



tastingnotes

Welcome to the sixth Matthew Jukes 100 Best Australian Wines “hotlist” – the most relevant, bang up to date buyer’s guide to the crème de la crème from Down Under for consumers and trade buyers alike.

Compiling this hotlist, Q and I have tasted pretty much every bottle of Australian wine we could get our hands on in the last 12 months, both here and in Australia. The enthusiasm and support that we receive from all sectors of the Australian wine industry, from small wineries to large corporations and from regional winegrowers associations to Wine Australia itself, means that we get unparalleled access to the wines and the people who make them. This incredible position gives us a unique and detailed picture of what’s really going on in Australia. It also makes this huge task so much easier, and it plays a key part in enabling us to discover new wines that might not otherwise get a hearing. Thank you for your continued accessibility, candour and support.

In a year of dramatic headlines and events, it is good to be able to launch our strongest hotlist ever. In no other country do we encounter such a range of diversity, innovation and the ability to deliver across such an extreme range of price points. We would like to applaud some of the larger companies who have clearly made very tough decisions on fruit quality to produce exceptional value for money wines below £9, and those smaller producers who have conjured subtlety and nuance into their distinctive offerings with world class élan. Deciding on the final 100 was tougher than ever – we had nearer 200 wines that could conceivably have made it (more than ever before). We hope that the final hotlist will both promote as animated a debate as we had in deciding them, and once again prove its worth as an essential buyer’s guide.

We continue to support the Wine Australia branding and segmentation initiative, and we have designated each wine with one of the four brand personalities. (Please see the key on the inside front cover).

All prices quoted are rounded up RRP’s and full stockist and agent details are available on-line at

www.matthewjukes.com

Enjoy the wines.



Wine Australia Branding Initiative: category key

Brand Champions = **BC** Regional Heroes = **RH** Landmark Australia = **LA** Generation Next = **GN**

SERIOUS FIZZ

NV Trilogy, Brut Cuvée, Orlando Wines, Australia

£9 BC

Made from the classic three fizz varieties, Trilogy cuts no corners apart from, of course, price as it impresses even the snobbiest of connoisseurs with its remarkably erudite delivery. Look no further for a stunning party wine – this is the budget sparkler of the year!

NV Bleasdale, Sparkling Shiraz, Langhorne Creek, SA

£14 RH

This is Australia's finest value sparkling Shiraz and it delights in this appraisal by giving us a desperately sexy and curvaceous body to grab hold of – packed with glistening plum, blackberry, mocha and exotic spice. There is also a faint kiss of sweetness on the finish which tantalises the palate pulling you in for another mouthful.

2004 Jansz Brut, Tas

£17 RH

This newly released vintage has four years bottle age under its belt, and this has resulted in a mellowing hitherto unseen at this property. Always in the running, Jansz has elevated itself this year to another level, bringing it into direct competition with all global sparklers – a fight it will no doubt relish.

2006 Croser Brut, Piccadilly Valley, Adelaide Hills, SA

£18 LA

Please don't tell me that the cantankerous professor that is Croser Brut is softening with age. I cannot help but think that the '06 vintage is not only the finest to date, but it is the only ever release of this wine to have balance, geniality and even a welcoming air in its youth. We are not worthy!

2004 Yarrabank, Yering Station, Yarra Valley, Vic

£18 RH

Yarrabank is Dr Jekyll to Jansz's Mr Hyde! The 2004 vintage of Yarrabank is brooding, deep, malevolent and muscular, with even a touch of Krug-like power at its core. Value-wise we are laughing here, because it's not even the price of an own label supermarket Champs! Hoorah.

WHITES

fresh & crisp

2008 Nepenthe, Altitude Sauvignon Blanc, Adelaide Hills, SA

£8 RH

Having tasted this wine fifty odd times in the last twelve months, and on every occasion being delighted with its terrific presentation of top quality AHSB, it is quite remarkable that – if you are very quick off the mark – you can pick it up for as little as £6 (on offer) across the country. Dangerously inexpensive, yes, but also incredibly brave to showcase this region's excellence to an ever-widening audience. So we must all congratulate you Nepenthe for this service.

2008 De Bortoli, Windy Peak Pinot Grigio, Vic

£9 BC

Steve Webber adds yet another string to his bow, this time attacking a sector that is woefully under-represented in terms of one important characteristic – overt quality! And so, with typical panache, bravado and charisma he has kicked PG so far up its rear end that it will perform its magic even in front of the strictest of judges. It is rare these days to find something so cheap and so delicious.

2008 Chapel Hill, Unwooded Chardonnay, SA

£10 RH

Michael Fragos effortlessly does something that other winemakers find so incredibly difficult – making an ultra-pure, unoaked wine by gilding three different layers of Chardonnay together in exactly the right proportions and with no visible sign of any joins. The Adelaide Hills, Coonawarra and McLaren Vale elements all bring something to the party but they do it with such cohesive control and collaborative joy that you cannot help but wonder why this wine is not poured 'by the glass' in every bar in town.

2008 The Architect by Philip Shaw, Chardonnay, Orange, NSW £10 GN

The drama quotient is on red alert with this unoaked, yet searingly dry Orange Chardonnay. The Shaw manifesto states that every wine released from this operation should challenge the drinker with every sip. The leesy, tangy, white-knuckle fruit on display here makes your brain pop with excitement as you murmur appreciatively into your glass.

2008 Joseph, Pinot Grigio, d'Elena, Clarendon, McLaren Vale, SA £11 GN

At ten years old, Elena herself (Joe's daughter) must be very proud of her namesake – this beautiful, herb and sweet-spice-punctured Pinot Grigio. Coming from only a one hectare plot I have always been a fan of this wine, but to date, I have never quite had the confidence to write it up. The vineyard has come alive in 2008 and therefore I have no hesitation whatsoever in commending it to you in this 100. I know what Elena will be drinking on her eighteenth!

2008 Tamar Ridge, Kayena Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Tas £12 GN

Tasmania is finding its feet in the international market at last and Tamar Ridge is at the vanguard with its glamorously proportioned but sophisticated wines. There is a rascally air about this Sauvignon as it nips and jabs at your senses on the one hand but soothes and satiates with the other. This is a fascinating white wine. Read on for more beauties from this very important property.

2008 Willow Bridge, Wild Ferment Sauvignon Blanc, Geographe, WA £12 RH

With raspably vibrant Sauvignon fruit, this re-badged wine sets out to stem the flow of Kiwi Sauvignon onto the shelves and into our fridges. With ninja-like precision, and a glittering array of aromatics, proud Aussies can now fight back with this Asian-fusion whirlwind of flavour.

2008 Cape Mentelle, Sauvignon Blanc / Semillon, Margaret River, WA £13 LA

A return to former glory for one of the most famous wines in Australia, '08 heralds a balletic, supine and sleek SBS which harks back to years gone by when the great David Hohnen first came up with this recipe. These days it is Rob Mann playing the old tune better than it has ever been played before – who'd have thought that this iconic wine would destroy its portfolio partner, Cloudy Bay, in this vintage, as effortlessly as it does.

2008 The Lane, Gathering Single Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc / Semillon, Adelaide Hills, SA £15 LA

This is the best Gathering since the iconic 2002 vintage (which is still a mesmerising creation). With the new winery at The Lane allowing these wines to be polished to perfection, John Edwards is the Willy Wonka of his generation and the releases just keep getting better and better. Nothing can stop the grin on your face when you start a bottle of Gathering - hysteria will ensue followed by inevitable and uncontrollable hugging.

2008 Cullen, Semillon / Sauvignon Blanc, Mangan Vineyard, Margaret River, WA £18 LA

Still in its infancy, but it has to be said, looking ravishing already, this is one of the most immediately appealing Cullen whites we have seen in years. The deportment and build quality on show in this wine are breathtaking and you could safely let it develop for another three years in the bottle, allowing this diva to perform at her peak.

2008 PHI Sauvignon Blanc, Lusatia Park, Yarra Valley, Vic £19 GN

Every year this wine makes it into our 100 Best and every year we marvel at the devastating danger and beauty in the glass. This is visionary winemaking and it is sensory stimulation of the highest order when you pour this wine for your friends. Spread the word – this is very PHI-ne wine!

2003 McWilliam's, Lovedale Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW £25 LA

Five years ago, in the inaugural 100 Best, this very wine made the cut in an unprecedented, pre-release format – which in turn went on to encourage McWilliam's to release it young, to a select group of fans, every year. Five years later (and this will never happen again because Q and I have decided to make it law), we welcome back Lovedale 03 into the 100, as it reaches its true drinking peak. This remarkable wine could, of course, come back every year for another decade such is its enduring appeal and incremental allure but this is the last time that you will have the chance to buy it – so do not shirk your responsibilities in owning a slice of the world's greatest Semillon vineyard.

succulent & aromatic whites

2008 Jacob's Creek Riesling, SEA

£7 BC

There are always surprises in the JC portfolio – with the two wines chosen for this 100 coming from two of our favourite wine styles. This baby Riesling must have some very serious contributors to its blend because there are large swathes of identifiably serious fruit flavours in this inexpensive and mass-produced wine. Congratulations once again JC for bringing artisan winemaking to a global audience.

2008 Zonte's Footsteps, Single Site Pinot Grigio, Langhorne Creek, SA

£8 GN

It is not often that an experimental wine gets it right first time, but Zonte's has a veritable armory of intellect on its payroll and these fun-loving wizards have conjured up the perfect potion here. With more traction on the palate than many PGs, this wine nods to the more mineral offerings from the Alto-Adige making it a thoroughly foodie proposition and therefore doubling its audience in one fell swoop.

2008 The White Mullett by Pikes, Clare Valley, SA

£8 GN

Just to show that the South Africans aren't the only people in the wine world to make 'something out of nothing white blends' so successfully, Pikes Mullett is a Riesling/ Viognier/ Sauvignon Blanc/ Chenin Blanc blend which confounds the sceptics and defies belief by tasting incredibly complex, as it should do, but also downright delicious at the same time (which most don't). Mulletts all round please.

2008 Fox Gordon, Princess Fiano, Adelaide Hills, SA

£10 GN

Australia's finest Fiano this year is made by Tash Mooney. There is more richness and beauty here than before and yet it still sits below Viognier on the exotic scale, so if you are looking to broaden your horizons beyond Chardonnay and the like, then rest a while here taking in the spectacular texture and invigorating complexity that Princess Fiano offers.

2008 Leasingham, Bin 7 Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£10 RH

Back to top form in 2008, Bin 7 is sniper-like in its accuracy as it targets your palate with unerring, Saharan-dry, Clare Valley Riesling fruit. Price-point-wise this wine over-delivers by a mile, plundering as it does from the Classic Clare pool which gives it its central core of life-giving, lemon and lime fruit.

2008 O'Leary Walker, Watervale Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£10 RH

This year, the Watervale cuvée triumphed over the Polish Hill version in the annual O'Leary Walker taste-off, but it was a close run thing as usual. There is bracing acidity and lemon and lime spice, bounding out of the glass in this wine, and at this price you should buy as much as you can carry.

2008 Bremerton, Verdelho, Langhorne Creek, SA

£11 GN

With teeth-squeaking crispness and chimpanzee-like agility, this pocket rocket Verdelho cavorts around your palate, pressing all of the right buttons, including the all-important lemon sherbet, frozen pineapple chunk, ginger fizz and lime daquari ones. Verdelho should be fun, after all so many are dreary, and when we found this bottle Q and I even managed an embarrassing 'high-five' at the ADTs!

2008 Pewsey Vale, Prima Riesling, Eden Valley, SA

£11 GN

There is an unwelcome element of worthiness in recommending a purposefully low alcohol wine. However, like many beautiful German Rieslings, Prima is downright delicious and so its alcohol level is not the reason why it has made the grade this year. The jocular, garrulous, tumbling fruit cocktail of flavours with its cool, long lick of juiciness on the finish all make this a stunning wine and one which revels in the challenge of modern day Asian and Indian cuisine. P.S. it's sealed with a Vino-lock too, so there is even more fun to be had watching sommeliers eyes pop out of their heads when they see it.

2008 Plantagenet, Riesling, Great Southern, WA

£11 RH

The WA Riesling revival is in full swing this year and Plantagenet, a newcomer to The 100, is perhaps, on one level, a square peg in a round hole. (However that is our problem, not the wine's!) Taste it again and appreciate the angular, cool, mineral-driven nature of this wine and see just how appealing it could be to the greater public. The responsibility might fall to producers like this to introduce Riesling to its true, new audience rather than relying on the more famous Clare and Eden Valleys.

2008 Tamar Ridge, Kayena Vineyard Riesling, Tas

£12 RH

This wine was, for me, the biggest single shock of the ADTs. After having sipped the KV Sauvignon (qv) I then moved on to this Riesling and was horrified when I wrote 19 out of 20 in my notebook. The drive and determination coupled with the downright deliciousness of this wine on the palate, was, and still is, completely all-enveloping. Legend has it that there are magnums out there, too! What would you do for one of those in your cellar?

2008 Pikes, Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£13 RH

Neil Pike seemingly has a season ticket to our 100 Best and this will not change as long as he continues to enchant us with wines like this one. Fleshy, ripe, cool and incredibly detailed, 2008 Pikes Riesling is a joyous wine and one that deserves to cast its spell on a far wider fan base.

2004 Pewsey Vale, The Contours Riesling, Eden Valley, SA

£13 LA

This is the first 'un-Germanic' Contours we have seen in years and yet it still has the late-release, genie-in-a-bottle appeal which makes Contours such an unmissable proposition. With no petroleum on the menu you will have to make do with rhubarb compote, green peach and waxy honeycomb notes which do only one thing – make you ravenously hungry and want to run out to the nearest and finest purveyor of victuals in your borough.

2008 De Bortoli, Estate Grown Viognier, Yarra Valley, Vic

£15 RH

There is a zen-like precision to this Viognier which leaves you feeling calm and cool and unlike many other wines made from this grape, not at all weighty or fruit-soaked. There is infinitesimal detail here on the nose and palate but it is all delivered in an almost monastic manner as opposed to a wild western 'yeehah' so often encountered with this variety

2007 The Lane, Viognier, Adelaide Hills, SA

£15 RH

The integrity of fruit in this wine is almost unbelievable, so when I tell you that it was made only using new oak barrels you will see just how incredibly well the fruit has absorbed, assimilated and then re-introduced you to its components. This is grape-growing, married to winemaking, of the very highest level and the result is a truly unique Viognier experience.

2008 Gemtree, Moonstone Albariño, McLaren Vale, SA

£17 GN

While not harnessing quite as much intensity as some Northern Spanish versions of this grape, Gemtree still manages to seize the transcendental appeal of Albarino with its tart, candy floss nose, spiders web crystalline zestiness and raspily, dry finish. It is fascinating to see how swiftly Aussie winemakers create wines in their back yard after having found them on tour around the world.

2008 Grosset, Springvale Watervale Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£17 LA

Another Watervale wine, and this time from the guru himself! Jeff's 08s are all delicious but the wine to buy must be this one, on account of its extraordinary line and length. I am always amazed at just how much passion and craftsmanship goes into these wines and in the greater scheme of things, they are still woefully underpriced.

2008 Skillogalee, Trevarrick Single Contour Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£18 LA

Is this the finest Riesling of the 2008 vintage in Australia? It certainly tastes like it today but, as you know, this is a competition that will run and run with anything up to ten other players in the field. Suffice to say that Trevarrick is in my cellar already and I promise not to touch it for five years.

2008 Jim Barry, The Florita Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£21 LA

Peter Barry and the gang have now got The Florita vineyard back where they want it and it is a joy to see this vineyard responding so beautifully to their care and attention. 2008 Florita Riesling is slippery smooth, all-pervading and incredibly rewarding already, which only serves to throw up a handful of problems for the keen collector – principally, when should we drink this wine? I would find it hard to say no to a bottle today knowing full well that it is already on such devastating form. However, given five, ten or even fifteen more years it will surely continue to thrill its audience.

2008 KT and The Falcon, Peglidis Vineyard Riesling, Clare Valley, SA

£21 RH

Only 350 cases of this wine were made and only a tiny fraction of this number will make it to St. James's Street, so act now if you want to own one of the purest expressions of Clare Valley terroir available. The illusion in the glass is that this wine is already starting to drink well, but please exercise restraint because Peglidis is only one year into its twenty year life span.

2007 Yalumba, The Virgilius Viognier, Eden Valley, SA

£23 LA

The finest Virgilius to date! Where once this wine would have happily taken on the heavier weight, warm vintage Condrieus in a rumble, Virgilius now is lithesome and it could conceivably tackle even the most romantic and cerebral of Northern Rhône beauties. This progression from all-in-wrestler to consummate, multi-faceted, entertainer has been incredible to watch and extraordinarily swift in its occurrence. Seek out the 2008 Yalumba Eden Valley Viognier, too, for an immediate kick of early drinking, top quality Viagra!

rich & structured whites

2007 Tahbilk, Marsanne, Nagambie Lakes, Vic

£8 LA

This wine has two lives, one public and one private. Its public life is spent entertaining at dinner parties inexpensively, enthusiastically and energetically, growing its fan base as it goes with its cool melon, lemon balm, and green apple notes. In private, it knows full well that it can age for ten years, conquer any number of dishes and should really be treated as a Grand Vin in spite of its everyday price point. So what is the conclusion? There is none – there are very few true bargains out there in the wine world these days and every so often, some lucky bugger will wake up and realise that this wine, in spite of its price, is a living and breathing Australian icon. The snowball effect is taking place, albeit slowly and for the privileged few.

2008 De Bortoli, Windy Peak Chardonnay, Vic

£9 BC

Windy Pants Chardonnay is the best value version of this grape variety in the Southern Hemisphere. The gleamingly-pure fruit, subtle, apple-crumble-kissed aroma and sultry, tender texture makes this cheap (because that is what it is) wine an incredible gift for our dinner tables. How can one explain the reasons why this wine is so good? It is simple – the De Bortoli team has great taste.

2007 Step Road, Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, SA

£10 RH

No frills Chardonnays with proud postcodes are rare in the market place these days. Heavy-handed oak, over cropping and clumsy winemaking ruin the chances of some of the best vineyards in every region. So, it is all the more exciting to introduce you to a bold, beautiful, bombastic Chardonnay which defines the Hills and yet which hasn't slipped into the premium price bracket.

2002 Peter Lehmann, Margaret Semillon, Barossa Valley, SA

£12 LA

We were sent the 2004 vintage of this wine for consideration but deemed it 'far too young'! On hearing that another parcel of '02 was heading to our shores mid-year we didn't hesitate in putting it straight into the final 100 without debate. Fully mature, and with every facet of baked brioche and lime curd on display, this is one of the most remarkable and impressive of whites from the Barossa and, served blind, it would give even the greatest Grand Cru Chablis a real run for its money.

2007 Cape Mentelle, Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA

£15 LA

Is Rob Mann the Harry Potter of the wine world? He must be because he is clearly employing some serious magic in the winery at Cape Mentelle. This year, the Chardonnay has sprinted into our final century of wines alongside the SBS! We knew it would be good but in our wildest dreams didn't expect it to be as impressive, compact, mineral-rich and layered as this. Cape Mentelle Chardonnay has done the unthinkable this year – it has taken Pierro's position in the 100.

2007 Stonier, Reserve Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£19 RH

This is the first year that the Stonier Reserve Chardonnay has eclipsed its Estate partner and this is because, for once, the oak impact is in perfect proportion to the sensational fruit. A big wine in every respect and with a few more years to go before its apogee, the Stonier dream is finally being realised in buccaneering spirit.

2007 Eileen Hardy Chardonnay, Australia

£20 LA

We have stopped saying 'told you so' a long time ago about Eileen, and still the team at Hardy's continues to push the level of this wine up every year. Finer, longer and more beautiful than she has ever been, Eileen is a goddess in our eyes and we don't care that the price has skyrocketed, because this is still one of the great Chardonnays of the world.

2002 Tyrrell's Wines, Vat 1 Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW

£22 LA

We always adore these mature Semillon releases, particularly when they gather momentum and with it richness on the palate. Remember that this is an unoaked wine. It is only in this section by dint of its age which has augmented and upholstered the aromas and flavours by a factor seemingly unimaginable in this wine's youth. Every year we recite the Hunter anthem in the hope that you will join in, this wine has the pomp and circumstance to turn heads, so let them be yours.

2007 PHI, Chardonnay, Lusatia Park, Yarra Valley, Vic

£22 GN

The Lusatia Park vineyard should have won three slots this year (2007 PHI Pinot Noir is every bit good enough to be included) but we have only given two places away to allow another wine a chance. PHI Chardonnay has edged ever closer to its Corton-Charlemagne pretensions in 2007, parading gracefully as it does its breathtaking poise and elegance in the glass.

2006 Cullen, Kevin John Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA £36 LA

Is this a perfect wine – by that, we mean a true 20/20? If it is not it's bloody close because on the ten or so times that Q and I have tasted this wine we have stared goggle-eyed in amazement at each other because of the sheer glory in the glass. Cullen Chardonnay has always been a serious wine, but Kevin John will now be spoken about in the same breath as Leeuwin, Giaconda and Yattarna.

2006 Penfolds, Yattarna Chardonnay, Australia £40 LA

Rather than sneaking over the line this year, Yattarna has ram-raided our fortress and is worth every penny of its fruity price tag. The restraint and bashfulness on the nose is wonderfully endearing, coupled with the way in which the palate releases its gifts incrementally. This is a truly mesmerising wine. It is hard to find a longer finish anywhere else on the planet.

2006 Leeuwin Estate, Art Series Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA £50 LA

Art Series Chardonnay makes its annual appearance at Australia House with metronomic regularity and this is because it is, and always has been, the most consistently brilliant Chardonnay in Australia. However, this means that every year it has to raise its game, and we are delighted to report that once again it has done just that. Flabber your ghaist and learn that this wine is made using 100% new oak, too, and you will see that the fruit in Art Series is of true Grand Cru quality! It is worth noting that 2007 Leeuwin Prelude Chardonnay is also on a high this year proving that this estate has a divine touch with this grape.

ROSÉ

2008 Wirra Wirra, Mrs Wigley Rosé, McLaren Vale, SA £10 RH

Mrs Wigley has had a makeover this year, and her star sign predicts a refreshing, reinvigorated outlook with a crisp balance and mouth-watering red fruit. It's nice to see that the fine-tuning that has gone into this wine over the years is really paying off in the vibrancy and shine in the glass. We love you Mrs Wigley.

2008 Linda Domas, Shotbull Rosé, Southern Fleurieu, SA £10 GN

Shotbull rampages onto the palate in the blink of an eye and then proceeds to maul your taste buds adoringly as you get your olfactory system around the levels and layers of fruit and herbs on offer in this wine. With a drier finish and half the brawn of Virginia, Shotbull can be utilised with a vast variety of cooking - its speciality subject being devilishly hot chicken wings.

2008 Turkey Flat, Rosé, Barossa Valley, SA £13 RH

This is very much the d'Artagnan of the bunch in this year's four musketeer rosés. With a misleading colour, there is much more power and depth to the palate than might at first appear. This is a really intriguing wine. Spice and perfume makes Turkey Flat disconcertingly pretty too, and it packs a punch that could easily take on a menacing steak sandwich.

2008 Charles Melton, Rose of Virginia, Barossa Valley, SA £15 RH

Always the biggest, richest, most ostentatious and indomitable of our rosé collective, Virginia is a force to be reckoned with and with this in mind choose your recipe wisely and you will enthrall your guests with your culinary acumen. Sweet and sour, hot and spicy, smoked or curried, bring it on, because Virginia has got it all – she's a whole lotta rosé.

RED

pinot noir

2008 De Bortoli, Windy Peak Pinot Noir, Vic £8 GN

He's done it again, this time with the most difficult of all grapes. Windy Peak Pinot is a consummate piece of winemaking which in no way blurs the hallmark notes of this noble grape and at the same time maintains an undeniable levity and slottability which should be part of the character of every delicious entry level wine. A joy to drink, the value afforded here is unquantifiable. Arise Sir Steve of Dixon's Creek.

2008 Swan Bay, Pinot Noir, Scotchman's Hill, Vic £9 GN

Another inexpensive Pinot has made this roll call proving that Australia has already cracked the Pinot gene successfully unlike many other countries who pretend that they have and yet who are nowhere near. Swan Bay is a suave, red-fruit cocktail of a Pinot with none of the jagged edges of Devils nor any of the creamy raspberry notes of Windy Peak. This time the mood is seductive and sensuous and at this sub-£10 price point it is delightful to be so easily converted to the cause.

2008 Tamar Ridge, Devil's Corner Pinot Noir, Tas**£11 GN**

A relative newcomer to the Tasmanian wine scene, it is extraordinary to see how far and how fast Tamar has come – and the proof, as always, is in the Pinot. This little Devil is nothing short of incorrigible with its chunky, cheeky Beaujolais-esque crunch on the palate and summer pudding aroma. We need more of these wines in the UK, because nowhere on earth can produce them with the *joie de vivre* (and value for money) that this wine has in spades.

2007 Riposte by Tim Knappstein, The Sabre Pinot Noir, Adelaide Hills, SA**£15 RH**

A Grand Vin approach to winemaking only results in a noteworthy outcome if the fruit used is of tip top quality. Tim accesses stunning raw materials for The Sabre, and then builds an enigmatic wine from the ground up, inlaying intricate oak marquetry and a definitive AH *goût de terroir* for good measure. It's also £10 less than it should be, so thank you Tim.

2007 Ten Minutes by Tractor, 10X Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic**£19 GN**

With showy (almost slutty) fruit intensity and a 'near-Barbera-like' palate, 10X is about as boisterous and marauding as this variety has ever been. Welcome this frat-house Pinot with open arms though, as long as you invite its sage uncle, 2006 McCutcheon Vineyard Pinot Noir as a chaperone. You will then see that TMBT has got all of the bases covered for this awesome grape.

2007 Yabby Lake, Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic**£24 RH**

There is an elemental energy to this wine that signals the arrival of a Pinot with a true sense of terroir. Youthful (as you would expect) but brimming with energy, the *sauvage* aromas and whirlwind plum and cherry flavours are yet to be tamed, but they will undoubtedly fall into line in the coming months. Yabby is one of the hottest properties in Australia right now!

2005 Piper's Brook, Reserve Pinot Noir, Tas**£32 LA**

I have not written up a Piper's Brook wine for many years, so when this and 2005 The Lyre turned up we were immediately intrigued. Given an hour to breathe, and a further hour to settle, this duo of stellar Pinots reminded us why this estate was so pioneering thirty years ago. Let's hope that we all see more wines of this standard in the near future. This is a world class wine and one that could sit in on any dinner party, anywhere, at any time, with its head held high.

*cabernet & merlot***2007 McWilliam's Hanwood Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, SEA****£7 BC**

McWilliam's makes this incredible wine year in, year out with unwavering accuracy. The remarkable thing is that when assembling a blend of these proportions surley it is likely to end up tasting like an average of its components(?) – but this wine tastes like a collection of only the best parcels. In Hanwood the quality soars from the glass with cool, fresh, classic, cassis notes. I must admit that I don't know how they do it, but this is one Australian company with unbelievably high standards, so they must simply just not bottle anything that isn't deemed up to scratch. Praise be!

2006 Battle of Bosworth, Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, SA**£15 RH**

With its organic credentials shining like a beacon and its authentic McLaren Vale roots giving us savoury warmth and generosity of fruit, this is a stunning, classically-dimensioned McLaren Vale Cabernet with gobs of damson fruit and buckets of bravado. Unafraid to show more than a hint or two of mint and eucalypt as well, BoB is a wine that wears its heart on its sleeve. You will fall for it in a moment, as we have done.

2005 Wakefield, Jaraman Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley / Coonawarra, SA**£17 LA**

You do not need a time machine to be allowed the privileged of tasting a truly iconic style of Australian Cabernet, because this inspirational Jaraman is made from Cabernet from two classic regions but this time the weld is purposely clear to see and taste. In fact Wakefield actually wants you to pick up the Clare spice and leather and counterpoint it with the Coonawarra mint and eucalypt, rather than amalgamating these ingredients invisibly in the glass. This is, of course, our pleasure and it makes for extraordinary and nostalgic drinking.

2005 Knappstein, Enterprise Cabernet, Clare Valley, SA**£19 RH**

Knappstein's top red this year is incredible. The aroma alone will rivet you to the spot with its dramatic brush strokes of plum, blackcurrant and mulberry. The palate shows the warm, dusty Clare soil off to a tee, never lapsing into 'hot' notes and always staying on the baked pie side of the track. You can sink your teeth into the oak flavours, they are so juicy – which all puts Enterprise in an orbit of its own.

2004 Skillogalee, Trevarrick Single Contour Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley, SA £25 RH

If you turn the volume up on your amp and deepen your purple-shag pile by a few inches, relax into some comfy bell-bottoms and then slip on a paisley tank top you will be in exactly the right mood to experience the ride that is this wine. Both Q and myself were struck dumb by the opulence of fruit on display, and it must be a first to have a red and a white wine from one single vineyard in the same 100 Best – the Palmers have themselves some awesome real estate at Skilly.

2006 Tapanappa, Whalebone Vineyard Merlot, Wrattobully, SA £32 LA

The two new red releases from the Whalebone Vineyard are of definite 100 Best standard. We have chosen to lead with the Merlot ahead of the Cabernet / Shiraz blend, it being the much more challenging wine to make. Stunningly proportioned and with not one ounce of unwanted power or alcohol, this wine is fast becoming a model to which all other Merlots in Australia need aspire.

2006 Moss Wood, Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, WA £45 LA

This vintage won't be released for a while but you should register your interest now because it is a truly spectacular Cabernet reminiscent of Moss Wood's greatest achievements. Margaret River's comparison to Bordeaux is often spoken about but it is Wilyabrup's direct comparison to the finer plots in Pauillac that intrigues me more. There really is a distinguished air to this wine that can only be found in the top wines of these regions. P.S. 2006 Amy's Blend is, not surprisingly awesome too, and it is very nearly drinking and eminently affordable. Get in quick.

2006 Penfolds, Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon, SA £60 LA

I am an enormous fan of 707, but I often struggle to see its potential in the first few years of its life. This vintage is, however, the most impressive young 707 I have ever seen, with phenomenal fruit control and awe-inspiring length on the finish. For once, the oak and alcohol seem already to be in perfect harmony and for that reason it leapt straight into this 100. Goodness knows what will happen to this wine in the future, but one thing is certain – it will get better and better, and from this elevated starting point the sky's the limit.

weird & wonderful

2006 Willunga 100, Cabernet / Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA £8 RH

This happy-go-lucky wine has no pretensions whatsoever to greatness and so it carries on its way oblivious to the fact that it is winning admirers left, right and centre. This endearing quality has won us over too, with the spice and fruit partnership working its magic in every glass. If only life was as joyous and worry free as Willunga 100!

2008 St. Hallett, Gamekeeper's Reserve, Barossa Valley, SA £8 RH

There is so much quality in this wine and it over delivers in every department, every year, that we barely need taste it prior to its inclusion in this list. However stranger things have happened and so we always go through the motions. Our surprise this year was that 2008 Poacher's Blend stepped up for inclusion with its brother, and to our shame we couldn't find a space for it. So if you want the perfect Fred and Ginger for dinner, then buy this duo and get a lot of change from a twenty and reward your palates handsomely at the same time.

2007 Wirra Wirra, Church Block, McLaren Vale, SA £10 RH

It must be so much fun putting Church Block together, and this is clear to see in the glass because none of the varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz and Merlot) hog the limelight, preferring to work as a well-drilled team rather than as a prima donna. This camaraderie results in a delicious, seamless blend of spice, briar and woodsmoke all surrounded in a perfect sphere of dark berry fruit.

2007 Kangarilla Road, Sangiovese, McLaren Vale, SA £10 GN

Trust Kangarilla Road to nail Sangiovese when so many have failed! The reason for this bull's eye is simple – these guys love fruit-driven, honest, delicious wines, and so even belligerent Sangiovese had to succumb to their charms. With cranberry, violet and lavender on the nose, this is a magnificent advert for the winery and a sigh of relief for those of us who never thought we'd ever see a decent Aussie Sangio.

2007 Fox Gordon, By George Cabernet Sauvignon / Tempranillo, Barossa Valley, SA £10 GN

Ribero del Duero gets a pasting By George for two simple reasons, Natasha Mooney's unerring blending accuracy and her phenomenal taste. A young wine with a decade ahead of it, I bet you that you will not keep it for more than a week such is the magnetic attraction of this wine. Decant it and then wait to fall under its spell. Hypnotism has never been so easy.

2006 Yalumba, The Scribbler Cabernet / Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA £11 RH

A trophy winner at The Great Australian Red and yet a wine that is sold at an everyday price – what more could you ask for? Brand new to the UK and presumably a descendant of Yalumba's Signature, The Scribbler should be obligatory drinking for every person who has yet to understand the global importance of the Cabernet / Shiraz blend.

2006 Bremerton, Tamblyn, Langhorne Creek, SA £11 RH

Langhorne Creek is a massively important wine region in Australia and Bremerton is its beacon of excellence. Tamblyn is another complex blend (Cabernet Sauvignon/ Shiraz/ Malbec/ Merlot) which uses the very finest notes of each of its constituent varieties to play the most soulful music in the glass. With incredible harmony and heart-warming melodiousness, this is a wine which could open this region up to a brand new, world wide audience and a few number ones, too!

2005 Majella, The Malleea Cabernet Sauvignon / Shiraz, Coonawarra, SA £15 RH

A word of warning for Malleea collectors – this 2005 vintage requires more air than ever before in advance of drinking. This signals to me a mightily long-lived wine and one that is crafted from the finest of Coonawarra's raw materials. For the impatient among you, search out 2007 Majella The Musician, a junior school version of our chosen hero, which is stunning right now.

2007 First Drop, The Big Blind Nebbiolo / Barbera, Barossa Valley, SA £16 GN

As a rule, I find it difficult to get my head around the legion of Italian and Spanish grape varieties now planted in Australia. Only a few examples have made it into the 100 this year but the Big Blind for me, is the bravest and it also has the most to lose! For these reasons I am delighted to congratulate Matt Gant on making a wine that completely stopped us in our tracks. This is a valid and eminently collectable 'Super Piemonte' wine made by a thoroughly delightful ex-Essex lad. Bloomin' marvellous!

2005 Penfolds, Bin 389 Cabernet / Shiraz, SA £20 LA

This wine was declared The Great Australian Red 2008, last September, and every time I have tasted it since, it has blown me away with its seamless integration of these two great grapes. Peter Gago and his team are on an incredible roll at the moment and 38905, its 48th vintage of production, proves that big companies and ageless blends can triumph over anything from anywhere if they try.

2007 Anaperenna by Ben Glaetzer, Barossa Valley, SA £32 LA

Ben continues to raise the bar year after year with his spectacular, eponymous wines. '07 Anaperenna is a sensitively assembled wine (bearing in mind its dimensions) and even in its youth it is showing us just how serious a proposition it is with an extraordinary depth of field and a palate that continues to open over hours. This must be one of Ben's greatest releases to date.

shiraz, grenache, mourvèdre

2008 Jacob's Creek, Grenache / Shiraz, SEA £7 BC

JC seems to do the Rhône varieties more successfully at the bottom end than the Bordeaux ones and we are delighted that this Grenache / Shiraz blend stood up this year. The thought that millions of people can experience this classic blend, at this quality level, for an everyday price is a truly wonderful thing.

2007 Wirra Wirra, Scrubby Rise, Fleurieu / Adelaide Hills, SA £8 BC

Q and I nearly came to blows over whether this wine or the uber-expensive, tribal colossus '06 RSW Shiraz, made the cut for this slot. In the end, we decided that the wizardry in making something out of nothing had to be rewarded, so Scrubby got the ticket. Is it the Petit Verdot in this Shiraz / Cabernet blend that sets it apart from the crowd? I don't know the answer, but I'm glad that it's in there making me swirl and sniff harder, searching for the truth.

2007 Mitolo, Jester Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA £13 RH

Jester Shiraz has so much swagger and panache in '07 it is frankly baffling. For an everyday price you can experience an extraordinarily well-honed red with valid delusions of grandeur, because this wine is made from the off-cuts of the likes of Savitar and GAM and it damn well tastes like it, too.

2007 Paxton Wines, Quandong Farm Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA **£15** **GN**

This biodynamically grown Shiraz complete with bee-emblazoned label is a delicious concoction of black liquorice, morello cherry and crème de cassis. With a ten year life ahead of it, I suspect that we are a few years away from its peak, so swirl vigorously and try to knock those bees off the bottle.

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2007 Torbreck, Juveniles, Barossa Valley, SA **£15** **RH**

This is the finest Juveniles in years, recalling the great inspiration behind this wine - Tim Johnson and his wine bar in Paris, Juveniles, where gallons of Grenache, Mouvèdre and Syrah are consumed. With spell-binding complexity and a sumptuous palate, reminiscent of top level Châteauneuf-du-Pape, this wine is a total and utter sybaritic joy.

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2005 Barossa Valley Estates, Ebenezer Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA **£15** **RH**

Stuey Bourne puts an enormous amount of energy into capturing and taming the wild aromas and flavours of his Ebenezer vineyard. In 2005 he has finally achieved a balance between fruit, earth and spice which, on the nose, is identical, to the aroma in the vineyard itself. This is the ultimate achievement of a winemaker in search of the exact postcode for his wine.

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2006 St. Hallett, Blackwell Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA **£16** **LA**

St. Hallett's 2006 Shiraz portfolio is profound. Old Block has charm as well as its brutish power, and Blackwell is as laconic and lugubrious as David Niven in his prime, making it a thoroughly fascinatingly intellectual and indulgent glass of wine. It is already wowing crowds up and down the country, but its best performance will surely be in five or six years time!

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2007 Bishop by Ben Glaetzer, Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA **£19** **RH**

The Bishop has true balance in 2007 making it a much more welcoming, but no less complex wine. In addition it's a medium-weight Barossan Shiraz, drawing its energies from purity of fruit as opposed to overt muscle. This is the way forward for Ben and his wines. And as they both mature we will be in for even more excitement in years to come.

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2007 Teusner, Joshua, Barossa Valley, SA **£20** **RH**

The magical, unoaked GMS blend is one of Australia's least recognized weapons, and with examples as masterful and as attractive as '07 Joshua available, we are hoping that we will see more of them in the future. Kym Teusner has a way with his wines that is nothing short of mystical, coaxing every last molecule of charm from every grape and leaving all traces of coarseness behind – everybody please take note.

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2006 S.C. Pannell, Shiraz / Grenache, McLaren Vale, SA **£23** **RH**

Steve Pannell mentors his McLaren Vale Grenache sagely, encouraging it to perform at the highest level in his wines. For that reason his blend makes the cut this year over his straight Shiraz. Both wines are showstoppers, but this renegade variety is entranced by Steve's calming influence, making this wine a truly wondrous treat.

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2006 Dutschke, Oscar Semmler Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA **£25** **RH**

Wayne Dutschke's famous Shiraz is a fraction of the price of some of the Barossan big guns, but it in no way holds back in any department of perfume or concentration. In fact, texturally, this wine is succulent, luxurious and brocaded without ever being gaudy. And none of this excitement is reliant on oak, because it is all thanks to his phenomenal fruit.

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2007 Clonakilla, O'Riada Shiraz, Canberra District, NSW **£27** **RH**

One step down from the premium offerings at Clonakilla is this inspirational new wine. What is rather exciting about O'Riada is that I have always 'pointed' it the same as the great Shiraz / Viognier, because the flair and integrity for which this estate is world famous is in evidence in every sip.

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2004 Peter Lehmann, Stonewell Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA **£30** **LA**

A perfect wine (I didn't flinch in giving it 20/20) and in my opinion this is the greatest Stonewell ever. The 2004 is a life-changing experience in every respect and you must still remind yourself that it is mind-blowing value for money, given that it costs around the same as a half decent bottle of NV Champagne. I cannot stress to you just how incredible this wine is. So beg, borrow or steal to get an allocation – it arrives this autumn and I will see you in the queue.

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2005 O'Leary Walker, Claire Reserve Shiraz, Clare Valley, SA £39 LA

With a similar texture and intensity of fruit to Trevarrick Cabernet (qv), this decadent, glamorous Shiraz does the 'big wine thing' with so much more control than you would ever find in North or South America. Let the nose and palate hypnotise your senses and try to pour as big a glass as possible for yourself, because it really is a trance-inducing wine.

2005 Elderton, Command Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA £45 LA

Another big '05 and another exceptionally attractive wine. Command has the ability to be brutish when it wishes but I have not seen this character emerge in the '05, favouring as it does a more statesmen-like position with its noble array of dark berry flavours and decadent tobacco and chocolate nuances.

2005 Jim Barry, The Armagh Shiraz, Clare Valley, SA £80 LA

2005 was a cracking vintage in Clare and this iconic wine and its sidekick, 2005 JB McRae Wood Shiraz, are both spectacular reds. Armagh wins its position in this century of greats by virtue of its unbridled, near-pagan meatiness and the incredible impact it has on the palate. The amazing thing about this wine is that in years gone by, a four year old Armagh would have been impenetrable, and today there is no less energy in the glass – it is just that the balance of ingredients is in perfect proportion.

2004 Penfolds, Grange, Barossa Valley, SA £170 LA

It was with great trepidation that Q and I tasted a pre-release screening of this wine and our delight was unimaginable when we realised, in stereo, that it was one of the most delicious wines of the past twelve months. The massive crescendo of flavour and soaring tannins roll on for minutes and the harmony is kept in perfect check at all times. This vinous pantechon is absolutely stunning and I will watch it with great interest over the next forty years (if I am lucky).

sweet & fortified

2008 Peter Lehmann, Botrytis Semillon, Barossa Valley, SA (half bottle) £8 RH

PL's inexpensive, everyday sweetie is just the ticket for fruity puddings and even raucous pâtés such is its pinpoint accurate balance between freshness, tanginess and ripe, sweet fruit. I could easily imagine myself destroying a few glasses as an ultra-trendy aperitif, such is its magnetic allure, long before I had got anywhere near a dining room table!

NV Seppeltsfield, Cellar No 9 Muscat, Rutherglen, Vic £10 LA

It is worth pointing out that this wine is only available in 75cl format, which must make it one of the greatest value sweet wines in the known universe. Why we in the UK don't drink containers of this nectar at dinner parties is beyond me, given that this is exceptional value for money, ancient and heroic, and it makes everyone else in the room better looking instantly.

2007 Keith Tulloch, Botrytis Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW (half bottle) £14 RH

Keith Tulloch's 2007 dry Semillon is a fabulous wine but this botrytised version takes things to a new and exciting level, with stunning sun-kissed Mediterranean orange notes and more honey than Winnie the Pooh could ever dream of. Well done, Keith for continuing to make this enormously labour intensive wine! Your fastidiousness is the reason why it shines above all other Aussie versions of this grape.

2008 Mount Horrocks, Cordon Cut Riesling, Clare Valley, SA (half bottle) £18 RH

Steff can do no wrong as she pulls up her cosy chair to our 100 Best every year. This is Australia's finest sweet Riesling and I wish that there were more besides, but I'm not losing too much sleep, because this sweetie is so heavenly.
