viable and exceedingly drinkable.

### Peninsula Chardonnay 2012

Fig and citrus notes come through on the nose and continue on the palate. The acidity is clear and the texture is smooth but fresh, while still displaying cool climate restraint.

### Zumma Chardonnay 2009

This wine is refined as well as showing richness and concentrated fruit. The fruit is layered with minerality, savoury notes, cashew and a smoky character.

### Oggi 2013

From the Italian for today, Oggi is Crittenden's experimental label. The 2013 is the first release of this wine and is a blend of 50% Friulano, 30% Savagnin and 20% Arneis 20% that were fermented on skins. There is an enticing freshness and texture to this aromatic wine.

### Peninsula Pinot Noir 2013

The fruit is handpicked and destemmed, whole berries are fermented in open top fermenters. A defined structure and mouthfeel is supported by juicy cherry and redcurrant fruit.

### Zumma Pinot Noir 2010

Darker berry fruit pervades here on the nose and the palate. There is a sense of restraint in the handling of the tannic structure, fruit and oak, giving an overall sense of harmony. Long on the finish.

### Los Hermanos Homenaje 2013

A blend of Tempranillo (42%), Mataro (38%) and Grenache (20%). Spicy and juicy fruit layer with ripe phenolics and lively acidity. There is no new oak in this wine, which further encourages the fruit expression to come to the fore. Plenty of energy throughout.



*Savagnin vine at Crittenden*

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