

## Running with Bulls Tempranillo 2011 Barossa

8 Feb 2013 by Jancis Robinson

From £10.99, \$19.99, Au\$17.90, \$18.67, 195 rand

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Yalumba is one of Australia's most successful family-owned companies, run by Robert Hill Smith. There are also various wine projects under the Hill-Smith Family Vineyards banner (including the irreproachable Heggies Vineyard Riesling of Eden Valley). One of them is this Tempranillo, first made in 2009, that pays homage to Hill Smith's 1978 Pamplona run (you know, that crazy thing in northern Spain where people drink sufficient red wine to be carefree enough to run with the bulls through the narrow streets).

After working the vintage at Ch Rahoul in Bordeaux and Domaine Dujac in Burgundy, he came back to South Australia convinced that Tempranillo could be very well suited to some local vineyard sites. They are now buying Tempranillo from a wide spread of sites around the Barossa and Eden Valleys (hence the appellation Barossa, not Barossa Valley) and the oldest vines were planted at the turn of the century. The packaging is determinedly different from Yalumba's more sober presentation, and the wine is, of course, screwcapped.

When I tasted **Running with Bulls Tempranillo 2011 Barossa**, the last Tempranillo I had had, just two nights before, was La Rioja Alta's Reserva 904 1985, so not exactly a fair comparison, but I was impressed by how varietally true and attractive this wine is, even at only two years old. It's a firm crimson with an earthy-looking edge. A sweet floral nose is followed by a devilishly alluring, lightly leathery Tempranillo palate. Well done, those Aussies! There is lots of lip-smacking fruit but some structure and real Tempranillo character here. The palate seems more Tempranillo than the perfume to me and although some oak is involved, its influence is structural rather than aromatic. Sweet start, dry finish, is a pretty good combo.

What I'm particularly pleased about is that, despite being presumably originally priced in the indomitable Australian dollar, it is not more expensive for such a relatively serious wine. As you can see from the list of best prices above, in ascending order as usual, the wine is, gratifyingly, cheaper in the UK and US than in its homeland.

Winemaker 'Señor' Sam Wigan's notes are reproduced below.

- TA 5.9 g/l, pH 3.7, Alcohol 13.5%, quantity made 3,210 12-bottle cases
- Clone: D8V12 [presumably limited by what has passed through Australia's strict plant-quarantine procedure - JR], our oldest plantings are now 12-13 years old in Penrice and Gomersal which are on own roots; the newer plantings are on either Paulsen 1103 or Ruggeri 140
- Vineyard profiles range from red earth over rock in the western Barossa to sandy loam in the Kalimna region to brown river loam in the Penrice and Light Pass regions.
- The wines are 100% wild fermentation; destemmed, not crushed.
- Approximately 40% of the grapes are fermented in 2.5 tonne wooden vats that are allowed to follow their own fermentation curve and can reach temperatures of up to 33°C.
- Once fermentation is complete, the must is pressed off and complete malolactic fermentation occurs in oak that is 10% new Hungarian and the remainder old oak.
- The wine spends 10 months in oak before being blended in late January or early February.
- The first of the 2013 Tempranillo arrived in the winery on 6 Feb (two days ago! so these notes are hot off the press) from the Brooks Vineyard at Gomersal.

Wigan revisited Spain last autumn, working the 2012 vintage in Rioja Alta, and describes it as 'a great experience and eye-opener into the viticultural and winemaking practices of the Spanish experts. It was amazingly informative to touch, listen, taste and enjoy aromatic differences between Ribera del Duero and Rioja while working at and visiting many of the best bodegas'.

This is what he reports he is 'going to really crack onto' this year:

- Working closely with the growers to have balanced crops, focusing on canopy management and crop load.
- Measuring berry weight to have the ideal juice-to-skin ratio in ferments, using saignée where needed.
- Looking at extended maceration to build a better balanced tannin structure.
- 'pH management is always on my mind and with Tempranillo I feel you have to find balance and not conform to the conventional <3.6 pH. This means I need to be vigilant with SO2 and constantly taste through my barrels'.

Sounds as though the 2013 vintage is set to be even better than the 2011, but I don't think you will be disappointed with the value offered by the 2011. It is stocked by a wide range of UK independent retailers as well as being sold by Laithwaites, Direct Wines and many of their subsidiaries at £10.99. It is also available in the US and South Africa.

I see that a varietal Vermentino has been added to the Running with Bulls range, although anyone familiar with our [Wine Grapes](#) tome will be at a loss to see any close connection between this popular white variety and Spain. More at [www.runningwithbulls.com.au](http://www.runningwithbulls.com.au), which is currently being augmented.

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