

The Hedonist Shiraz 2010 McLaren Vale

18 Oct 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From \$17.99, Aus\$17.99, £12.99 and 3,000 yen

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I have not in fact chosen this wine because there is a luxurious new, Russian-backed wine shop [Hedonism Wines](#) in Mayfair, London, discussed by several Purple Paggers on [this thread](#) on our Members' forum.

The ethos of this wine could hardly be further from that of the collection of collectibles that makes up the bulk of the glamorous new store. Although it, too, is certainly predicated on hedonism, on maximising pleasure. While some Australian Shirazes can taste like a tannin, alcohol and acid soup, and others are hurtling towards a more obviously northern Rhône model, this wine is full, fleshy Shiraz ripened by the South Australian sun but has real structure and spice. The texture is polished, the finish is dry. It has that pure gloss of McLaren Vale's best fruit (it's grown biodynamically in the Willunga foothills) and, as I wrote in my tasting note, 'what's not to like?' At 14% it's not excessively alcoholic.

I do try to keep introducing you to something new in this Wine of the week slot and am rather ashamed to see that I chose a previous vintage of this wine, [the 2005](#) (pictured here), back in 2008. You can read about the background to winemaker Walter Clappis and his daughter there.

Whereas I came across the 2005 vintage as a complete, rather well packaged novelty (complete with drawing of contented pig) back in the day when I was still wine consultant for British Airways and all wines were blessedly chosen on the basis of blind tastings, the wine has by now found its way into mainstream distribution outside Australia. This 2010 is stocked by Zachy's (and a host of American retailers), by Niseko Cellars on Hokkaido, Japan, and by Waitrose Wine Direct and 226 branches of this UK supermarket.

As a result I can share with you Waitrose's characteristically detailed background notes below:

100% Shiraz, grown organically and biodynamically on Walter Clappis' own vineyards in Willunga foothills, McLaren Vale. Soil is rich loam over clay with patches of limestone. Vines are over 15 years old, yielding 3 tonnes/acre and the grapes were machine-harvested. After gentle crushing, the must was pumped into traditional open fermenters with twice daily pumpovers and hand plunging. Fermented at 25°C. 25% was run off skins to complete ferment in new French oak, whilst the remainder received additional maceration to extract further ripe tannins from the skins. Matured 70% in new French oak and 30% in 1-year-old American oak for 18 months. Bottled Jan 2012. Winemaker Walter Clappis. Suitable for

vegetarians and vegans. Alc 14.0%, TA 7.6g/l, pH 3.4. RS <1g/l.

Though I must confess to surprise at reading it is both biodynamically grown and machine picked. I asked our biodynamic

specialist author Monty Waldin about this and here's how he replied:

'Yes, it is allowed. But the guiding ethos is to "minimise" off-farm inputs. Whether more fossil fuel is burnt by manual

pickers driving to the vineyard, or by a single person on a machine harvester, is (perhaps) moot. I favour hand picking

because it is more social, it keeps people fitter (body and mind) and you get better quality - meaning less potential need

for inputs in the winery (or potassium metabisulfite in the trailers carrying the machine-picked grapes).'

Anyway, I can thoroughly recommend this sunny, satisfying drink for consumption, with hearty food, any time over the next three years, and gave it an enthusiastic score of 17 out of 20 when I tasted a range of Waitrose current offerings recently. Look out for my full set of reviews in the next week or so.

One more hedonistic recommendation for Londoners: the relatively new, good and very wine-friendly Chiswick Restaurant [Hedone](#).

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