

WINE

BEST of BAROSSA SHIRAZ



The Facts Region

Barossa Valley

Years in the Industry

Colin Glaetzer, 34 years

Ben Glaetzer, 11 years

Annual Crush

7-8000 tonnes

Standout Wines

Glaetzer Shiraz,

Amon-Ra Shiraz,

Mitolo Serpico, Cabernet Sauvignon

CRITICAL OPINION WOULD PLACE the Barossa Valley at the forefront of Shiraz production in Australia. This view was confirmed by two major tastings last year of virtually all of Australia's best-performing Shiraz by this magazine's tasting panel. The Barossa performed better than any other region. There were eight Barossa wines in our article on Australia's top 25 Shiraz, with the Barossa claiming half the top 10 spots as well (*AGT WINE*, June/July 2003). The region also had 12 among the best 41 up-and-coming stars of Shiraz (*AGT WINE*, August/September 2003). Those tastings emphasised the strength and regional diversity of Shiraz in Australia today and celebrated the giant leaps forward made in the past decade, both by producers of the variety in emerging regions, as well as in places, such as the Barossa, where Shiraz has a long and glorious history. So when the magazine's tasting panel had the chance to travel to the Barossa, we were delighted to take the opportunity to visit some of the wineries we hadn't seen before (or had been away from for too long) and to take part in a major tasting of Barossa Shiraz. The panel included educator and wine writer Peter Bourne, industry consultant Nick Bulleid MW, auctioneer Andrew Caillard MW, publicist and wine writer Sophie Otton, journalist Huon Hooke and myself. We tasted wines from 23 producers, in most instances examples from both the excellent 1996 and 2001 vintages. The tasting was organised and hosted by Fuller Communications for the Barossa Winemakers Association. We are grateful to both for their support.

This close look at a range of Barossa producers provided a fresh perspective on how well the region is handling the variety, reaffirmed our opinion of many of the superstars of the area and introduced us to some very smart new wines. In fact, the results of the tasting suggest that many of the relative unknowns are set to challenge the more established names in the next few years.

While it's been wines made from gnarled, unirrigated, old vines (in many cases, rediscovered or rejuvenated) that have transformed the perception of Barossa Shiraz over the past decade, the reality is that much of the region's plantings of the variety have taken place in the past few years. There were 2500 hectares of Shiraz planted before 1999, but by 2002 this had leapt to 4000 hectares. In 1997, the Barossa produced 10,000 tonnes of Shiraz by 2008, it is projected that that figure will have grown to 35,000 tonnes. Shiraz is currently 42 per cent of the region's production and this will rise to nearly 50 per cent by 2008.

Prices, generally, are satisfactory, with the average price per tonne in 2003 being \$1700 (from the lowest, \$500, to a high of \$14,234 per tonne), down \$200 from the previous year.

With Shiraz, the Barossa Valley shows the rest of the world how it's done. Here's the best of this classic red variety from this deservedly famous region.

BEST of BAROSSA SHIRAZ

The results of the tasting suggest that many of the relative unknowns are set to challenge the more established names in the next few years.

Tasting Panel's Averaged Scores Out Of 20

2001 Glaetzer Shiraz, 18.1

2001 Glaetzer Bishop Shiraz, 18

2001 Beer Brothers Old Vines Shiraz, 17.8

2001 Miranda Family Reserve Old Vine Shiraz, 17.7

2001 Saltram No.1 Shiraz 17.7

2001 Schild Estate Shiraz, 17.6

1996 Glaetzer Bishop Shiraz, 17.6

1996 Glaetzer Shiraz, 17.3

2001 Gibson's BarossaVale Shiraz, 17.3

2001 Grant Burge Filsell Shiraz, 17.2

2001 Gibson's BarossaVale Australian

Old Vine Collection Shiraz, 17.2

2001 Thorn-Clarke William Randell Shiraz, 17.1

2001 Penfolds RWT Shiraz, 17

2001 Chateau Tanunda Grand Barossa Shiraz, 17

1996 David Wynn The Patriarch Shiraz 16.8

1996 Grant Burge Filsell Shiraz, 16.8

1996 Barossa Valley Estate

E & E Black Pepper Shiraz, 16.8

1996 Peter Lehmann Stonewell Shiraz, 16.8

2001 Yalumba Octavius Shiraz, 16.8

2001 Charles Melton Shiraz, 16.8

1996 Charles Melton Shiraz, 16.8

2001 Mountadam Eden Valley DW Shiraz, 16.7

1996 Yalumba Octavius, 16.7

2001 Henschke Mount Edelstone Shiraz, 16.6

2001 Elderton Command Shiraz, 16.6

1996 Elderton Command Shiraz, 16.6

BEST VALUE FOR MONEY

2001 Miranda Family Reserve

Old Vine Shiraz, \$22.95

2001 Schild Estate Shiraz, \$24

2001 Gibsons BarossaVale Shiraz, \$25

2001 Grant Burge Filsell Shiraz, \$30

2001 Glaetzer Bishop Shiraz, \$35

THE TASTING

2001 Glaetzer Shiraz

2001 Glaetzer Bishop Shiraz

The big winner at the tasting was the family company, Glaetzer. Winemakers Colin Glaetzer and his son, Ben, produced the top two wines (out of 40) of the tasting with the 2001 Glaetzer Shiraz and the 2001 Glaetzer Bishop Shiraz, while the first vintage of each of those wines (from the 1996 vintage) also finished in the top 10. That's class and consistency - in very strong company. About 5000 cases of Glaetzer wines are made each year at Barossa Vintners, which Colin and Ben manage and of which they are shareholders. The family company was formed in 1995 after Colin had left Barossa Valley Estate, where he had established a formidable reputation both for himself and the company, especially with traditional, full-bodied Barossa Shiraz. Ben is a young man in a hurry, having established the Amon-Ra label for the Glaetzer export drive, the Heartland range (at lower price points, with Geoff Hardy and Scott Collett) and the Mitolo label (with Frank Mitolo).

The major differences between the Glaetzer Shiraz and Bishop Shiraz (named for the family of Colin's wife, Judith) is the fruit sourcing. Both come from the Ebenezer area of the Barossa Valley, with the flagship red coming from 80-year-old vines, while the Bishop is from 30 to 60-year-old vines, with a touch of older material. The Glaetzer is matured in American oak, and the Bishop is aged in French and American hogsheads.

In both cases, the oak handling is evident without being intrusive and the oak is neatly integrated with the powerful, rich fruit. The 2001 Glaetzer Shiraz was universally admired for its ripe, vibrant bramble, red jube and blackberry flavours, depth, richness and concentration. Caillard commented that it had generosity and "intense savoury, malty oak, mocha and bitumen characters" as well as finesse, complexity and well-handled oak. The Glaetzer Bishop also scored universally high points. Hooke found it "delicious" and commented on its vibrant coconutty oak, the focused and tightly knitted structure of its palate and its great drive and balance. There was one dissenting voice with the 1996 Glaetzer Shiraz, although Bulleid summed up the majority view, finding the wine in good shape for its age. He said it showed complex, developed plum and sweet oak characters as well as good balance, excellent depth and rich, fine tannins.

The 1996 Bishop scored marginally better than its pricier counterpart. I loved its powerful richness and depth of flavour, the complex, ripe pepper, anise and licorice characters, and its silky texture. Hooke noted its balance, smoky meat and smoked oyster characters, although Bulleid found the tannins a bit hard and dry.