

———— TYSON STELZER'S ————

AUSTRALIAN

SPARKLING

REPORT

———— 2018 ————



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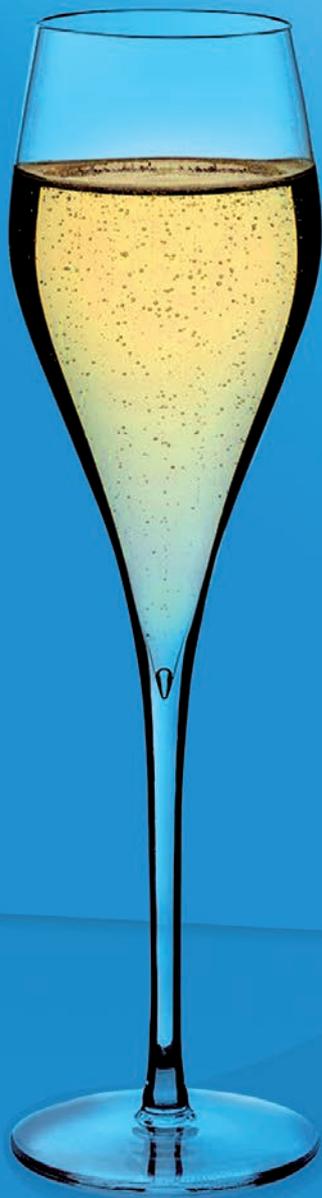
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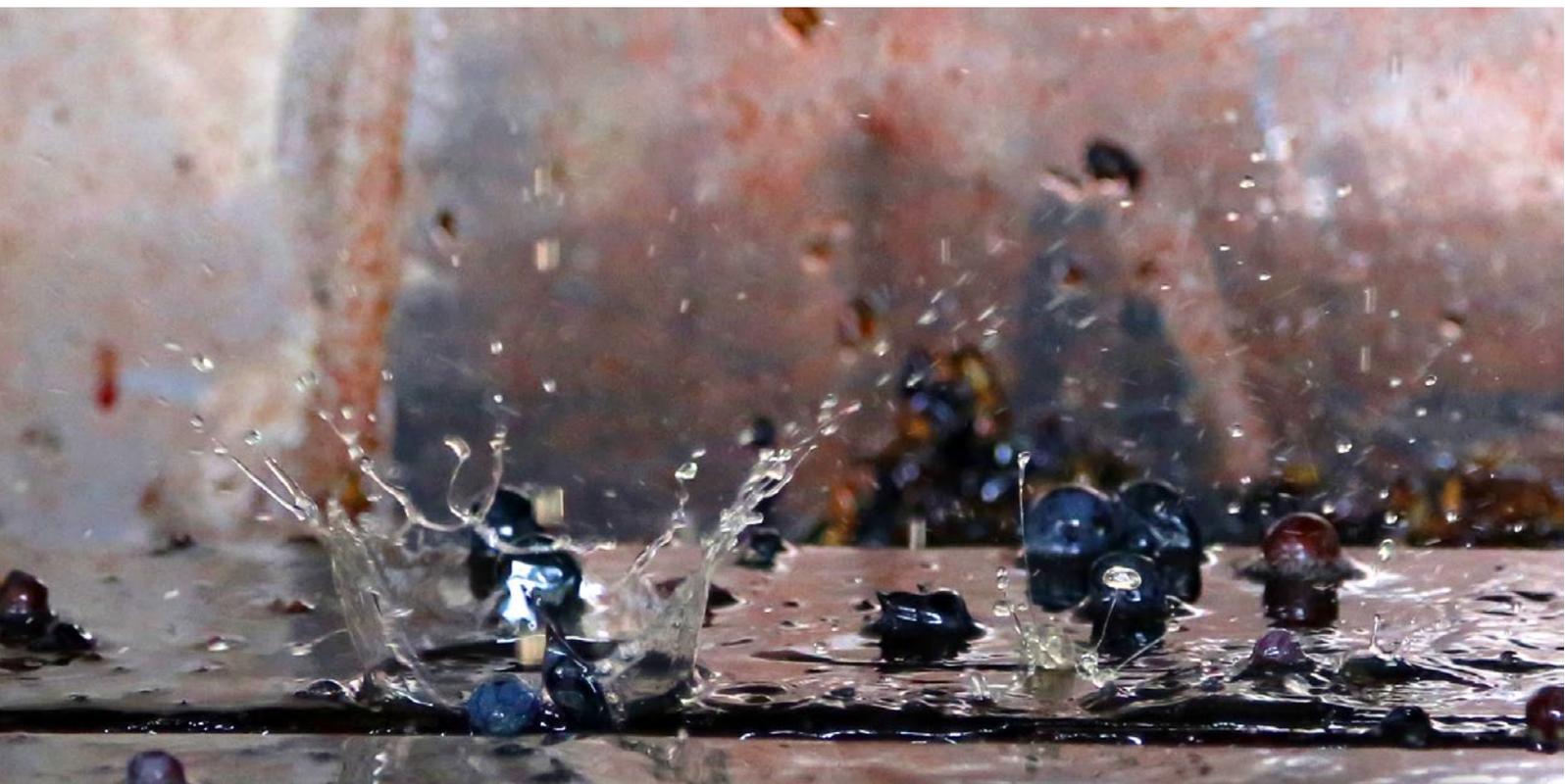
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CONTENTS

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IN ONE PAGE	6
AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING 2016-2017	8
SPARKLING IMPORTS 2016-2017	9
WELCOME TO THE AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING REPORT 2018	10
HALL OF HONOUR	14
TYSON STELZER'S AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR 2018	15
REGIONALITY: THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING	17
REGIONAL HEROES	23
CORK STRIKES BACK	24
USING THIS REPORT	26
MAKING SPARKLING WINE	28
CELLARING SPARKLING WINE	30
SERVING SPARKLING WINE	32
THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR	
THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$20	34
THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$25	36
THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$30	40
THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$50	44
THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR OVER \$50	49
THE BEST BLANC DE BLANCS OF THE YEAR OVER \$30	53
THE BEST SPARKLING ROSÉS OF THE YEAR OVER \$30	56
THE BEST SPARKLING RED WINES OF THE YEAR OVER \$30	60
THE BEST PROSECCOS OF THE YEAR	63
SPARKLING WINE GLOSSARY	66
TYSON STELZER	68
WINE EVENTS WITH TYSON STELZER	69
CONTACT	77





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ENDORSEMENT

EVERYTHING YOU COULD EVER WANT TO KNOW
ABOUT AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING
FROM CHAMPAGNE GURU TYSON STELZER

Evan Schwarten, Australian Associated Press

A MOST COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW AND
AN ENORMOUSLY VALUABLE REFERENCE...
METICULOUS ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND ALL
SUPPORTED BY EXEMPLARY TASTING NOTES

Ross Brown, Brown Brothers

THE SCOPE, LEVEL OF DETAIL AND
INDUSTRY INFORMATION ARE FANTASTIC

Ed Carr, Accolade Wines

TYSON STELZER IS AUSTRALIA'S
FOREMOST REVIEWER OF SPARKLING WINES

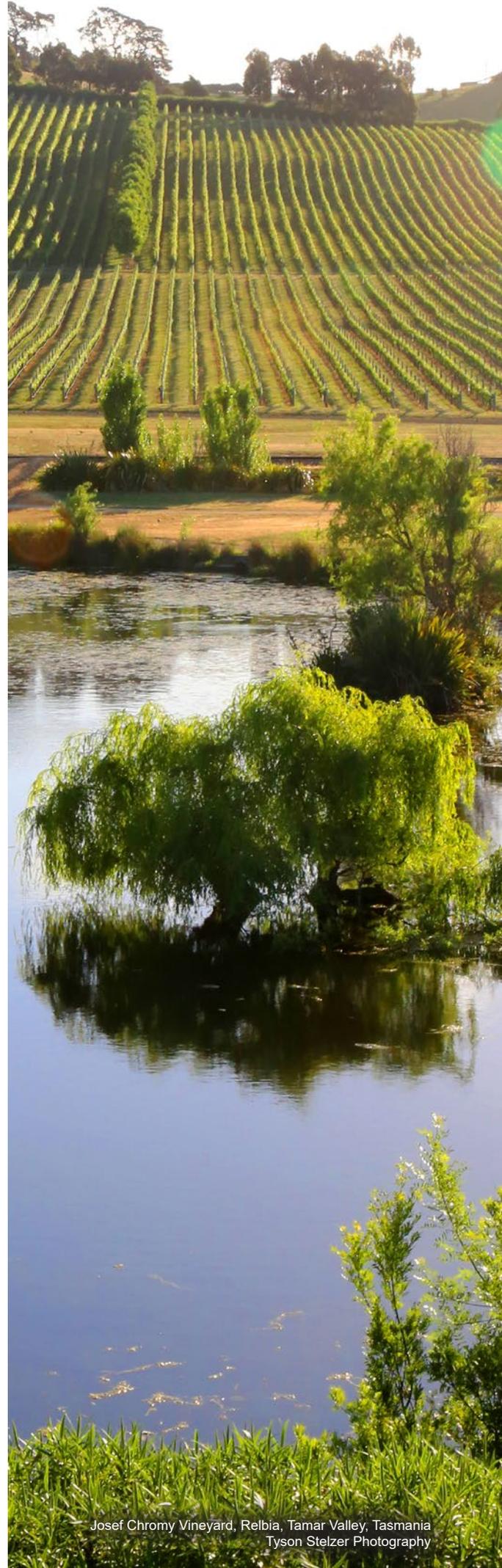
Wolf Blass Wines

I'VE BEEN INSPIRED BY THIS REPORT,
BECAUSE UNTIL NOW I HAVEN'T BEEN MUCH
OF A SPARKLING WINE CONSUMER.
AFTER READING THE 2016 REPORT I BOUGHT
SOME LUIGI BORMIOLI STEMS AND A SIX PACK
OF WOLF BLASS RED LABEL... FOR LESS
THAN \$100 THE JOURNEY HAS BEGUN!

Nathan Gogoll, Editor, Australian & NZ Grapegrower & Winemaker

A MUST READ WITH BUBBLES IN HAND!

Trio Wine



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IN ONE PAGE

SPARKLING IS AUSTRALIA'S FASTEST-GROWING EXPORT CATEGORY,
MUSHROOMING AT SIX TIMES THE RATE OF STILL WINE EXPORTS IN 2016-2017

PAGE 8 (CLICK TO READ MORE)

2017 WAS THE YEAR THE WORLD DISCOVERED AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING

PAGE 10

A PROMINENT CHAMPENOIS FIGUREHEAD DECLARES TASMANIAN SPARKLING
IS ON THE LEVEL OF CHAMPAGNE

PAGE 11

AUSTRALIAN PROSECCO PRODUCTION HAS TREBLED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

PAGE 12

AUSTRALIA HAS THE POTENTIAL TO REPLACE ITALIAN PROSECCO
AS THE GLOBAL BENCHMARK FOR HIGH QUALITY, AFFORDABLE FIZZ

PAGE 13

HOUSE OF ARRAS AND SEPELT ARE AUSTRALIA'S TOP SPARKLING HOUSES THIS YEAR
CLOSELY FOLLOWED BY NEWCOMER BELLEBONNE

PAGE 14

IT'S TIME TASMANIA'S SUBREGIONS ARE OFFICIALLY RECOGNISED

PAGE 18

PIPER'S RIVER HAS STEPPED FORWARD AS TASMANIA'S EFFERVESCENT EPICENTRE

PAGE 20

TASMANIA IS AUSTRALIA'S HERO SPARKLING STATE,
TOPPING THE CHARTS AGAIN THIS YEAR ON EVERY MEASURE

PAGE 23

CORK TAIN'T IS BACK TO THE SAME ALARMING LEVELS OF FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

PAGE 24

OF THE HUNDREDS OF AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING WINES
I'VE TASTED IN THE PAST YEAR, ONLY 120 MADE THE CUT

PAGE 26

THANKS TO ONE CUVÉE, MY SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$20 IS BACK

PAGE 34

ANNOUNCING THE BEST SPARKLING WINE UNDER \$20 THAT I HAVE EVER TASTED

PAGE 36

MY SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$30
IS ON THE STREETS RIGHT NOW UNDER \$18

PAGE 40

A NEWCOMER TAKES OUT MY SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$50

PAGE 44

A BRAND NEW LABEL ECLIPSES ALL OTHERS FOR SPARKLING ROSÉ OF THE YEAR

PAGE 56

A GRAND COMEBACK FOR MY HIGHEST POINTED AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING EVER

PAGE 60

WHY AUSTRALIAN PROSECCO NEEDS OUR SUPPORT

PAGE 63

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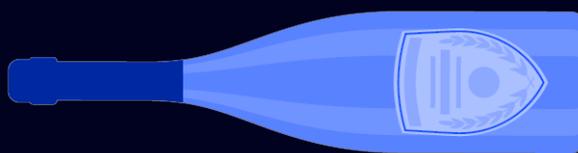
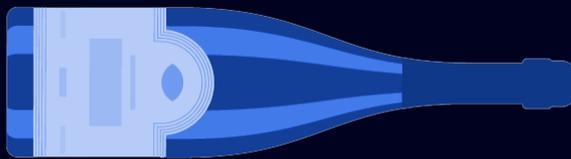
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AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING

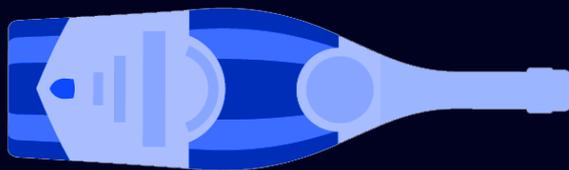
2016-2017

92 000 000
BOTTLES SOLD
UP 8.2% on 2015-2016



72 000 000
BOTTLES SOLD DOMESTICALLY
UP 1% on 2015-2016

AUSTRALIAN PROSECCO
TRIPLED
SINCE 2015



20 000 000
BOTTLES EXPORTED
UP 37% on 2015-2016



SPARKLING EXPORTS
GREW AT
6X THE RATE
OF STILL WINE EXPORTS
IN 2016-2017

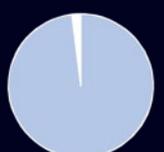


ESTIMATED SPARKLING
SALES VALUE
\$600 000 000

SPARKLING REPRESENTS
ONLY 11%
OF DOMESTIC WINE SALES



SPARKLING REPRESENTS
JUST 2%
OF AUSTRALIAN WINE EXPORTS



SPARKLING IMPORTS

2016-2017



8 534 000
CHAMPAGNE
BOTTLES IMPORTED
VALUED AT
\$210 000 000



15.4% OF
WINE IMPORTS
IN AUSTRALIA
ARE SPARKLING

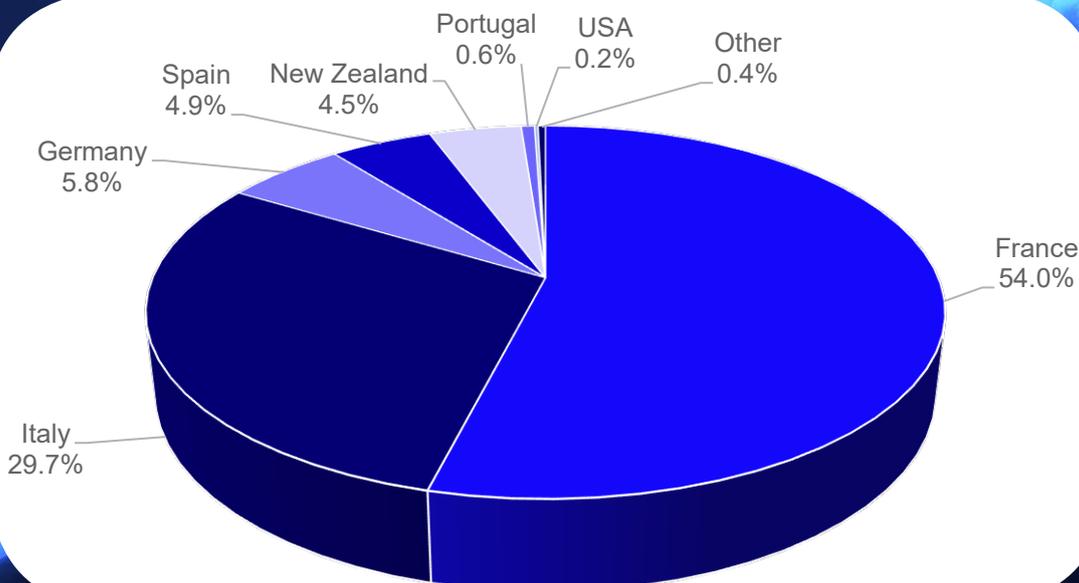


18 900 000
BOTTLES IMPORTED
UP 3% ON 2015-2016
INCLUDING 11 400 000
BOTTLE FERMENTED



\$237 000 000
TOTAL VALUE OF IMPORTS
DOWN 2% ON 2015-2016

CHAMPAGNE
IMPORTS UP BY
23% IN VALUE AND
15.5% IN VOLUME
ON 2015-2016



SPARKLING
IMPORTS BY
COUNTRY
2016-2017

WELCOME TO THE AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING REPORT 2018

It's the week before Easter, the sales are in full force, Bollinger is \$64, Taittinger is \$50, Lanson is \$40 and Piper-Heidsieck is \$39. Last year, Australia clocked in as the fastest-growing champagne market on earth by both volume and value. At the height of our champagne frenzy, should we even bother with Aussie fizz? Does our home-grown sparkling stack up?

For an objective perspective, we do well to look beyond our borders. How does the rest of the world regard Australian sparkling?

2017 WAS THE YEAR THE WORLD DISCOVERED AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING

In years to come we will look back on the events of the past twelve months as a watershed year for Australian sparkling. 2017 marked a turning point for Australian sparkling on the global stage.

A series of key signs have aligned to herald a new era in the recognition, success and opportunity for Australian sparkling wine exports.

The rise and rise of Australian sparkling wine over the past decade has been unprecedented. In my *Australian Sparkling Report 2017* I recounted the story of how 2015 and 2016 saw Australian sparkling come of age at home. 2017 was the year in which it first came to true international acclaim.

AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING PRODUCER TAKES OUT OUR FIRST INTERNATIONAL ACCOLADE

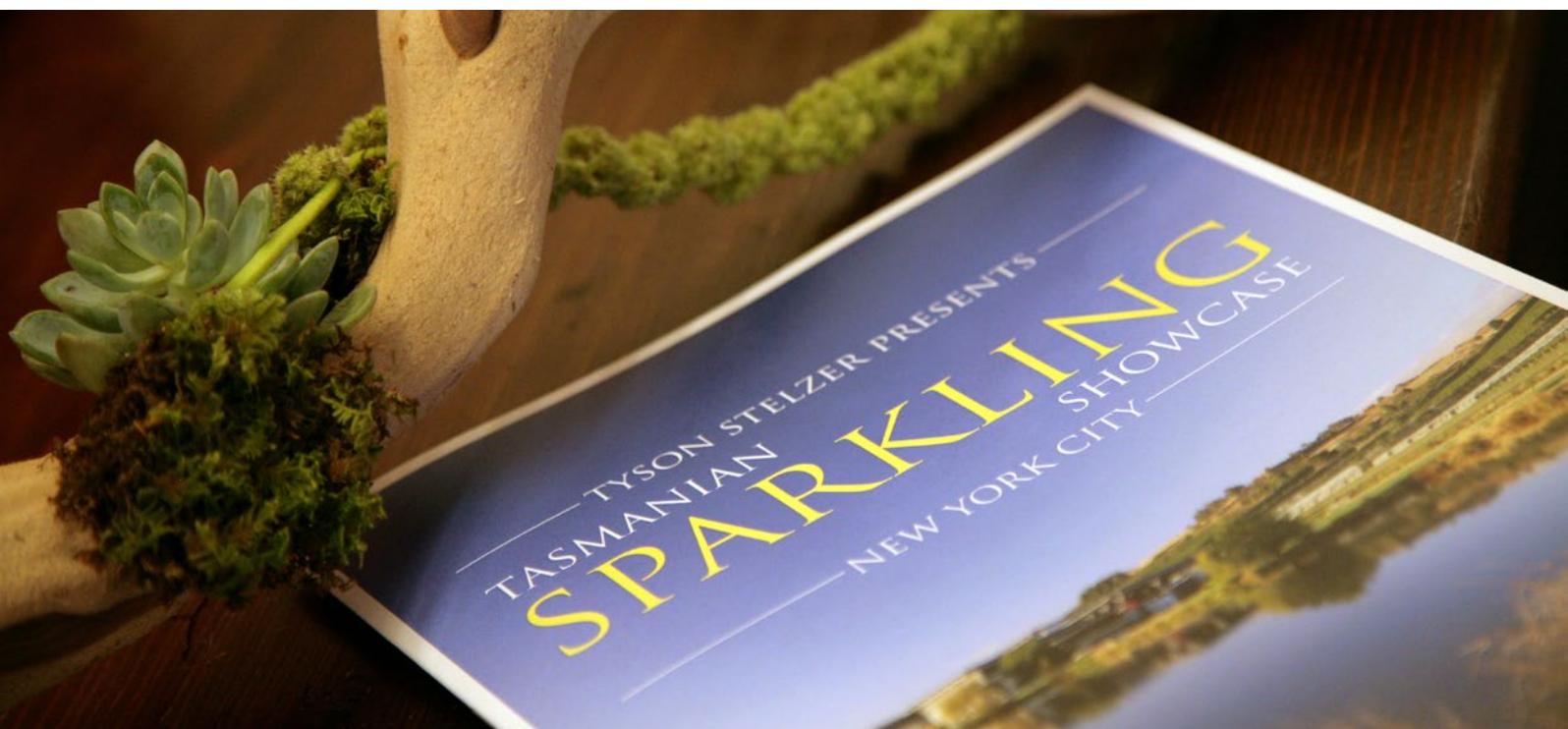
Never in history has a specialist Australian sparkling brand trumped every still wine producer in the country for a major international accolade. Never, that is, until November 2017, when it was announced in the UK that the winner of the trophy for the Best Australian Producer at The International Wine and Spirit Competition was House of Arras.

Such a grand international accolade is a powerful statement, but I have been equally impressed recently by the profound endorsements that I have heard in hushed voices in important places. There is a rising buzz around Australian sparkling in influential circles globally.

WORLD INFLUENCERS ACKNOWLEDGE THE CALIBRE OF AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING

In September 2017 I took over a restaurant in Downtown Manhattan to present 22 of the Tasmanian highlights of my *Australian Sparkling Report 2017* for wine and tourism trade and lifestyle media. It was to be the first ever Tasmanian sparkling showcase on US soil.

With the support and encouragement of the Tasmanian makers, I did a daring and controversial thing. Alongside the Tasmanian sparklings, I chose four of the most expensive and highest pointed cuvées from the new edition of my Champagne Guide to pour at the same tasting: the epic 2002 vintage from the mythical house of Krug, Nicolas François Billecart 2002, the finest cuvée of the moment from this great house, the heavenly prestige cuvée of Amour de Deutz Rosé from the sublime 2008 vintage and an ultra-rare re-release of Duval-Leroy Femme de Champagne from the great 1996 vintage, no less. Four of the most sublime sparkling wines on the planet right now, with price tags between \$400 and \$600 per bottle, ten times the price of virtually every Tasmanian cuvée in my tasting.



No small risk. How would the tiny state of Tasmania stand up the middle of one of the most cut-throat markets of all, in the stratospheric company of the greatest sparkling wines on earth? Tasmania's sparkling industry is, in real terms, just a few decades old, making cuvées that, with just a few exceptions, have never been sold beyond the borders of Australia. Champagne houses boast hundreds of years of history in a region that has been producing sparkling for four centuries and cultivating grapes for more than 2000 years. And at ten times the price.

And there's another twist to this precarious scenario.

Carol Duval-Leroy herself, the matriarch of her eponymous family house, who has personally led its transformation into what is now the fifteenth largest house in Champagne, was present at my New York event to launch her 1996 Femme de Champagne.

At the conclusion of the tasting, Carol made a point of thanking me for introducing her to the best sparkling wines of Tasmania. 'I almost said "champagnes"! she exclaimed. 'They are on that level.'

I have known Carol for 13 years and she is not one to use superlatives lightly. Never have I heard such endorsement of any sparkling wine from the Champenois.

And this was no one off. Recently in a benchmark tasting in Champagne one high profile chef de cave leant over to another and commented, 'There is one other sparkling region in the world that we need to be very aware of and that region is Tasmania.'

A famous champagne grower in Le Mesnil-sur-Oger recently declared to me, 'Tasmania now makes the best sparkling wines on earth outside Champagne.' Strong endorsement, especially given the context of the conversation: his own side project embarking on sparkling wine production in California.

In November 2017 I assembled the most significant benchmark international sparkling tasting I have yet hosted, lining up 16 of the very best cuvées I have tasted from Prosecco, Spain, the south of France, California, Central Otago, Victoria and the Adelaide Hills. Assembling a discerning audience of sparkling winemakers, sommeliers, wine buyers and sparkling-adoring public at Effervescence Tasmania, I concluded the tasting with two blind flights to compare the finest wines of Tasmania and England with similarly priced standouts from three of my very favourite champagne houses. At the conclusion of the tasting, before revealing the cuvées, I put the vote to the preference of the room. The overwhelming standout was unveiled to be House of Arras Méthode Traditionnelle EJ Carr Late Disgorged 2003.

For the first time in history, Australia now stands proud among the greatest sparkling producers on earth.



Tasmanian sparkling and champagne showcase, New York City
Tyson Stelzer Photography

SPARKLING IS AUSTRALIA'S FASTEST-GROWING WINE EXPORT CATEGORY

Australia's sparkling exports are beginning to reflect the global recognition its wines are receiving. 2016-2017 was a record year for Australian wine exports overall, with sparkling excelling as the fastest-growing category. Sparkling exports grew at six times the rate of still wine exports in 2016-2017.

Meanwhile, production of Australian prosecco has trebled in the three years since 2015, growing by 50% in 2017 alone, and estimated to be worth \$60 million, with projections suggesting that sales could reach \$200 million within a few years. Australia is gaining a significant footing in the rapidly expanding international prosecco market.

Wine Australia attributes Australia's sparkling export growth particularly to the rise in popularity of Australian sparkling in New Zealand and China.

THE POTENTIAL FOR AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING WINE EXPORTS TO GROW IS TREMENDOUS

Sparkling represents just 2% of Australian wine exports compared with 11% of domestic wine sales. Its opportunities to expand are widespread.

CHINA

Reports are beginning to emerge from China that sparkling wines may be overtaking the popularity of red wine in the country. Sparkling wine still makes up just one percent of wine sales in China, but posted 33% growth in 2017. A surge in more affordable bubbles is drawing in the average Chinese consumer, and in particular young professionals, who are embracing sparkling wines more openly than their predecessors. More than half of Chinese sparkling wine drinkers are aged between 18 and 34.

UNITED STATES

While Australian sparkling is tiny in the US, the opportunities are huge, with the market recording 33% growth in sparkling sales and more than \$350 million in turnover in 2016. The US now represents Champagne's most valuable export market, while prosecco and US sparkling are regarded as the best value. Prosecco has ranked as the number one sparkling growth category in the US over the past decade, driven particularly by the under-45s category.

UNITED KINGDOM

Sparkling consumption has increased by 40% in the UK in the past five years, and thirst for Australian sparkling wine is on the rise. In the wake of Brexit, champagne remains too expensive and cava has posted 6% decline since 2015. Prosecco has exploded three-fold by volume in five years and continues to power along, though there are signs that tastes are moving on. New World sparkling and French crémant are the flavour of the day, New Zealand and Argentinian sparklings are on the up, and Aussie fizz is back in vogue.



JAPAN

Japan is a mature, premium sparkling market where Champagne and Cava dominate, and Chile has recorded significant volume increases (though perceived by the Japanese as highest in value for money and lowest in quality). Champagne, Cava, Prosecco and Asti are considered highest quality, and Cava as the best balance in terms of perceived quality and value for money. Australia is regarded along with Champagne and Chile as the preferred sparkling wines for drinking at home or at a friend's house.

AUSTRALIA COULD BECOME THE GLOBAL BENCHMARK FOR HIGH QUALITY, AFFORDABLE FIZZ

Italian Prosecco is the big success story of global sparkling of the past decade, accounting for a large proportion of the worldwide growth in sparkling consumption as consumers have sought value for money in the wake of the GFC. This growth has driven volumes up astronomically and an ocean of bulk, discounted proseccos have swamped key markets like the US and UK. Herein lies the challenge for prosecco and the opportunity for Australia. Consumers are waking up to the declining quality and waning reputation of Italian prosecco. This paves the way for Australian prosecco to gain traction of the global stage. Further, traditional method Australian sparkling from chardonnay, pinot noir and meunier is superior to Italian prosecco, and while it isn't cheap, it is more affordable than Champagne. This is why Australia has the potential to replace Italian prosecco as the global benchmark for high quality, affordable fizz.



Tasmanian sparkling and champagne showcase, New York City
Tyson Stelzer Photography

HALL OF HONOUR

TYSON STELZER'S AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING REPORT 2018

My *Australian Sparkling Report 2018 Hall of Honour* acknowledges the finest sparkling wine producers of the year. A brand is only as worthy as its current cuvées, so its rating is based exclusively on the quality of all of its sparkling wines in the market this year (the highlights featured in this report and all other sparkling cuvées of the same house not featured here), not on past performance or museum wines. History and reputation count for nothing if the wines you can buy don't live up to expectation.

Readers of my *Champagne Guide* will be familiar with my champagne house ratings out of ten. My ratings for Australian sparkling estates are calculated using exactly the same scale. Roughly, to qualify for seven stars, an estate must produce prestige sparkling wine typically scoring around 96 points, vintage wines around 94 points and non-vintage wines around 93 points. To attain two stars, these drop to 91, 90 and 88 respectively.

There is by necessity some subjectivity in this process and it is of course meaningless to attempt to compare Chandon's portfolio of 10 sparkling wines with Rockford's single sparkling shiraz.

These ratings are by their nature highly controversial. The vast diversity of Australian sparkling wines, from méthode traditionnelle, charmat method, transfer method, blanc de blancs, rosés, proseccos, sparkling reds and moscatos makes it an immense challenge to reduce their grand complexities to a single number. I encourage you to use these only as a guide to quickly home in on the very best houses and to then focus your attention on my commentary on each of their cuvées.

This year I narrowed my tastings down to a focused set of 100 Australian sparkling producers, hand selected from the highlights of the 300 estates featured in previous editions of my *Australian Sparkling Report*. My *Hall of Honour* acknowledges just the top 68 of these. It must hence be emphasised that even my one star rating is a strong endorsement, ahead of three-quarters of Australian sparkling producers.

SEVEN STARS

House of Arras
Seppelt

SIX STARS

Bellebonne

FIVE STARS

Clover Hill
Deviation Road
Jansz Tasmania
Pirie
Stefano Lubiana

FOUR STARS

Apogee
Ashton Hills
Chandon
Coldstream Hills
Henschke
Ninth Island

Primo
Rockford
St Huberts
Swift
Taltarni

THREE STARS

Best's Great Western
Bleasdale
Bream Creek
Brown Brothers
Daosa
Delamere
Delatite
Hentley Farm
Kreglinger
Levantine Hill
Moores Hill
Mt Lofty Ranges
Relbia
Riversdale
Santa & D'Sas
Sittella

TWO STARS

Beresford
Croser
Di Sciascio
Frogmore Creek
Grant Burge
Heemskerck
Josef Chromy
Mia Valley
Nocton Vineyard
Pepperjack
Redbank
Shingleback
Stefano de Pierri
The Lane
Wordsmith
Yarra Burn

ONE STAR

Blue Pyrenees
Dal Zotto
Devil's Corner
Dominique Portet
Goaty Hill
Golding
Harewood Estate
Hungerford Hill
Innocent Bystander
Little Helper
Merindoc
Piper's Brook
Rutherglen Estates
Umamu
Willet
Willow Creek
Wolf Blass

TYSON STELZER'S AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR 2018

THE SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$20

REDBANK EMILY KING VALLEY
CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR BRUT CUVÉE NV

\$16 (PAGE 34)



THE SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$25

NINTH ISLAND TASMANIA ROSÉ NV

\$25 (PAGE 36)

THE SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$30

SEPPELT ORIGINAL SPARKLING SHIRAZ NV

\$27 (PAGE 40)



THE SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$50

ST HUBERTS MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE
BLANC DE NOIR 2011

\$40 (PAGE 44)

THE SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR
OVER \$50

HOUSE OF ARRAS GRAND VINTAGE 2007 MAGNUM

\$249 (PAGE 49)



THE BLANC DE BLANCS
OF THE YEAR

HOUSE OF ARRAS BLANC DE BLANCS 2008

\$87 (PAGE 53)

THE SPARKLING ROSÉ
OF THE YEAR

BELLEBONNE NATALIE FRYAR VINTAGE ROSÉ 2015

\$65 (PAGE 56)



THE SPARKLING RED
OF THE YEAR

SEPELT SHOW SPARKLING LIMITED RELEASE SHIRAZ 2007

\$100 (PAGE 60)

THE PROSECCO
OF THE YEAR

DI SCIASCIO D'SAS KING VALLEY PROSECCO 2017

\$32 (PAGE 63)



REGIONALITY: THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIAN SPARKLING

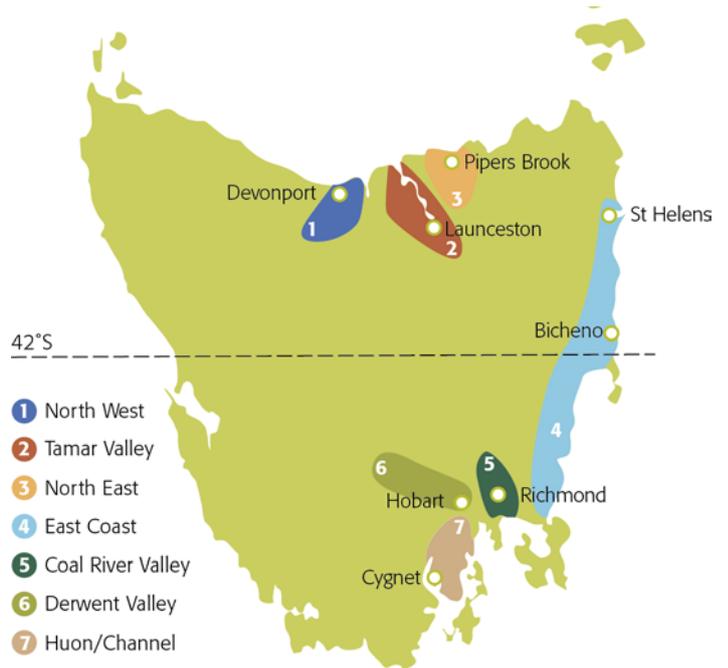
The vast continent of Australia boasts an immense diversity of terroirs that give birth to its extensive plethora of sparkling styles. Again in my tastings this year, Tasmania has set the benchmark on every measure. And the diversity even within this one region has never been more pronounced.

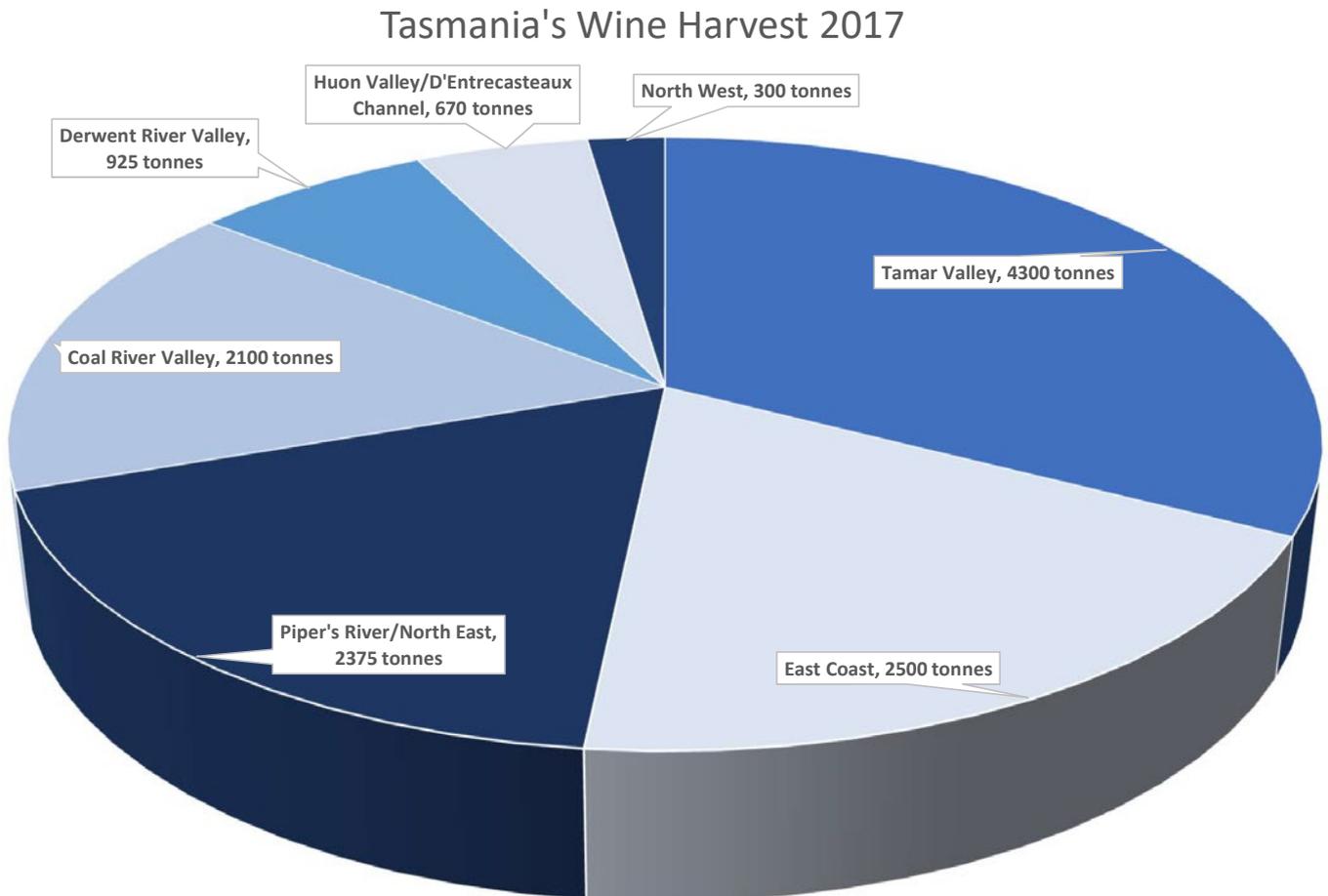
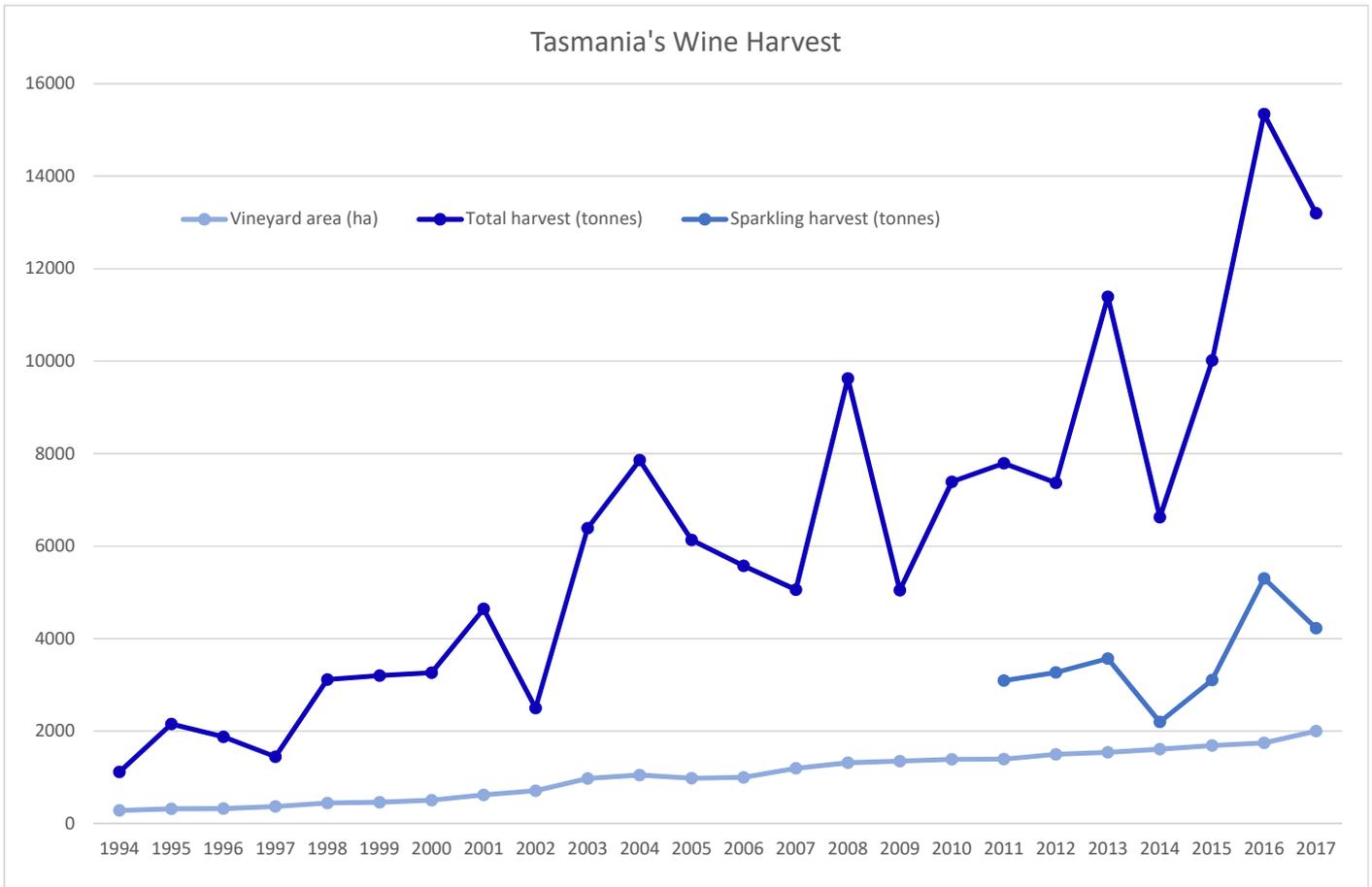
We don't much speak of the subregions of Tasmania. This is because, strictly speaking, there aren't any. According to the official Australian Geographical Indications, Tasmania is one region and there are no subregions.

Tasmania has seven unofficial wine 'zones': North West, Tamar Valley, Piper's River/North East, East Coast, Coal River Valley, Derwent Valley and Huon Valley/D'Entrecasteaux Channel.

As a relatively young and establishing region, it's only sensible that Tasmania has only ever been a single region, without the momentum of producers to drive each region's identity, or the complexity of official subregions to complicate their marketing. But as more producers have established themselves in each of its zones and refined their styles, their cuvées have articulated the regional identity of each area with ever greater clarity.

There has been another good reason why Tasmania has not pursued subregional recognition. A minimum of 500 tonnes of grapes is required for any Australian zone to be eligible to qualify as a distinct region or subregion. For many years, Tasmania's regional production has fallen short of this requirement. But in the 20 years to 2017, Tasmania's wine grape harvest increased ten-fold, and now six of its seven districts comfortably met the minimum requirement, with only the new zone of the North West falling short.





Graphs created by Tyson Stelzer. Data courtesy of Sheralee Davies, Wine Tasmania. Tonnages are approximate.

Both the quality and volume of Tasmania's production have now reached sufficient levels to warrant official subregional status. With the exceptions of the North West and Huon Valley (for now) each area now boasts sufficient momentum of producer numbers to fly the flag of their own regional identity.

It's a sign of the coming of age of a region that its subregional identity is recognised. Subregionality is a strong theme of the current era of Australian and New Zealand wine, and has been a hot topic in the Barossa, McLaren Vale and Central Otago for a decade now.

There is a case to argue that Tasmania's subregional identity is more pronounced than any other region in the country.

When we speak of terroir in its highest order we speak of cool places. The patchwork of Burgundy, riesling slopes of Germany, chalk of Sancerre, grand crus of Alsace, rolling hills of Barolo. Its expression in the fields of the southern Rhône, Provence, even the noble plains of Bordeaux, shares nothing of the same precision. Every time I return to Champagne, the Champenois speak in greater detail and with more conviction of the unique terroirs of each of their villages. The icy touch of this ancient region, the coldest of all, awakens the soil and gives it birth in its fruits.

I have been privileged to participate in extensive subregional comparative tastings in the Barossa, McLaren Vale and Central Otago, but each time I have been left with the profound impression that the specificities of site and maker are more pronounced than the intricacies of subregional distinction. And yet in Tasmania the diversity of climate and soil make its seven wine zones sufficiently unique and distinct that my chances of accurately identifying them in a blind tasting are more akin to Burgundy than to the Barossa.

Brian Walsh, Chairman of Wine Australia, recently articulated that sense of place is the only true point of uniqueness of Australian wine in an increasingly competitive global market.

Tasmania remains but a small player in volume terms, but its significance as Australia's leader in premium cool climate wine growing cannot be overstated. In a global climate that juxtaposes a rising consumer taste for elegant, cool climate wine styles with the uncertainties of increasing temperatures worldwide, Tasmania's lead role can only become more pertinent.

The world is ready to embrace the subregional recognition of Tasmania. In my tastings around the globe, sparkling consumers, media and wine trade know about Tasmania, and they are now set to go deeper.



PIPER'S RIVER

One area is stepping ahead of all others as Tasmania's effervescent epicentre.

Amidst the tranquil rolling hills and sweeping Bass Strait vistas of northern Tasmania lies a remarkable little district that will one day be spoken of with the same reverence for sparkling wines as the Barossa is for shiraz and Margaret River for cabernet.

No other area has sparkled as brightly as Piper's River across my Australian sparkling tastings this year. This little zone is the exclusive source of fruit for two of my eight top Tasmanian sparkling houses this year (Apogee and Bellebonne), and a key source and home of four others (House of Arras, Clover Hill, Jansz Tasmania and Ninth Island).

My Sparkling Wine of the Year under \$25 and my Sparkling Rosé of the Year both hail entirely from Piper's River. And it's no coincidence that both are rosés. Of my top seven rosés this year, five were sourced exclusively and one in majority from Piper's River.

Rosé represents the finest cuvée this year of Apogee, Bellebonne, Delamere, Ninth Island, Kreglinger and Pirie. Four are 100% and two are majority pinot noir. All from Piper's River.

But it's not all about pinot. Sourced exclusively from the Jansz Vineyard, planted in 1975 as one of the pioneering sites of northern Tasmania, Jansz Single Vineyard Chardonnay has established itself as the finest cuvée of the house, trumping its Vintage Rosé of 100% pinot noir from the same site. Clover Hill has built its house style on Piper's River chardonnay from the outset, and its Cuvée Exceptionnelle Blanc de Blancs consistently outclasses its Cuvée Prestige blend.



What is it that makes Piper's River one of the finest places to grow sparkling wines outside of Champagne?

'If you look at a soil map of Tasmania, you will see that the Pipers River region has a very particular soil on those hills,' points out Natalie Fryar, maker of Bellebonne, Ninth Island, Kreglinger, Piper's Brook and, until recently, Jansz Tasmania. Very deep soils are rich in iron and free draining, making them ideally suited to viticulture.

The prevailing influence of nearby Bass Strait has a moderating influence on the weather patterns of this cool region. 'Because of our maritime climate, and lower ultraviolet light and higher humidity due to cloud cover, we don't ever move into jammy, heat-affected fruit,' Fryar explains. 'Our ripening season is always cool and long, producing elegant fruit in a lovely rose and cherry spectrum, and never blackberry or blackcurrant.'

Higher humidity is a key to Piper's River's success, according to Dr Andrew Pirie, PhD scientist in viticulture, pioneer of northern Tasmanian grape growing and maker of Apogee and formerly Pirie. 'Humidity is as important as temperature in determining wine style and the fingerprint of every region,' he says. 'A region's temperatures change from season to season but its dryness is more consistent.'

It is in the level and the texture of the tannin structure that Pirie perceives the most profound impact of moisture, suggesting not only that a vine stressed by low moisture will produce more tannin, but that humidity produces different classes of tannins. 'Tannins are very responsive to location,' he points out. 'Central Otago produces more tannic wines than Burgundy.'

Pirie explains that it's greener in Piper's River than in southern Tasmania, thanks to slightly more rainfall and slightly less evaporation. 'We've long known a lot about cool climates, but what I'm proposing is that there are two kinds of cool climate, cool dry and cool humid,' he suggests. The cool dry conditions of southern Tasmania produce more tannic wines than the cool humid conditions of the north. 'This is driving the terroir and style of each region. Southern Tasmania is probably the world's leading region for cool dry sparkling.'

'We're not fighting water stress or hot days here,' highlights Fryar, 'so we have very balanced vines with full-functioning foliage for a long time.'

Piper's River's high humidity and moderate climate are reflected most demonstrably in the thin-skinned pinot noir grape. 'It suits sparkling pinot noir in a way that I've never seen anywhere else,' states Fryar. 'And chardonnay also, but especially pinot noir for sparkling wine, and for still wine also.'



Natalie Fryar shows Tyson Stelzer the chardonnay harvest in the Jansz Vineyard, Piper's River

The profoundly maritime climate and iron-rich soils of Piper's River are a world away from the continental climate and chalk of Champagne, and yet Fryar proposes that the two possess a surprising similarity in upholding high humidity. 'Champagne is continental, yet it is unusually very humid,' she observes. 'With thin topsoils, the moisture from the chalk keeps the humidity in the canopy high.'

In my tastings, the effect of humidity on sparkling wine styles is profound. The dry south of Tasmania produces sparkling styles more often akin to the warm, dry years in Champagne, with the structural grip of phenolic texture produced by Pirie's elevated levels of tannins. The cool, wet conditions of Piper's River produce softer tannins and hence sparkling wines structured less by phenolic grip and more by acid tension, reflective of Champagne's cooler seasons.

Fryar emphasises another reason for Piper's River's success as a sparkling zone. 'Terroir is more than just agriculture, and in the north we have many sparkling specialists, demanding higher crops and gearing their viticulture to sparkling.'

Look out for Piper's River throughout this report and keep a keen eye on this district in the years and decades to come. Its greatest sparklings are yet to be made.

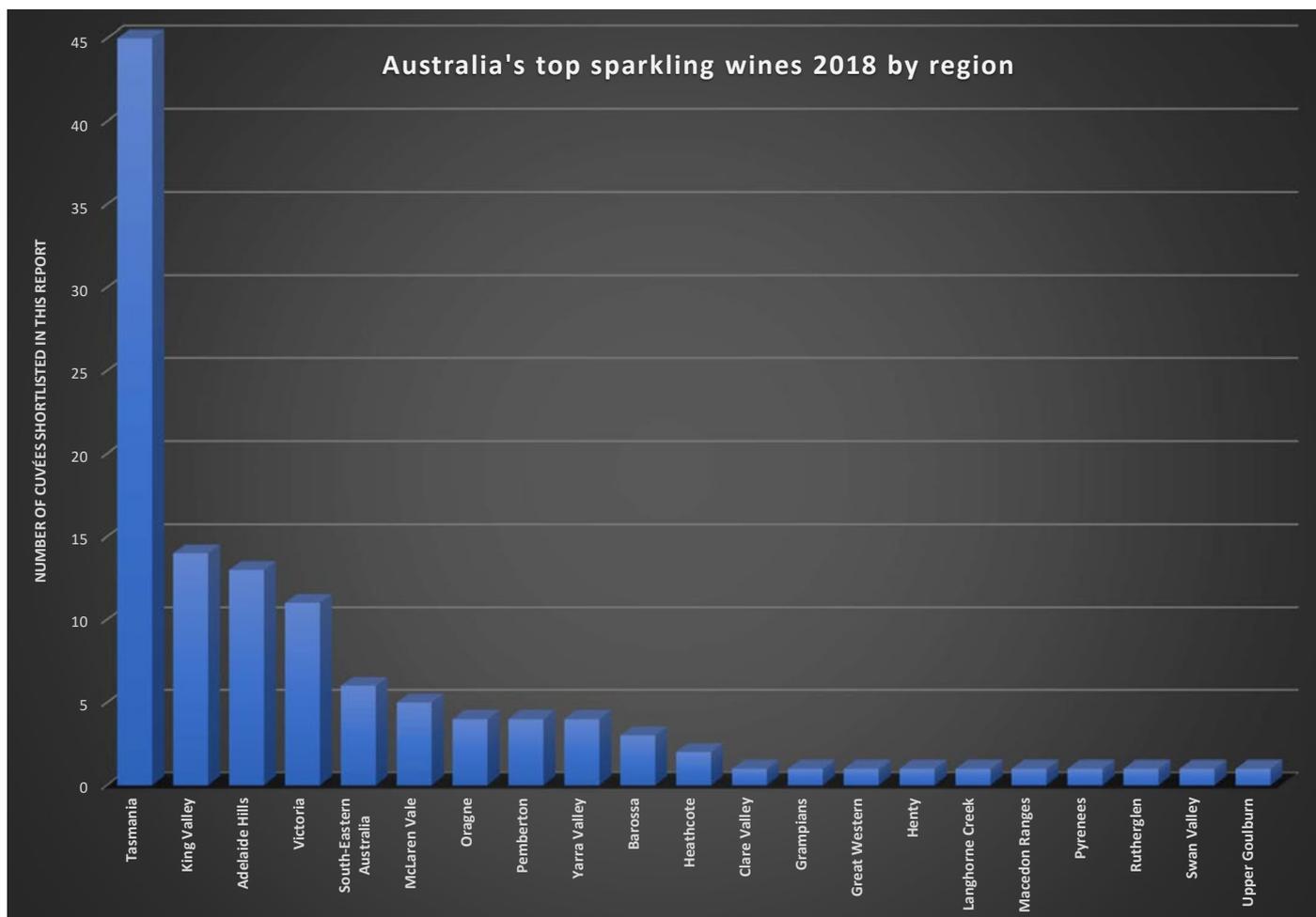


REGIONAL HEROES

The simple rule in buying top sparkling wines is to stick with the coolest regions.

TASMANIA goes from strength to strength as Australia's hero sparkling state, far and away leading the country again in my tastings this year. Production is ramping up, and 2016, 2017 and 2018 were Tasmania's first ever hat trick of three strong-yielding vintages back-to-back. 2016 set an all-time record with a sparkling harvest clocking in at 5301 tonnes, more than 70% up on 2015 and more than 140% up on 2014, with 2017 backing this up with a respectable 4223 tonnes. At the time of writing, 2018 is on track for another bumper harvest, reminding House of Arras maker Ed Carr of the great 2008 season. The best estimates put Tasmanian sparkling production at a record of more than 4.5 million bottles in the 2016 vintage, more than one-third of all Tasmanian wine production, with an estimated value of close to \$13M. This year, Australia's top sparkling regions are:

1. **TASMANIA** topped the charts again this year on every measure, with 45 highlights shortlisted in this report, more than the next four top regions put together! The diversity and dexterity of the Island State are exemplified in my list of Sparkling Wines of the Year, snaring Wine of the Year under \$25, Wine of the Year over \$50, Blanc de Blancs of the Year and Rosé of the Year. Tasmania confidently holds its place as Australia's sparkling capital.
2. **KING VALLEY** swings into second place in my list this year with 14 cuvées shortlisted, and it's not all about prosecco. Brown Brothers and Redbank are doing some impressive pinot noir and chardonnay blends up there, too. And, of course, King Valley retains its crown as king of prosecco.
3. **ADELAIDE HILLS** comes in a close third this year with 13 cuvées shortlisted, including a benchmark blanc de blancs that has burst triumphantly into three-digit price territory for the first time.
4. Blends from across **VICTORIA** were stronger than ever this year, thanks primarily to the blending power of Chandon, Yarra Burn and Seppelt.
5. Blends from across **SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA** also performed well, thanks largely to the strength of Taltarni.
6. **MCLAREN VALE** is on sparkling form again this year, thanks to sparkling reds, led splendidly by Primo Estate.
7. **ORANGE** owes its ranking exclusively to Swift.
7. **PEMBERTON** tied with Orange, thanks entirely to Sitella.
7. **YARRA VALLEY** also ranked equal seventh this year, putting forth an exciting newcomer to claim Sparkling Wine of the Year Under \$50.



CORK STRIKES BACK

I am alarmed and dismayed to report that the positive trend that I observed last year in the effects of natural corks proved to be short lived, and my tastings this year have seen a stark and dramatic return to abominable levels of detrimental influence of corks on wine bottles.

Across my tastings, natural cork represents close to 40% of Australia's sparkling wine labels. DIAM now accounts for more than 50% (and if you consider the total number of sparkling bottles in Australia, DIAM now represents 20 million, close to one-quarter), the balance made up of a small representation of crown seal and screw cap (mostly on moscato). I have not encountered any bottle variation in my tastings of sparkling wines sealed with DIAM, crown seal or screw cap this year.

After reporting an encouragingly low level of cork taint of just two corks in 172 (1.2%) last year, I was alarmed to encounter five in 88 (5.7%) this year, a stark return to the dark days when cork taint was rife across Australian wines.

And these are not old corks. All of these cork-tainted bottles were recently disgorged. Nor is this situation isolated to one producer. These five bottles hail from five different regions and five different producers, from the smallest to the very largest.

Five bottles in 88 is a small sample size from which to draw conclusions. Was I simply unlucky or is this an ominous sign of an alarming trend? And another question. It has long been said that Australia's adoption of superior closures was sparked by years of being sent inferior corks. Is this problem isolated to Australia?

During my tastings for this report, I was simultaneously tasting more than 630 New Zealand pinot noirs for The Great New Zealand Pinot Noir Classification. Of those, I opened 500 bottles myself, the majority of which were of course screw-capped. Of the 32 bottles from which I pulled a natural cork, an astonishing four bottles were cork tainted. One in eight. 12.5%.

In the past two months I have also opened 105 bottles of champagne sealed with natural corks to showcase at dinners. Of these, six were corked. 5.7%. Identical to the cork taint rate I encountered in Australian sparklings this year.

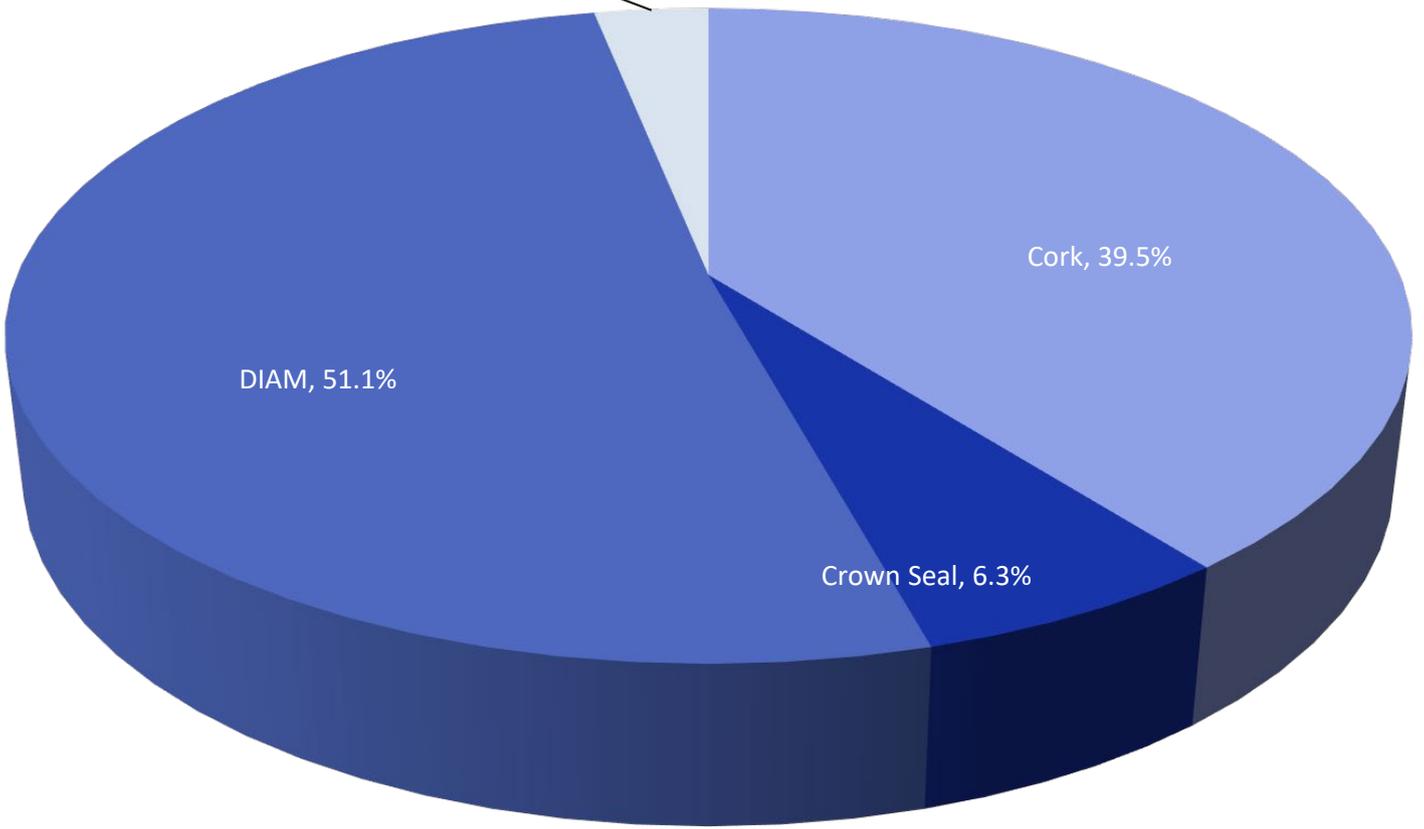
Again, these are small sample sizes, but how much evidence does it take to prove this scandal is far, far from over? One corked bottle is too many, especially now that superior closures are readily available, with a proven track record now spanning more than half a century. I have never seen cork taint from a DIAM closure, crown seal or screw cap.

Cork companies have been insisting for 13 years that they have solved the cork taint crisis. If this is the truth, why do the results fail so dramatically to live up to the rhetoric? My tastings this year reveal the same alarming levels of cork taint that I observed fifteen years ago. Winemakers and wine drinkers deserve better than this.



Australian Sparkling Wine Closures by Number of Labels

Screw Cap, 3.1%



Across my champagne tastings this year, 5.7% of bottles have been afflicted by cork taint.
Tyson Stelzer Photography

USING THIS REPORT

Points are a quick way to highlight the best sparkling wines in each category. Readers of my *Champagne Guide* will be familiar with my 100 point scores. I assess Australian sparkling wines using exactly the same scale.

There has been much controversy surrounding wine scores in recent years. It is of course a travesty to reduce the grand complexities of wine to a single number, but I persist in doing so because many readers find this useful. As always, my descriptions are infinitely more informative than scores.

There has been something of a slanging match between otherwise respectable Australian wine commentators in recent years regarding the high-pointing of wines. I have vigorously avoided this discussion. My scores are as they stand and those who look for scores understand what they mean. Other reviewers can point as they wish and I have always encouraged my readers to follow those whose tastes align with their own.

The shortcomings of the international 100 point system have been well noted. I persevere, not because I endorse it, but simply because it is universally understood. Broadly, anything less than 85 is faulty, less than 90 is sound but unexciting, and 91 is where the real fun begins. A 94 point wine has impeccable purity and immaculate balance – a gold medal in a wine show. Beyond, it's not greater concentration of flavour, more obvious fruit or more clever winemaking tricks that set it apart. True greatness is declared by something more profound: the inimitable stamp of place – 'terroir' to the French, articulated most eloquently in length of finish and palate texture. Persistence of aftertaste and depth of mineral character distinguish the very finest sparkling wines.

Publications, retailers and winemakers themselves would have us score everything over 90 points, but it is not for them that I award scores. It is for the consumer, and for this reason I do not hesitate to bless wines with high scores when they are worthy, and award controversially low scores when they are faulty.

Of the hundreds of Australian sparkling wines I've tasted in the past year, only 120 made the cut for this report.

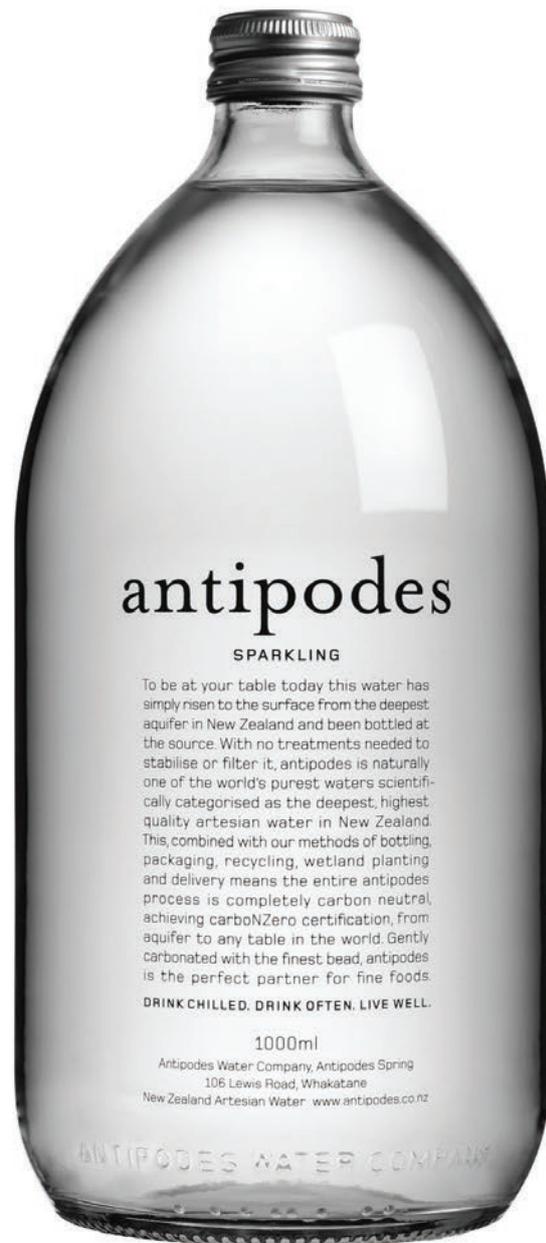
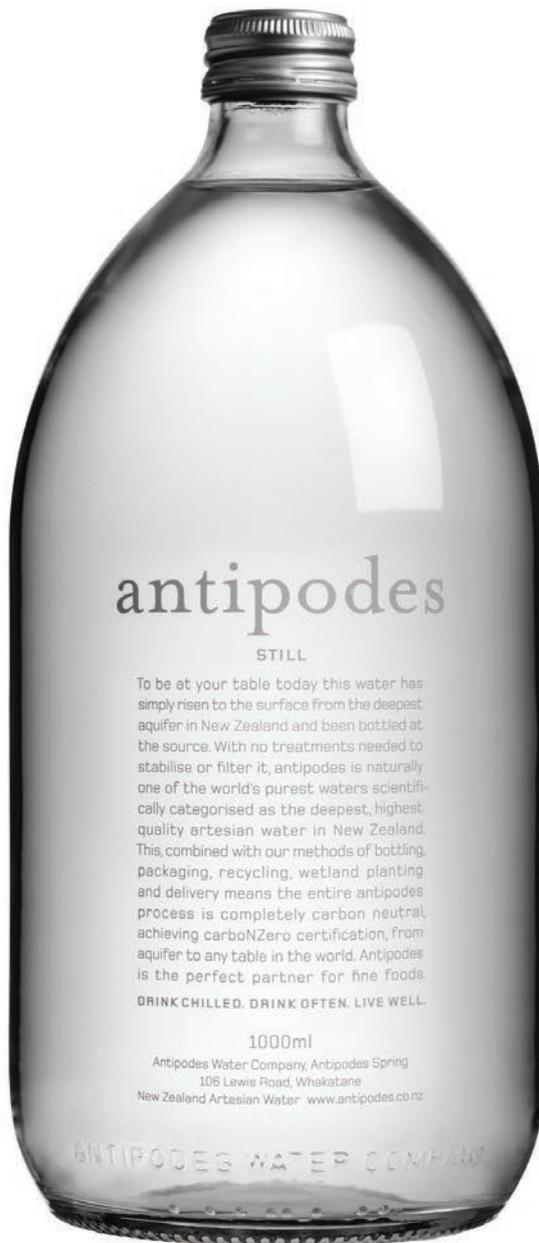
This year I have discontinued The Best Moscatos of the Year. I tasted the wines but none scored over 87 points. Let's be honest: life is too short.

WHAT DO MY SCORES MEAN?

- 100 The pinnacle of character, balance and persistence. I am yet to score an Australian sparkling wine 100 points.
- 99 Almost perfection (20 on the 20 point scale). I am yet to score an Australian sparkling wine 99 points.
- 98 An exceedingly rare calibre of world-class distinction. I am yet to score an Australian sparkling wine 98 points.
- 97 More than exceptional. I have only ever scored one Australian sparkling wine 97 points. It's here again this year. Don't miss it.
- 96 Exceptional. Top gold or trophy standard in a wine show (19/20); Seven Australian sparkling wines this year. Five Tasmanian vintage cuvées and two South Australian sparkling reds. Look out for one cuvée at \$45.
- 95 Offering an edge that pushes beyond excellent; Ten of Australian sparkling wines this year. Eight Tasmanian cuvées, one Barossa sparkling red and one Adelaide Hills blanc de blancs. Look out for a rosé at \$48.
- 94 Excellent wine that I love. Gold medal in a wine show (18.5/20). Just seven Australian sparkling wines this year. Three Tasmanian, one Adelaide Hills, one Yarra Valley, and two Seppelts under \$30.
- 93 Almost excellent; Eight Australian sparkling wines this year. Including one incredible rosé under \$25.
- 92 A very good wine that characterises its place and variety; 18 Australian sparkling wines this year. Including two Taltarni vintage cuvées at \$26.
- 91 Better than good, offering an edge of distinction. Silver medal (17/20); 20 Australian sparkling wines this year, including the best prosecco of the year.
- 90 A good wine that I like; 22 Australian sparkling wines this year.
- 89 Better than sound and almost good; 19 Australian sparkling wines made the cut for this report.
- 88 Sound. Worth buying if it's cheap. Bronze medal standard (15.5/20); Five Australian sparkling wines made the cut.
- 87 Almost sound; Four Australian sparkling wines made the cut because they're cheap.
- 86 Simple and ordinary; None made the cut for this report.
- 85 Ordinary and boring, though without notable faults (14/20); None made the cut for this report.
- 84 Borderline faulty. None made the cut for this report.
- 83 Faulty. Caution! None made the cut for this report.
- 82 Distinctly faulty (12/20). None made the cut for this report.
- 81 Exceedingly faulty. Stand well clear. None made the cut for this report.
- 80 Horrid. You've been warned. None made the cut for this report.

ANTIPODES

TURNING WATER INTO A WINE COMPANION



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MAKING SPARKLING WINE

Sparkling winemaking is among the most complex, labour-intensive and time-consuming winemaking processes of all. It begins with careful, selective harvesting and immediate, gentle pressing, capable of extracting white juice even from dark-skinned pinot noir and meunier grapes. The *coeur de la cuvée*, the heart or middle of the pressing, yields the purest juice. The *tailles* is the coarser, inferior juice that flows last from the press.

To create the finest sparkling wine, the juice is settled prior to fermentation to allow the solids and impurities to fall from the must (pressed grape juice), allowing clear juice to be drawn off from the top. This process is called *débourbage* in French and the most fanatical champagne houses perform it twice to achieve particularly exquisite and fresh *cuvées* (blends).

Following the first fermentation, sparkling wines from the coolest regions typically undergo *malolactic fermentation* to convert tart *malic* (green apple) acidity into softer *lactic* (dairy) acidity. With the advent of warmer vintages in the wake of global warming, an increasing number of sparkling winemakers are experimenting with blocking malolactic.

Sparkling wine is blended following its first fermentation, and perhaps a period of ageing on lees in tanks or barrels. Non-vintage wines are a blend of a base (youngest) vintage with *reserve* wines, older vintages aged in the cellar in tanks and sometimes barrels or bottles. Prior to bottling, a *liqueur de tirage* of sugar and wine is added so as to induce a secondary fermentation in the bottle, known as the *prise de mousse*. Held under pressure by a crown seal or cork, the second fermentation produces carbon dioxide which remains dissolved in the wine, creating sparkling wine.

Following the second fermentation, sparkling wines mature in contact with the lees (dead yeast cells) to mellow, soften and build complexity, mouth feel and texture, a process called *autolysis*. In Champagne, the mandatory minimum is 15 months for non-vintage and three years for vintage wines, but reputable houses always far exceed these minima.

Méthode traditionnelle is the ultimate sparkling winemaking process, mandatory in Champagne, and the standard for all of Australia's top sparkling wines, in which the second fermentation to produce the bubbles occurs in the bottle in which the wine is sold.

This process is often simplified in other sparkling wine producing regions in the *transfer method*, in which the wine is transferred to a vat and filtered after the second fermentation, invariably losing some gas. The *charmat* or *tank* method is a further simplification in which the second fermentation occurs in large tanks under pressure. *Carbonation* is the cheapest method of creating sparkling wine, by injecting the wine with carbon dioxide, in the same manner as lemonade.



Each of these simplifications tactically avoids the most labour-intensive stages of *méthode traditionnelle*: *riddling* and *disgorgement*. Second fermentation in bottle creates sediment of lees which must be removed without losing bubbles. *Riddling* is the process of moving this sediment into the neck of the bottle, traditionally achieved on a riddling rack called a *pupitre* by giving each bottle a quarter-rotation every day and slowly tilting it from horizontal to upside down. A good riddler can turn some 60,000 bottles a day, but this is a dying art. In modern times, riddling has been largely taken over by *gyropalettes*, giant robotic arms that slowly rotate large cages of bottles.

After riddling, the sediment is settled on the inside of the cork or crown cap. The neck of the bottle is then frozen, the cap released, and the plug of sediment shot out, leaving perfectly clear wine behind. This process is called *disgorgement*.

To replace the volume lost through *disgorgement*, the bottle is topped up with sweetened wine called *liqueur d'expédition* and a new cork is inserted. The sweetness of the finished wine is determined by the level of sweetness of the liqueur. *Zero dosage* sparkling wines are topped up with dry wine. In Champagne, *brut nature* or *brut zero* denote a wine of less than 3g/L of sugar, *extra brut* (extra dry) less than 6g/L, *brut* (dry) less than 12g/L, *extra dry* or *extra sec* less than 17g/L, *sec* (dryish) less than 32g/L, *demi-sec* (half dry) less than 50g/L and *doux* (sweet) more than 50g/L.

Sparkling rosé is made in the same manner as white sparkling, with colour achieved in one of three ways. *Rosé d'assemblage* is a blending method, the most common means of making rosé, in which a tiny quantity of pinot noir or meunier made as table wine is added to the white base wine. The *saignée* method adds free-run juice from just-crushed red grapes, while a *limited maceration* method produces darker, heavier wines through a quick soak on red grape skins.

Sparkling red wines begin their life in the same manner as still reds, fermented on skins to extract colour, flavour and tannin. The finest are then privileged to *méthode traditionnelle*, though transfer, charmat or carbonation simplifications are used for cheaper labels.

UNDERSTANDING DOSAGE

Throughout this report I've noted the dosage level for each *cuvée* wherever I can, measured in grams per litre of sugar. As a reference point, 16g/L is the same as one teaspoon of sugar in your cup of coffee.

12g/L dosage used to be typical in champagne and sparkling wine. These days, the trend is toward lower dosage and 6-9g/L is common. But don't read too much into the numbers. In high acid vintages in cool regions, sparkling wines can swallow high levels of dosage and appear almost dry.

The drying effect of tannin in sparkling reds can handle surprising levels of dosage, and some of the best this year boast more than 20g/L.



CELLARING SPARKLING WINE

My drinking windows throughout this report offer an insight into the endurance of Australian sparkling wines, with Tasmania's top cuvées demonstrating the potential to live for up to thirty years, and the best sparkling reds at least as long.

Sparkling is the one category of fine wine for which the wines tend to be pre-aged to their optimal drinking point. Australian sparklings are currently available at up to 22 years of age!

Most Australian sparkling wines have little to gain from further ageing, and the majority of the cuvées I tasted this year are already at their peak. Most will drink best over the next couple of years, and only a small proportion stand to benefit from further bottle age.

Sparkling wines are among the most sensitive of all wine styles to adverse storage conditions, so never keep a bottle in the rack above the fridge or even in the light.

Méthode traditionnelle sparkling wines spend the first years of their life under dark, humid, stable and cold conditions, so they will get a rude shock if they're thrust into a warm environment. Unless you live somewhere particularly cold, if you don't have a climate-controlled cellar, err on the side of caution and drink your sparkling wines within a few years.

Fizz in clear glass bottles is remarkably light sensitive, so keep it in the dark at all times. If it comes in a box, bag or cellophane wrap, keep it covered until you serve it.



SERVING SPARKLING WINE

SPARKLING WINE GLASSES

Using decent glassware is essential for fully appreciating wine, and all the more for sparkling wine. The more I visit and taste with the Champenois, the more I appreciate the way a large glass draws a sparkling wine out of itself. Sparkling wine holds its bead longest in an elongated glass, but don't select one so narrow that you can't get your nose in to appreciate the bouquet.

The Champenois prefer slightly wider glasses than typical champagne flutes, to allow their finest cuvées sufficient space to open out. Think halfway between a flute and a fine white wine glass.

All good glasses curve in slightly at the top. The finer the glass, the better they look at the table, and the less the wine will warm up when you pour it. Cut, engraved or coloured glasses make it harder to appreciate the wine's appearance.

The glass I use for all of my sparkling wine tastings is the Riedel Vinum XL Champagne. This is the largest glass I've found, with a bowl of white wine glass proportions that draws down into the stem sufficiently to produce a focused stream of bubbles.

My second-favourite glass is one-fifth of the price. The Luigi Bormioli Magnifico Flute is very nearly as large as the Riedel and just a little heavier. If you can't find these, grab a medium-sized white wine glass over a champagne flute for any serious bottle of fizz.

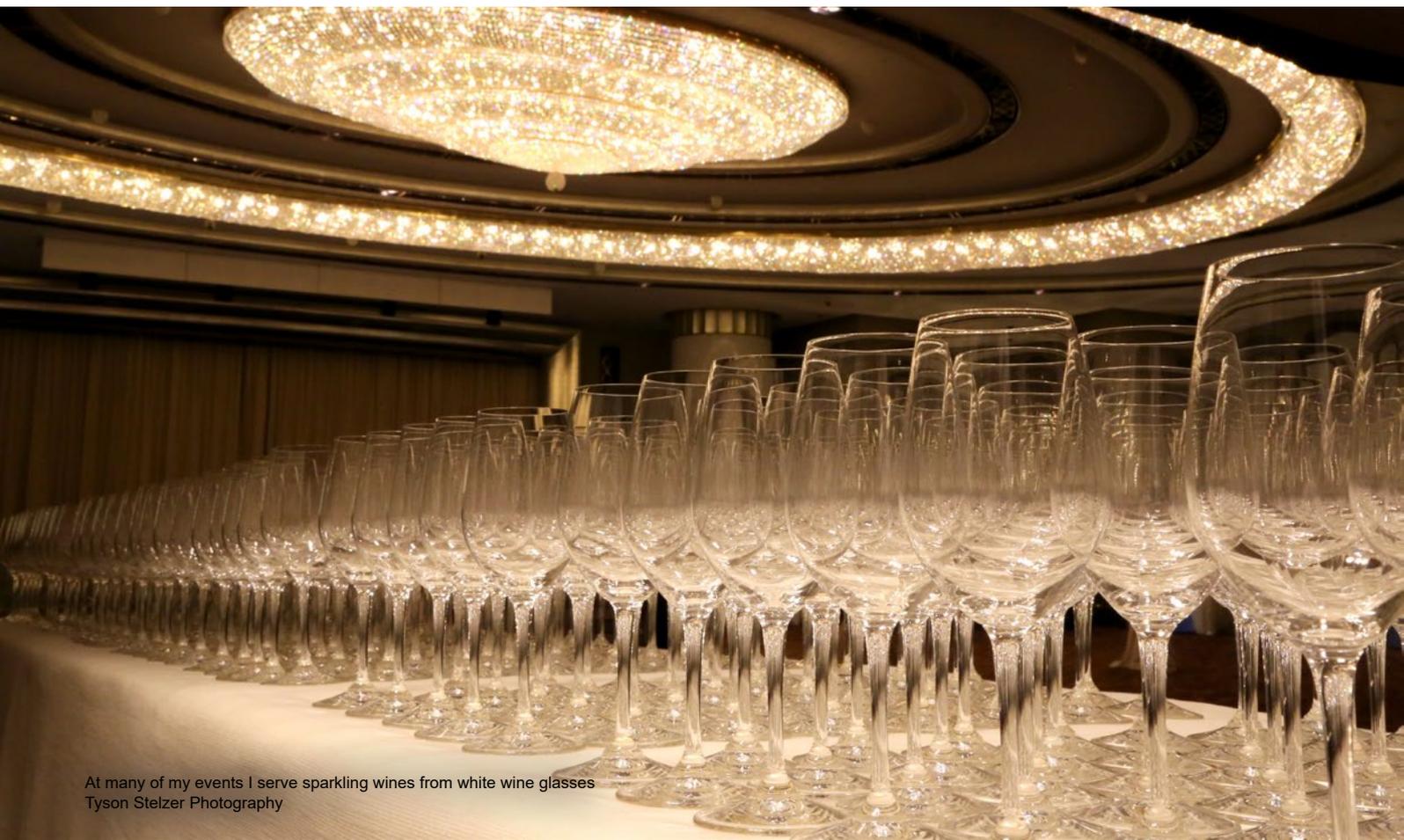
It's paramount that there is not the slightest residue of detergent in the glass, as this will instantly destroy the mousse (bubbles) and the taste. Riedel recommends washing under warm water without detergent, and polishing with microfibre towels. Never dry a glass by holding the base and twisting the bowl, as this may snap the stem.

SERVING TEMPERATURE

Sparkling wine is often served much too cold. Poured at fridge temperature, it will taste flavourless and acidic. The only exceptions are particularly sweet styles (moscato!), which are best toned down with a stern chill. In general, the finer the wine, the warmer I tend to serve it. The Champenois suggest 8–10°C for non-vintage and rosé styles, and 10–12°C for vintage and prestige wines. I prefer Australian sparkling reds a little warmer again, say 15–17°C.

If you're pulling a bottle out of a climate-controlled cellar, it will need to be cooled a little further, so pop it in the fridge for half an hour. If it's at room temperature to start with, 3–4 hours in the fridge or 15 minutes in an ice bucket might be in order. On a warm day, serve sparkling wine a touch cooler, as it will soon warm up.

Always hold a glass by its base or stem, to avoid warming the wine in your hand. This will also reduce the likelihood of any aromas on your hands interfering with its delicate bouquet.



OPENING SPARKLING WINE

Opening a sparkling bottle is pretty easy, but some people make such a fuss about it that they end up stuffing it up altogether. There are a few basic points to grasp before spraying your friends with fizz.

First, ensure that nobody has shaken the bottle before you get hold of it (not funny!). Always have a target glass nearby to pour the first gush into, but not too close (I once inadvertently shot the bowl clean off one of those expensive Riedels with a stray cork!). Check the firing range for chandeliers and unsuspecting passers-by and re-aim if necessary.

Remove the capsule using the pull-tab, if it has one. Hold the bottle at 45 degrees and remove the cage with six half-turns of the wire, keeping your thumb firmly over the end of the cork, in case it attempts to fire out of the bottle. I prefer to loosen the cage and leave it on the cork, which can assist with grip.

Twist the bottle (not the cork) slowly and ease the cork out gently. If you encounter a stubborn, young cork, use a clean tea towel to improve your grip. When the cork is almost out, tilt it sideways to release the gas slowly. It should make a gentle hiss, not an ostentatious pop. This is important, as it maintains the maximum bead (bubbles) in the wine and reduces the risk of a dramatic gush.

POURING SPARKLING WINE

Check that the wine tastes right, then pour half a glass for each drinker, topping them up after the 'mousse' has subsided. You can choose to tilt the glass to minimise frothing – I do. Sparkling wine is the only style where you can break the rule of never more than half-filling a glass, but do leave sufficient room for your nose so you can appreciate the bouquet!



Open a sparkling bottle carefully to preserve the bead and avoid a dramatic gush.

THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$20

As tempting as it is to lead out with the most expensive sparkling wines of the year, it's at the affordable end of the market that you must be most discerning in your effervescent purchases. Sparkling wines are among the most complex, labour-intensive, time-consuming and hence expensive of all wine styles to produce, and it takes an outfit of considerable expertise to pull this off with any level of finesse at this price.

The bottom shelf is dominated by variously coarse, hard, sweet and characterless sparkling wines, and there is a lot to be said for spending another five dollars (read on).

But if you're chasing big party fizz with bang for your buck, I've found you just the thing. After a hiatus last year, I've reinstated my Best Sparkling Wine of the Year under \$20, thanks to one cuvée clocking in at 90 points.

Economies of scale play heavily into this equation, so no surprise that my list of Sparkling Wines of the Year under \$20 is dominated by the big players of Yarra Burn, Wolf Blass and Jacob's Creek with large, multi-region blends. Bravo to the Hill-Smith family's Redbank for trumping this category with a blend from just two family-run vineyards in the heights of the King Valley.

After wading through an ocean of ho-hum cheap fizz this year, I have assembled just five cuvées worthy of your table under \$20. Stick with these, and may the force be with you.

TYSON STELZER'S SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$20

REDBANK EMILY KING VALLEY CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR BRUT CUVÉE NV

\$16.00 | KING VALLEY | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 90 POINTS

67% chardonnay, 33% pinot noir; aged on lees; carbonated; 8.5-9.5g/L dosage.

The blend of just two family-run vineyards at the cool heights of 860m and 550m in Victoria's alpine country, this is a crunchy and fruity style that celebrates the tension of the King Valley. At this price, the complexity and texture of lees maturation in bottle are impossible to dial up. What you get instead is the fruity and friendly appeal of cool climate chardonnay and pinot noir, balancing red apple and pear fruit with lemon tang and taut acidity in a clean, primary blend of refreshing integrity and great value. At the time of writing, the street price is \$11, making Emily the ultimate big party toast.



YARRA BURN PREMIUM CUVÉE ROSÉ NV

\$16.00 | VICTORIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 88 POINTS

Bottle fermented

A bold, luminescent crimson pink hue heralds a fruity rosé of raspberry and strawberry character, with candied dosage offset by cool acidity. It's simple and short but appealing value at \$11 on discount.

WOLF BLASS RED LABEL CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR PREMIUM CUVÉE NV

\$14.00 | SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA | CORK | 11.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 87 POINTS

68% chardonnay, 32% pinot noir

For the price, Wolf Blass Red Label is perpetually the most balanced and drinkable fizz on the shelves. Always available somewhere under \$10, and frequently under \$7, nothing else comes close. It's a clean, fruity and primary style of red apple and white peach, with hints of spice and honey. The finish is sweeter than it ought to be, and benefits from a stern chill, but that's a small price to pay. Whatever you do, don't buy anything else under \$10.

YARRA BURN PREMIUM CUVÉE BRUT NV

\$16.00 | VICTORIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 87 POINTS

Bottle fermented

A fruity style of citrus and stone fruits, displaying a balance between gentle dosage and tangy acidity. This in itself projects this cuvée above everything else you'll find discounted under \$11. It's simple and short but sound. The first bottle I opened was corked.

JACOB'S CREEK RESERVE CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR 2016

\$20.00 | SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA | CORK | 11.8% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 87 POINTS

11.0g/L dosage. Transfer method.

There was once a time when the entry Jacob's Creek sparklings ranked high in my best value shortlist, but their position has dropped as dosage has risen. For just \$5 more, step up to greater texture, heightened interest and less sweetness in Jacob's Creek Reserve. Red apple, grapefruit and guava denote a balanced style, with the gentle texture of bottle fermentation. It's a simple style with a short finish, but you can't go wrong on discount for just \$10.

THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$25

Nowhere is \$5 better spent than in trading up from a bottle of \$20 fizz.

My Best Sparkling Wines of the Year under \$25 has never been a more hotly contested category and the highlights have never twinkled so brightly. Step up to Australia's most lauded cool climate regions, some of our most famous sparkling houses (small and large) and all the fanfare of méthode traditionnelle (the complete champagne recipe). You'll even find the odd five year old vintage cuvée lurking in this category.

\$25 happens to be where you'll find champagne kicking in on Australian shelves, but be warned: no champagne under \$40 is worth drinking (unless you've chanced upon a rare day when Piper-Heidsieck is discounted to \$39). All 15 Aussie cuvées I've assembled here smash anything from champagne under \$25. For that matter, they obliterate anything from anywhere: prosecco, cava, Chile...

And if you buy no other cheap fizz this year, don't miss my Sparkling Wine of the Year under \$25. You won't believe it. I didn't.

TYSON STELZER'S SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$25

NINTH ISLAND TASMANIA ROSÉ NV

\$25.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 93 POINTS

Piper's River vineyards; 65% pinot noir, 20% meunier, 15% chardonnay; traditional method; base 2016 with 10% reserves; no oak; aged 14 months on lees; dosage of Tasmanian pinot noir with 9.75g/L.

No, my score is not a misprint. Ninth Island has landed in pink guise, and no surprise, with rosé queen Nat Fryar entering the building to join the team of wizards at Piper's Brook. The result resoundingly meets every lofty expectation, from its gracefully pale salmon hue through its elegant restraint and delightful expression of pinot noir's red cherries and strawberries. Then it delivers much more than anyone anticipated, with delightfully complex allure of pink pepper and beetroot and a magnificently creamy palate texture, the blessing of a year of lees age. And then more. The finish holds integrity nothing short of shocking for this price, with remarkable line and length that hold unwavering for thirty seconds and beyond. If there is anything to nitpick it is a little more dosage on the finish than it really needs, but at this price it's not out of place, and nothing a light chill can't deal with. This is an astonishingly sophisticated sparkling rosé with a report card that reads more like a \$60 cuvée than one you can snare under \$19 at Dan Murphy's from time to time. Such was my disbelief that I got straight in the car, drove to Dan's, bought a six pack and cracked a bottle (warm) the moment I got it home. Is this the best sparkling wine on the shelves under \$20 right now? It's more than that, it's the best sparkling wine under \$20 that I have tasted. Ever.



BLEASDALE SPARKLING SHIRAZ NV

\$22.00 | LANGHORNE CREEK | DIAM | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 91 POINTS

Fruit is sourced from sandy and stony vineyards for aromatics and from clay/loam for mid-palate richness; shiraz with a splash of malbec; reserves back to 1997, matured in a modified solera of seasoned oak barrels and tanks; around 8,000 cases and rising

Australia's best-selling sparkling shiraz is on the move, ever more refined on every level thanks to the meticulous attention of maker Paul Hotker. It's a refreshingly elegant and low alcohol style, thanks to parcels of Langhorne Creek fruit which ripen at lower baume and uphold classic regional black jube and pepper character, boosted by the depth of components from vines of more than 50 years of age. It's also older than ever, thanks to a big solera, 50% of which becomes the blend before being topped up with the new vintage every year. Even the liqueur for dosage is made in house to uphold a fresher and more lively style. The result is a perpetual bargain in the sparkling shiraz stakes, and in spite of its age it remains a resolutely fruit-focused style, packed with vibrant, crunchy red and dark berry fruits of all kinds, snugly wrapped in dark chocolate. It finishes with well-composed tension between tangy acidity, fine tannins and soft dosage.

SITTELLA CHENIN BLANC BRUT NV

\$22.00 | SWAN VALLEY | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

100% chenin blanc from 5 vineyards with vines between 20 and 45 years of age; aged 15 months on lees; 8g/L dosage; made this way since 2001

Inspired by trips to the Loire Valley, Sittella have mastered the tension between the citrus and apple crunch of chenin and the subtle almond meal complexity and texture of 15 months of lees age. Chenin will never ascend to the finesse or seamless texture possible with champagne varieties, but this is a noble and attractive cuvée that showcases the freshness and cut that are possible even in a warmer region.

THE LANE LOIS SPARKLING BLANC DE BLANCS NV

\$23.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

Fermented in stainless, then matured in a mix of 75% stainless and 25% large old oak (puncheons & foudres); No malolactic fermentation; Non-vintage blend of current vintage with typically 20-30% reserve wines from previous two vintages; 8g/L dosage

The Lane has gone superhero with a great release of Lois Lane. This affordable Adelaide Hills blanc de blancs celebrates the cool heights of chardonnay at 400m elevation in The Lane vineyard. A refreshingly pale straw hue announces an elegant style of lemon and apple fruit, a fine creamy bead and balanced synergy of acidity and dosage.

NINTH ISLAND TASMANIA NV

\$25.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 90 POINTS

Chardonnay, pinot noir, meunier; traditional method

For the price, this is one of the finest estate-grown, cool climate, méthode traditionnelle sparkling wines on the planet, and for this reason I've lost count of the number of times I've recommended it on television, radio, magazines and at events over the past year. Perpetually discounted under \$20 (and as low as \$18), the only better value fizz you'll find is its rosé sibling. A zesty apéritif style; cool, bright fruit takes the lead here in crunchy grapefruit, red apple, even lime. It's tangy and lively, with acid taking the lead and dosage lending appropriate support. Lees age has built balance without emphasis on secondary complexity or texture. It's just the thing to pour liberally at big parties.

SEPPELT SALINGER PREMIUM CUVÉE NV

\$25.00 | SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA | CORK | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

65% pinot, 29% chardonnay, 6% meunier; 42% Adelaide Hills, 30% Tumbarumba, 28% Henty and Yarra Valley; matured in old French oak barrels; 11.6g/L dosage

In 1890, Hans Irvine employed Frenchman Charles Pierlot from Champagne to craft some of Australia's first méthode traditionnelle wines at Seppelt. 128 years later, all the complexity and refinement of this magnificent heritage is alive and well in this grand old estate, and you can taste and feel it even in its entry cuvée. Layers of complexity wound into its folds transcend its affordable price, packed with all the secondary personality of honey, ginger nut biscuits and mixed spice. A long finish of red apple, fig and strawberry fruit is underlined by softly balanced acidity and well-integrated dosage, completed with a creamy bead. It concludes a touch honeyed and will appreciate a good chill. The best Salinger NV I can recall.

REDBANK ELLORA KING VALLEY CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR BRUT CUVÉE 2013

\$24.00 | KING VALLEY | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

Chardonnay 70%, pinot 30%; handpicked, pressed and fermented into base wine, small percentage in old oak barriques, full malolactic fermentation, then bottle fermented and aged for 3 years on lees; disgorged 12/12/2016; 6.2g/L dosage.

This is a cuvée that contrasts depth of maturity with the zing of two high altitude King Valley vineyards. At four years of age, toasty, roast hazelnut complexity provides layers of interest to tangy, cool climate lemon, grapefruit and apple. Phenolic presence lends grip and grainy, dry extract texture to the finish. Check out redbankwines.com to learn more, right down to the stories of each of the growers.

BROWN BROTHERS SPARKLING BRUT ROSÉ NV

\$25.00 | KING VALLEY | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

55% pinot noir, 32% chardonnay, 10% meunier, 3% malbec; base vintage 2015; small percentage of base wines matured in old oak; disgorged 25/7/2017; 9.0g/L dosage

A brand new cuvée! The introduction of a rosé to partner Brown Brother's legendary King Valley cuvées has been much anticipated and the result resolutely lives up to the expectation. With a pretty, bright, pale salmon hue, this is an elegant style of pink pepper, watermelon and strawberry hull, energised by the tangy acidity of the heights of King Valley. Dosage is elegantly restrained, seamlessly supporting the creamy texture of two years lees age. Some phenolic extract provides dry grip to the finish.

BROWN BROTHERS PINOT NOIR CHARDONNAY PINOT MEUNIER NV

\$25.00 | KING VALLEY/TUMBARUMBA | CORK | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

57% pinot noir, 33% chardonnay, 10% meunier; base vintage 2015; small percentage of base wines matured in old oak; disgorged 13/12/2017; 8.0g/L dosage

Long one of the bargains of méthode traditionnelle sparkling, this cuvée is packed with all the character and complexity of two years of lees age, with a touch of the savoury funk of barrel maturation. The richness of King Valley pinot noir takes the lead in red apple and fig character, culminating in a finish of roast nuts and wild honey. A rich and full style, well balanced by the tension of cool King Valley acidity, and finished with restrained, nicely integrated dosage.

GOLDING THE LAST HURRAH ADELAIDE HILLS SPARKLING 2016

\$25.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2017.00 | 89 POINTS

55% pinot, 45% chardonnay; estate Lenswood vineyard; tank fermented; 9.2g/L dosage

Notes of apple and pear define a young and fruity sparkling, structured with cool, high altitude Lenswood acidity, gentle phenolic grip and balanced dosage.

SHINGLEBACK BLACK BUBBLES SPARKLING SHIRAZ NV

\$25.00 | MCLAREN VALE | DIAM | 13.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2020-2022 | 89 POINTS

100% shiraz; Davey Estate Vineyard, Whites Valley, at the southern end of McLaren Vale; 17.0g/L residual

The density of McLaren Vale shiraz defines a style of satsuma plum skin, blackberry and black cherry fruit, accented with black pepper and underscored by firm, fine, savoury, drying tannins that will appreciate time in the cellar to soften.

THE LANE LOIS SPARKLING BRUT ROSÉ NV

\$25.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 13.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

Chardonnay and pinot noir fermented in stainless steel tanks, then matured in a mix of 50% stainless and 50% large old oak (puncheons & foudres); No malolactic fermentation; Non-vintage blend of current vintage with typically 20-30% reserve wines from previous two vintages; 7g/L dosage

With an elegantly pale salmon hue, this is vibrant and fruity young rosé of strawberry hull, pink lady apple and raspberry fruit, accented with pink pepper. Nicely poised balance of vibrant yet ripe acidity, a soft creamy bead and subtle dosage define an elegantly honed finish. It's a friendly, approachable party style.

ANDREW GARRETT MCLAREN VALE SPARKLING SHIRAZ 2013

\$25.00 | MCLAREN VALE | CORK | 13.2% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 88 POINTS

Discounted to \$20, there's value here in a five year old sparkling red. Tangy blackcurrant fruit is underlined by dark chocolate oak. Firm, fine tannins are countered by plenty of sweet residual.

DEVIL'S CORNER SPARKLING CUVÉE NV

\$22.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 87 POINTS

80% chardonnay, 20% pinot noir; base vintage 2017; 10.0g/L dosage

A fruity and lively young Tasmanian sparkling of impressive fruit depth of apple and stone fruits, finished with honeyed dosage. Its youth does not permit the lees age or maturity to build texture, complexity or persistence, but it's a well-balanced wine for its price.

THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$30

Why spend \$30 rather than \$20 on a bottle of Aussie fizz? Pop a few bottles and you'll never go back. This price tier opens up a whole new level of effervescent diversity, and this year my sparkling highlights span red, white, rosé, blanc de blancs, blanc de noirs, a dozen regions and vintages from 2017 back to 2013.

Your investment here buys into serious cuvées from top cool climate regions including Tasmania, Henty and Adelaide Hills and reds from famous places like the Barossa and McLaren Vale. These are the sparkling wines I buy when budget and occasion don't call for champagne.

We are privileged to enjoy a heyday era for affordable Australian sparkling and right now you can grab my Sparkling Wine of the Year under \$30 for less than \$18. Gosh.

TYSON STELZER'S SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$30

SEPPELT ORIGINAL SPARKLING SHIRAZ NV

\$27.00 | VICTORIA | CORK | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 94 POINTS

100% shiraz; 50% in seasoned barrels for 12 months; Selective harvester; 100% whole berry; Static & open fermenters

The perennial go-to for affordable sparkling shiraz, Original captures the black pepper, satsuma plum and black cherry elegance of Victoria and supports it with masterfully handled, finely structured tannins, beautifully integrated dark chocolate oak and well-gauged dosage. It concludes bright, long, creamy and joyous. Now a non-vintage blend and oaked for the first time, never has Original upheld the effortless calm and spicy black fruit integrity of the house with more finesse. How they can pull all this off for a street price under \$18 at Dan Murphy's is beyond me. Bravo.



SEPPELT SALINGER PINOT NOIR CHARDONNAY 2013

\$30.00 | HENTY | CORK | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 94 POINTS

48% pinot noir, 38% chardonnay, 14% meunier from the Drumborg Vineyard; 100% hand picked & whole bunch pressed; full solids ferment at 18 degrees; 100% malolactic fermentation; no oak; aged at least 36 months on lees; 8 g/L dosage

With an additional year on lees (now more than 36 months) my sparkling wine of the year under \$30 last year is now even more complex and more textured. If it weren't for its red stablemate hitting the same score at a lower price, this cuvée would have fronted up for the accolade for a second time this year. I phoned maker Adam Carnaby to congratulate him last year and he was ecstatic. 'I've been campaigning to take this cuvée back to the full méthode traditionnelle process of its heyday, and 2013 was the first year in which I was given the green light.' I had no idea that this had transpired, but my endorsement provided the confirmation he needed to continue. There are no short cuts to the sparkling winemaking process, and a no-compromise approach to the full detail of the champagne method blesses a cuvée with flavours and textures possible in no other way. With another year on lees, this is even more pronounced, and lees character is now the focus, supporting lemon and red apple fruit, with almond meal and toast prominent, structured with the mouth feel of lees texture. It finishes with great persistence, sustained by the graceful, enduring acid line of Henty. There's an enormous amount of integrity and class wound up in this cuvée, rejoicing in Carnaby's bold return to the style that brought this label to fame way back in 1983.

TALTARNI CUVÉE ROSÉ 2013

\$26.00 | SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA | DIAM | 11.8% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 92 POINTS

46% chardonnay, 52% pinot, 2% meunier; reserve wine aged in old French oak barrels; disgorged 24/11/2017; 10.2g/L dosage

Taltarni just might be the only sparkling estate in the world to offer two rosés from the same vintage at the same price, but the stylistic distinction here is marked. By contrast to the primary lift of Taché, this cuvée is decidedly more savoury and complex, laced with pink pepper, tomato and rose hip. For all this, it lacks nothing in precision or vibrancy, beautifully defined by a long-lingering and refreshing acid line and a core of spicy red berry fruits. It's impressively assembled and exceptional value for money.

TALTARNI BRUT 2013

\$26.00 | SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 92 POINTS

57% chardonnay, 42% pinot, 1% meunier; reserve wine aged in old French oak barrels; disgorged 24/11/2017; 10.3g/l dosage; April/May 2018 release

Robert Heywood and his team have implemented wide-sweeping reform in the vintage, blending and tiraging of Taltarni and their efforts are visible for the first time, right from the beginning of the portfolio. This is a blend that celebrates the crunch of cool climate fruit, married harmoniously to the complexity and texture of lees age. Lemon, apple and strawberry hull of elegant poise linger long on the finish, backed by the subtle toasty complexity of maturity. For everything it offers, this cuvée represents fantastic value for money.

HOUSE OF ARRAS A BY ARRAS NV

\$30.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 92 POINTS

55-60% pinot noir, 30-35% chardonnay, 7.5% meunier; aged at least 3 years on lees

The expert mastery of Ed Carr is apparent even in his entry cuvée. Such layers of character and complexity are unprecedented at this price, celebrating the full fanfare of a full three years of lees age (double champagne's minimum requirement), filled with toasted almonds, vanilla and mixed spice. A core of tangy lemon, baked apple and fig carries long and accurate. Vibrant acidity unites seamlessly with well-integrated dosage and fine phenolic grip on a creamy finish.

TALTARNI TACHÉ 2013

\$26.00 | SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA | DIAM | 12.2% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

64% pinot, 29% chardonnay, 7% meunier; reserve wine aged in old French oak barrels; disgorged 28 November 2017; 10.0g/L dosage

Taché has long been a go-to rosé and this characterful and refined cuvée remains on top form. With a bright, medium salmon/pink hue, it celebrates the red cherry and strawberry personality of pinot noir (almost two-thirds of the blend), massaged by the finely textured structure and creamy mouth feel of three years of lees age. Fine tannins are well managed and balanced with dosage on a long finish.

RELZIA ESTATE MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE NV

\$29.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.1% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

100% 2015 vintage, though not labelled as such; a blend of four Tamar Valley vineyards including 74% Josef Chromy; 57% pinot noir, 42% chardonnay, 1% meunier; 38.8% fermented and aged for six months in older oak barrels; 50% malolactic; 8g/L dosage

A masterfully assembled cuvée that presents the red cherry and strawberry fruit of Tamar Valley pinot noir and accents it with the fresh lemon zest of chardonnay, heightened by the zing of tactically retained malic acidity. Restrained deployment of barrel maturation and lees age have produced a soft and seamless texture, controlling some phenolic grip, and drawing out the finish with subtle biscuity complexity. A class act, and great value.

RIVERSDALE ESTATE CRUX TASMANIA NV

\$29.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 91 POINTS

Coal River Valley; aged 18 months on lees; Cellarmasters

The toasty, honeyed, buttery, roast cashew nut complexity and creamy texture of bottle age have created a style of secondary character and silky mouth feel, culminating in a finish of vibrant Tasmanian acidity, gently integrated dosage and lingering preserved lemon flavour.

SITTELLA CUVÉE BLANC BRUT NV

\$29.00 | PEMBERTON | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 91 POINTS

2016 base with 15% reserves from 2015 and 2014; 53% chardonnay, 47% pinot noir; 18% fermented in seasoned 225L French oak barrels; disgorged 29 October 2017 after 18 months on lees; 8g/L dosage

In less than a decade, Sittella has established the benchmark for the sparkling success that Pemberton, and Western Australia for that matter, is capable of achieving. Its entry cuvée is seamlessly crafted, showcasing the apple, pear and lemon finesse of the 2016 harvest and building subtle complexity with careful barrel fermentation (18%), reserves (15%) and lees age (18 months). It's all wrapped seamlessly in fine, creamy, lees-derived texture and finished impeccably with a low dosage of 8g/L. It takes talent to craft a cuvée of such poise, not least in Western Australia.

YARRA BURN PINOT NOIR CHARDONNAY PINOT MEUNIER VINTAGE 2015

\$30.00 | VICTORIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 91 POINTS

Victoria (60% Yarra Valley); pinot noir 56%, chardonnay 34%, meunier 8%; aged 2 years on lees; 11.5g/L dosage

Cool climate tension defines a poised and focused fruit profile of lemon, red apple and strawberry hull, while lees age has brought dimension in notes of ginger nut biscuits and toast. It concludes long and even, with excellent acid line and well-handled phenolic structure expertly offset by subtle, well-integrated dosage. An expertly crafted style, one of the standout vintages for Yarra Burn, for which an additional year on lees has been of great benefit. Great value for money for as little as \$17 on the shelves.

TALTARNI BLANC DE BLANCS 2015

\$26.00 | PYRENEES | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 90 POINTS

Reserve wine aged in old French oak barrels; disgorged 24 November 2017; 10.2g/L dosage

It takes talent and not inconsiderable effort to draw blanc de blancs of elegance from the Pyrenees, and I cannot recall a cuvée that achieves this as effortlessly as this. Apple and lemon fruit is backed by the toasty complexity of lees age, finishing with even acid line and just a touch more dosage than it needs. It has the stamina to live for some years yet.

CROSER ADELAIDE HILLS BLANC DE BLANCS NV

\$28.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

Méthode traditionnelle; 8g/L dosage

Croser's non-vintage cuvées rely on richer and more immediately approachable fruit than its vintage wines, and even its brand new blanc de blancs boasts quite a powerful fruit profile. Spicy, baked apple fruit is backed by the toasty, honeyed, ginger depth of lees age. It carries with good length and finely handled phenolic texture.

FOX CREEK VIXEN SPARKLING SHIRAZ CABERNET SAUVIGNON CABERNET FRANC NV

\$29.00 | MCLAREN VALE | CORK | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 90 POINTS

75% shiraz, 15% cabernet sauvignon, 11% cabernet franc

Sweet, crunchy, characterful McLaren Vale shiraz takes the lead here, in all of its blackberry, satsuma plum and black pepper glory, with cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc lending more blackcurrants, cassis and capsicum than their one-quarter representation might suggest. Firm, fine tannins and sweet dosage tussle on the finish, but there's no doubting the fruit integrity for the price.

HENTLEY FARM BLANC DE NOIR VINTAGE 2017

\$27.50 | BAROSSA | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

50% grenache, 50% pinot noir

This must be unique in the world, if not for its surprising blend of equal parts grenache and pinot noir then for its early launch, lobbed into the market just a few months post-vintage. A pretty, pale salmon hue makes for a rosé style of vibrant, tangy red berry fruits, crunchy acidity and finely structured phenolic grip. The race to the bottle denies the opportunity to build texture and persistence, but it's nonetheless balanced and refreshing.

CROSER ADELAIDE HILLS NV

\$28.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

Méthode traditionnelle; 65% pinot noir, 35% chardonnay; aged 1 year on lees; 10g/L dosage

A young and fruity style, the bouquet leads out with the strawberry and red apple personality of pinot noir (two-thirds of the blend), while the palate is bolstered with the toasty, honeyed complexity of lees age. True to Croser's non-vintages, it's a full and fleshy style that celebrates the body and depth of the Adelaide Hills, concluding with some candied sweetness from a full dosage of 10g/L.

RUTHERGLEN ESTATES SHIRAZ DURIF 2014

\$28.00 | RUTHERGLEN | DIAM | 14.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2020-2024 | 89 POINTS

Bottle fermented

The depth and richness of Rutherglen shiraz is layered with black plum and black cherry fruit and black pepper, while durif lends its savoury, spicy, leathery complexity. Firm, fine tannins clash with sweet dosage on the finish.

BERESFORD MCLAREN VALE SPARKLING SHIRAZ 2014

\$30.00 | MCLAREN VALE | CORK | 13.4% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 89 POINTS

Aged in 5 year old French and American hogsheads for 16 months; Dosage 26 g/L

A fresh young sparkling shiraz of blackberry and blackcurrant fruit, well supported by dark chocolate oak, tangy acidity and finely structured tannins. A full dose of residual sweetness lends a little candied simplicity to the finish, but it has the acidity to keep things lively.

THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR UNDER \$50

The \$30-\$50 category represents the most exciting chapter of Australian sparkling wine at the moment. If there is one place where your investment pays the greatest returns in sheer drinking pleasure, this is it.

Why? Because, apart from the rare exceptions listed above, the high cost of sparkling winemaking in cool regions almost universally rules out truly great fizz under \$30. And because spending more than \$50 can land you a serious bottle of champagne.

Such is the strength of this category that I have skimmed off all the top blanc de blancs, rosés and red wines into their own 'best of' lists (see below). Even after doing so, 24 stunning cuvées remain, making this the largest category of highlights in this report.

Testimony to Tasmania's lead in the premium sparkling stakes, half of the 24 cuvées I've shortlisted in this category hail from the island state. The balance comprise a plethora of diversity hailing from some of Australia's top cool climate sparkling regions including Adelaide Hills, King Valley, Macedon Ranges, Orange and Pemberton.

TYSON STELZER'S SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR UNDER \$50

ST HUBERTS MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE BLANC DE NOIR 2011

\$40.00 | YARRA VALLEY | CORK | 11.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 94 POINTS

87% pinot noir, 13% chardonnay; fermented in stainless steel tanks; aged on lees more than 4 years; 6.5g/L dosage

Well, here's a surprise! It's not often that a sparkling wine of this calibre lobs in out of nowhere, and I didn't ever get to taste the inaugural 2010, hence my astonishment when this delightful blanc de noirs (almost) landed this year. The vibrancy and endurance of Upper Yarra pinot noir sings in the cool 2011 season, trumping everything out of Tasmania under \$50 this year. It celebrates crunchy red apple, red cherry, lemon and strawberry hull character, while more than four years on lees has coaxed out spicy, biscuity, ginger nut complexity, a fine bead and creamy texture. It finishes wonderfully harmonious and poised, showcasing the body and depth of pinot noir with the zesty poise of a cool season in the Upper Yarra. A blanc de noirs of great integrity and persistence. The first bottle opened was corked.



PIRIE VINTAGE SPARKLING 2011

\$40.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 93 POINTS

52% chardonnay, 48% pinot noir; 20% aged in old French barriques; disgorged 5/6/2017; 7.0g/L dosage

Charged with the tension, energy and acid line of the cool 2011 season and fleshed out with 20% barrel maturation followed by more than five years on lees, this is a characterful and engaging sparkling of vibrant citrus zing, spicy baked apple richness and wonderful layers of spice, honey and golden fruit cake. The entire panoply lingers long and true on the finish. The result is a confident, main course-ready style.

BREAM CREEK CUVÉE TRADITIONNELLE 2011

\$42.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.8% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 93 POINTS

60% pinot noir, 40% chardonnay; cool, wet season; 80% matured for 5 months in old oak barrels (5 years of age and older); aged 5 years on lees in bottle; disgorged 19 May 2017; 8g/L dosage

The cool, wet 2011 season has infused tension and endurance in Tasmanian sparkling, producing a standout cuvée for Bream Creek. The red cherry, red apple and strawberry fruit of pinot noir take the lead, backed by the citrus crunch of chardonnay. A majority of fermentation in old oak barrels has been well-handled, upholding the purity and focus of the fruit and the season, while heightening spice and complexity. It holds with impressive line and length, concluding with balanced dosage.

BROWN BROTHERS PATRICIA PINOT NOIR & CHARDONNAY BRUT 2011

\$47.00 | KING VALLEY | CORK | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 93 POINTS

78% pinot noir, 22% chardonnay; Whitlands plateau; aged 6 years on lees; disgorged 12/12/2017; 7g/L dosage; old oak in reserve wine

Blessed by the cool 2011 season, this is a cuvée that presents a profound contrast between concentration and tension. Apple, citrus and stone fruit flavours of almost tropical proportions are overlaid with the exotic spice of six years of lees age. For all its exuberance, it pulls resolutely into a finely-honed tail of cool vintage, high altitude acidity that draws out a finish of immense length, grand dimension and wonderfully creamy texture. No subtle vintage, this is a main course-ready cuvée of heightened proportions.

JANSZ TASMANIA PREMIUM CUVÉE NV

\$32.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 92 POINTS

60% chardonnay, 40% pinot noir; Tamar River, Pipers River and Coal River Valley vineyards; majority fermented in stainless steel tanks; 20% fermented and matured on lees in mature French oak barrels for 6 months; 100% malolactic fermentation; predominantly a blend of 2015, 2014 and 2013, with a small percentage of older reserve wines; aged 26 months on lees in bottle; 8g/L dosage

With a bright, pale straw hue, this is a complex cuvée led by the biscuit, roast nut and ginger cake complexity of lees age, supporting a fruit core that harmonises the red apple and strawberry fruit of pinot noir with the zesty lemon notes of chardonnay. It concludes with good persistence and slightly candied dosage. Great value on discount at \$22.

COLDSTREAM HILLS PINOT NOIR CHARDONNAY 2014

\$35.00 | 87% YARRA 13% TASMANIA | CORK | DRINK 2018-2020 | 92 POINTS

59% pinot noir, 41% chardonnay from the Deer Farm Vineyard at Gladysdale in the Upper Yarra; aged 3 years on lees

A beautifully crafted, young, single vineyard Yarra Valley style. The blanc de noirs focus of the past has evolved to encompass a strong proportion of chardonnay, harmonising the crunchy strawberry and red apple of pinot noir with the citrus zest of chardonnay. It's energised by the cool acidity of the Upper Yarra, zapped with an injection of Tasmanian fruit and massaged by the gentle texture and fine almond meal character of lees age. The finish is long and even, with bright acid line and harmonious poise.

DELATITE DEMELZA CUVÉE BLANC 2011

\$39.00 | UPPER GOULBURN | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 92 POINTS

100% chardonnay; méthode traditionnelle

This cuvée is loaded with the secondary toasty, nutty, buttery, spicy complexity of lees age in spades, with a creamy, buttery texture that beautifully softens the bright, lemon-accented acidity of this cool, wet season. The result is confidently ready to drink right away, beautifully poised and holds its detail with impressive line and persistence.

MT LOFTY RANGES VINEYARD MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE PINOT NOIR CHARDONNAY LENSWOOD 2014

\$40.00 | LENSWOOD | CORK | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 92 POINTS

55% pinot noir, 45% chardonnay; 550m altitude vineyard; disgorged January 2017; 7.1g/L dosage

The red apple crunch and lemon and strawberry hull tang of this high vineyard in Lenswood mark out a young, zesty style, while a couple of years on lees have contributed subtle almond complexity. It concludes with well-balanced dosage, refreshing acidity and even persistence.

DEVIATION ROAD LOFTIA VINTAGE BRUT 2015

\$45.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 92 POINTS

60% pinot noir, 40% chardonnay from sites above 550m in Lenswood and Piccadilly Valley; partial malolactic fermentation; aged 2 years on lees; disgorged September 2017; 6g/L dosage

The red apple and strawberry hull of pinot noir is backed by the citrus tang of chardonnay, infused with the cool, high tension of the Adelaide Hills, emphasised cleverly by partial malic acid tension. Two years on lees has brought creaminess to the texture and subtle almond meal complexity. A fine phenolic grip has been well managed and it finishes with impressive length and even line, energised by lively yet ripe and well-integrated malic acidity.

JANSZ TASMANIA VINTAGE CUVÉE 2012

\$47.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 92 POINTS

55% chardonnay, 45% pinot noir exclusively from the Jansz vineyard; 50% barrel fermented and matured in oak barriques of more than 10 years of age; 100% malolactic fermentation; aged more than four years on lees; disgorged April 2017; 6g/L dosage.

More than four years of lees age following barrel fermentation has built layers of toasty, ginger nut biscuit and vanilla complexity, creating a creamy texture and drawing out a very long and full finish. The result is a complex and rich style that has already attained the peak of its secondary complexity. It finishes with slightly candied dosage and gentle phenolic grip.

SITTELLA MARIE CHRISTIEN LUGTEN GRAND VINTAGE 2013

\$36.00 | PEMBERTON | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 91 POINTS

60% pinot noir, 40% chardonnay; 10% fermented in 5 year old French oak barrels; double settled as juice; long, cool fermentation; aged 52 months on lees; disgorged October 2017; 7g/L dosage

Crunchy red apple and grapefruit expresses the cool personality of Pemberton, well massaged by the creamy texture and biscuity complexity of a touch of old barrel fermentation followed by 52 months on lees. It carries with excellent persistence and energetic acid line, with phenolic grip lending a little bitter grapefruit pith texture to the close.

CHANDON VINTAGE BRUT MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2013

\$41.00 | VICTORIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 91 POINTS

Yarra Valley, Whitlands Plateau and Strathbogie Ranges; altitudes between 250m and 820m; aged more than 36 months on lees; disgorged November 2016; 6g/L dosage

Close to four years of lees age has built layers of buttery, roast almond and ginger nut character to tangy grapefruit and crunchy red apple fruit. It carries with impressive persistence, supported both by even, vibrant acid line and gentle phenolic grip, completed with subtle, well-integrated dosage.

CLOVER HILL VINTAGE RELEASE MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2013

\$50.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

63% chardonnay, 31% pinot, 6% meunier; aged four years on lees; disgorged 13/9/2017; 11g/L dosage

2013 was winemaker Robert Heywood's first year at the helm at Clover Hill and he's done an impressive job of his first vintage release. It's an expressive and ready to drink cuvée of red apple and red berry fruits, with a soft and silky mouth feel, culminating in a finish of softly integrated yet vibrant Piper's River acidity and a little more dosage than its gentle style needs.

SWIFT VINTAGE BRUT MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2011

\$50.00 | ORANGE | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

65% chardonnay, 35% pinot noir; bottled July 2011; aged 62 months on lees; disgorged September 2016; 4.5g/L dosage

An additional year of cork age has served to emphasise the subtle almond meal complexity of this zesty, cool vintage style. Its hue has evolved to a medium straw, while upholding its crunchy lemon zest, red apple and grapefruit character. The focused acidity of the season remains prominent, while its fine phenolic structure has been heightened by cork age, producing a textural style of grip and tension.

PIRIE SPARKLING NV

\$32.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

56% chardonnay, 44% pinot noir; northern Tasmania; 2012 base vintage with 40% reserves; 20% matured in old French barriques for between 2 and 6 months; disgorged 6/2/2017; 7.5g/L dosage

Based on the 2012 vintage, this is an impressively mature cuvée, a non-vintage blend that packs loads more lees-derived complexity and texture than its bargain price might suggest. Some four years on lees in bottle, in tandem with 20% old French barrel ageing, makes for funky complexity of bubblegum, offering character and dimension to its focus of cool Tasmanian lemon and apple fruit. Long age has drawn out an impressively seamless mouth-feel, completed with low, well-integrated dosage on a long finish.

DELAMERE CUVÉE NV

\$35.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 13.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

60% pinot noir, 40% chardonnay; 2016 base vintage, 18% reserves from 2015 and 2014 with a smaller portion of older chardonnay; aged 12 months on lees; 6g/L dosage

In brand new, elegantly characterful livery inspired by the guinea fowl that graces the vineyard, this is a cuvée that embodies the spicy wild strawberry fruit of Delamere pinot noir, with the texture and complexity of lees age. It culminates in a soft finish of lingering fruit sweetness.

STEFANO LUBIANA BRUT RESERVE MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE NV

\$38.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

65% chardonnay, 35% pinot noir; 100% estate vineyard Derwent Valley; 2014 base vintage with 10% 2012 reserves; no oak; méthode traditionnelle; disgorged September 2016; 8g/L dosage

Steve Lubiana's NV is layered with class and complexity, accurately conveying the pretty red cherry fruits of pinot noir and the lemon zing of chardonnay. Lees age has added toasty, biscuity complexity, while well-balanced dosage lends a subtle honeyed note to the finish. Cool Tasmanian acidity lingers long on the finish amidst the dry extract phenolic grip inherent to the rain shadow of the Derwent Valley. This is a benchmark style for southern Tasmania, and like House of Arras it achieves wonderful finesse in spite of low yields in this dry part of Tasmania.

HOUSE OF ARRAS BRUT ELITE CUVÉE 1301 NV

\$50.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 90 POINTS

45% pinot noir, 46% chardonnay, 6% meunier; 70% 2013 base vintage; Tasmania (Coal River Valley, Derwent Valley, Huon Estuary); partial fermentation in oak barrels; aged almost four years on lees; 7.4 g/L dosage

Brut Elite is back to almost four years of lees age, after taking a dip to meet demand for some years. Since 2006, up to ten percent of the blend has been fermented in new and second use barriques, which maker Ed Carr uses to regulate what he calls a 'spicy end tannin character' which has become part of the style. Introduction of oak in this way has enabled him to significantly drop the dosage levels. 'With the structure there we don't need sugar to fill in the gaps.' The struck flint complexity of its release has turned subtly funky with another year in bottle, with layers of biscuity, toasty, spicy complexity heightened by oak barrels, while the tension of cool, southern Tasmanian vineyards has upheld an energetic core of lemon and grapefruit. It finishes with fine acid line, though that oak tannin structure serves to emphasise a mouth feel of firm phenolics of bitter grapefruit pith texture.

ABEL'S TEMPEST BY HEEMSKERK CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR NV

\$32.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

55% chardonnay, 45% pinot noir; méthode traditionnelle; aged 24 months on lees

A zesty and lively Tasmanian sparkling that celebrates chardonnay in lemon and apple fruit, supported by the strawberry tang of pinot noir. It's primary and fruity, with candied dosage slightly trumping vibrant Tasmanian acidity on the finish. The first bottle was corked.

CLOVER HILL TASMANIAN CUVÉE MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE NV

\$34.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 89 POINTS

55% chardonnay, 38% pinot noir, 7% meunier; estate grown Coal River Valley and Pipers River vineyards; 2015 base vintage; partial malolactic fermentation; aged on lees at least two years; reserve wines aged in large format old French oak foudres (5%) and barrels (2%); disgorged 6/7/2017; 10.2g/L dosage

The cool tang of Piper's River accents this cuvée with zesty grapefruit and lemon, even a suggestion of lime and crab apple. The style has evolved, thanks to Clover Hill's Tea Tree Vineyard in the Coal River Valley coming on stream for this blend four years ago. Lees age has blessed it with beautifully creamy texture and a fine and silky finish.

MERINDOC CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR NV

\$37.00 | MACEDON RANGES | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 89 POINTS

Aged 5 years on lees; disgorged August 2017

A powerful cuvée in which intense grapefruit and golden delicious apple are met head-on by the toasty complexity of five years of lees age and hints of funky complexity. It holds with good persistence and tension.

PIPER'S BROOK TASMANIA 2015

\$39.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 89 POINTS

Piper's River vineyards; méthode traditionnelle; partial fermentation and maturation in oak barrels; aged for almost 3 years on lees

This is a cuvée of heightened structure and complexity, aligning the tension of Piper's River fruit in lemon and apple with a funky charcuterie complexity, a hangover of barrel work. Lees age brings a creamy texture and persistent finish.

SITTELLA MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE PINOT NOIR CHARDONNAY 2009

\$40.00 | PEMBERTON | DIAM | 13.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

55% pinot noir, 45% chardonnay; tank fermented; partial malolactic fermentation; aged 7 years on lees; 5g/L dosage

This is a main course proportioned sparkling of fullness and intensity. Seven years of lees age have built considerable depth and complexity of caramel, ginger nut biscuits and a hint of mushroom. Ripe fruit brings character of baked apple and spice, while partial malolactic upholds tension and balance on a long and full finish.

SWIFT CUVÉE BRUT MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE NV

\$40.00 | ORANGE | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

70% chardonnay, 30% pinot noir; 2011 base vintage; 5% reserve wine from 2010; bottled July 2011; aged on lees 62 months; disgorged September 2016; the third and final disgorgement from this base; 5g/L dosage

Now evolving into the secondary phase of its life, this is a cuvée of rising almond meal and toast complexity, while upholding the acid cut of cold a vintage and the tangy preserved lemon and pear fruit of chardonnay. It's beginning to show some tiredness after 16 months on cork, and its phenolic grip is more pronounced on the finish now, though it holds with poise and persistence.

THE BEST SPARKLING WINES OF THE YEAR OVER \$50

The investment of effort and time makes sparkling wine the most costly of all wine styles to produce. Great sparkling wine is intimately dependent upon a cool climate, and cool climate viticulture notoriously entails vagaries in yields and inconsistency in quality from one season to the next. The result is that truly great sparkling wine is never inexpensive. And yet the finest cuvées of Champagne and of Australia sell for but a fraction of the price of top Burgundies, Bordeauxs and Barossas. Prestige sparkling remains the bargain of the luxury world.

Sparkling winemakers are faced with a catch-22 in their pricing, unlike any other wine style, thanks to the ever-present question, 'Why buy Australian when I can land champagne for the same price?' Thankfully some Australian sparkling wines have pushed through the glass ceiling of champagne pricing, and this section is dedicated to all those that are worthy of your investment this year.

Those that fly above \$100 do so thanks to miniscule production, and in the case of some late disgorged releases, just 100 bottles or magnums.

Again, such is the strength of this category that I have skimmed off the best blanc de blancs, rosés and red wines for their own dedicated 'best of' lists. What remain are 16 sublime sparkling benchmarks between \$55 and \$399 that have won my tick of approval. This year more than two-thirds (including the top six) hail from Tasmania, with the Adelaide Hills stepping up to three inclusions and the final two from the Yarra Valley and Victoria.

TYSON STELZER'S SPARKLING WINE OF THE YEAR OVER \$50

HOUSE OF ARRAS GRAND VINTAGE MAGNUM 2007

\$249.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.3% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2022-2027 | 96 POINTS

Tasmania (Coal River Valley, Derwent Valley, Pipers River); chardonnay 78%, pinot noir 22%; aged on lees 9 years; 3.9 g/L dosage

The most successful sparkling wine on the Australian show circuit ever lives on in glorious magnums, projecting every bit of tension and complexity that we adore in this cuvée and heightening it in a way that only magnums can – elevating its crunchy acidity, struck flint reduction and youthful grip. It's at once more energetic, fuller and more creamy in texture, thanks to elongated lees age. It impeccably and effortlessly captures the focus and precision of Tasmanian chardonnay (more than three-quarters) and pinot noir in crunchy lemon and apple fruit, backing it with enticing layers of brioche, almond and nougat. Thrilling, bright, lemon-infused acidity of grand energy is what really sets this cuvée apart, driving a very long and impeccably focused finish; irresistible now, yet possessing enduring longevity, and more than ever in magnificent magnum. Join the queue for one of these beauties.



HOUSE OF ARRAS EJ CARR LATE DISGORGED MAGNUM 2001

\$399.00 | SOUTHERN TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2021-2031 | 96 POINTS

Southern Tasmania; 60-65% chardonnay; 35-40% pinot noir; 2.5g/L dosage; the back of the bottle states 107 magnums produced, disgorged in May 2015 after 13 years on lees.

I loved Arras 2001 when Ed Carr poured it for me when it was first released as a late disgorged cuvée in 2012 (after its inaugural fling as Grand Vintage around 2008). ‘This wine is my favourite,’ he volunteered in his quietly understated manner. ‘This is precisely where we want this blend to be. It has the elegance and the complexity that we’ve been chasing.’ It proved to be my favourite, too, and at the time I declared it ‘one of the finest sparkling wines ever made in this country.’ With another five years on lees in magnum, the astonishing impossibility is that it is every bit as fresh and magnificent as it was then. Such is its purity and freshness, if I didn’t know better I’d say it was but half its age. Even after 16 years (107 magnums were disgorged in May 2015 after 13 years on lees), it upholds a gorgeous pale straw hue. Southern Tasmanian chardonnay retains a strong two-thirds lead and marks out a long tail of prominent, confidently structured, finely poised acidity and gently textural mouth feel. All the glories of preserved lemons, grapefruits and white peaches are preserved in suspended animation, showcasing great southern Tasmanian fruit presence, underlined by subtle lees complexity of almond meal and buttered toast. It possesses a deep core of energy that will sustain it for another 16 years yet. And, dare I say it, it’s yet to attain its glorious peak. In personality it’s eloquently gentle and understated, yet quietly and unequivocally confident. Exactly like the man himself. Never has an EJ Carr been more aptly named.

STEFANO LUBIANA GRANDE VINTAGE MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2008

\$60.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2028 | 95 POINTS

78% chardonnay, 22% pinot noir, 100% estate vineyard Derwent Valley, no oak, disgorged May 2016, 5g/L dosage

A year on from its release, the electric energy and youthful purity of one of my favourite vintages in Tasmania look set to sustain this cuvée for many years to come. Primary lemon, apple and white peach fruit of great purity and structure are sensitively massaged by the almond meal, nougat and brioche of maturity. One of the highlights of my Tasmanian Sparkling Showcase in New York City in late 2017, it’s my go-to order whenever I spot it on a wine list. Every bottle I’ve tasted has been stunning, charged with a dynamism that looks nothing like a decade of age, yet with a silky texture that can only come from long lees age. Steve Lubiana has captured this elegant and enduring season with a grace rarely achieved in southern Tasmania.

JANSZ TASMANIA SINGLE VINEYARD CHARDONNAY 2011

\$65.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2021-2026 | 95 POINTS

100% chardonnay; single block selection from the Jansz vineyard; 100% barrel fermented and matured in oak barriques of more than 10 years of age; 100% malolactic fermentation; aged more than five years on lees; disgorged February 2017; 6.5g/L dosage; 3204 bottles

The energy of chardonnay in the fabled Jansz vineyard was heightened in the cool 2011 season, charged with all the character and bite of lemon, grapefruit and crab apple. Barrel fermentation followed by more than five years on lees has built creaminess of structure, vanilla pod complexity and a polish that calms the bite and grip of the season. Magnificently heightened cool vintage acidity drives a very long finish. A bright, medium straw hue heralds a cuvée of dynamism and character, from a vintage for the long-haul.

HOUSE OF ARRAS EJ CARR LATE DISGORGED 2003

\$190.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 95 POINTS

61.1% chardonnay, 38.9% pinot noir; 82.2% Upper Derwent Valley, 8.9% Huon Valley, 7.8% Lower Derwent Valley, 1.1% Murray Darling (Victoria); 100% malolactic fermentation; aged 12 years on lees and two year on cork; disgorged June 2015; the only French oak maturation here is in the liqueur, just 1.5% (‘As much as I can squeeze in!’ says Ed), 6.5 g/L dosage; 2200 bottles

At a full 15 years of age (12 on lees), this is the same disgorgement that I tasted a year ago, a showpiece for the grand endurance of Australian sparkling, still showing more energy, vitality and potential than most champagnes from the same vintage. Grapefruit, lemon and apple continue to abound in this chardonnay-charged style (more than 60%) while maturity has blessed it with delightfully silky structure and captivating layers of nougat, lemon meringue, vanilla and mixed spice. Another year on cork has lifted its dried peach character and it’s just beginning to hint at dryness on the finish, suggesting it’s attained its peak and will hold for the next few years, sustained by a thrilling line of bright, enduring acidity. Marvellous.

HOUSE OF ARRAS EJ CARR LATE DISGORGED MAGNUM 2002

\$399.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 13.1% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 95 POINTS

58% chardonnay, 42% pinot noir; aged 12 years on lees; disgorged May 2016; 3.9g/L dosage; 104 magnums

An enticing, glowing, golden aura surrounds this cuvée, not only in hue but in nuances of succulent grilled pineapple and golden peach. Twelve years on lees has blessed it with layers of brioche, vanilla and mixed spice, furnishing a beautifully creamy and full mouth feel. It culminates textural and complete, with succulent presence perfectly in tune with fine phenolic structure, having attained its irresistible peak.

HENSCHKE JOHANNE IDA SELMA BLANC DE NOIR LENSWOOD MD

\$62.00 | LENSWOOD | CROWN SEAL | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2022 | 94 POINTS

100% single vineyard pinot noir; 550m altitude; every vintage 1997 through 2013 separated bottled and aged on lees until blending on 9 August 2015; 7.5g/L dosage

A year on, the same blend as last year has upheld wonderful integrity, tension and personality. This is a beautifully characterful, expressive and powerful blanc de noirs that masterfully captures the depth of pinot noir and the tension of the heights of Lenswood. Pinot noir speaks in a deep voice of satsuma plums, black cherries and layers of mixed spice, riding a line of focused, finely poised acidity. The method of reserve blending flips the traditional Champagne technique on its head. Instead of ageing reserves in tank to blend with the young base vintage and age in bottle before disgorgement, sixteen vintages of reserves with up to two decades of maturity are aged on tirage in bottle and disgorged before blending in tank under pressure. All the complexity of vintages from 1997 to 2013 unites to build layers of dark fruit cake, ginger nut biscuits and dark chocolate, culminating in a long and full yet impeccably tense finish. Its cool, high acid drive has sustained it magnificently, promising years of endurance yet.

HOUSE OF ARRAS GRAND VINTAGE 2008

\$80.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2023-2028 | 94 POINTS

65.6% chardonnay, 34.4% pinot noir; 74.4% Derwent Valley, 13.3% Freycinet, 5.6% Coal River Valley, 2.2% Yarra Valley (Victoria), 1.1% Tamar Valley, 1.1% Huon Valley, 1.1% Pipers River, 1.1% Riverland (South Australia); 5.3% first use French oak barriques, 100% malolactic fermentation; aged on lees close to 8 years; 5.4 g/litre dosage; 1300 dozen

During the past year since its release, struck flint reduction has turned faintly funky and charcuterie on the nose, while the palate upholds the tension of bright, focused lemon and apple fruit of one of my favourite vintages in Tasmania. The tightly coiled acidity of this enduring season is only beginning to unwind, and calls for years in the cellar yet. Seven years on lees has built more in buttery texture than flavour, lending almond meal and spice complexity, with plenty more yet to unfold. The tightly coiled acidity of this enduring season calls for time to unwind. I find it impossible to fathom that anything could eclipse the phenomenal Grand Vintage 2007, but Ed Carr quietly revealed to me recently that he believes 2008 to be the better wine. Time will tell.

CLOVER HILL CUVÉE PRESTIGE BRUT VINTAGE 1996

\$300.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 94 POINTS

60% chardonnay, 30% pinot, 10% meunier; reserve wine aged in old French oak barrels; aged a minimum 20 years on lees; disgorged 18 July 2017; 6.3g/L dosage

'We discovered a pallet of 1996 still ageing on lees,' Clover Hill CEO Adam Torpy confided in me last year. 'We'd like to say we kept it for strategic release! What a find! With a full yellow golden hue after a magnificent 20+ years in the depth of the cellar, this is a cuvée that delivers all of the remarkable complexity that it promises, rippling with secondary character of dried peach, fig, preserved lemon, burnt butter and roasted almonds, and then boring deep into the grand old age of tertiary complexity in smouldering hearth, exotic spice, even a hint of Huon pine. It has upheld great integrity for its age, finishing with lingering persistence, and while it's lost much of its bead, it maintains impressive fruit presence, supported by subtle, evenly integrated dosage.'

DEVIATION ROAD SOUTHCOTE BLANC DE NOIRS 2016

\$55.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 93 POINTS

The best pinot noir parcels of the vintage; 100% pinot noir from sites above 550m in Lenswood and Piccadilly Valley; fermented in stainless steel tanks; aged 14 months on lees; disgorged September 2017; 6.5g/L dosage; 1957 bottles

Exemplifying the focus and exacting attention of Kate and Hamish Laurie, this brand new cuvée is a tightly coiled Adelaide Hills pinot noir that showcases the heights that are possible for Lenswood and the Piccadilly Valley. Strawberry hull, grapefruit and elegant spice of beautiful restraint coast evenly through an exactingly focused palate that captures the body of pinot noir in a laser line of energy. It lingers very long, with firm, fine phenolics lending grip to the finish.

LEVANTINE HILL MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE LATE DISGORGED YARRA VALLEY 2010

\$80.00 | YARRA VALLEY | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 92 POINTS

Late Disgorged; 50/50 chardonnay/pinot noir from Levantine Hill's estate vineyard on the Maroondah Highway planted in 1994/1995, from fruit previously sold to Punt Road.

A softly textured style of pale hue, blessed by lees age, capturing the white peach of chardonnay and the spicy, sweet strawberry fruits of pinot noir. It's creamy, buttery and textured with good length and subtle, fine phenolic structure.

CHANDON WINEMAKER'S SELECTION CHARDONNAY PINOT NOIR 2008

\$59.00 | VICTORIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

Cellar door only.

On the eve of its tenth birthday, this is a cuvée that rejoices in the blessings of age, brimming with golden fruit cake, toffee, dried apricots, grilled pineapple, even raisins. It's reached the juncture between secondary and tertiary character that signals the close of life, with phenolic grip and the dryness of maturity defining the structure of the finish.

CROSER PICCADILLY VALLEY LATE DISGORGED 2004

\$60.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 13.7% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

68% pinot noir, 32% chardonnay; bottled February 2005; aged 11 years on lees; disgorged May 2017; zero dosage; 3150 bottles.

Already beginning to tire a year ago, another year on lees (twelve in all now) has produced a complex and fully mature style of full straw yellow hue. White peach and lemon zest fruit is well evolved into toasty, buttery, nutty complexity, even notes of golden fruit cake and glacé fig. It finishes dry and a touch bitter with some burnt orange notes suggesting a touch of oxidative development, having edged beyond its finest moment. Nonetheless, impressive acid line defines a long finish with no need for dosage.

CLOVER HILL CUVÉE PRESTIGE BRUT VINTAGE 2006

\$150.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.8% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 91 POINTS

56% chardonnay, 37% pinot, 7% meunier; reserve wine aged in old French oak barrels; aged a minimum ten years on lees in bottle; disgorged 18/7/2017; 9.5g/L dosage

Eleven years on lees has built a plethora of complexity, with bubblegum and boiled sweets notes over butterscotch and spice of all kinds. Glacé peach and strawberry fruit linger very long on a spicy finish, energised by the cool acidity of Piper's River and finished with more candied dosage than this soft and mature style needs.

GRANT BURGE HELENE GRANDE CUVÉE TASMANIA 2006

\$55.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 90 POINTS

53% pinot noir, 46% chardonnay, 1% meunier; aged 8 years on lees; 5g/L dosage

A complex style of red apple, dark chocolate, even hints of coconut and peppermint, with the toasty complexity of eight years of lees age. It culminates in a finish of persistence and line, with cool Tasmanian acidity softened by the texture of long age.

APOGEE DELUXE BRUT 2014

\$63.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

Pinot noir 46%, chardonnay 46%, meunier 8%; around 25% of base wines fermented in old oak casks; Disgorged 4 July 2017; 8.5g/L dosage

A spicy and complex style in which the savoury funk of partial old oak fermentation meets the tension of this cool site in Piper's River. An additional year on lees has seemed to heighten its phenolic grip, lending a little coarseness to the finish. Nonetheless, a long and complex cuvée.

THE BEST BLANC DE BLANCS OF THE YEAR OVER \$30

As global tastes edge toward ever more elegant flavours, while global warming threatens to drive wine styles in the opposite direction, the rising significance of chardonnay in sparkling blends cannot be overstated. While the Champenois fight over chardonnay allocations, in Australia's warmer climate, the vital role of blanc de blancs has never been more crucial.

Australia's finest blanc de blancs hail from its coolest regions, with Tasmania again leading the charge and putting forward two-fifths of my highlights, including the top three cuvées this year.

TYSON STELZER'S BLANC DE BLANCS OF THE YEAR

HOUSE OF ARRAS BLANC DE BLANCS 2008

\$87.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2023-2033 | 96 POINTS

Tasmania (Derwent Valley, Freycinet, Coal River Valley, Piper's River), partial fermentation in new French oak barriques; aged 8 years on lees, 3.2g/L dosage; 500-600 dozen

Ed Car celebrates the finesse and elegance of Tasmania's east coast chardonnay in his blanc de blancs, with significant support from Derwent Valley, which he prefers to the richness and fullness of the Tamar Valley and the steeliness of Piper's River. Testimony to the outstanding sparkling season of 2008 in Tasmania, this is a cuvée of tremendous energy, poise and a gorgeous luminescent straw hue. Bright chardonnay fruit projects itself with luminous clarity and exacting definition through eight years of lees age, with crunchy lemon, grapefruit and white peach precision and sparks of struck flint reductive complexity. Time has heightened notes of ginger, brioche and vanilla, creating a creamy texture that contrasts very fine phenolic grip. A long-enduring finish of bright acid drive promises an exciting, extended future in the cellar.



HOUSE OF ARRAS MUSEUM RELEASE BLANC DE BLANCS 2001

\$350.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2026 | 96 POINTS

Predominantly Piper's River with a little Upper Derwent; 98-98.5% chardonnay, 1.5-2% pinot noir (which Ed Carr says 'snuck in somehow!'); 2.5g/L dosage

'When we started in Tasmania in 1995, we had no idea how far we could take lees age and we never expected to go this far!' exclaims Ed Carr. 2001 was a magnificent year for Arras and testimony to the grand endurance of cool Tasmanian chardonnay. This is a tightly coiled cuvée that unites the crunch and grip of grapefruit and lemon with the struck flint reduction of chardonnay, the toasty, nutty, smoky complexity of long lees age and the zap of cool acidity. The texture of deep maturity melds seamlessly with gentle phenolic structure on a finish of outstanding line and length. If 2001 was your year, this is the fizz for your next big birthday!

CLOVER HILL CUVÉE EXCEPTIONNELLE BLANC DE BLANCS 2011

\$65.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 95 POINTS

100% chardonnay; reserve wine aged in old French oak barrels; aged at least five years on lees in bottle; disgorged 24 November 2017; 10.7g/L dosage

I loved the 2010 last year and Clover Hill has proven that this was no one hit wonder by backing it up with a successor every bit as remarkable. A pale straw hue heralds its elegance and precision, though there's no shortage of refined complexity wrapped carefully into its folds. Some six years of lees age have drawn out delightful nuances of butter, toast, even a wisp of wood smoke. Its texture is a revelation, creamy, mouth filling and complete, yet never heavy or broad, seamlessly meshed with the fine acidity of this cool season.

DEVIATION ROAD BELTANA BLANC DE BLANCS 2012

\$100.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2027 | 95 POINTS

Deviation Road vineyard and a new site for Deviation Road in Carey Gully, both above 550m altitude; no malolactic fermentation; aged five years on lees; disgorged November 2017; 7g/L dosage

The pinnacle of Adelaide Hills sparkling, and arguably of everywhere in the country outside of Tasmania, this cuvée is a grand statement of the energy and endurance of the finest and highest sparkling sites of South Australia. The Adelaide Hills by its nature tends toward higher phenolics than Tasmania or Champagne, though chardonnay is naturally less susceptible than pinot noir, and this is the first key to the longevity here. The second is the exacting craft of Kate and Hamish Laurie, tactically deploying full malic acidity to charge the palate with high voltage energy, yet never for a moment harsh or searing. The magic of maturity is slowly transforming primary lemon and apple fruit into the roast almonds and butterscotch of middle age, with a slow-motion assurance that promises a very long life. Texture is ultra-fine and creamy, but the real standout feature here is its grand persistence, hovering motionless for 45 seconds. Bravo Kate and Hamish for the courage to venture into three digit price tag territory. It's worth every cent.

DAOSA BLANC DE BLANCS 2012

\$55.00 | PICCADILLY VALLEY | DIAM | 12.4% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 92 POINTS

500m altitude, one of the highest vineyards in the Piccadilly Valley, planted in 1996; warmer year; fully fermented and aged for 5 months in old oak barrels; aged in bottle on lees for 5 years; full malolactic fermentation; disgorged September 2017; 6g/L dosage; 269 six packs produced.

The toasty, nutty, honeyed complexity of full barrel fermentation is amplified by five years of lees age, making for a buttery and complex style of smooth texture and notes of sautéed mushrooms. The definition and energy of one of the Piccadilly Valley's highest sites provides poise to its acid structure even in a warmer season, defining a long and vibrant finish of softly textured lees structure and apple and lemon fruit.

SWIFT BLANC DE BLANCS NO 1 MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2010

\$85.00 | ORANGE | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 92 POINTS

Bottled 16 November 2010; aged 62 months on lees; disgorged September 2016; 3g/L dosage; 1,498 bottles

It's fascinating to observe the idiosyncratic nuances of evolution as cuvées from different regions progress along their own unique path on lees and under cork. Another year on cork for each of Swift's cuvées has had a subtle effect on heightening toasty, almond meal complexity, while accentuating the grip of phenolic structure on the finish. This is a wonderful blanc de blancs that celebrates a captivating contrast between lemon zest and white peach fruit and the buttery, toasty development of almost six years on lees. It culminates in a toasty, buttery finish of excellent persistence.

COLDSTREAM HILLS BLANC DE BLANCS MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2011

\$45.00 | YARRA VALLEY | CORK | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2021-2026 | 91 POINTS

87% chardonnay, 13% pinot noir; Deer Farm Vineyard at Gladysdale in the Upper Yarra; aged 4 years on lees; 7g/L dosage

The cool 2011 season has furnished the inaugural release of a zesty and bright chardonnay-focused blend that has appreciated long lees age and a touch of pinot to tone its searing acidity. The structure is still bracing, and it will appreciate plenty more time yet. Time has already blessed it with fine, creamy texture and the subtle complexity of almond meal, nougat, vanilla and lemon meringue. An elegant and enduring style.

MOORES HILL BLANC DE BLANCS MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE NV

\$45.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.1% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

Tamar Valley; 60% 2012 base vintage with 30% 2011 and 10% 2010 reserves; 20% barrel fermented with some wild fermentation; unfiltered and unfiltered at bottling; aged 24-36 months on lees; disgorged August 2017; 8g/L dosage of 2008 vintage liquor

This is a carefully crafted Tamar blanc de blancs, with blending, barrel maturation, wild fermentation and lees age all playing a role in building texture and complexity, with no element dominating. Biscuity, toasty, honeyed complexity is rising amidst spicy apple fruit and hints of barrel-derived, mushroom-like complexity, having already found approachable balance.

SITTELLA MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE BLANC DE BLANCS NV

\$32.00 | PEMBERTON | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

2015 base; 8% fermented in oak barrels; no malolactic fermentation; aged 30 months on lees; 6g/L dosage; just 250-300 dozen each year

Thirty month on lees, coupled with a touch of barrel fermentation (8%) brings layers of biscuity, custardy, caramelly, ginger-accented complexity to the crunchy grapefruit and crab apple tension of Pemberton chardonnay. A touch of dry extract grip on the finish is well countered by a low dosage of 6g/L.

CHANDON VINTAGE BLANC DE BLANCS MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2013

\$41.00 | VICTORIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 90 POINTS

Whitlands plateau, Strathbogrie, Upper Yarra and a small inclusion of Tasmania; aged more than 38 months on lees; 5g/L dosage

A toasty style of pronounced ginger cake and wild honey, accented with vibrant acidity that carries long on the finish. Grapefruit pith-like phenolic bitterness creeps in on the finish, but it has the acid structure, lees texture and fruit integrity to carry it.

THE BEST SPARKLING ROSÉS OF THE YEAR OVER \$30

If trends in the UK, US and Japan are anything to go by (and they are), sparkling rosé is a category with tremendous potential for growth in Australia. Champagne houses who have registered the strongest growth in Australia in recent years are now targeting rosé as their key focus.

This is a style that Australia can produce remarkably well. Our warm, dry climate and high levels of ultraviolet light can have the effect of accentuating phenolic grip, which tends to disrupt the elegance of white sparkling wines. Rosés are often able to handle this better, thanks to the fruit body and tannin presence of their red wine component.

Cool climate regions are naturally the focus here, and Tasmania has never dominated this category more convincingly, producing 80% of this year's highlights and every one of my top seven cuvées.

TYSON STELZER'S SPARKLING ROSÉ OF THE YEAR

BELLEBONNE NATALIE FRYAR VINTAGE ROSÉ 2015

\$65.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 96 POINTS

Inaugural release; 100% pinot noir; Piper's River single vineyard; particularly cool site; very small proportion fermented in stainless steel and a very high proportion in old oak; 6g/L dosage; 1472 bottles

Announcing the most important and the most sublime new sparkling label in a very long time, from a name we know and love well. Signature Natalie Fryar at an all new level. This is the first personal release made entirely by Australia's rosé queen and maker of Kreglinger, Piper's Brook, Ninth Island and formerly Jansz Tasmania. I first saw a sneak preview as a base wine in late 2015 and I have awaited its release with great anticipation. To pay for the fruit, she sold a house, drove 'a crappy car' and worked waitressing shifts. The result of all this is what she says is the best rosé she's ever made. Of course she would. If you know the rosés she's made for Jansz for so many years, and love them (as I do) you'll see all the detail of her signature here. It articulates the elegant expression of pinot noir from a cool site, pale salmon in hue, and lifted and wispy, with an airy freedom, somehow lighter and more delicate than ever before. And yet it juxtaposes this with deep, resonant presence of red cherry fruit, wild strawberries, even a white fruitcake spice, heightened by oak barrel fermentation. It has the acid drive to age and evolve for some years yet. The result of all this is beautifully graceful, magnificently persistent, delightfully detailed and eminently classy. Is this the finest rosé yet from Nat Fryar? Too right it is.



THE RUNNER-UP ROSÉS OF THE YEAR

PIRIE VINTAGE SPARKLING ROSÉ 2010

\$48.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 95 POINTS

100% pinot noir; 5% aged in old French barriques; 100% malolactic fermentation; aged more than 6 years on lees; disgorged 17/8/2017; 8.5g/L dosage

Pirie has long ranked high among my favourite sparklings outside of Champagne itself, and this release takes the house to an all new plane of refinement. A gorgeous pale salmon straw hue introduces a bouquet and palate that rejoice in the gorgeous red cherries, wild strawberries and exotic spice of Tasmanian pinot noir, magnificently polished by some seven years of lees age, building a seductively creamy and silky mouth feel.

APOGEE DELUXE ROSÉ 2014

\$79.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.6% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 95 POINTS

88% pinot noir, 12% chardonnay; 100% Apogee Vineyard, Lebrina, Piper's River; around 25% of base wines fermented in old oak barriques; aged 3 years on lees; disgorged 1 November 2017; 8.5g/L dosage

Piper's River is the epicentre for elegant pinot noir rosé outside of Champagne, and Andrew Pirie has been one of its longest influencers. It was wines like this that inspired my introductory chapter on the rise and rise of Piper's River pinot noir. Pirie's latest vintage is every bit as gorgeous as it was on release a year ago, and then some! An additional year of lees age has built even finer complexity, without for a moment dipping its gaze from pure and gorgeous red cherry fruits. The bright yet ripe acidity of his cool vineyard meshes seamlessly with fine tannins and well-integrated dosage on a magnificent finish of elegant persistence. He reduced the old oak cask fermentation from 40% to 25% in 2014 and the purity and precision of the result rank it among his finest yet.

HOUSE OF ARRAS ROSÉ 2006

\$87.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 95 POINTS

Tasmania (Huon Valley, Coal River Valley, Derwent Valley); 65.2% pinot noir, 32.6% chardonnay; 5% fermented in new and second use oak barrels; aged on lees at least 7 years and a further two years on cork; 6.5 g/L dosage; just 500-600 dozen

Ed Carr leads out his rosé with Huon Valley pinot noir for its deep colour and what he describes as a rose water feel 'that you'd have to beat hard to remove, so we embrace it!' One-third chardonnay is used to bring tightness and character. The wine is aged as a blush style and red liqueur is added at dosage to top up the colour. The result carries the palest salmon tint that barely discloses it as a rosé and anticipates nothing of the grand complexity and character loaded into this impeccably crafted Tasmanian style. More than seven years on lees has built a toasty, creamy, spicy complexity, yet, astonishingly, it's even fresher and more pure than a year ago, charged with the personality and depth of southern Tasmanian pinot noir (two-thirds of the blend) in elegant nuances of red cherry, strawberry hull and lemon. It culminates in a finish of great persistence and creamy texture, enlivened with bright, enduring acidity and very fine and well-placed phenolic grip.

APOGEE DELUXE ROSÉ 2012

\$86.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 94 POINTS

67% pinot noir, 27% meunier, 14% chardonnay; around 40% of base wines fermented in old oak casks; disgorged 15 June 2015

Two-and-a-half years of cork age has brought a new plane of texture and complexity to Andrew Pirie's Rosé. Its pale salmon hue has taken on a subtle bronze tint, while flavours have evolved toward soft, buttery, golden fruitcake, ginger and burnt butter. Its gorgeously creamy texture overflows long into a beautifully defined finish, full and complete, yet restrained and poised. I have long admired its primary youthfulness, and this cuvée is compelling evidence of just what Andrew Pirie can deliver in enticing secondary complexity.

CLOVER HILL TASMANIAN CUVÉE ROSÉ MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE NV

\$34.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 93 POINTS

50% chardonnay, 42% pinot noir, 8% meunier; 2014 base vintage; reserve wines aged in large format old French oak vats; aged on lees in bottle for at least two years; disgorged 9/11/17; 9.0g/L dosage

The cool elegance of the eminently rosé-suited Piper's River is transposed effortlessly into the characterful expression of pinot noir, creating a cuvée alive with red cherry and strawberry fruit, energised by tangy acidity and structured with fine, well-poised tannins. Mid-palate body coasts seamlessly into a long and focused finish.

DELAMERE ROSÉ NV

\$35.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 13.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 93 POINTS

100% pinot noir; estate Piper's River vineyard; 2016 base vintage with 21% reserves from 2014 (aged in bottle under low gas pressure as a trial); no oak; aged 12 months on lees; 6g/L dosage

Shane Holloway and Fran Austin have made the daring move of shifting their focus predominantly to sparkling wines and this cuvée showcases why. The finest sparkling wine I've tasted to date from this terrific little estate is elegantly pale salmon-tinted and sings with full voice the delightfully spicy and characterful personality of Piper's River pinot noir. Rose hip and pink pepper ride over a core of tiny wild strawberries which linger very long, impeccably supported by finely structured tannins and a seamless accord between cool Piper's River acidity, well-gauged dosage and the creamy texture of lees age.

SWIFT ROSÉ BRUT 11-2 MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE NV

\$40.00 | ORANGE | DIAM | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 93 POINTS

63% chardonnay, 37% pinot noir; 2% 2017 pinot noir addition at disgorgement; Bottled 4 August 2011; aged 74 months on lees; disgorged September 2017; the second disgorgement from the 2011 base (hence 11-2 on the label); 5g/L dosage; 6,365 bottles

With a pretty pale salmon hue, it's remarkable just what a difference 2% pinot noir red wine can make, emphasised by the freshness of a young disgorgement. This is a refined Orange region rosé that has magnificently upheld its primary strawberry and red apple character and vibrant pink grapefruit acid line. An impressive 74 months on lees has done nothing to disturb its vibrant fruit purity, serving instead to build beautifully fine and creamy texture.

NOCTON VINEYARD SPARKLING ROSÉ NV

\$34.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 92 POINTS

First release; 2016 base vintage; 100% pinot noir; aged 16 months on lees; disgorged September 2017; 8.6g/L dosage; 4,200 bottles in this disgorgement

Nocton has fast established a coveted position among Tasmania's sparkling cognoscenti and its inaugural rosé seals its place. It's an elegant style of pretty pale salmon hue, celebrating Coal River Valley pinot noir in highlights of strawberry hull, red apple, beetroot and musk, finishing with well-tuned balance between fine phenolic structure, fresh acidity and subtle dosage.

STEFANO LUBIANA BRUT ROSÉ MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2011

\$45.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 92 POINTS

Méthode traditionnelle

A pretty southern Tasmanian rosé of pale salmon hue, celebrating the red cherry and strawberry fruit of pinot noir, enlivened by the cool tang of 2011. A gorgeous spice complexity and cherry depth carry long through the finish. It beautifully contrasts the brightness of the season with the depth of pinot. An additional year of lees age has worked wonders in building texture to its mouth feel, integrating fine tannins and gentle phenolic grip.

KREGLINGER TASMANIA ROSÉ 2006

\$65.00 | TASMANIA | CORK | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2020 | 92 POINTS

100% Piper's River pinot noir, 100% barrel ferment; maceration method; a touch of pinot noir in the liqueur to tweak the colour a little; aged at least 9 years on lees; 9.2g/L dosage

Kreglinger Rosé presents an articulate expression of its place, capturing the elegance of Piper's River, even a note of seaspray from Bass Strait. It's held consistently since its release last year, maintaining a medium to full salmon hue and elegant appeal of rose petals, Turkish Delight and cherry liqueur. Characterful presence of structure proclaims nine years on lees, with the fine, textural grip of tannin structure and a little phenolic bitterness creeping into the finish. It carries with excellent line and length, concluding with fine-tuned acid tension that will sustain it for some years yet.

CHANDON LATE DISGORGED ROSÉ 2006

\$105.00 | VICTORIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 92 POINTS

Cellar door only; Yarra Valley, Strathbogie Ranges and Whitlands Plateau; altitudes from 250m to 820m; aged more than 10 years on lees; disgorged March 2017

At a glorious twelve years of age, this late disgorged cuvée celebrates its life in the cellar in a full salmon hue and complexity of roast almonds, brioche and mixed spice. Grapefruit and golden delicious apples linger long, supported by an evenly balanced union between acidity, dosage and the creamy texture of long lees age, finishing with firm yet fine phenolic bitterness.

DEVIATION ROAD ALTAIR BRUT ROSÉ NV

\$35.00 | ADELAIDE HILLS | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

60% chardonnay, 40% pinot noir from sites above 550m in Lenswood and Piccadilly Valley; 2016 base vintage; 4-7% pinot noir red wine; 5% oak; disgorged November 2017; 9g/L dosage

An elegant medium salmon hue announces a refined style that heralds the finesse of the Adelaide Hill's higher climes, with crunchy apple and pear fruit accented with the succulence of red cherries, the tang of strawberry hull and lingering with pink grapefruit acidity. Fine phenolic grip lends a little firmness to the finish.

CHANDON VINTAGE BRUT ROSÉ MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2013

\$39.00 | VICTORIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

King Valley and Yarra Valley; 63.7% pinot noir, 30.6% chardonnay, 5.7% meunier

A pretty medium salmon hue introduces a gentle and savoury rosé of red apple fruit and the almond meal complexity of lees age, accented with notes of tomato. Acidity, dosage and dry phenolic grip unite evenly on the finish.

CHANDON CYGNET PINOT MEUNIER ROSÉ MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE 2014

\$59.00 | VICTORIA | DIAM | 12.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2019 | 91 POINTS

Whitlands plateau, 780m altitude, with small portions from Strathbogie and Coldstream; aged 36 months on lees; disgorged June 2017; 6g/L dosage

Charged with a vibrant medium salmon hue, this is a spicy young meunier of strawberry and red apple fruit, supported by a long-lingering acid line. Firm phenolic grip lends a coarseness to the finish, balanced somewhat by the creamy texture of lees age.

APOGEE DELUXE ROSÉ 2013

\$82.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.6% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

100% Piper's River pinot noir; around 40% of base wines fermented in old oak casks; Disgorged 27 November 2017 as a later disgorged release

Cool Piper's River pinot noir brings a pretty pale salmon hue and purity of red cherry fruit, contrasting the savoury, spicy complexity of partial barrel fermentation in this single vineyard rosé. Long lees age has had a softening effect on its fine tannin structure and gentle phenolic grip. It concludes with lingering persistence, albeit without the finesse and precision of the 2014.

JANSZ TASMANIA PREMIUM ROSÉ NV

\$32.00 | TASMANIA | DIAM | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

70-80% pinot noir, 20-30% chardonnay; Tamar Valley and Piper's River vineyards; majority fermented in stainless steel; 10% fermented and matured on lees in mature French oak barrels for 6 months; 100% malolactic fermentation; predominantly a blend of the 2015 and 2014 vintages, with a small percentage of older reserve wines; aged 30 months on lees; 8g/L dosage

Glowing with a pretty pale salmon hue, this is a cuvée of candied strawberry and musk nuances, culminating in a subtly earthy finish that detracts a little from fruit purity and persistence. Lees age has built a creamy texture and it concludes with subtle phenolic grip, countered by slightly candied dosage.

THE BEST SPARKLING RED WINES OF THE YEAR OVER \$30

Reds represent a strong category in Australia's sparkling offering again this year. Unlike its white and pink counterparts, sparkling shiraz is a characteristically Australian style, thriving in our warmer regions and not afraid of warm seasons.

The result is tremendous regional diversity among my highlights (Tasmania can't always have the fun to itself!). Standout regions span South Australia and Victoria, and this year include the Grampians, Clare Valley, McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Great Western and Heathcote.

While sparkling reds can be polarising, I have converted many folk who now regularly request this style. I admire its versatility with our warm climate and diverse international cuisine. The trick is not to over chill a sparkling red, for risk of over-accentuating its tannins. Just be super careful when you open the bottle, as pressure builds as it warms up, and a sparkling red spray isn't nearly as endearing as a champagne shower!

This year I again awarded a sparkling red the highest score I have ever given an Australian sparkling wine. It hails from an estate with more than 120 years of sparkling red heritage. Don't miss it.

TYSON STELZER'S SPARKLING RED OF THE YEAR

SEPPELT SHOW SPARKLING LIMITED RELEASE SHIRAZ 2007

\$100.00 | GRAMPIANS | CROWN SEAL | 13.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2027-2047 | 97 POINTS

100% shiraz from the Seppelt Great Western vineyard; 50% hand picked/50% selective harvester; 100% whole berry fermentation; 100% static fermenters; no cold soak; matured on lees in 100% seasoned 3000L French oak vats; aged 8 years on lees; disgorged 16/11/2016; 23g/L dosage

Released in December 2016, my Australian Sparkling of the Year 2017 is back for an encore. The precision and depth of satsuma plum and black cherry fruit on parade here are something to behold, and an additional year of bottle age has heightened its secondary complexity of sweet leather and game. Yet at eleven years of age it remains remarkably poised and primary. As ever, the trump card that elevates Show Sparkling to the pinnacle of the Australian sparkling summit is its structure, with a powder-fine tannin profile of the utmost finesse, mineral and chalk-fine in its mouth feel and intimately harmonised with a creamy bead and perfectly gauged dosage. Such enduring tannin structure would crush the spirit of any mere mortal cuvée, but here it is neither confronting nor dominating, propelling a thrilling finish that reverberates long with cherry liqueur and dark chocolate. With a heritage of more than 120 years, this remains the pinnacle of Australian sparkling, and it will outlive all others. It is every bit as magnificent today as it was on its glorious release, and my confidence in its 40 year potential remains stronger than ever.



ASHTON HILLS CLARE VALLEY SPARKLING SHIRAZ 2010

\$45.00 | CLARE VALLEY | DIAM | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2030 | 96 POINTS

Half sourced from dry grown shiraz of 1919 plantings at Wendouree; aged in old oak for 4 years then refermented in bottle; disgorged August 2016

This is a sparkling red deeply entrenched in history and it articulates every intricate detail in its aroma, flavour and texture. The savoury, medium-bodied complexity of 1919 Wendouree shiraz coasts effortlessly through a palate that captures the black plum and black cherry succulence of the grand 2010 harvest and overlays it with the savoury black olive and mixed spice personality of Wendouree, backed with high cocoa dark chocolate, heightened by four years of barrel age. The structure is a marvel, with ultra-fine tannins and chalk minerality of ancient Clare limestone terroir uniting seamlessly on a palate that hovers unwavering for thirty seconds and beyond. It's unashamedly medium-bodied and unequivocally irresistible.

PRIMO ESTATE JOSEPH SPARKLING RED NV

\$90.00 | MCLAREN VALE | CORK | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2021 | 96 POINTS

Predominately shiraz and cabernet; a hogshead of Primo Estate Shiraz from every vintage since 1989 and Moda Cabernet Merlot since 1991 with museum vintages from the last 40 years; matured in 10% new American oak barriques; aged 24 months on lees in bottle; liquor of Australian fortified wines; disgorged July 2017; Dosage 20 g/L;

Joseph remains rock solid, and every bottle I've tasted in the past year has projected its full majesty and awe. The grand complexity of Joseph meets every expectation of its deep and complex recipe, capturing all the depth and character of McLaren Vale cabernet, merlot and shiraz, young and old. A deep purple hue heralds a universe of expansive complexity, spanning primary satsuma plum and black cherry fruit, secondary roast nuts, dark chocolate and coffee and the tertiary allure of black olives. Firm, fine tannins and well-gauged dosage unite seamlessly on a long finish of finely structured tannins, creamy texture and captivating personality. Its complexity lingers with haunting persistence on a breathtaking finish. Another legendary release in the grand lineage of Joseph.

ROCKFORD BLACK SHIRAZ NV

\$67.00 | BAROSSA VALLEY | CORK | 13.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2020-2030 | 95 POINTS

A mother blend of about two-thirds. Each year, one-third is taken for the blend and one-third stays back, topped with the new vintage, after it has aged for 3-5 years in old oak barrels. In recent years, production has been expanded to facilitate greater time on lees in bottle. Previously made at Petaluma, with production shifted to Yalumba for the past four or five years. Hand riddled and hand foiled. Disgorged August 2017.

There is a freshness and vitality in this disgorgement that I've not seen before in the iconic Rockford Black Shiraz, with a crunchy, vibrant primary fruit edge. It upholds all the multifaceted complexity that its vast depth of maturity predicts, with every detail of the personality of old vine fruit ricocheting in black plum, black cherry, liquorice, even a hint of sarsaparilla, and the ever present, long-lingering delight of high cocoa dark chocolate. Age has brought notes of mixed spice and orange liqueur. It's magnificently finished with perfectly integrated dosage and firm, fine yet somehow creamy tannins that will sustain it for a good while yet. This is the finest I have ever seen Black Shiraz.

BEST'S GREAT WESTERN SPARKLING SHIRAZ 2014

\$35.00 | GREAT WESTERN | CROWN SEAL | 14.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2017-2024 | 92 POINTS

Harvested early; matured in oak vats for minimal oak impact; dosage of aged liqueur muscat

All the glorious layers of regional personality of Great Western and the historic depth of Best's are packed into this characterful sparkling shiraz. Satsuma plum fruit is dusted with paprika and black pepper, backed with high cocoa dark chocolate, set off with a fine, creamy bead, and supported by firm, finely textured tannins, culminating in a long finish in which glossy fruit is countered by drying alcohol. Value.

MIA VALLEY RED CLOUD SPARKLING SHIRAZ 2008

\$40.00 | HEATHCOTE | CROWN SEAL | 14.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018-2023 | 92 POINTS

Méthode traditionnelle; disgorged 3 December 2017; 15g/L dosage

The savoury, leathery allure of mature Heathcote shiraz makes for a complex sparkling that celebrates the character, supple texture and creamy bead of almost a decade on lees. Black plum fruits and black pepper linger long amidst a softly structured finish.

BARFOLD ESTATE SPARKLING SHIRAZ NV

\$32.00 | HEATHCOTE | DIAM | 13.4% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2021-2025 | 90 POINTS

2011 base vintage; disgorged 30/3/17, stated to be 18 months after harvest, so something doesn't quite add up here; 2.3g/L dosage

A spicy and savoury sparkling shiraz that translates the savoury, iron-filing complexity of Heathcote soils in both flavour and tannin feel. Bright red and black fruits are accented with pronounced pepper and notes of paprika and cumin, underlined by firm, fine tannins that call for time to soften and integrate.

HENTLEY FARM BLACK BEAUTY SPARKLING SHIRAZ NV

\$62.00 | BAROSSA VALLEY | CROWN SEAL | 14.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2024-2029 | 90 POINTS

97% shiraz, 3% viognier; 2015 base vintage, with a large portion of 2014; 28 months in 35% new French oak; aged 12 months on lees in bottle; disgorged November 2017; 20g/L dosage with a small amount of old tawny

The crunch of deep, dark Barossa shiraz is heightened by the firm, grainy tannins of a significant spell in more than one-third new oak, making for an astringent style that calls for a long time to soften. Its bright fruit definition carries long on the finish, suggesting that it has the stamina to go the distance.



THE BEST PROSECCOS OF THE YEAR

By contrast to the complexity, texture and sophistication of méthode traditionnelle sparkling wines of chardonnay, pinot noir and meunier, the glera variety of prosecco in northern Italy typically yields simple, young, fruity fizz. It's refreshing, affordable and immensely popular in these lingering days of GFC-induced conservatism.

The King Valley remains far and away Australia's uncontested king of this category, claiming 9 out of 10 places in my list of highlights this year, the tenth a blend of King Valley and neighbouring Alpine Valleys.

On the same day as I am completing this report, Australian prosecco producers are showcasing their wares for Federal Parliamentarians in Canberra, to highlight the importance of maintaining their right to use the name and the variety. Prosecco is currently in a complex and convoluted space politically. articulated nowhere better than in the insightful and balanced article, [Australia could be the long-term saviour for Prosecco](#) by Dal Zotto Wines' UK Importer, Nik Darlington.

Australian producers deserve the support of us all in defending their right to continue their almost 20 year tradition of fine prosecco production. My ten best proseccos of the year are a great place to start!

TYSON STELZER'S PROSECCO OF THE YEAR

DI SCIASCIO D'SAS KING VALLEY PROSECCO 2017

\$32.00 | KING VALLEY | CROWN SEAL | 11.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 91 POINTS

Charmat method; 9.8g/L residual

Prosecco is all too often neutral and simple, but this vintage cuvée captures character and fruit expression and frames it in a fine, creamy structure. Tangy kaffir lime, crunchy granny smith apple, exotic star fruit and white pepper coalesce in a wine of persistence and appeal. It sings with the high notes of King Valley, the prosecco capital of Australia, with zingy acidity taking command of a long and lively finish.



STEFANO DE PIERRI DI QUALITA KING VALLEY PROSECCO NV

\$17.50 | KING VALLEY | CROWN SEAL | 10.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

Cellarmasters

A lively and fruity prosecco of nashi pear and fennel character, with a lemon tang that lingers long on the finish. Dosage is refreshingly low, making for a bargain prosecco with a clean, crunchy finish.

REDBANK PROSECCO 2017

\$22.00 | KING VALLEY | CROWN SEAL | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

Single vineyard at Whitfield; 100% prosecco, pressed and fermented into base wine, then tank fermented and bottled in 2 or 3 batches each year; 6-7g/L dosage

A pale, fresh, young prosecco of crunchy apple and lemon fruit with a hint of white pepper. The cool altitude of King Valley concludes tangy and refreshing, offset by subtle residual sweetness. A clean, simple and balanced style.

SANTA & D'SAS KING VALLEY PROSECCO NV

\$24.00 | KING VALLEY | CROWN SEAL | 11.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 90 POINTS

Charmat method; 13.4g/L residual

A great King Valley prosecco, crunchy and refreshing, with nashi pear and lemon fruit, accented with notes of white pepper. Cool King Valley acidity and finely textured structure define a long finish, well supported by balanced dosage and a creamy bead.

WORDSMITH ALPINE VALLEY KING VALLEY BED OF ROSES PROSECCO NV

\$14.00 | VICTORIA | CORK | 11.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

Cellarmasters

It's great to see a value-for-money prosecco with just the right amount of dosage (not much at all!). Zesty lemon and crunchy red apple fruit unite in a tangy style of clean fruit lines and balanced, poised, high altitude acidity.

INNOCENT BYSTANDER PROSECCO NV

\$20.00 | KING VALLEY | DIAM | 9.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

100% Prosecco

A fresh and fruity prosecco of lemon and nashi pear flavour and a creamy bead. The tangy acidity of the cool heights of King Valley draws out a long finish, balanced with gentle dosage. A friendly and immediate quaffing style.

DAL ZOTTO PUCINO PROSECCO 2017

\$23.00 | KING VALLEY | SCREW CAP | 11.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 89 POINTS

Charmat method

Dal Zotto planted the first prosecco in Australia and still makes some of its best examples. This one is a pale, clean and fresh take on the variety that unites the lime and nashi pear crunch of the King Valley with a lick of star fruit exoticism, finishing refreshingly dry, charged with cool, high acidity.

CHALKBOARD KING VALLEY PROSECCO 2016

\$13.00 | KING VALLEY | CORK | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2017 | 88 POINTS

Vintage Cellars has done a fine job with its own brand prosecco, and this affordable vintage release is cleaner, fresher and more drinkable than any of the Italian proseccos that the company imports. With elegant and classic flavours of apple, lemon and ginger, it finishes soft and not too sweet. Value.

BROWN BROTHERS VINTAGE RELEASE KING VALLEY PROSECCO 2017

\$25.00 | KING VALLEY | CORK | 11.5% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 88 POINTS

Single vineyard

A fruity and crunchy prosecco of nashi pear freshness and star fruit exoticism, finishing with zesty King Valley acidity and a golden delicious apple ripeness.

DAL ZOTTO L'IMMIGRANTE PROSECCO 2016

\$36.00 | KING VALLEY | CROWN SEAL | 12.0% ALCOHOL | DRINK 2018 | 88 POINTS

Méthode traditionnelle

Golden delicious apple, grapefruit and lime unite in a style of fine bead, King Valley acid drive and subtle phenolic bitterness.

SPARKLING WINE GLOSSARY

ACIDITY A crucial element that gives sparkling wine its tangy freshness, vitality and life, and a sharp, clean taste on the finish.

APÉRITIF A drink used to get the taste buds humming before a meal (sparkling wine, naturally!).

ASSEMBLAGE The process of blending a sparkling wine.

AUTOLYSIS The breakdown of dead yeast cells during ageing on lees, improving mouth feel and contributing biscuity, bready characters.

BARRIQUE Small oak barrel of 225-litre capacity.

BÂTONNAGE Stirring of the lees in barrel or tank.

BEAD Bubbles. The best sparkling wine always has tiny bubbles, the product of the finest juice fermented in cold cellars.

BIODYNAMICS An intensive viticultural regime of extreme organics, eschewing chemical treatments and seeking a harmonious ecosystem.

BLANC DE BLANCS Literally translates as ‘white from white’. White sparkling wine made exclusively from white grapes, usually chardonnay.

BLANC DE NOIRS Literally ‘white from black’. White sparkling wine made exclusively from the dark-skinned grapes pinot noir and/or meunier. This is achieved by gentle pressing removing the juice from the skins before any colour leaches out.

BRUT Raw/dry, in champagne containing less than 12g/L sugar (formerly less than 15g/L sugar).

BRUT NATURE OR BRUT ZÉRO No added sugar (less than 3g/L sugar in champagne).

CAPSULE Crown cap.

CARBON DIOXIDE The gaseous by-product of fermentation that is responsible for the bubbles in sparkling wine.

CARBONATION The cheapest method of creating sparkling wine, in which the wine is injected with carbon dioxide in the same manner as lemonade.

CHARMAT A method of bulk sparkling wine production in which second fermentation occurs in a pressure tank.

CORKED Cork taint is an all too common wine fault resulting from the presence of 2,4,6 trichloroanisole (TCA) in natural cork. It imparts an off-putting, mouldy, ‘wet cardboard’ or ‘wet dog’ character, suppressing fruit and shortening the length of finish.

CORK TAINT See ‘corked’.

CROWN CAP A metal seal like a beer cap, used to seal a sparkling wine bottle during second fermentation and lees ageing. In Australia, some disgorged sparkling wines are sold under crown cap, a very reliable closure.

CUVÉE The first pressing of the grapes (in Champagne 2,050 litres from 4,000 kilograms of grapes), yielding the best juice. Also refers to an individual blend or style.

DEGREES POTENTIAL The ripeness at which grapes are picked, which determines the alcohol content of the finished wine.

DIAM Mytik DIAM is a brand of sparkling wine closure made by Oeneo, moulded from fragments of cork which have been treated to extract cork taint. Its reliable performance has made it an increasingly popular choice for sparkling wine in recent years.

DISGORGEMENT Removal of a frozen plug of sediment from the neck of the bottle.

DOSAGE The final addition to top up the bottle, usually a mixture of wine and sugar syrup called *liqueur d'expédition* or *liqueur de dosage*. A dosage of 10–12g/L of sugar is typical.

EXTRA BRUT Extra raw/dry (less than 6g/L sugar in champagne).

EXTRA DRY OR EXTRA SEC Off dry (12–17g/L sugar in champagne).

FERMENTATION The conversion of sugar to alcohol by the action of yeasts. Carbonic gas is produced as a by-product.

FLUTE Narrow sparkling wine glass.

GYROPALETTE A large mechanised crate to automatically riddle sparkling wine bottles.

INOCULATE To seed a ferment with yeast.

LATE DISGORGEMENT A sparkling wine that has been matured on its lees for an extended period.

LEES Sediment that settles in the bottom of a tank, barrel or bottle, primarily dead yeast cells.

LIGHTSTRUCK The degradation of wine exposed to ultraviolet light. Sparkling wines in clear bottles are most susceptible.

LIQUEUR DE DOSAGE See ‘*Liqueur d'expédition*’.

LIQUEUR D'EXPÉDITION The final addition to top up the bottle, usually a mixture of wine and sugar syrup.

LIQUEUR DE TIRAGE A mixture of sugar and wine or concentrated grape juice added immediately prior to bottling, to produce the secondary fermentation in bottle.

MACERATION Soaking of red grape skins in their juice in the production of red or rosé wine.

MALIC ACID A naturally occurring acid in grapes and other fruits, particularly green apples. It is most pronounced in grapes in cold climates and is responsible for sparkling wine's searing acidity, which is usually softened through malolactic fermentation.

MALOLACTIC FERMENTATION 'Malo' is the conversion of stronger malic (green apple) acid to softer lactic (dairy) acid.

MÉTHODE TRADITIONNELLE The official name for the traditional method of sparkling winemaking, in which the second fermentation occurs in the bottle in which the wine is sold.

MINERALITY The texture and mouth feel of a wine derived from its soil.

MOUSSE See 'Bead'.

MUSELET Wire cage to hold a sparkling wine cork in the bottle.

NON-VINTAGE (NV) A sparkling wine containing wine from more than one vintage. In Australia, it is permissible to label a wine as a vintage with up to 15% of other vintages.

ORGANICS A viticultural regime that avoids the use of any synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or other treatments. Copper is permitted, though criticised in some circles for a toxicity higher than that of some synthetic products.

OXIDISED A wine that has reacted with oxygen. At its most extreme, oxidation can produce browning in colour, loss of primary fruit, a general flattening of flavours, a shortening of the length of finish, or even a vinegar or bitter taste.

PH The level of acid strength of a wine expressed as a number. Low pH equates to high acidity; 7 is neutral.

PHENOLICS A grape compound responsible for astringency and bitterness in the back palate. It is particularly rich in stems, seeds and skins, and especially prevalent in sparkling wines from warm, dry regions and vintages.

PRESTIGE CUVÉE The flagship sparkling wine or wines of a brand, typically the most expensive.

PRISE DE MOUSSE The second fermentation that creates the bubbles.

PUPITRE Hand riddling rack.

REDUCTIVE A wine made or aged with limited contact with oxygen may develop reductive characters, hydrogen sulphide notes akin to struck flint, burnt match and gunpowder. At their extreme, these can manifest themselves as objectionable notes of rubber, rotten eggs, garlic, onion or cooked cabbage.

REMUAGE The riddling process.

RESERVE WINES Wines held in the cellar for future blending in a non-vintage cuvée. Usually aged in tanks, although sometimes kept in barrels or bottles.

RIDDLING The process of moving the lees sediment into the neck of the bottle prior to disgorgement, either by hand or by gyropalette.

SAIGNÉE A technique in which rosé is made by 'bleeding' off juice from just-crushed pinot noir or meunier grapes after a short maceration (soaking) on skins prior to fermentation.

SEC Dryish (17–32 g/L sugar in champagne).

SOLERA A system of fractional blending through a system of wines of different ages, with the bottled wine drawn from the last stage. Sometimes also used in sparkling wine production to refer to a simplified system of perpetual blending, in which successive vintages are added to a single tank.

STALE Lacking in fruit freshness.

TAILLES Coarser, inferior juice that flows last from the press.

TCA See 'Corked'.

TERROIR A catch-all term for anything that defines the character of a vineyard – soil, micro-climate, altitude, aspect, exposure, slope, drainage, and even the hands that tend it.

TIRAGE Bottling of the blended wine with an addition of sugar and yeast, so as to provoke the second fermentation in bottle.

TRANSFER METHOD A method of sparkling wine production in which second fermentation occurs in bottle before the wine is transferred to a tank and its lees removed, invariably losing some gas, before rebottling.

VIN CLAIR Still base wine that has undergone its primary fermentation and (potentially) malolactic fermentation, but not its secondary fermentation.

VINTAGE Wine from a single year. Australian law permits a wine to be labelled as a vintage provided it contains less than 15% of other vintages.

ZERO DOSAGE No sweetness is added during the final addition to top up the bottle.

TYSON STELZER

Tyson Stelzer is a multi-award winning wine writer, television host and producer, author of 16 wine books, international keynote speaker and wine show chairman and judge. He is the author of five editions of *The Champagne Guide* and the host and co-producer of the television series *People of the Vines Tasmania* and *People of the Vines Barossa*. An accomplished presenter, Tyson has 14 years experience presenting at international events in the UK, USA, France, Japan, Italy, South Africa, Hong Kong, New Zealand and across Australia.



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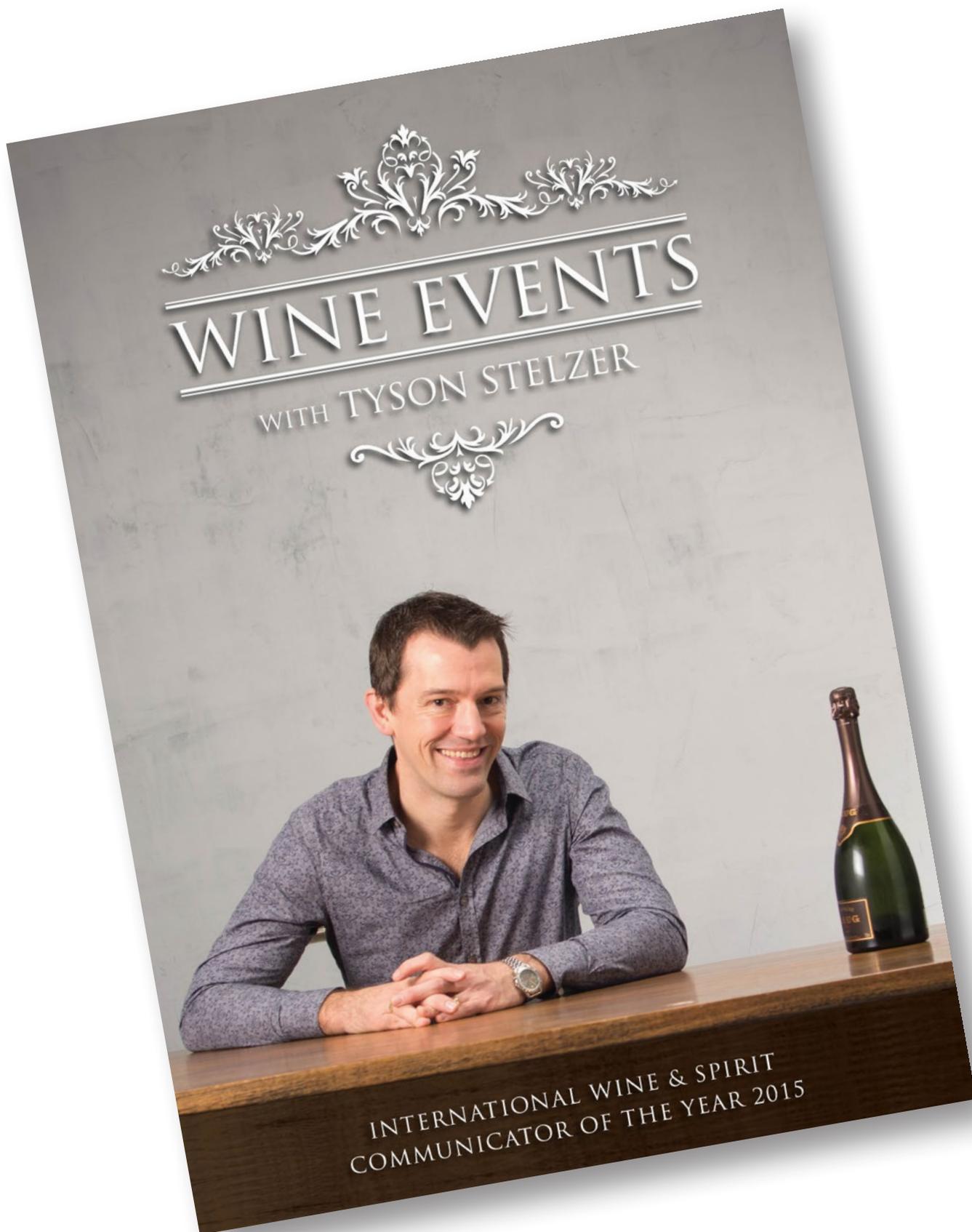
THE
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2018-2019



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His dynamic and informal approach encourages interaction, making wine enjoyable and unpretentious.

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