



tastingnotes

Welcome to the 100 Best Australian Wine list for 2010. As always this list is the result of exhaustive tastings over the last twelve months and it represents the finest one hundred Australian wines on the shelves in the UK today.

This year I have introduced a brand new initiative - the Hall of Fame - and I congratulate the names below for making this imperial grade.

Cullen, De Bortoli, Fox Gordon, Hardy's, Jacob's Creek, Knappstein, McWilliam's, Mitolo, Penfolds, Peter Lehmann, St. Hallett, The Lane Vineyard, Tyrrell's, Wirra Wirra, Yalumba

These fifteen magnificent producers have had one or more wines in every 100 Best Australian Wines list since its inception in 2004. They are the inaugural members of my Hall of Fame. Their wines, along with this year's 100 Best, will be used as the vanguard of my continued push to celebrate and educate the world about fine Australian wine. They reflect what is exciting, engaging, passionate and essential about Australian wine and they have all gained a place in the very highest echelons of the world of wine.



www.matthewjukes.com




 **NV Jacob's Creek, Blanc de Blancs, Australia** **£10**
 Hats off to the great Phil Laffer, as he departs the Titan that is Jacob's Creek for pastures new. This sparkler is a worthy wine to toast his decades of over-performance. Fresh, light and effervescent, it shows none of the leaden-footed nature of so many of Australia's inexpensive fizzies. Cue a twenty-one cork salute.
Agent: Pernod Ricard
Stockists: Sainsbury's, ASDA, Budgens, Somerfield, Londis, Co-op

2008 Wolf Blass, Yellow Label Pinot Noir / Chardonnay, Sparkling Brut, Australia **£10**
 Be prepared to be shocked by the intensity of colour, depth of aroma, and creaminess on show in the brand new Yellow Label vintage sparkler. Having waded around 'the biggest Champagne tasting in the world' (at the Banqueting House in London) earlier this year, it is frankly hilarious to note that this unlikely wine can do it better and cheaper than the vast majority of the opposition by some considerable margin.
Agent: Fosters
Stockists: Morrisons, Tesco (wine by the case)

NV Jansz, Rosé, Tas **£11**
 It's no surprise that, on an island which specialises in making Pinot Noir, the rosé version of Jansz's NV brother and sister act would one day come out on top as the dominant sibling. With more colour than one might dare to drip into a wine of this price point, this is the most evocative and keenly balanced ten pound rosé on the planet. If you don't believe me - take just one sip and you will be a convert.
Agent: Negotiants
Stockists: Oddbins, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Selfridges

WHITES

Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc

 **2009 Jacob's Creek, Sauvignon Blanc, SEA** **£7**
 Inexpensive Sauvignon Blanc is not Australia's trump card, however, when the recipe is as precise as it is in this mass-produced wine, there is no need to look to Chile, South Africa or indeed, New Zealand for solace. It strikes me that JC is able to do the most difficult wines brilliantly while sometimes stumbling on Australia's preferred varieties. Having said that the Shiraz/Cabernet and Grenache/Shiraz blends are jolly good warriors and this sniper-like Sauv is a mere 11.5% ABV and lacks nothing in impact. Good work team. With Bernard Hickin now running with the baton we can expect more of the same.
Agent: Pernod Ricard
Stockists: Tesco, Budgens, Londis

2009 Vasse Felix, Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon, Margaret River, WA **£10**
 Vasse Felix has leap-frogged all comers this year in the WA SBS field - this is great news for restaurateurs and private clients alike because this cracker is already drinking perfectly and it is stunning value for money. There is only so far that I like to push the grassy element of these wines before it dominates the senses and VF has judged it perfectly this year. This is one portfolio which has sky-rocketed in quality of late and I am eager for more!
Agent: Negotiants
Stockists: Waitrose



2009 The Gum, Semillon/Sauvignon Blanc, Adelaide Hills, SA

£10

The team at M&S knows a sure thing when it sees it and for more than five years now The Gum has entranced its more discerning customers with the Sauvignon Blanc grape. Step forward a Sem/Sauv blend which raises the drama quotient further, while soothing your palate with rivulets of elegance and calm. Class and restraint are matched with deliciousness and the results are so good you'll want to drink it on the train on your way home, so buy two bottles please!

Agent: The Lane

Stockists: Marks & Spencer



2009 McWilliam's, Mount Pleasant Elizabeth Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW

£10

Elizabeth '09 is silky smooth and she already shows a precocity and charm that one might expect to see three or four years down the track. With so much allure so young, it is a very good bet that this wine might turn out to be one of the greatest ever incarnations of this delectable variety. With prices still barely requiring a second thought it is essential that you invest in this Grand Vin now and be one of the first to recognise its inevitable and long-underestimated true worth.

Agent: PLB

Stockists: contact Istephens@mcwilliamswines.com.au

2009 Shaw & Smith, Sauvignon Blanc, Adelaide Hills, SA

£12

Is this the finest S&S SB ever? An early glimpse at this wine last year suggested that it is and repeated encounters ever since (many such goes, I am fortunate to report) have confirmed this thought. Purity and length are the only two elements worth considering after the flavour boxes have been ticked and this wine excels in both disciplines.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Waitrose, Harvey Nichols, Corks Out, Philglas & Swiggot, Wholefoods

2009 Tamar Ridge, Kayena Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Tas

£12

The Kayena Vineyard is home to not only this staggeringly self-assured Sauvignon Blanc, but it also gave birth to a spectacular '08 Chardonnay. My fascination with Tassie Sauvignon continues apace - the distinct lack of tropical notes coupled with bracing acidity and lithe citrus themes makes for invigorating drinking. I detect a minerality here, too, which harks back to top flight Old World Sauvignon. With other countries losing the Sauvignon plot altogether, who'd have thought that little old Tasmania might mount another unlikely island assault on our senses.

Agent: Awin Barratt Siegel

Stockists: Charles Steevenson, Wine in Cornwall, Ex Cellar, Australian Wine Agencies, Revelstoke Wine, Bowland Forest Vinters, New Fine Wines/Hawkshead, Connolly's Wine Merchants, Amps Fine Wine

2009 Keith Tulloch, Field of Mars Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW

£17

Keith's estate 2009 Semillon would have got the nod this year were it not for the opportunity to taste this otherworldly Field of Mars wine. Made from a single, quarter hectare block of Sem, this is one of the most elemental, mineral-rich and yet, gossamer light versions of this variety I have ever tasted. Do anything in your power to find this wine because it might go some way to explaining why some people are so Messianically captivated by Hunter Semillon.

Agent: Boutinot

Stockists: The Vineyard



2005 Peter Lehmann, Margaret Semillon, Barossa Valley, SA

£15

Try to imagine all of the least chic elements of white wine in one glass - prominent oak, mature Semillon, a really buxom body, beeswax and lanolin notes, overt tropical charm. Well, guess what? In any other wine, just one of these characteristics would warrant a finger-wagging dismissal. However, '05 Margaret has them all (count 'em) and you are unlikely to find a more polarising and yet more spectacular wine this year. Drunk with roast chicken and dauphinoise potatoes there is nothing finer - medieval dining has never lost its appeal!

Agent: Enotria

Stockists: Australian Wines on Line, SWIG, Harrison Fine Wines, Edencroft Fine Wines

 **2004 Tyrrell's, Belford Single Vineyard Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW** **£16**
It is great to know that Tyrrell's has decided to ship more of its single vineyard Semillons than ever before into the UK. HVD is a more forward proposition for those of you who favour a more laid back style, while Belford has a more linear, concentrated, edgy appeal and for that reason it romped across the line and into the 100 Best.
Agent: Fells
Stockists: tbc

weird and wonderful whites

 **2009 Fox Gordon, Abby Viognier, Adelaide Hills, SA** **£12**
It is funny this year that people famous for red wines have more white wines on the list and vice versa. So if I tell you that the most exciting wine in Tash Mooney's portfolio this year is a Viognier please don't be distracted from the brilliance that is her 2008 Eight Uncles Shiraz, too. 2009 Abby takes twenty minutes or so to loosen up in the glass. When she has removed her spectacles and shaken out her hair, this Viognier is an extraordinary creation. Lighter than Virgilius, but every bit as fine and long - this is a style of wine that even those in the Northern Rhône struggle to make with this degree of success.
Agent: Fox Gordon
Stockists: Oddbins

2009 First Drop, Bella Coppia Arneis, Adelaide Hills, SA **£12**
It is no surprise that the mercurial Matt Gant is the first winemaker to score an Arneis in the 100 Best. That's not to say that I haven't chewed through a fair few failures for the team before arriving at this glistening example. The aim with this characterful (and oft awkward) variety is to harness as much of its floral charm as possible, without loading it with sour phenolics. When judged correctly (and there are only a handful in Piemonte who regularly crack its code), this is a sublime and thirst-quenching accompaniment to intricately assembled Asian cuisine.
Agent: First Drop Wines
Stockists: contact matt@firstdropwines.com

2009 Tim Adams, Pinot Gris, Clare Valley, SA **£12**
Tim misses out on a Riesling inclusion this year because his PG is so darn good. Once again balance and complexity are all that is required to score a PG hit in this list, but this year so many wines have missed the mark with their ponderous navel-gazing flavours. Tim's wine initially glides across the palate smiling and then it impales your uvula to the back of your head with one deft draught of acidity. This pain is exquisite and you go back for more.
Agent: Australian Wine Agencies
Stockists: Ozwines, www.australianwinecentre.co.uk

2009 Bremerton, Verdelho, Langhorne Creek, SA **£13**
There is little point in searching for this variety unless you are committed to finding a perfect example. Bremerton's pineapple chunk and Mohito-tang Verdelho awakens the senses and punctures your taste buds with innocent enthusiasm and unbridled joie de vivre. This grape rarely refreshes as well as it does in this wine and there is nothing more to add. So call off the search party, you have found your quarry.
Agent: Seckford
Stockists: Cambridge Wine Cellars, Harrogate Fine Wine, Hedley Wright, Great Grog, Noel Young, Harvey Nichols

2009 Mitchelton, Airstrip Marsanne/Roussanne/Viognier, Nagambie Lakes, Vic **£15**

This unassuming wine was my highest scoring white at the Bibendum Wine trade tasting back in January. The finest elements of each grape are seamlessly sewn together in a model of perfect tailoring. Full and flavoursome and yet with crunchy, lip-smacking acidity this is a wine that should only be served with the finest, line-caught fish. I am struggling to think of a Southern Rhône equivalent which comes close to the majesty of this wine at twice the price. It should be on every Michelin star restaurant's list in the country, because serious food needs this degree of class in the glass.

Agent: Bibendum


Stockists: Bibendum

2009 Petaluma, Viognier, Adelaide Hills, SA **£15**

A change of tack has occurred with '09 Petaluma's lusty Viognier because there are terrific greengage and quince notes which carve a trench through the fleshy peach theme ensuring this big wine falls into balance in a trice. Rich and refreshing is not usually possible in the Viognier world but '09 Petaluma manages to be both, and that is what will win it a new brigade of followers. Interestingly, Petaluma's Chardonnay is getting close to a renaissance and it's this Viognier which is showing it the way!

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Bibendum

 **2008 Yalumba, The Virgilius, Eden Valley, SA** **£26**

Virgilius continues its weight-loss programme, now solely concentrating on definition and tone. It is hard to engender masses of finesse into a full-bodied Viognier, however the pin pricks of lime zest, shards of ginger, flecks of cinnamon and crunchy pineapple core cunningly interrupt the lava flow of peach and apricot nectar, making this an extremely stylish wine indeed. Never has big(ish) been so beautiful. Don't miss out of the '08 Eden Valley Viog, either, because it is a diva-in-waiting and there's a big wodge of stock over here!

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Selfridges, Harrods, Noel Young

Riesling

 **2009 St. Hallett, Eden Valley Riesling, SA** **£9**

Try as I might to ignore this wine in favour of the rest of the St. Hallett red portfolio, the aroma grabs you by your olfactory bulb and never lets go and so it would be criminal not to include it in this list of greats. Hypnotic, sensual, melon, pear and lemon meringue notes cavort around the palate making this an immediate hit for inexpensive, ultra-high quality dining. I have never drunk an old one - leave that to other labels and dive into this stunner on day one without a care in the world.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Bibendum

 **2009 Knapstein, Hand Picked Riesling, Clare Valley, SA** **£10**

This Riesling is probably the cheapest Trophy-winning entry in my 100. I was judging in Canberra when it picked up this gong and it was a joy to be part of the process. For a wine that can be bought for nine quid (and on occasion discounted as low as £7) it is frankly an unmissable proposition. What's even more incredible about this estate is that the '09 Ackland Single Vineyard Riesling (its bigger brother) also picked up a Gold medal at this National Show, too. These are truly great wines which reach a fairly large audience already, but they deserve to be mentioned in the same breath as Loosen et al and drunk in much larger volumes.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Majestic, Bibendum

2009 Pewsey Vale, Eden Valley Riesling, SA**£10**

It was a toss-up this year whether '09 Pewsey would get carded with a mention for '04 Contours or the other way 'round. Both wines are of stellar quality but '04 Contours needs even more than its six years (can you believe it?) to drink perfectly and so this neat, little, gymnastic Riesling wins its spot in this year's century. So radically different in flavour than the Knappstein, Pewsey personifies Eden Valley's feminine charms while still retaining a nerve of steel. Refreshing and uplifting, but quietly menacing at the same time - the wine with the dragon tattoo.

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Oddbins, Noel Young

2009 Petaluma, Hanlin Hill Riesling, Clare Valley, SA**£11**

Oh, the brown bottle, love it or loathe it, Petaluma's brown glass is a siren call to the senses. I drank a bottle of 1990 PR earlier this year and it was on epic form. There is no reason to think that this outstanding '09 vintage won't go that distance, too - incredible when you think about it. With more structure and muscle than many, this is a main course Riesling, as opposed to a fresh-faced-fish-friendly-fella. As much as you'd like to crack an ice cold bottle when you walk through the door after a hard day's work, slip any white in first, because Hanlin Hill offers much more than just primary refreshment.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Waitrose, Oddbins, Bibendum

2009 O'Leary Walker, Watervale Riesling, Clare Valley, SA**£12**

The undisputed quality of the 2009 vintage is clear to see in David and Nick's tremendous Watervale cuvée. As always their wines flatter in their youth - sleek, polished, glistening and lascivious - so this beauty looks ready to devour right now. Don't be fooled though because its undoubted succulence and harmony will continue to grow over the next five years with metronomic precision. Top vintages in the Clare Valley are awesome occurrences and everyone should be drawn to their wonder. This is, after all, the finest value, ultra-boutique wine region in the world.

Agent: Fortitude Wines

Stockists: contact Fortitude on 01903 889960

**2004 Peter Lehmann, Wigan Eden Valley Riesling, SA****£15**

In the absence of a Riesling classification system in Australia (I suggested one eight years ago and it was snootily sniffed out of court) you will just have to believe me that this is a truly Grand Cru effort from Wigs. When one wine makes you question the absolute dominance of Cuvée Frédéric Emile in the world class dry Riesling arena a wine has surely achieved its aim. '04 Wigan is one of the greatest dry white wines in the world (every facet gleams with an iridescent charm), and it is certainly worthy of carrying Andrew's name.

Agent: Enotria

Stockists: SWIG, Australian Wines Online, www.thedrinkshop.com

2009 Pikes, Riesling, Clare Valley, SA**£16**

Neil Pike has a season ticket to the 100 Best and it's nice to see just how effortlessly his wine strolls into the line up each year. With a heavenly texture and more rhubarb and red apple notes than the lime cordial brigade, Pikes Riesling is a terrific way of getting unbelievers into the Aussie Riesling thing without shocking their palates too much. Sensuality is the watch word here and this elixir has never been so attractive than in 2009.

Agent: Seckford

Stockists: Lea & Sandeman, Great Grog, Bottle Apostle, Gt Horkesley Wine Centre

2009 Frankland Estate, Isolation Ridge Vineyard Riesling, Frankland River, Great Southern, WA**£17**

I adore WA Riesling with its finesse, purity and joyous lemon and lime notes. '09 Isolation Ridge presents a completely different take on this variety to the Clare and Eden Valley wines in this list. With more finesse in its youth there is an overwhelming temptation to crack on with this wine but exercise some self control because it will hit its apogee in three or four years time. For some reason, whenever I drink Isolation Ridge Riesling I get a sensational chill down my spine - perhaps it's the name, perhaps it's the tender, yet nervy fruit, perhaps it's the jittery acidity, perhaps it's the vineyard - I don't know. But I must have it to break up my regular Riesling diet, and you must too.

Agent: Fields Morris & Verdin

Stockists: Berry Bros & Rudd

2009 Grossett, Polish Hill Riesling, Clare Valley, SA**£20**

Sometimes Jeff's Polish Hill is butch and swarthy, other times it is monastic and serene. In 2009, not only are the aroma and flavour of this wine in exceptional balance but also the character of this wine is clear to see, too. '09 Polish Hill is an erudite gentleman of a Riesling, impeccably turned out and magnanimous in its demeanour. Approachable already and delicious, this is another sensational '09 and it should be savoured and revered in equal measure.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Majestic, Noel Young, Philglas & Swiggot, The Sampler, Harrods, Wholefoods, Bennetts, Reserve Wines

2009 Jim Barry, The Florita Riesling, Clare Valley, SA**£25**

Florita whispers sotto voce at you, beckoning you to come within its force field. This is an ultra-subtle Clare Riesling with none of the bombastic displays of lime-blossom and buttered toast with which we are all more familiar. This time the message is urgent and covert and you have to tune yourself in perfectly to receive it. What you discover in the eye of the storm is a serenity and control which dumfounds the senses. The power is staggering, but it is concealed beneath an intricate layer of swirling, pastoral flavours.

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Wined up Here; Planet of the Grapes; Le Pont De La Tour

2006 Leasingham, Classic Clare Riesling, Clare Valley, SA**£25**

With the future looking more uncertain than ever for Leasingham, it is a great pleasure to announce that if this is indeed the last CCRHR we ever see in the UK, then it is an absolute beauty. Youthful and firm, the aroma and flavour needs coaxing from the glass with large amounts of swirling and agitation. Bit by bit the layers of flavour emerge and they are a congregation of nuances in perfect harmony. One of the longer lived styles in this section, it is critical that we, in the UK, get the opportunity to experience what this wine can do in the future. So please petition to keep this celestial wine on our shelves. Classic Clare's little sister, '09 Bin 7 Riesling, is here (thanks goodness) and so at least you can bathe in her charms if her more alluring sibling is NFI!

Agent: Constellation

Stockists: contact Constellation and lobby them to bring this wine to the UK!

Chardonnay

**2009 De Bortoli, Windy Peak Chardonnay, Vic****£9**

So buttoned up and reserved is Windy Peak Chardonnay this year that it appears that Webber and his team have been taking classes at a Swiss finishing school. Faultless deportment and a fine-turned heel, indicate a wine of tremendous focus and nerve. There is the merest hint of lushness on the mid-palate, but it is kept in line with a firm smack of acidity. Has Windy Pants grown up? The label suggests that it has and the flavour and texture is 100% Agent Provocateur, so the answer must be in the affirmative.

Agent: De Bortoli UK

Stockists: RS Wines, New Forest Wines

2009 Chapel Hill, Unwooded Chardonnay, McLaren Vale / Adelaide Hills, SA**£10**

Is Unwooded Chardonnay an easy style of wine to make? One might assume so because Chapel Hill nails this wine every year, when so many others fail. Perhaps the reason for their success is an obsession with pristine viticulture and faultless high tensile winemaking. Perhaps they just simply love to drink it - I know I do! I suppose the question that need to be asked is - is this a style that the consumer still wants to drink? Without blinking, the answer is a massive yes. However, in my opinion, no one needs to know the oak level in Chardies these days - it is the stuff of fiche techniques and nerds. So I would lose the word 'unwooded' from the label, keep the bottle shape (as a reminder) and then lead the way in this field once and for all - because this estate has already won every heart it has touched with this adorable style of wine.

Agent: Berkmann

Stockists: Berkmann

2008 Vasse Felix, Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA**£10**

Perhaps the best way to describe this wine is for you to imagine a Chardonnay shaped like the explosive Vasse Felix SBS in the earlier category. Grassy, limey, nervy Chardonnay with neon green bolts of lightning, pretty much sums this beauty up. Drink it with Thai-spiced chicken or rich, creamy, Indian-scented seafood and prove to yourself that Chardonnay really can manage heat and spice like a Sauvignon Blanc or Riesling. The fireworks continue to amaze us all from Virginia Willcock and her well-drilled squad.

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Majestic, Wine Direct

2008 Stella Bella, Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA**£16**

I have long been a fan of this estate, but 100 Best status has been out of its reach for a few years. So I am doubly delighted to welcome them back to the fold. Lush pear and apple-crumble notes with hints of mandarin romance your taste buds making this a more exotic Chardonnay than many but it is still completely under control. It is also drinking very well already, which means that you can squirrel away some of the other wines here for the time being and gaze adoring into Stella Bella's eyes right now.

Agent: Alliance Wine

Stockists: Highbury Vintners, Constantine Stores, Vinology, Ann et Vin, Cooden Cellars, Burgundy Wines, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Bacchanalia, Cellar Door, Classic Wine Direct, Henderson Wines, Noel Young Wines, VH Wines, Vineking, Vineyards (Dorest), Wine Buddy, Canapes (Bothwell), Wine Society

**2008 Hardy's, Eileen Hardy Chardonnay, Australia****£20**

One of the most successful Chardonnay labels in Australia, this wine out manoeuvres most white Burgundy by a mile thanks to its phenomenal build quality and diversity of ingredients. Sadly, its poor distribution is the only thing that lets Eileen down. The once great Hardy brand could be enormously boosted by a wine of this quality beaming its joy onto all of our palates. It is a shame that the only place I can find it is on tour in Australia.

Agent: Constellation

Stockists: SWIG, Ocado

2008 Yabby Lake Vineyard, Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Vic**£24**

Sound the trumpets, Tom Carson's 2008s are here and they are (every single one of them) absolutely sublime. From Red Claw Chardonnay via this estate wine to the Block wines there is an enormous amount of excitement to be had with a Yabby in your glass. 2008 YLV Chardonnay combines depth and freshness in precise quantities - never overstepping the mark and with perfectly seasoned oak in a finely-judged supporting role. It is rude to gulp expensive wine, but it's hard not to when it is this delicious.

Agent: SWIG

Stockists: Harvey Nichols, Noel Young Wines, Reserve Wines (Manchester)

2009 Ocean Eight, Verve Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Vic**£25**

Serious Chardonnay does not need to rely on overt power nor should it have to lean on posh oak staves to garner plaudits. Verve is an example of a wine which does what it says on the label - it injects vigour and dynamism into a class of wines which is often too serious and lacking in momentum. Bright citrus fruit and punchy acidity make for very happy bedfellows, particularly when the results are as holistic and uplifting as this. We will see more from this newcomer in due course, but for now turn up the Verve.

Agent: Auswineonline

Stockists: www.auswineonline.co.uk

2008 Stonier, KBS Single Vineyard Chardonnay, Mornington Peninsula, Vic**£25**

KBS narrowly missed out on a place in the 100 several years ago but TCA got the better of it and we had to scrap its listing. Back with a vengeance and sporting a screw cap, it is patently clear that this is one of the future classics of the Australian Chardonnay scene. Controlled and with exemplary finesse on show this is another example of a wine which takes Mornington to the next level. Sadly KBS is in short supply, so if you are slow off the mark then grab some 2007 Stonier Reserve Chardonnay and see what (nearly) all of the fuss is about.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Bibendum



2008 Penfolds, Reserve Bin 08A Chardonnay, Adelaide Hills, SA

£34

If Kevin John is the critics' favourite in the UK, then 05A, 06A, 07A and 08A must be the critics' choice in Australia, because they all picked up Gold medals in the National Show last year. This unprecedented sweep of gongs, in one of the most highly contested classes in the country, shows just how masterful Penfold's has become with this variety. I cannot state enough how impressed I am with the way in which this company handles its Adelaide Hills fruit. Comparisons between this wine and all of my favourites from the Côte d'Or pinball around my brain every time I take a sip. If you want a sneaky and affordable peak at their undoubted mastery of this grape then taste '09 Thomas Hyland Chardonnay - at a tenner it is one of the greatest value whites in the solar system.

Agent: Fosters

Stockists: Majestic, SWIG, Wine Society, Hailsham Cellars

2008 Xanadu, Reserve Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA

£35

If you're looking for restraint and elegance, you are in the wrong place because Xanadu Reserve Chardonnay is larger than life in every respect. Stunningly dimensioned and with the most incredible, plush, succulence of broody fruit, it is extraordinary that such a rich wine should still have control of its faculties - but it does and I absolutely adore it. Test the water before you dive in though - this Chardy is not for the faint-hearted.

Agent: Enotria

Stockists: SWIG



2007 Cullen, Kevin John Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA

£36

The wine that most appealed to the critics last year, in this section, was '06 KJ Chardonnay. I am not going to bet against it happening again this year because the '07 is a veritable tour de force for Cullen. Without the whoosh of flavour and succulence of Leeuwin, nor the immediate harmony and accessibility of Eileen this is always a more awkward wine to judge in its youth. However, with so much going on in the glass and more than a touch of nerd appeal from beginning to end this is not surprisingly a winner for those of us in the zone.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Noel Young, Fortnum & Mason, Reserve Wines, Bennetts, www.slurp.co.uk

2007 Leeuwin Estate, Art Series Chardonnay, Margaret River, WA

£50

Firmer and tighter than last year's '06, 2007 Art Series Chardonnay seems to have all of the attributes required to make it a must-have wine for any Chardonnay lover. There is finesse here and layers of fruit which peel gently away to reveal a golden core. Like the 2007s in Burgundy, this wine is built around its stunning, cliff-hanger acidity and naked energy. It is a crime to drink it early, but we don't mind a little flirting with the law!

Agent: Domaine Direct

Stockists: Averys, Bristol, Erik Laan Fine Wines, Fortnum & Mason, Four Walls, Harrods, Harvey Nichols, Highbury Vintners, L'Assemblage Fine Wine Traders, Luvians Bottle Shop, Majestic (St John's Wood), Robersons, Selfridges, www.slurp.co.uk, Uncorked, Winedirect

ROSÉ

2009 Charles Melton, Rose of Virginia, Barossa Valley, SA

£15

Only one rosé this year because everyone is presumably stuck with old stock (and there is nothing more unattractive than an '08 in '10!). Still we need not worry too much because Charlie has come up trumps again with his world class wine. I, for one, would rather people made rosé wines because they love them rather than because the 'category' demands it. Charlie started making Rose of Virginia long before wine had 'categories'. It is the best of the year by a mile - look to Provence '09s if you want something lighter and more genteel. I am having a snob year in 2010, avoiding indifferent rosé and drinking top end white instead. Charlie's is the only Aussie that will pass my lips - bet'cha.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Bennetts, Highbury Vintners, Selfridges, Cooden Cellars, Hanging Ditch Wine Merchants, www.slurp.co.uk

REDS

Pinot Noir

2009 Devil's Corner, Pinot Noir, Tamar Ridge, Tas

£13

A perennial favourite in the cut-price Pinot camp, Devil's Corner is a mightily impressive wine. Most budget versions of this grape simply don't deliver but this cheeky little imp has an extra dimension of richness and integrity that sets it apart from, not only above other inexpensive Aussies this year but also international versions of this grape, too.

Agent: Awin Barratt Siegel

Stockists: Winesmith, Ellis of Richmond, Worth Bros, Bablake, Dartmouth Wine Co, Hicks & Don, Dorset Wine, Weavers of Nottingham, Rodney Densem Wines, Adnams, Whitebridge Wines, Connolly's Wine Merchants, Bowland Forest Vintners, Noel Young Wines, Field & Fawcett, Christopher Wells/London Wine Shippers

2008 Stonier, Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£13

'08 Stonier Estate Pinot wrestles a slot in the 100 not only from its Reserve stable-mate but also from some new single vineyard big guns, too. How could it perform this David versus Goliath manoeuvre? The answer is that '08 Stonier is dimensionally perfect, with lithe, agile tannins and multi-skilled, multi-talented fruit flavours. It is fresh and vital, with breezy cherry notes and a lip-smackingly crisp finish. Balance is born and this wine has perfect balance.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Waitrose, Bibendum

2008 Red Claw, Pinot Noir, by Yabby Lake, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£15

This wine is so texturally spot on it is amazing. Victoria plum and red cherry notes glisten along the full length of Red Claw's slippery delivery. Many producers would be delighted if this wine was their flagship Pinot, however, Red Claw lounges on the 'by the glass' sections of top restaurant lists at every day prices. It celebrates its second-label status only by drinking early. It lacks nothing in integrity and valour and it looks awesome too.

Agent: SWIG

Stockists: Harvey Nichols, Noel Young Wines, Reserve Wines (Manchester)

2007 Pirie, Pinot Noir, Tamar River, Tas

£17

Tasmania's Pinot street cred is now firmly in place and one of the principle reasons for this is the good Doctor Andrew Pirie. While performing miracles for other wineries he amazed the world but now that his own label is up to cruising speed, the wines truly live up to their anticipated billing. '07 Pirie has an intensity and minerality which mainland Victorians often lack and it is this goût de terroir that makes this proposition so compelling.

Agent: Stratford's

Stockists: Villeneuve Wines, Soho Wines, www.everywine.co.uk

2008 Yabby Lake, Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic

£24

A complete contrast in shape and delivery to the Red Claw above, 2008 Yabby Lake Pinot is a more structured model and it is the finest wine ever made at this estate. It would be a crime to drink it now, so let Red Claw enjoy the spotlight for the time being while Yabby incrementally adjusts its milles feuilles of flavours and summons up the confidence to perform miracles on the world stage. Several brief castings, held in the privacy of my own home, have indicated that there is extraordinary talent here.

Agent: SWIG

Stockists: Harvey Nichols, Noel Young Wines, Reserve Wines (Manchester)

2007 Ten Minutes by Tractor, Judd Vineyard Pinot Noir, Mornington Peninsula, Vic **£41**

TMBT further cements its position in the hierarchy of the Aussie Pinot scene with this buccaneering single vineyard creation. Judd is the jewel in the crown of the TMBT single vineyard wines with sensational texture and lusty, fragrant, almost decadent, plum and cerise notes. Sadly not a cheapie, you can still get your everyday TMBT fix by leaping into a glass of '08 10X, Judd's rabble-raising, mayhem-causing, junior gang member.

Agent: H & H Bancroft

Stockists: The Wine Library, Essentially Wine, www.bancroftwines.com

Cabernet and Merlot

2008 Smith & Hooper, Merlot, Wrattenbully, SA **£8**

With a savoury tang of herbs and fresh leather this Wrattenbully Merlot must be one of the ultimate red wine picks from the supermarket shelves this year. Decant it to allow all of the flavours to emerge and you will be shocked at how complex and rewarding a wine of this price can be. More macho and less polished than Preece, this is a wine to fling at rare steaks and hastily thrown together salads. Al fresco, out of the blue, uninvited-but-pull-up-a-chair dining has never seemed so effortless with this eight pound wine on the table.

Agent: Negociants

Stockists: Tesco, Morrisons

2007 Ringbolt, Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, WA **£9**

One of the cheapest wines in this list and yet, after half an hour in a decanter you could stick a 1 in front of its price. Ringbolt lacks the polish and distinction of some in this section but its natural appearance, lacking make up and lighting, shows this wine in a real light and I love what I see. With a typical Margaret River laid back attitude, Ringbolt's gentle blackberry, forest floor and old leather notes intrigue the palate and point to honest, no frills winemaking - which will definitely scores points with all who spend £9 on it.

Agent: Negociants

Stockists: Tesco

2008 Preece, Merlot, Vic **£9**

It looks like this wine will be sold in restaurants only in the UK. However, this is great news for keen drinkers because they will be able to sink their teeth into this pristine Merlot for less than twenty quid! At this on-trade price it outperforms any other wine of this variety in the world. Fresh, spicy and with a twist of cranberry and zing of tobacco-leaf, this is a desperately brainy wine for its mild-mannered label and teeny price tag. Merlot is an outcast in the wine world, but it wouldn't be if there were more spunky wines like this.

Agent: Bibendum


Stockists: Bibendum

2008 Heartland, Cabernet Sauvignon, Langhorne Creek/Limestone Coast, SA **£11**

Ben Glaetzer's trademark glossy, but detailed winemaking ensures that this exuberantly fruity wine manages to stay on the right side of self indulgent. With soaring cassis notes, a lick of menthol and posher oak than one would imagine for its workmanlike price point, this is a glorious piece of work and a real treat for fans of both Heartland and also this grape. Decant it for even more pleasure and you could easily convince your pals that this is a twenty pound wine.

Agent: Great Western Wine

Stockists: Revelstoke Wine, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Caviste, The Guildford Wine Company, Field & Fawcett, Carruthers & Kent Fine Wine, The Fine Wine Company, www.greatwesternwine.co.uk

 **2008 Wirra Wirra, Church Block, McLaren Vale, SA** **£11**
I always have a smile on my face when I open a bottle of Church Block because this wine has a cast iron guarantee of excitement. There is inevitably an extra dimension of flavour at its core which leaves you gasping in awe of the extraordinary skill required to assemble these grapes in such style. Cabernet, Shiraz and Merlot seem like the original three Musketeers in this wine such is their teamwork, laughter level and lust for life.
Agent: Stevens Garnier
Stockists: Waitrose, Wine Society

 **2009 Mitolo, Jester Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, SA** **£11**
Frank Mitolo kindly flew in all of his new releases a few weeks ago for assessment and any one of them could have made this list. After forensic examination, Jester Cab was the champion of the Jester duo, once again, by virtue of the dribble of Serpico that it is kindly allowed to slurp. This inky addition makes Jester's fruit transcendental in its delivery of cassis, dark chocolate and liquorice flavours. This wine could teach the whole of South America about fruit/oak/alcohol balance such is its impeccable fulcrum of flavours. One more scoop - A 2010 Mitolo Vermentino (!) looked stunning, too. You heard it here first.
Agent: Liberty
Stockists: Noel Young, Butlers Wine Centre, Bennetts, Highbury Vintners, Cooden Cellars

2008 Battle of Bosworth, Cabernet Sauvignon, McLaren Vale, SA **£16**
With almost cartoonish Cabernet flavours, and a depth of fruit akin to the shagpile in Scooby Doo's Mystery Machine, this joyful Cabernet reverberates with boundless enthusiasm on the palate. Joch grows some of the purest and most luscious Cabernet fruit in the Vale and it is these astounding raw materials that ensure that his wines have immense integrity and appeal. Cinnamon sticks, soft black liquorice, mint leaves and espresso cream are all to be found swirling in this vortex of cassis juice.
Agent: Vintage Roots
Stockists: Vintage Roots

2008 Majella, Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra, SA **£19**
The aroma on this young wine defies belief - it is one of the most intense and evocative encapsulations of the essence of Coonawarra I have ever experienced. The moments of eucalyptus and mint are invisibly welded into the deep, dark blackcurrant chassis and the entire mass of flavour seems to hover on a million ball bearings as it slides across the palate. Disturbingly approachable already, but clearly with a decade or more to go, this is one of the most accurate and enjoyable Cabernets of the year.
Agent: Alliance Wine
Stockists: Corks Out, Chester Beer & Wine, Vinology, Planet of the Grapes, Cambridge Wine Merchants, Harper Wells, Classic Wine Direct, Copperfield Wines, Corks & Cases, Fine Wine Co, Highbury Vintners, Nidderdale Fine Wines, Peckhams, Sommelier Wine Co, VH Wines, Bacchanalia, Brindisa, Cooden Cellars, Henderson Wines, Noel Young Wines, The Vineking

2007 Petaluma, Coonawarra, SA **£23**
There is a school of thought that says this wine should survive on Bordeaux varieties alone. But, over the years a few captains have smuggled in some Shiraz (this year only 10%) and I have always adored these vintages more than the straight Cab/ Merlot/PV versions. So, when I learnt that the '07 was assembled from four laser cut, interlocking, components which clicked together to reveal a perfect work of modern art I was delighted. With more immediacy on the nose and creamier fruit than you might expect, this is a heavenly Petaluma and one which should start to drink well from a relatively early age. The decision to massage this iconic (and sometimes cantankerous) wine into a suave, young gentleman is inspired and it will no doubt attract a brand new, inquisitive audience who will then pour over its back catalogues with glee.
Agent: Bibendum
Stockists: Majestic, Oddbins, Bibendum

2006 Grosset, Gaia, Clare Valley, SA**£28**

Gaia is one of those wonderfully vintage dependant wines which can sometimes look belligerent and often a little too eclectic for people's tastes in its youth. It is always a privilege to taste the wine from this incredibly special vineyard site and in 2006 Jeffrey has made an exceptionally finely-tuned and delicious (dare I say, crowd-pleasing) red wine - this is a flattering vintage, to be sure. All of the Gaia herbs and spices are there and none of the minerality is missing, but this time there is a plushness to the fruit which gives it an extra dimension of appeal.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Harrods, Highbury Vintners, Noel Young, SWIG, West Mount Wine

2007 Moss Wood, Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River, WA**£45**

There are always a few one-sniff-and-you're-in wines in the 100 Best, and this year '07 Moss Wood didn't even stop to say hello before lining up on the grid in the early days of assembling this 100. Several tastes later, it cemented its position forever because '07 is a very special vintage from this esteemed property. There is a nobility of flavour which underpins all of the expected grandeur and intensity of fruit, and the length and quality of tannins are a wonder to behold.

Agent: Laytons

Stockists: Jeroboams, Wine Society, Barrica Wines (Lancs)

**2007 Cullen, Diana Madeline, Margaret River, WA****£45**

This is the finest young DM I have ever tasted and at a Liberty Wines line up, on a snowy January day, it was the finest wine in a packed room of very smart samples. It is not size that matters in this wine, but the intricate detail and infinite, miniature explosions of flavour which mesmerise the senses while keeping you totally and utterly locked on to the elemental machinations in the glass. Less muscular than Moss Wood but no less impactful, '07 DM scored a masterful 19.5 in my notes.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Wine Society, Highbury Vintners, Noel Young, The Sampler, Bennetts, www.slurp.co.uk

weird and wonderful reds

2008 Hellbent by Kangarilla Road, Shiraz/Cabernet, SA**£8**

This marvellously compact red is based upon the time-honoured Shiraz/Cab recipe. However, this is a very modern version made with breakneck fruit flavours and more than a little danger in the glass. Cheap and ready to drink the moment that you get it home, this is a perfect, rascally 'house red' for those of you who refuse to stray from the carnivorous end of the victuals spectrum.

Agent: Kangarilla Road


Stockists: Majestic


**2009 St. Hallett, Gamekeeper's Reserve, Barossa Valley, SA****£8**

Many have tried and none have succeeded to copy the phenomenal success of Gamekeeper's Reserve. The excuse that the Touriga element is the reason why this wine tastes like it does just doesn't hold any water anymore. This is because the succulence and precocity of this wine is wholly down to St. Hallett's innate understanding of what we want to drink when we're thirsty for gluggable, juicy, lip-licking red. This has resulted in another perfect performance in 2009, but if you want to taste a less hectic and more settled wine from this vast and impressive portfolio, plump for 2008 Faith Shiraz - it is 100 Best quality, too.

Agent: Bibendum


Stockists: Waitrose, Sainsburys, Tesco, Co-op, Bibendum

 **2008 Wirra Wirra, Scrubby Rise, McLaren Vale, SA** £9
Wirra's mastery of all things red continues apace. Scrubby clearly gets a leg up from other, more expensive wines in the winery because the quality of fruit in this Shiraz, Cab, PV blend is off the clock. I've always thought that Scrubby Hill was the wrong name for this wine because it is anything but. Unfortunately I think that Polished Hill has been used in Clare!
Agent: Stevens Garnier
Stockists: Jeroboams, Stevens Garnier

 **2008 Penfolds, Koonunga Hill, Seventy-Six Shiraz/Cabernet, SA** £9
This heroic wine is intentionally old-fashioned, displaying chunky, pagan tannins and artisanal, rough hewn oak. It is exciting to see deconstructed wine like this in a field of so many highly polished creations and it is this coarseness and these blemishes which make this splendid reconstruction work so well. Decanting is a must, and a minimum of an hour is required to tame this wine enough to tackle it with confidence. When you do it is bound to impress. Scoop - 2007 Bin 389 Cabernet / Shiraz is a stunner and it will certainly make the grade next year, but you might be able to buy it before then, so here's a serious heads up!
Agent: Fosters
Stockists: Waitrose, Majestic

2008 Willunga 100, Cabernet/Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA £9
This is Willunga 100's top wine and it is no surprise that this visionary red blend works, coming as it does from one of the finest Cabernet and Shiraz growing regions in the world. For ten pounds you can drink a wine that knocks anything from Chile (at five quid more) into a cocked hat. So don't waste any more money - follow this juicy and authentic red, and others like it, on this list and they will never let you down.
Agent: Liberty
Stockists: Noel Young, Highbury Vintners, Philglas & Swiggot, Wimbledon Wine Cellar, www.slurp.co.uk

2008 Majella, The Musician, Cabernet/Shiraz, Coonawarra, SA £10
The Musician has become a bit of a favourite at The Great Australian Red competition, winning gongs every year. In the UK we haven't quite got our heads around this blend yet, but wines like The Musician and others in this section provide the best value for money red experience that Australia has to offer. Most of this breed hail from Barossa or McLaren Vale so a Coonawarra version is something of an anomaly. What's fabulous about this wine is that it has a clarity of message and a freshness of fruit which should really appeal to our European palates. Get into the groove.
Agent: Alliance Wine
Stockists: Bacchanalia, Canapes (Bothwell), Cheers Wine Merchants, Classic Wine Direct, Constantine Stores, Cooden Cellars, Copperfield Wines, Denby Dale Wines, Fine Wine Co, Gap Wines, Henderson Wines, Luvians, Nidderdale Fine Wine, Noel Young, Scatchards Wine Merchants, The Vineking, Vinea, Vinology, Wine Bureau, Wine Buddy, Worcester Wine Co, Worth Brothers

 **2008 Yalumba, The Scribbler, Cabernet/Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA** £10
The Scribbler takes a more savoury and herbal look at this iconic blend and fashions its flavour in a more upright manner than that of the Willunga 100, Hellbent, or The Musician. With a fair degree of tannin, and therefore age-ability, this is a wine which is only starting to show its class now, but it will evolve in time more than the aforementioned trio. There is a good argument for having them all in your cellar though, such is the diversity of black fruit flavours and the detail of oak involved. The Scribbler is a wine which Yalumba has focused on heavily of late and this is fantastically encouraging for us all.
Agent: Negociants
Stockists: Oddbins, Noel Young, Taurus Wines

2007 Bremerton, Tamblyn Cabernet/Shiraz/Malbec/Merlot, Langhorne Creek, SA **£13**

There is a veritable smorgasbord of flavours and aromas roller-blading around in this wine, all sporting fetching, black velvet jumpsuits. Tamblyn is a lavishly upholstered red wine and considering its price, it offers an enormous amount of glamour for your spend. Bec Willson picks the finest of her Langhorne fruit and magics it into this heavenly potion. Our duty is to drink it with our most wickedly debauched friends - perfect.

Agent: Seckford

Stockists: Great Grog, Hedley Wright, Wines of Interest (Ipswich), Charles Steevenson, Harrogate Fine Wine, Bottle Apostle

2008 Gemtree, Luna Roja Tempranillo, McLaren Vale, SA **£20**

This is one of only a handful of Southern European varieties to make the list this year. So many winemakers try and so many fail because there is no point trying to make a foreign wine in Australia. The trick is to make a delicious wine from a foreign grape grown on your own beloved property - only these wines work and Luna Roja is a classic example! Not only is it delicious, it is comparable, whether by accident or not, to some of the ultra new wave Spanish reds which gain massive followings overnight in the Michelin starred restaurants of Barcelona and Madrid. I do hope that Gemtree manages to find traction for this wine within its own fine dining fans, because the explosive plum and black cherry fruit and astoundingly well-appointed texture deserves as much attention as it can get. This is a phenomenal wine. PS - don't forget '09 Moonstone. Last year it was an Albariño, now it's transmogrified into being a Savagnin - same wine, new vintage and it's every bit as rapsingly refreshing and intellectually satisfying.

Agent: New Generation Wines

Stockists: contact Hamish@newgenerationwines.com

2007 Greenstone, Sangiovese, Heathcote, Vic **£27**

My goodness me, a 100% Sangiovese makes the grade for the very first time this year. Perhaps it's not surprising though, because in very small letters on the back label one David Gleave MW (Italian specialist shipper) gets a mention. He knows the form and that's why this wine works as well as it does. The fruit character of Greenstone does not try to emulate the wines of Chianti or Brunello, it simply reflects the peculiarities of its Heathcote position and in this way it tells a very credible story about why it tastes like it does and where it comes from. With tangy cranberry and cherry notes, and a decent whack of sun-dried herbs and wistful meadow flowers, this is a gastronome's delight when it comes to food and wine matching - braised lamb shank is certain to be at the front of the pack.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Imbibros, Wimbledon Wine Cellar

2007 SC Pannell, Nebbiolo, Adelaide Hills, SA **£37**

Served blind, against three top Barolos and another extremely expensive rival Aussie Nebbiolo, this wine trounced the lot of them with its devastating truffle and blackberry aromas and finely judged, refreshing tannins. Steve is obsessive about his Neb - one has to be with this exacting grape variety - but he shouldn't lose a moment's sleep this year, because this is the finest Australian Nebbiolo that I have ever tasted.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Noel Young, Wimbledon Wine Cellar

2006 Tapanappa, Whalebone Vineyard, Cabernet/Shiraz, Wrattobully, SA **£40**

Last year's '06 Merlot sold out in the blink of an eye and so this year I have given the nod to the imperial Whalebone Cab/Shiraz. Fiendishly difficult to pin down, the flavour and aroma of this wine shapeshifts in the glass as you try to keep up with every intricate nuance. Lighter on its feet than one would imagine, this sensational red should last for twenty years in the bottle, but its balance is so finely tuned already that I would bet that its fans will not be able to keep their hands off it.

Agent: Mentzendorff

Stockists: Oddbins, Fortnum & Mason, Noel Young Wines, Wholefoods Market, The Sampler

2005 Wolf Blass, Black Label Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz, SA**£45**

Without a doubt this is the biggest and most menacing wine in the 100 Best this year. Some people need two hands to lift the glass, others offer a silent prayer before taking a sip, but I have luckily survived several evenings in the company of Black Label and have lived to tell the tale. So I encourage you to attempt the same because there is nothing like the flavour, indomitable power and majesty that this wine delivers. Interestingly, when I poured this wine at the end of a massive TGAR dinner, there was not a single person in the room who didn't rate it as highly as anything that they've drunk before, and for that reason I commend it to you. Just make sure that you share!

Agent: Fosters

Stockists: Gondola Wines, Hailsham Cellars, Corking Wines

Shiraz, Grenache, Mourvèdre

**2008 Yalumba, Y Series Shiraz/Viognier, SA****£8**

No oak and really pure and juicy plum, raspberry and mulberry fruit are the themes here. There is not much more to report than that, except to say that it is done with masses of style and panache. Even the packaging has had a face-lift, too. If you want to embrace a bottle of wine and sloosh it down with some pals without pausing for thought, then this is the perfect candidate. Slippery and with controlled Viognier (not tipping it into being too heady), this unoaked style must be adopted by more wineries to harness the clean flavours that are usually mucked up in the winery with manky chips and shoddy barrels by less skilful operators.

Congrats to Yalumba for leading the way

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Tesco

2007 Songlines Estate, Leylines Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA**£13**

Using older French oak and some ancient parcels of fruit, Leylines is the little brother of the new uber-cuvée Songlines and it is expertly assembled by winemakers David Fatches and John Duval. Succulent, smooth, honed and mellifluous, this is a forward-drinking Shiraz, with a cultured air and a pliable texture with none of the muscle or dried fruit so often associated with McLaren Vale. Elegance and finesse are rarely used alongside the word Shiraz, but this wine is as close as it gets.

Agent: Songlines

Stockists: Private Cellar (Wicken, Cambridgeshire), Jascots

**2007 Prominent Hill, Shiraz, Adelaide Hills, SA****£12**

This single vineyard, finely-tuned Shiraz is as European in flavour and outlook as it gets in this list and this is thanks to the site atop a hill above Hahndorf, the fastidious viticulture and kid glove winemaking at The Lane. This is a wine that you can really get stuck into. It is a wine that refreshes and relaxes in equal measure. There are faint herb, leather and spice notes here which permeate the silky blackberry fruit. These handsome attributes make this PHS an accomplished food fan, and with its broad repertoire of flavours it suits a vast array of recipes. Accurately named, this heart-warming Shiraz should find a prominent position in your cellar!

Agent: The Lane

Stockists: Waitrose

2006 Tahbilk, Shiraz, Vic**£13**

This inexpensive, everyday Shiraz wears a very important name - Tahbilk. I was worried that, given the price, it might fall short of the standard set by the extraordinary portfolio at this historic estate. Well it doesn't. The Victorian tones suit this grape so well and the floral, red fruit and herb notes are sensational. Wines that express their postcodes always appeal to me and the 2002 1860 Vines Shiraz, of which this property is justly proud, does this better than any site in the country. But Tahbilk's featured Shiraz is just as worthy a creation because it takes this name to a much wider audience and gives it a chance to taste something other than South Australian fruit and also point the finger at a region which they won't have heard of, but will inevitably remember and follow.

Agent: Ehrmanns

Stockists: The Wine Society, Jeroboams, Stanton Wine Company, Goodrich Wines, Marc 1 Wines, Bon Coeur Fine Wines, Wine Importers of Edinburgh, www.everywine.co.uk,

2008 Glaetzer, Wallace Shiraz/Grenache, Barossa Valley, SA**£15**

Some years Bishop gets in, other years Wallace captures the flag. This year Wallace didn't just capture the flag, he got the whole castle, too. This is a magnificent Shiraz / Grenache blend and in spite of the Grenache element only just hitting the 20% mark, the overall feel here is one of ethereal, rhubarb and raspberry (Grenache) which leads and even dominates the swarthier, dark, raisin and chocolate (Shiraz). Hoorah for the underdog, because it is the Grenache in this wine which makes it so unutterably special.

Agent: Great Western Wine

Stockists: Old Bridge Hotel (Huntingdon), the Sampler, Field & Fawcett, DeFine Food & Wine, Luvians, The Fine Wine Company, www.greatwesternwine.co.uk

2008 Clonakilla, Hilltops Shiraz, Canberra District**£15**

The winner in the current line up of Clonakilla wines in the UK is the cheapest (yippee), not only because it is the most ready to drink, but also because it has supreme balance and poise. I awarded it an enthusiastic 19/20 in my notes and it is worth every single point of this score. 'Utterly sensational' was my most recent note - this is a very smart wine indeed! Remember it is a fifteen pound bottle with a priceless flavour of cracked pepper, iodine and the most Grand Cru blackberries of all time.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Corks Out, Dunell's, Noel Young, Premium Wine Collections, Fortnum & Mason, Harvey Nichols

2007 First Drop, Two Percent Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA**£18**

I know Gantos pretty well, but I have never had the balls to ask him what 2% meant. I realise that this is the reserve Shiraz in the First Drop line up, but until I logged onto his website and saw some of the hilarious movies, I was flying blind. Two per cent, in this instance, is Albariño - surely shome mishtake? So none the wiser I just retired to the glass and carried on with analysing its contents. Weirdly this is only the second Shiraz from Matt and John which has made the grade over the last six years. All of the others have been ever so slightly too testosterone-fuelled. 2% is balanced, harmonious and genial - please don't send the gangstas 'round. I know it's meant to be intimidating and 4 real, but it's not. It utterly bloody delicious! HA!

Agent: First Drop Wines

Stockists; contact matt@firstdropwines.com

**2006 Yalumba, FDR1A Cabernet Sauvignon/Shiraz, Eden Valley, SA****£20**

This is The Great Australian Red 2009. It won hands down against some incredibly serious wines and on every occasion that I have tasted it since I have been floored by its charm, restraint and balance. One of the key factors here, which I believe is the reason why this wine is so alluring and hypnotic, is the considered attitude to oak which Yalumba utilises with this cuvée. French, American and Hungarian oak are the orders of the day, but only for 13 months and only 41% new. Thank the Lord for this. If FDR1A was manhandled and bullied by huge oak percentages and extended periods in purgatory, like many of the other big wines that I see day in day out, it would be a mess. Only made in particularly good vintages, this is a rare wine and one which I place on the very top rung of the Aussie ladder.

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Wine Society, Wine Direct, www.slurp.co.uk

2005 Jim Barry, McRae Wood Shiraz, Clare Valley, SA**£22**

Rarely do we see fully mature, top of the line Aussie Shiraz on sale in the UK. The McRae Wood is a stupendous property which the late, great Jim Barry bought forty-five years ago and it's where he planted his first Shiraz vineyard. Made with lashings of American oak and swathes of blueberry, cinnamon, tar, lavender and vanilla this is one of those wines that is so evocative you barely know where to start. For twenty-two quid you can drink not only a slice of history, but a sensational and world class red wine at its apogee. Don't forget its little brother, either - '07 Lodge Hill Shiraz is a tremendous red and its half the price of this fella!

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Majestic, Waitrose

**2006 St. Hallett, Old Block Shiraz, Barossa Valley, SA****£23**

More blood and thunder from St. Hallett this year, but before I talk about a spectacular Old Block there is a small mention in dispatches for '07 Blackwell Shiraz - another breathtaking effort from Toby Barlow. Blackwell shows tempered, luge-like blackberry and raisin notes which seemingly never stop flowing across your taste buds. It is a hypnotic wine. OK, onto Old Block, which sits squarely and magnificently in the glass, taunting its audience and looking for an opportunity to strike. This is a very clever wine which gives the illusion of massive weight and tannins, but it is quite the opposite. It is a dense wine with intensity and energy, but without any trace of coarseness or melodrama. I love this Old Block. It might be my favourite young vintage of all time. I will pop back to this wine every six months or so for twenty years to watch its progress and I anticipate it rivaling some of the very big names in the future.

Agent: Bibendum

Stockists: Waitrose, Bibendum

2007 Plantagenet, Shiraz, Great Southern, WA**£25**

A dusty, coffee bean nose and a mocha and plum palate signify a really beautiful effort from Plantagenet this year. I have not been a fan of their reds before, finding them lacking in impact and drive, but these shortcomings are nowhere to be seen in this '07 Shiraz. Medium-weight, aromatic and very long, this is a wine with a fabulous future and I look forward to following it very closely indeed over the next five or six years.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Bennetts, Virgin Wines Online, Wimbledon Wine Cellar, Noel Young

2008 Chapel Hill, The Vicar Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA**£25**

Both the 'straight' '08 Chapel Hill Shiraz and '08 The Vicar are of 100 Best standard this year. I love the fact that one of the vineyards used in this wine is called 'Inkwell'! It is perfect - the vicar with his inkwell sitting in the chapel on the hill. What's he writing? Perhaps that this is the best red wine made at this estate since day one. Maybe that the quality of the Cabernet and Shiraz estate wines are as good as The Vicar was in the old days? Perhaps that Chapel Hill is hitting the high notes with the whites, too, and that world domination is moments away? He's probably right on all counts. It is certainly true that winemaker Michael Fragos is doing his best work up there on the hill and we are still paying the right price for these wines. That's something to thank The Vicar for.

Agent: Berkmann

Stockists: Berkmann

2006 Charles Melton, Nine Popes, Barossa Valley, SA**£25**

I am welling up while typing this note, because Charlie's Nine Popes is a dear old friend and for years I have wondered where the old boys have been - MIA? The first few vintages seemed to have bravery, guts and strident characters, but then a series of flatter, wider, less purposeful wines lost my vote and I all but gave up. Enter the 2006 vintage with more charisma than the last decade of wines added together. This is a phenomenal wine - Grenache meet Shiraz, Shiraz meet Grenache. Back together again and getting on famously, I am so pleased that these pontiffs have been reunited. The results are truly biblical.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Corks Out, The Vineking, Noel Young, DK Vintners, Bennetts, Eton Vintners, Philglas & Swiggot, Reserve, The Worth Bros

2008 La Ciornia, Shiraz, La Violetta, Denmark, WA**£30**

Apparently the word 'ciornia' means dark or black in Russian. In Piedmontese dialect, ciornia is a term for a very attractive woman. Winemaker Andrew Hoadley notes that it's a pretty bad pun on Cornas, too. Either way these are superb reasons for calling this wine this word. When I first tasted La Violetta I was completely blindsided. I didn't expect the pepperiness and certainly had no idea that a Shiraz from Denmark could have Pinot Noir tenderness under its malevolent, vampiric exterior. There is bugger all stock in the UK - but if you have read this note, I would expect that the vast majority of you (if you know/follow my palate) will do anything you possibly can to find a bottle.

Agent: Auswineonline

Stockists: www.auswineonline.co.uk

**2007 Mitolo, Savitar Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA****£30**

From the Chinese Block in Willunga and named after a mythical dragon whose tail 'swept the stars from the sky and flung them to the earth', this is a wine groaning with symbolism and valid hype. Considered to be a lighter vintage and yet easily as gripping and bold as the rich 2006, this is a thrilling wine with clove, woodsmoke, black liquorice and even pastrami notes in its vast panoply of flavours. Mitolo is riding the crest of the wave and perhaps a dragon's tail, too.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Corks Out, SWIG, Philglas & Swiggot, Noel Young, www.winedirect.co.uk

**2006 Penfolds, St. Henri Shiraz, SA****£35**

Gosh, feast your eyes and palates on just how impressive St. Henri is in 2006. This is a great vintage and the spice and earth elements in this wine are so mouth-watering it is amazing. Toned, minutes-long and incredibly classy, this wine seems to have had a makeover and, while retaining its no new oak mantra, it has become fitter and leaner and more vulpine. This is one of the most attractive and enviable St. Henris I have seen (and I have been lucky enough to revel in a fair few glasses over the years). This highlights the raising of the game that Gago and his A Team has been implementing over the last few years that has put the great Penfolds name into the stratosphere of Aussie producers.

Agent: Fosters

Stockists: Waitrose, Majestic, Berry Bros & Rudd, Tesco (wine by the case)

2007 Kangarilla Road, Q Shiraz, McLaren Vale, SA**£35**

This is a top secret wine and one with jaw-dropping label and bottle designs. I have only a small amount of info that I can impart at this juncture - Q is biodynamically farmed, utilising very old vines from a Seaview vineyard. Believe it or not this wine has spent 24 months in new French oak and it's unfiltered and unfinned! All I can say is that the components are all A+++ grade and it tastes completely delicious and the length and bravado on display is thoroughly impressive. Every year I search for a wine named Matthew and this year Quentin and I got a surprise with this 'Q'! Thank goodness the wine was awesome. I do hope that it will make it to the UK and that we can all wallow in its exceptionally decadent flavours.

Agent: Kangarilla Road

Stockists: Majestic

2006 O'Leary Walker, Claire Reserve Shiraz, Clare Valley, SA**£50**

Made from century old vines whose yields barely require a punnet to pick them, this is one of the most focussed and luxurious of the Clare hierarchy of reds. Black in colour, but not tar-y in any way on the flavour front, this is a concentrated wine but, once again, it is not too extracted or brutish. Strangely this is a wine of baffling vital statistics - it should be over the top and it should only appeal to port drinkers, but it is ethereal and it dances on the tongue, with slick moves and agile power. Claire is a force to be reckoned with, and I expect that her namesake was as well.

Agent: Fortitude Wines

Stockists: Waitrose

2006 Teusner, Riebke FG Shiraz, Astral Series, Barossa Valley, SA **£70**

With a hilarious bottle (it is truly magnum sized, but it declares 75cl on the label) and a monster alcohol of 15.5% (again declared, but who knows), this is a pantomime wine in every respect until you heft it towards your hooter and inhale its remarkable aroma. The world stops spinning and you have another go - 130 year old vines apparently. Gravity takes over and your head falls into the glass mouth open, of course, and you slurp and feel even more ridiculously out of sorts. I normally can't abide this hulking style of wine, but it is completely and all-consumingly stunning. I doubt that anyone will be able to find a bottle but FG is F'ing G'. I eat my words. All of them because I am starving and I want some FG to drink with them.

Agent: Stokes Fine Wines

Stockists: Noel Young, Stokes Fine Wines

2006 Torbreck, RunRig, Barossa Valley, SA **£160**

RunRig looks spectacular in 2006 and it takes me back to the 1995 vintage which I bought for Bibendum Restaurant back in 1998. This wine is so similar in its texture, aroma and grandeur and it still stands tall among its peers. The addition of 3% Viognier in 2006 has tamed the Shiraz a touch and it adds a lustre to the whole package which will not fail to mesmerise all who come within range of its musky scent. It is easy to kick the big boys, searching for faults and chinks in their armour, but Torbreck looks spectacular in 2006 and RunRig is an impeccable icon.

Agent: Fells

Stockists: Farr Vintners, Hailsham Cellars, DeFine Food & Wine

Sweet and Fortified



2008 McWilliam's, Morning Light Botrytis Semillon, Hunter Valley, NSW (half bottle) **£13**

One from the left field - Q and I tasted this beauty from a cleanskin bottle on the very last day of the deliberations and it leapt over the line like a gazelle. Not a rich brooding Sem, but a crystalline, open, pear and mandarin-imbued wine with a stunningly long finish and a Siren-like call back to the glass for more. I can't wait to see the label design, because I love the name. Keep your eyes peeled, because Morning Light will be an instant favourite when it arrives later this year.

Agent: PLB

Stockists: contact Istephens@mcwilliamswines.com.au



2006 De Bortoli, Noble One Botrytis Semillon, Riverina, NSW (half bottle) **£18**

De Borts makes the most revered botrytised Semillon in Australia and it is back to top form in the 2006 vintage. The comparisons between this wine and serious quality Sauternes are valid because it is as complex and lingering as many of the big names which cost five times the price. Hoorah for the sheer excellence and commitment shown by De Bortoli - someone give them a long service award! BTW, the 2007 vintage has crept into the country, too, and it is incredibly tight and youthful. My advice is to buy as much '06 as you can, because for the next few years it will have a considerable advantage over the coltish '07.

Agent: De Bortoli UK

Stockists: Majestic, Oddbins, Waitrose, Theatre of Wine, Harrods, Flint, SWIG

Seppeltsfield, Para 21 year old Vintage Tawny, Australia **£19**

I was privileged to tour the Seppeltsfield facility last year and I was in awe of the set up and its historic wines. This Para 21 is an incredible Tawny, with fig, roasted almond, caramel and amontillado notes in perfect harmony. We are completely ignorant of this winery and its legendary wines in the UK, but we must try to broaden our horizons because these drinks are as important, to my mind, as top flight Ports and Madeiras. Great value for money and able to last for 100 years in the bottle - this is as nostalgia and brilliance in equal parts and it looks like it costs a hundred quid, too.

Agent: Negotiants

Stockists: Planet of The Grapes, The Wineman

2006 Brown Brothers, Late Harvested Patricia Noble Riesling, Vic (half bottle) £20

Brown Brothers makes the most amazing portfolio of sweeties, but I had never tasted a Patricia sweet cuvée before until recently and I must admit that this wine is as magnetic and jaw-dropping as I had hoped for. Richer, older and more unctuous than Cordon Cut (qv), this is a dense, tropical wine with butterscotch and honey stuffed into every nook and cranny.

Agent: Brown Brothers

Stockists: Christopher Piper Wines, www.everywine.co.uk

2009 Mount Horrocks, Cordon Cut Riesling, Clare Valley, SA (half bottle) £20

Like clockwork, Stephanie Toole's sweetie rocks up, gets unscrewed and passes muster with a huge tick. Lithe, cool, apple pie and cream notes serenade the senses and you need half a bottle each to really get to know this wine well. Cheers - Cordon Cut is a must have wine on any wine list or in any cellar.

Agent: Liberty

Stockists: Premium Wine Collections, Reserve, Dunell's, Harvey Nichols, Bennetts, Virgin Wines Online

NV Skillogalee, Liqueur Muscat, Clare Valley, SA £21

Makers of delicate Rieslings and Gewurztraminers, this time Skilly ramraids the 100 Best with a loony juice Liqueur Muscat and it is a gob-smackingly delicious wine, too. Masses of coffee and toffee and brown sugar gloop around the glass and the heady aromas weave their magic in your nostrils like Gandalf's herbal pipe smoke. It is hard to put this wine down, so open it up with friends and don't!

Agent: Enotria

Stockists: Wooden Wine Box, Australian Wines On Line, Roberts & Speight, Nidderdale Fine Wines
