

WINE News

Get an early start on summer with wines of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.



MAY 3, 2021 FEATURES

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Uncorking Your Summer

By Thomas Smith

There's no doubt about it—this summer is going to be absolutely amazing. We've been through a lot over the last year with mask wearing, social distancing, and staying indoors. But with the vaccine rollout well on its way and COVID numbers plunging across the country, we are quickly getting back to normal. And this summer, I'm sure we will all be making up for lost time. For me, that means sharing meals and great wine with friends and family. Whether sitting on the patio with an icy glass of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, opening a bottle of Aussie Shiraz with burgers on the grill, or sipping rosé poolside, great wine is always a part of my summer routine.

At K&L, we will soon be getting back to business as usual, too. The shops are opening soon, and as always our incredible staff is ready to share new discoveries, exceptional values, and hidden gems with our customers. In this issue, we take a deep dive into the subregions of Marlborough, and share stories from some of our favorite producers like Matt Connell in Central Otago and Torbreck in the Barossa Valley. We'll get into some of the finer points of Australian Riesling, as well as look at some of the exciting wines coming out of Stellenbosch, South Africa and Lake Wanaka in New Zealand.

2017 Ata Rangi Pinot Noir Martinborough

(\$54.99) Ata Rangi produces some of the best Pinot Noir in New Zealand today. With notes of vine-ripened strawberries and black cherries over wet stone, there's both a purity and a depth here that is extraordinary. This explodes across the palate with bright red fruits, vibrant acidity, and silky tannin, all leading to a finish that carries on and on. This is a Pinot Noir you absolutely cannot miss. **98 JS, 98 SK**



2017 Trinity Hill "Homage" Syrah Hawke's Bay

(\$79.99) Undoubtedly the best Syrah being made in New Zealand, the Homage is a powerful, Northern Rhône-styled wine. With soaring aromas of cracked black pepper, dried rosemary, and charcoal, the quality on display here is off the charts. The fruit follows through with black sour plum, candied black cherry, and blackberry fruit that washes over the palate with richly concentrated flavors. Worth cellaring but incredible now. **98 JS, 97 SK**



2015 Leeuwin Estate "Art Series" Cabernet Sauvignon Margaret River Western Australia

(\$39.99) Leeuwin is a top producer from Australia's best region for Cabernet Sauvignon. Brimming with aromas of black cassis, dark cherry, charcoal, and toasty oak, this is mouth-coating and rich on the palate, full of black fruits, and exquisitely balanced with a gently acidic counterpoint. The tannins here are so fine and smooth that the wine disappears almost effortlessly from the glass. **95 W&S, 94 JH**



Cover: Moon over Marlborough. (Photo: New Zealand Wines)

Discovering the Difference in Marlborough

I absolutely adore Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. With intense tropical flavors, over-the-top aromatics and a thirst-quenching acid bite, there's nothing else I'd rather have in my glass on a warm summer day. But what I love most about this variety is how well it express a sense of place. The qualities and characteristics of this extraordinary grape make it sensitive to the slightest nuances of soil and climate. Think about the mineral-driven wines of Sancerre, the citrus and cut-grass character of Bordeaux blanc, or the explosive aromatics of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. But there's more to discover in Marlborough. Let's explore some of the subregions of New Zealand's best-known Sauvignon Blanc appellation for a delicious tutorial in the grape's variety of expressions from *within* one of its marquee regions.

The first and most important subregion is the Wairau Valley. When you think of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, with its powerful fruit flavors and soaring aromatics, this is ground zero. The Wairau is a wide, open plain carved out by a glacier 14,000 years ago, creating Marlborough's Cloudy Bay in the process. Today, the entire valley is brimming with vineyards as far as the eye can see. The warm daytime temperatures in the growing season allow grapes to reach full ripeness while cool ocean breezes help maintain crisp acidity. The wines themselves show big flavors and intense aromatics of passion fruit, pear, and citrus, along with a round, full-mid palate and a crackling finish.

One of my favorite examples is the **2019 Smith & Sheth "Cru" Sauvignon Blanc Wairau Valley Marlborough (\$19.99)** made by winemaking legend Steve Smith (of Craggy Range). With the explosive aromas of pear, quince and stone fruits, this is unmistakably New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc, but so much better than any other you've had. This is an absolute head-turner of a wine, made from the best vineyards in the Wairau, by one of New Zealand's best winemakers. **94 BC, 94 VN**



Another important subregion for Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc is the Awatere Valley. The Awatere is located further to the south, separated from Wairau by the Wither Hills to the north, and its vineyards stretch along a series of terraces carved through the valley by the Awatere River. The climate here is dramatically cooler than the Wairau, and grapes hang on the vines for at least a full week longer to achieve ripeness. The wines are inherently less fruit-forward and display minerally characteristics with taut, electrifying acidity. Think of it as a cross between traditional Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc and Sancerre.



Possibly the best vineyard in the Awatere is Taylors Pass. The **2019 Villa Maria "Taylors Pass" Sauvignon Blanc (\$19.99)** shows exactly what Awatere Sauvignon Blanc is all about. With notes of passion

fruit, nectarine, and honeysuckle complemented by bright, linear acidity, this is a thirst-quencher that's nicely suited for cooling off on a hot day. **95 DC, 95 BC**

About an hour's drive south of Blenheim brings you to the Kekerengu Coast, a remote outpost with only a handful of vineyards. Here it's notably cooler than the other two regions, and most vineyards are planted on small pockets of limestone-rich soil, with some vineyard rows leading right to the coast. The wines of Kekerengu are all about lightning acidity, subdued fruit, and prominent minerality.

The **2019 Astrolabe "Kekerengu Coast" Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough (\$19.99)** captures this profile perfectly. Low in alcohol, with notes of oyster shell, lemongrass, and wet stones, this is a brilliant, vibrant wine that will redefine what you think of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. **94 BC**



After the harvest, the Flowerday's "wee bovine mowers" move in for a munch. (Photo: Te Whare Ra Vineyard & Winery)

And finally, I'd be remiss not to mention my absolute favorite Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand, the **2020 TWR (Te Whare Ra) Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough (\$19.99)**. Jason Flowerday is one of the most in-demand viticulture consultants in Marlborough, and through his work he has found two vineyards that complement one another—one in the Wairua, and one in the Awatere. Their Wairau Valley fruit gives lush fruit, while the Awatere lends cut and structure. The result is a beautiful, and incredibly delicious Sauvignon Blanc that hits all the right spots. **94 SK, 93 JS**

Marlborough Sauvignon Blancs are certainly not "just one thing." With its varied landscapes and high-quality vineyards, Marlborough is a region that is continuing to raise the bar. I truly hope you get the chance to explore these wines yourself, and see just how good they are.



Power and Precision: South Australia's Top Riesling Regions

You might not expect South Australia to be one of the world's greatest sources of Riesling. When most Americans think about Australia, the dry and harsh conditions of the outback are the first images that come to mind—a far cry from the frigid slopes of the Rhine River valley. But in South Australia, two cool-climate regions are producing stellar Rieslings that defy expectation: Eden Valley and Clare Valley. Both regions craft Riesling in dry styles, with gorgeous aromatics and punchy acidity. But what makes the wines from these two valleys different?

Eden Valley lies high in the hills of the Mount Lofty Ranges, just outside of the Barossa Valley. The landscape is what you would expect for Riesling: broad, exposed hills with windswept vineyards planted on steep slopes. Eden Valley, which includes the tiny subregion of High Eden, is planted at altitudes of up to 2,000 feet and cooled by ocean breezes from the Antarctic. These are ideal conditions for Riesling, which prefers cooler temperatures and steep grades, allowing flavor development and acid retention in its ripening grapes.

If Eden Valley has the reputation for producing some of the best Rieslings Australia has to offer, then the **2020 Pewsey Vale Dry Riesling Eden Valley (\$17.99)** is a prime example. Owned by the Smith-Hill family (Yalumba) with winegrowing roots that date back to the 1840s, Pewsey Vale is an iconic Australian Riesling with the quality to back it up. With fragrant notes of lemon blossom, grapefruit, and lime juice, this is austere Riesling with thirst-quenching acidity—nice for sipping on a warm summer day. Named No. 3 on James Suckling's top 100 values of 2020, this is a delicious wine at an unbeatable price. **96 JS**



Another top producer of Eden Valley Riesling is David Powell, who founded Torbreck and spent nearly two decades building it into one of the new classic producers in Australia. Today, Powell is crafting

wines under his Powell & Son label and continues to set the bar astronomically high for wines from Barossa and Eden. The **2018 Powell & Son Riesling Eden Valley (\$29.99)** is built with powerful fruit flavors of rich lemon and lime zest above a mineral-driven frame of crushed stones and fragrant white flowers. This is a masterly effort that competes toe-to-toe with the best Riesling produced anywhere. **94 JS, 91 WS**

About 75 miles north of Eden Valley, along the same mountain range, is the other pillar of Australian Riesling, Clare Valley. Clare is an open plateau with a network of smaller valleys that spill across the valley floor. At a slightly lower elevation of 1,000–1,800 feet, Clare is still pleasantly cool as a whole, but individual sites can vary dramatically in temperature throughout the growing season. Whereas Eden Valley wines tend to have more floral character, Clare Valley Riesling leans more to vibrant citrus flavor that can border on tropical in warm years.

Jim Barry is an icon of wine production in Clare Valley. He began his career there in 1947 before going on to found his eponymous label in 1959. The family still owns and operates the winery today. In 1977, the Barry family purchased the Lodge Hill vineyard, one of the highest elevation vineyards in all of Clare, and have been producing a single vineyard Riesling from this distinctive site ever since. It has always been one of my favorites because it absolutely outperforms its price every time. With flavors of yuzu, lemon zest, and elderflower, the **2019 Jim Barry "Lodge Hill" Dry Riesling Clare Valley (\$16.99)** packs an aromatic punch with a mouthwatering, crisp bite. Delicious. **92 BC, 91 DC**



In addition to Jim Barry, we're thrilled to have a small allocation of Clare Riesling in stock from Adelina. The winery is located in the hamlet of Wendouree, the beating heart of the Clare Valley. Separated by a fence from A.P. Birks, who makes the most sought-after cult wines in all of Australia, Adelina produces Shiraz, Grenache, and Riesling of extraordinary quality from their tiny property. The **2020 Adelina Riesling Clare Valley South Australia (\$24.99)** is an absolute head-turner. This wine makes an impact, with intense flavors of stone fruits and Makrut lime, driven by a bright line of searing acid that carries to the finish.

The next time you think about picking out a Riesling, think about Australia. Eden and Clare Valley are both producing stunning examples of the variety with value and quality that are off the charts.



Riesling ripens in the South Australian sun: Sure it's sweet—but only before it's picked and made into deliciously dry Aussie wine. (Photo: Shutterstock)

An Australian Powerhouse: Torbreck

There are few stories in the world of Australian wine as legendary as that of Torbreck, founded in the mid-1990s by David Powell. Torbreck is named after the Scottish forest where Powell worked as a lumberjack in his youth. Upon returning to his native Australia, he began his winemaking career working for some of the best Shiraz producers in the Barossa before striking out on his own in 1994. Torbreck was established on one central principle: older vines yield better wines. Scouring the Barossa Valley, Powell discovered multiple parcels with vines over a century old. These vineyards were small plots, often overgrown and neglected by their owners. Powell struck deals to rehabilitate and care for these lost vineyards in exchange for the right to purchase the grapes for Torbreck. Not only did this give Powell access to some of the oldest vines the Barossa had to offer, it also gave him the ability to control every aspect of his production from vine to glass.



Grapes linger another day on the vine in the warm Barossa Valley—for that little extra flavor and power. (Photo: Shutterstock)

The results were astounding. Since its first release in 1995, Torbreck's RunRig Shiraz has been scored 99 points by Wine Advocate seven times, and 100 points twice. Robert Parker named Torbreck one of the world's great wine estates, and it sits in the top tier of Langton's Classification of Australian Wine.

In the decades since, Torbreck's approach to old-vine Shiraz has inspired a generation of winemakers in the Barossa Valley. Acclaimed producers like Dan Standish, Sami-Odi's Fraser McKinley, and even David Powell's son Callum are revitalizing Barossa's old-vine vineyards and creating Australia's top Shiraz. The following is a selection of some of the incredible wines that Torbreck has to offer.

The **2019 Torbreck "Woodcutter's" Shiraz Barossa Valley (\$19.99)** pays tribute to Powell's time in Scotland. For me, this is without a doubt the best value Shiraz being produced in Barossa today. What I love about this wine is the dark and concentrated



fruit: black cassis and blackberry offset with notes of smoke and bacon. Yet for all its power and focus, it has a perfect acid cut, keeping the fruit balanced and vibrant. This wine has plenty of rich flavor, and with soft and velvety tannins, it's a natural pairing for burgers, ribs, or a steak on the grill. **92 WE**

One of the more unique wines in the Torbreck lineup is the **2019 Torbreck "Woodcutter's" Semillon Barossa Valley (\$19.99)**. While the majority of Australian Semillon is grown in the Hunter Valley, picked early, and stored in stainless steel to preserve freshness, the Torbreck Semillon takes a different angle on this classic Bordeaux grape. Grown from the Madeira clone—which is found almost exclusively in the Barossa—the Torbreck Semillon sees a much longer hang time to help develop flavor and complexity. In addition, it is aged in barrel for weight and mouthfeel. Aromas of honeycomb, marzipan, and lime are all on display here in a richly textured, yet crisply balanced Semillon that is both totally uncommon and utterly delicious.



The **2017 Torbreck "Descendant" Shiraz Barossa Valley (\$99.99)** is where the Torbreck wines start to get serious. The Descendent is the product of one of the most important vineyard projects in Australian wine. Due to their relationships with old-vine growers in Barossa, Torbreck was able to secure budwood from some of the best and oldest vines across the valley and use them to establish a new vineyard in the Maranga District. Propagated entirely from these rare cuttings taken from vines over 100 years old, there is no other vineyard like this anywhere, and the wine shows it. Built on rich, black fruit along with flavors of mocha and anise, it sits right at the intersection of decadence and balance. **96 RP, 95 WS**

On a different note, the **2017 Torbreck "The Factor" Shiraz Barossa Valley (\$94.99)** is one of the most ageable wines in the Torbreck lineup. The Factor is sourced from a handful of family vineyards throughout the Barossa, most of which were planted in the 1800s, whose vines continue to produce dark, concentrated Shiraz to this day. Structured with powerful tannins, The Factor shows black fruits, hickory smoke, and baking spices, and develops into savory, earthy tones of leather and cherry liqueur. This is a gorgeous, collectible Shiraz that pays dividends in the cellar. **96 JS**



And of course, no discussion regarding Torbreck is complete without mention of the **2017 Torbreck "RunRig" Shiraz Barossa Valley (\$179.99)**. This flagship wine is a blend of six vineyards, with an astounding vine age ranging from 120 to 170 years old, and is aged in 50% new French oak. This groundbreaking Shiraz continues to be every bit as good year after year. Just as Torbreck itself, it is one of the great, new icons of Australian wine. **98 RP, 95 JS**

The Buzz in Central Otago: Matt Connell

At K&L we're always on the hunt for the next big thing. When I first came across the wines of Matt Connell a few years ago, I was astounded by the quality. Gorgeous, with perfumed fruit, and full of nuanced detail, the wines left me scratching my head and saying to myself, "Who is this guy?"

Connell is a talented winemaker, seasoned through decades of working in extraordinary wineries. From his start at Wynns in Australia, to Oregon's Elk Cove and Central Otago's Akarua, Connell eventually decided to strike out on his own in 2016, settling in Central Otago. From the beginning his focus has been on handcrafting small lots of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay sourced from vineyards in Lowburn and Bendigo, with a level of detailed winemaking that borders on obsessive.

From the get-go, Connell's wines have been met with rave reviews across New Zealand. His first three vintages scored 95 points from both local wine critics, Sam Kim and Bob Campbell. Connell's 2018 vintage Pinot Noir swept New Zealand's prestigious International Wine Show, winning the Champion Pinot Noir award. I knew we needed to bring the wines to the US and share them with our customers. I am extraordinarily excited to have these wines in our selection. Taste them for yourself and see what all the buzz is about.

The **2019 Matt Connell "Rendition" Pinot Noir Central Otago (\$29.99)** comes out swinging. Sourced from vineyards in the Lowburn and Bendigo subregions of Central Otago, it displays aromas of blackberry, raspberry compote, and dark cherry. On the palate, wild strawberry, black fruits, and savory undertones are displayed with an excellent sense of balance and drive. The tannin profile is softened, and the light hint of French oak complements the depth and sweetness of fruit on the palate. **95 SK, 94 BC**



With the **2019 Matt Connell "Lowburn" Chardonnay Central Otago (\$21.99)** Connell proves that Central Otago's Chardonnay can perform on right on par with the Pinot Noir. On the nose are traces of lime zest and pineapple, setting up the palate, where all the real fireworks happen. Richly decadent with butter, stone fruit and brioche, this is a master class in exquisitely crafted, robust Chardonnay. Yet for all its layers of flavor, it's also light on its feet, with crackling acidity. This is an exceptional, mouth-coating Chardonnay. **95 SK, 92 BC**



The Beauty of Lake Wanaka Pinot Noir

Lake Wanaka is a place like no other. Considered one of the most beautiful sites in the world, it sits at the northern border of New Zealand's Central Otago where the lake's crystal water reflects the year-round snowy mountaintops. In addition to its natural wonders, the Lake Wanaka wine region is home to some of the most lovely Pinot Noir New Zealand has to offer. The climate here is the only truly continental climate in the country. Vineyards regularly see snowfall in the winter, while exposed to piercing sunshine during the growing season. The result is powerful Pinot Noir with finesse, balance, and complexity.

Andrew Donaldson lives and breathes Pinot Noir. It is the only grape planted in his family's small vineyard, nestled on the hillsides of Mount Barker in Wanaka. Despite only growing one variety, Donaldson is a walking encyclopedia of Pinot Noir clones and has dozens of different ones planted across the vineyard. His **2018 Akitu "A2" Pinot Noir Central Otago (\$24.99)** is a gorgeous example of what thoughtful vineyard design and the terroir of Wanaka can produce. Airy, elegant, and incredibly floral, this is Pinot Noir with a light touch. This would easily be at home among any of the top wines you'd find in the Sonoma Coast today—but at a fraction of the price. **95 BC, 93 SK**



In addition to the A2, Donaldson also produces his flagship Pinot Noir. The **2018 Akitu "A1" Pinot Noir Central Otago (\$34.99)** is crafted from the best vineyard blocks and fermented whole cluster. The result is a more powerful expression of Pinot, structured with crunchy tannin and bright acidity that gives it the ability to improve for years to come. A quick decant and the A1 is showing gorgeously already, but some time in the cellar will turn this into something magical. **94 SK**



Rippon is without doubt the most recognized producer in the region, and is generally regarded as having the most beautiful vineyard in the world. Proprietor Nick Mill's family has been producing incredible Pinot Noir from the shores of Wanaka for three generations. The **2017 Rippon "Mature Vine" Pinot Noir Lake Wanaka Central Otago (\$59.99)** is an utter epiphany, with floral notes of garrigue among crushed stone and warm, black fruits. The palate equally measures up with dark, layered fruits among brambles and earth. There are faintly Burgundian aspects to this, but the sheer power and drive of dark fruit gives it depth and expression all its own. A wine as singularly beautiful as Wanaka itself. **99 JS**



Vintage Report: Margaret River's Astounding 2018s

There are two types of vintages in Margaret River: good vintages and really good vintages. The region enjoys consistency in its weather patterns throughout the growing season, and rarely contends with biting spring frosts or torrential rains at harvest. But, that's not to say that all vintages are the same. Every once in a while, Margaret River will benefit from a flawless growing season, yielding wines that push the region to a whole other benchmark of quality.

The 2018 vintage in Margaret River is one of those rare vintages that only come along once or twice in a decade. A wet spring brought moisture to vineyard soils and helped them recover from drought, while the growing season featured remarkably consistent temperatures, with no cold periods or heat spikes to speak of. This allowed slow, steady ripening and flavor development in the grapes, granting producers the freedom to pick at the exact right moment. "The 2018 growing season was just beautiful," explains Vanya Cullen of Cullen Wines. "Everything happened in rhythm, at the right time, and the wines have such intensity."

We are starting to see the first of these wines trickle in to the US, and critics and fans of the region are taking note. In a recent vintage report, wine critic James Suckling asks the bold question, "Western Australia's greatest vintage ever?" From the wines we've managed to taste so far, the answer has been a resounding, "Yes." We've put together a selection of our favorite 2018 Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignons so you can judge for yourself.

Robert Oatley was established by a five-generation Australian family, and produces a number of tasty and charismatic wines from McLaren Vale and Margaret River. But compared to any other vintage, the **2018 Robert Oatley "Signature Series" Cabernet Sauvignon Margaret River Western Australia (\$17.99)** is a completely different animal. With layered black currant fruit cut with spicy oak, there's excellent balance and concentration, as well as nuances of tobacco leaf and black olive that keep you returning to the glass over and over. There's no reason why a wine at this price point should be this good. **95 JH**



Mike Kerrigan was already a Margaret River veteran when he purchased the Hay Shed Hill property back in 2006. His **2018 Hay Shed Hill Cabernet Sauvignon Margaret River Western Australia (\$22.99)** is a delicious Cabernet that can keep pace with some of the best wines being made in the region. Occupying the space between medium and full-bodied, this wine is elegantly styled, brimming with blackberry fruit and intense aromatics of bell pepper and mint. Its good concentration and aromatic intensity make it well worth seeking out.

No winery in Margaret River has had a journey like Xanadu's. Established back in 1977, Xanadu had made middling wines for decades as their vineyards slowly fell into disrepair. In 2005, the property was purchased by Doug Rathbone, who spared no expense in his ambitions to turn this dilapidated property into a Margaret River icon. Rathbone's efforts culminated in the 2016 "Estate" Cabernet, which won Australia's prestigious Jimmy Watson Award in 2018. In my opinion, the **2018 Xanadu "Estate" Cabernet Sauvignon Margaret River (\$24.99)** is every bit as good as the award-winning wine from two years ago. Blackberry fruit, graphite, cedar, and bay leaf all intertwine within the glass, placed in a dense frame of soft tannins and rich fruit. This is one of the most dependable producers at its price point. **94 JH, 94 JS**



Cullen is one of the biggest names in Margaret River today. This is not only due to the acclaim for their wines vintage after vintage, but also their dedication to environmentalism and sustainability. Their wines are produced organically, biodynamically, certified sustainable, and carbon neutral. They plant trees after every vintage across their estate in order to offset carbon from each vintage. Their wines also happen to be phenomenal. The **2018 Cullen Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot Margaret River Western Australia (\$39.99)** is a blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon and 37% Merlot, with a splash of Cabernet Franc. There's depth, richness, and complexity all operating at full volume with a taut wall of fine tannin and plush mouthfeel. Plum, violets, black currant, and nuances of cigar box all work in this exceptional blend that could easily stand up to wines from Napa at twice the price. **95 JH, 93 JS**



It wouldn't be an Aussie wine feature without 'roos in the vineyard. (Photo courtesy of Xanadu Vineyards)



The Age of Stellenbosch: Cabernet Sauvignon and Blends

Stellenbosch has always held a unique relationship with the wines of Bordeaux. Call it aspirational, but for decades, if not centuries, the producers in Stellenbosch have always aimed to make wines like those found in the Médoc. In many ways these two regions are similar. Just like Bordeaux, Stellenbosch is cooled by its proximity to the ocean, and vineyards are planted on gravels and clay. Most Stellenbosch reds are Cabernet and/or Merlot, blended with other classic Bordeaux varieties. Further, due to their harvest occurring in March through May, many Stellenbosch winemakers spend the other half of the year working harvests in Bordeaux, learning to hone their craft from the masters.

But how does Stellenbosch shape up against the great wines of Bordeaux? Can the wines improve with age? I've always found that Stellenbosch wines have more generous fruit and a somewhat softened tannin profile. They represent excellent value. And while the classified growth wines of Bordeaux can age for decades in the best vintages, Stellenbosch blends tend to come around a touch sooner. A good rule of thumb is that these blends really enter their prime drinking windows at eight to twelve years after the vintage. We currently have in stock a variety of Stellenbosch Bordeaux blends, ranging from perfectly aged to younger cellar-worthy collectibles, so you can see for yourself how these wines compare.

Vergelegen translates to "situated far off" in Dutch, which was an accurate description of this property when it was first planted in the hills of southern Stellenbosch in 1685. Today these are the hills of Somerset West, one of the region's coolest subclimates. Under the guidance of winemaker Andrew Van Rensburg, who has committed his life and career to the property, the wines of this historic and celebrated estate are again setting the benchmark for what Stellenbosch has to offer. With a rounded fruit core of black cassis and black cherry above a bouquet of earth and tobacco leaf, the **2013 Vergelegen "Premium" Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot Stellenbosch (\$22.99)** is a proper, and perfectly aged Stellenbosch Bordeaux blend that vastly outperforms its price.

To Bordeaux lovers, the name May-Eliane de Lencquesaing should sound familiar. Her family owned second growth Pichon-Lalande for nearly 250 years. She purchased an estate in South Africa in 2004, and since selling Pichon-Lalande in 2007, has poured her resources and family knowledge into the wines of Glenelly Estate. The **2013 Glenelly "Lady May" Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch (\$29.99)** is the result of Bordelais craft and South African terroir. The Glenelly is aged in 100% new French oak, but with a little age on the wine, the spice and vanilla have fully integrated with the fruit, resulting in a blend with depth and complexity. **94 WE, 93 VN**



When de Lencquesaing purchased Glenelly, she chose the property directly across the road from Rustenberg. This was no mistake, as this is one of Stellenbosch's most iconic producers. The **2015 Rustenberg "John X Merriman" Bordeaux Blend Stellenbosch (\$29.99)** is one of their standouts. Named after the family scion who purchased the estate in 1892, the John Merriman is 52% Merlot, 41% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Malbec, with faint traces of Cab Franc and Petit Verdot. A little more Right Bank in its sensibilities than Left, the John Merriman is soft, plush, and an utter joy to drink. It will show generously now, but no rush.

Meerlust is equally a Stellenbosch classic. Founded in 1756, the property has remained in the hands of the Myburgh family for nearly eight generations. After an inspiring trip to Bordeaux, Hannes Myburgh began planting vines on the family property in 1980. The **2016 Meerlust "Rubicon" Bordeaux Blend Stellenbosch South Africa (\$29.99)** is the result of the property's continued dedication to producing Bordeaux-style wines that sit among the best of Stellenbosch. With 49% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Petit Verdot, the Rubicon is just starting to come into its own. With a powerful presence of toasty oak and rich, densely layered black fruits, this could easily be mistaken for top-quality Cru Bourgeois any day of the week. **90 RP**

Despite growing up locally in the Bay Area, Andrea Mullineux has gone on to become one of South Africa's most acclaimed winemakers. She launched her eponymous wine label in 2007, and has won numerous awards, including *Wine Enthusiast's* Winemaker of the Year in 2017. Although she's known for old-vine Syrah and Chenin Blanc from Swartland, Leeu Passant is Mullineux's Stellenbosch-focused project.

The **2018 Leeu Passant (Mullineux Family Wines) Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch (\$39.99)** displays Mullineux's exceptional winemaking skill in a classically structured 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Sourced from old-vine parcels and cooler sites across the region, the Leeu Passant expresses black currant and blueberry fruit with excellent richness and density. This is worth cellaring and proof that the Bordeaux blends of Stellenbosch will age as beautifully as their counterparts in Bordeaux.



There's nothing better than a chilled glass of salmon-pink-hued rosé on a warm, salmon-pink-hued evening. (Middle-Earth™ Vineyards photo: Chocolate Dog Studio)

Exciting and Surprising Rosés for the Season

Rosé season is my favorite time of year. There are lots of reasons why I love this style of wine: it makes an excellent aperitif; it's a versatile food pairing wine; and always makes a great shot for your Instagram profile. And don't get me wrong: I love the wines of Provence, but there's a whole world of rosé out there to explore. Here are a few highlights of the season for anyone looking to try something new:

The **2020 TWR (Te Whare Ra) "SV5182 Single Vineyard"**

Rosé Marlborough (\$15.99) may be the most exciting pink wine of the season. For one thing, it's back—after skipping a few years in their winemaking program. At TWR, they prefer to make a savory, light-hued style, from direct-pressed Pinot Noir grapes picked for a rosé, not a red wine saignée, from their acclaimed vineyard just outside of Renwick—the same source of their \$40 single-vineyard Pinot Noir. **94 BC, 94 SK**

Adi Badenhorst is one of the leading figures in the South African wine renaissance that has taken place over the last decade. He inspired a number of young winemakers to begin discovering old-vine vineyards, creating profound wines that set the new benchmark for quality in South Africa. The **2020 A.A. Badenhorst "Secateurs" Rosé Swartland (\$16.99)** is a blend of Shiraz, Grenache, and Cinsault sourced from old vines planted on hillsides in the Paardeberg Mountains. With aromas of rose above strawberry and cranberry red fruits, this is one of my favorite rosés, year after year.

One of the big stories from New Zealand last year was Middle Earth Sauvignon Blanc. We managed to score an exclusive deal with this family-owned and operated



winery last year and sold over 10,000 bottles. They also make a delicious and unique rosé from their estate in Nelson.

The **2020 Middle Earth Rosé Nelson (\$14.99)** is produced entirely from Pinot Meunier, one of the three principal varieties grown in Champagne. As a rosé, it's soft and fruity with notes of cherry and watermelon, offset with zesty acidity, giving the wine excellent balance. **90 WE**

Pinotage is a uniquely South African grape variety, made from a crossing of Pinot Noir and Cinsault at the University of Stellenbosch in 1925. Although it's typically a medium-bodied and spicy red, more and more producers in South Africa are using Pinotage to create delicious rosé with a fruity profile and thirst-quenching acidity. You can't go wrong with Kanonkop, widely regarded as the premier producer of Pinotage in South Africa. The **2019 Kanonkop "Kadette" Pinotage Rosé Stellenbosch (\$15.99)** is direct-press, made from grapes in the cooler coastal regions. With strawberry and pomegranate fruit, along with a touch of telltale cinnamon spice, this would be a great match for salmon right off the grill.

Finally, one of my all-time favorite Australian rosés is the nonvintage **Jansz "Premium Rosé" Brut Tasmania (\$19.99)**. Jansz was founded as a joint venture between Australia's Yalumba and the Roederer Champagne house, who recognized Tasmania's potential for high-quality sparkling wines. The Jansz rosé is made in the traditional method with all the care and attention you'd find from Champagne. With soft fruit and creamy texture, this is a gorgeous wine at a great price. **91 JS, 91 WE**



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