

PARADISE LOST OR PARADISE REGAINED? BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ

Tim Atkin MW introduces a tasting of some of Australia's best-known wines, assessing, with Gerard Basset MS MW and Simon Larkin MW, their evolution, stylistic progression, and vintage variation over the past 15 years

“How much does a haircut cost in the Barossa Valley? The answer—one dollar runs an old Australian gag. The answer— is a reference to the area's Germanic origins and its all-too-recent reputation as an agricultural backwater. The Germanic links, apparent in the valley's food, architecture, slang and winery names (Soppelt, Krondorf, Orlando, Henschke, Wolf Blass, Peter Lehmann, Leo Buring), started in the 1840s and continue to this day, but its provincial reputation needs revising. The Barossa is not exactly Sydney, but over the past decade it has become the source of some of Australia's most sought-after wines.

The Barossa has not always had it so good. It suffered from its Silesian heritage during both world wars (some of the local place names were anglicized to disguise the connection) and found itself at odds with prevailing wine tastes in the 1980s. In a country that was in love with elegant, cool-climate styles from regions like Coonawarra and Margaret River, the Barossa's burly reds and fortifieds were deemed clumsy and, er, foursquare. The concurrent boom in white wine left the Barossa, with its venerable plantings of Rhone varieties, in the viticultural mire. Many grapes were left unpicked or, ignominiously, turned into Shiraz muffins.

Two things saved the Barossa. The first was the ebullient, nicotine-voiced Peter Lehmann, who bought grapes from local growers, despite scant demand for Barossa wines. The second was the emergence of three new personalities, two of them winemakers—

Charlie Melton, producer of Nine Popes, and Rocky O'Callaghan of Rockford—and one of them—Bob McLean, then of St Hallett, now of McLean's Farm—a talented marketer and Barossa spokesman. The recognition belatedly accorded to Henschke's Hill of Grace and Penfolds Grange (whose so-called “mother wine” comes from Kalimna) also helped haul the region back from the brink.

In more recent times, the enthusiastic support of the American critic Robert Parker has brought fame and, in some cases, wealth to a new generation of winemakers and wineries, such as Torbreck (Dave Powell), Rusden (Christian Canute), Chrs Ringland, Greenock Creek (Michael Waugh), Veritas (Rolf Binder), Spinitex (Pete Shell), The Relick, Massena, and The Standish (Dan Standish), Turkey Flat, Troy Kalleske, and Kym Teusner. If these wines have a common theme, apart from old vines, it is high alcohol, masses of flavor and abundant oak.

Our tasting did not include wines from all of these producers, but many of the area's best-known names (Penfolds, Rockford, Peter Lehmann, Charlie Melton, Torbreck, Grant Burge, Henschke, Yalumba and Veritas) sent in one or, in several instances, more wines. As such, it provided a good overview of the Barossa's recent history.

The spread of vintages tasted by Gerard Basset MS MW, Simon Larkin MW, and myself covered the 15 years from 1991 to 2005. It was significant that the older wines tended to be lower in alcohol, with 13.5% the norm back in 1991, compared with 14.5% since 2000.

BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ

Andrew Guard
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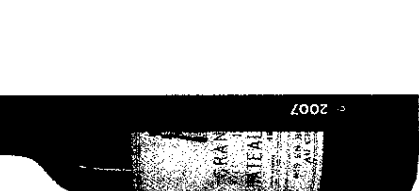
1998 Bethany GR6 - 15.5
TA: Mid-purple/ruby. Youthful but alluring nose. Lots of oak, but also lots

2004 Henschke Mount Edelstone - 15.5
TA: Youthful, vibrant purple. Ripe, but not overripe, nose. Licorice, spice, and blackberry aromas, with an enticing hint of pepper. Ditto on the palate, finish. Warming as well. Some good mocha, and a little more mocha on the accompanying alcohol. Mocha, No denying the exuberance of the fruit heady, almost blockbuster example, coffee-like nuances on the palate. A too. Rich, plenty of volume, more the aromatics; a little ground coffee, SL: Toasty, blackberry, spicy nature to enjoyable and full of life. 17

1998 Yalumba The Octavius - 16
TA: Mid-ruby/purple. Quite oaky, but there's more than enough sweet fruit to balance it on the nose. Ripe, full on, but not OTT. Palate structured, dense, lots of licorice, sweet spice, and black fruits, underpinned by oak. This has a lot of potential for a 1998 and will develop over the next decade into something outstanding. Barossa at its flag-waving best. 17

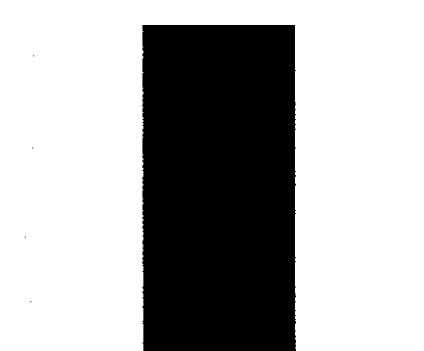
2003 Barossa Valley Estate E&E Black Pepper Shiraz - 15
TA: Rich, opaque, dense, youthful purple. Nose a little alcoholic, but still integrated. Viognier again in evidence on the palate. A little reduced, but like the smoke and spice here. Supple, voluptuous, rich, lots of flavor. Medium to full length. 15.5
GB: Very deep purple. Licorice, dried apricot. Rich and luscious, long finish. Wonderful to drink now. 17

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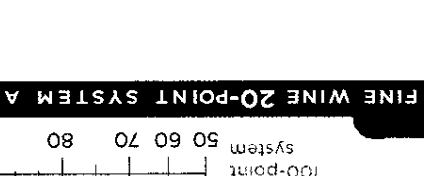
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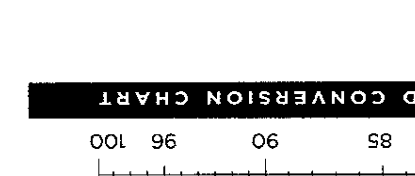
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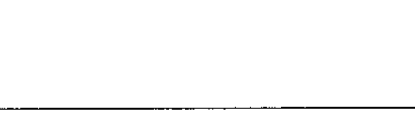


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of fruit and potential. Mocha, plum, and blackberry; sweet tannins, lovely oak integration; silky, sweet, complex, well balanced, with concentration and length. Not a wine with huge cellaring potential, but this is hugely drinkable without being OTT. 16.5
GB: Medium-full ruby. Very ripe nose, dark chocolate and sweet spices. Rich and generous, strong mocha in retro, medium-long finish. Good example. 15
SL: Immediately greater interest than most on the nose; minty, cool, fresh—nothing baked. Perhaps a more spicy capsicum aspect. Pleasing mouthfeel, again cool, fresh fruit, starting to evolve, with a little of that Marmite-like character that can overlay fruit. More complexity here, with minty, leafy nuances, as well as some mocha and cigar box. Much more refinement, too. Not far off drinking at its peak, and really enjoyable now. 15.5



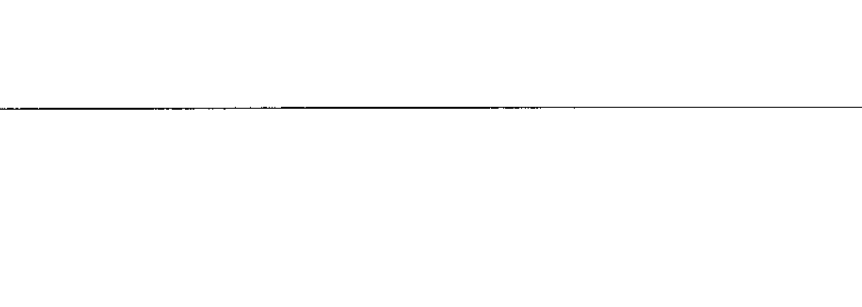
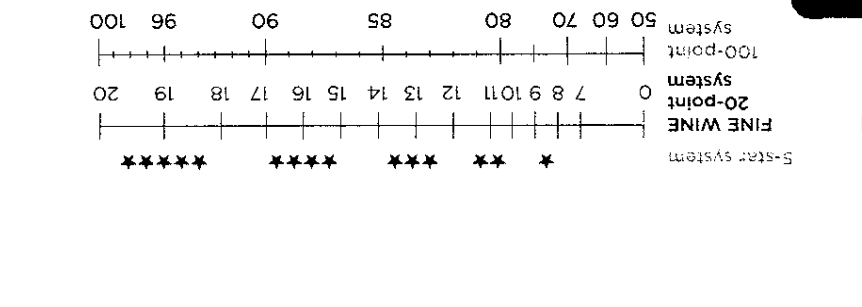
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GB: Medium-deep purple. Cocoa and blueberry muffin, very concentrated, medium-long finish. Very intense. 15
SL: Aromas here surround coffee nuances, raisin and dark plum fruit. There is also a little capsicum-like spice. Cooler nature to the ripeness here, generous, textural in style. There is a pleasing sense of volume here, and many of this vintage. A good finish with modest length signals a sound showing. 13.5



FINE WINE 20-POINT SYSTEM AND CONVERSION CHART



BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ

ripeness. Persistent, warm berry fruit on the finish. Appealing. 13

2004 Charles Melton Shiraz - 14.5

TA: Thick, dense purple. Hard to fight your way past the alcohol on the nose. Very ripe, very concentrated, masses of perfume. Very concentrated palate; masses of sweet plum, mulberry, and blackberry flavor, balanced tannins. If you don't mind super-ripe Shiraz, this is a very good example of the style. 16.5

GB: Deep purple. Rich, baked plum tart, cocoa. Voluptuous and very exuberant, good balance despite the alcohol, and a long finish. Excellent. 16

SL: Ripe berry fruit; capsicum, too. Pinched palate, little generosity. Coffee touch, leafy, almost minty, nuance to berry fruit. Nonetheless slightly stewed, with marked alcohol on the finish. Decidedly average. 10.5

2003 St Hallett Old Block Shiraz - 14.5

TA: Youthful, vibrant purple. Black-pepper and blackberry nose, with a touch of reduction. Attractive palate, where the oak, fruit, and acidity are nicely balanced. Harmonious, silky tannins, sweet fruit, lots of flavor, possibly with some Vioigner adding extra perfume and flavor and suppleness. Needs 3+ years. 16.5

GB: Very deep purple. Fruitycake, almost Christmas cake. Powerful, rich structure; long finish. Explosive but very enjoyable. 16

SL: Good intensity in the glass. The aromas suggest espresso-infused black fruit. Rich, intense; an expansive style with little subtlety. Cumberston, characters. Lacks freshness and poise. Coffee and bitter chocolate on the finish. Sound—nothing more. 11.5

1991 Thorn-Clarke Clifton - 14.5

TA: Mature, full, garnet/brick red. Leafy, pleasantly feral, complex nose with a gamey undertone and attractive red-fruit notes. Considerable structure

Creamy palate, very rich, medium-long finish. Very Barossa. 15

SL: Certainly toward opaque. Rich berry nose, warm toasty oak frame, and the merest hint of spice. Intense, some fine textures and underpinning tannins. Oak overlay seems a little marked, but there is the semblance of some appealing ripe fruit behind. The combination of oak and fruit does lead to a more sickly impression than might otherwise have been the case. Good persistence if a little warming. 12.5

**1991 Peter Lehmann Stonewell - 14.5**

TA: Comparatively youthful, mid ruby/garnet. Looks young for a wine of this age. Bold, assertive, oak-dominated nose, but with sufficient fruit aromas to support it. Palate similarly oak-dominated, with notes of pepper and spice and, once again, very youthful flavors. This almost reminds me of a Reserva Rioja, and it's significant that the alcohol isn't excessive. It doesn't quite have the concentration or complexity for a top score, but I like the sweet-oak and red-fruit flavors. 16

GB: Medium ruby. Summer pudding and Indian spices. Firm structure, middleweight, medium-long finish. Elegant wine; still very enjoyable. 15

SL: Good solidity, little sign of bricking. Aromas here suggest ground coffee, moist fruitcake, slightly baked. Lovely, layered, with a pleasing sense of elegance. Still lively, attractive

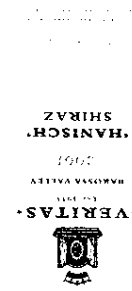
SL: Sweet, ripe aromas here. Ripe, broad fruit on the palate. A rich style with an expansive berry fruit, and the merest hint of capsicum. Coffee-infused, heady, with significant warmth on the palate. A slightly lumpy style that I find hard to appreciate. 12

2004 Torbreck Runrig - 15

TA: Dense, opaque, purple-hued. Rich, super-intense, quintessence of Barossa style. A layered, textured, very rich, but somehow balanced wine. The alcohol burns slightly, but there's enough flavor and tannin for balance. Plum and licorice flavors, with sweet tannins and a background of vanilla oak. 16

GB: Very deep-black inky/purple. Sweet black fruit, cocoa and wild flower. Very vigorous palate, very floral in retro, long finish. Very intense example. 18.5

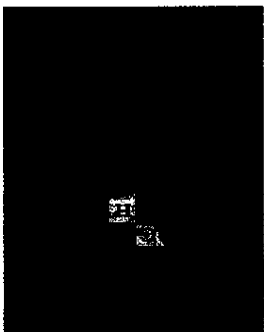
SL: Stewed, black fruit-pastille nose. Rich, ultra-concentrated, raising, dried out. Lacks generosity and poise. Malted licorice, soupy, spicy, hot on the finish. So out of kilter. 10.5

**2001 Veritas Hanisch - 15**

TA: Dense, almost opaque purple. Powerful, ultra-concentrated, ultra-rich; almost a wine on steroids. Rich, oaky (but not overly so), expressive, broad-shouldered style, but the wine is beautifully balanced, sweet, plummy, and suave. A wine that will develop beautifully over the next decade or so. A wine where the fruit has been allowed to express itself. 17

GB: Deep ruby. Baked plum, coconut,

1991 Henschke Hill of Grace - 14
TA: Bottle 7: Developed garnet/brick red, some sediment. Flat, dull, rather fruitless nose showing some oxidation. Medium-bodied. Some fruit left, but it's clinging on by its fingernails. I suspect this was considerably fresher and more interesting five years ago, because the oak is sensitively handled



1994 Grant Burge Meshach - 14
TA: Mid-ruby, less development than some of the 1994s. Comparatively youthful, assertive nose. Still a baby, with lots of potential to unfurl. This has good tannin structure, well-used oak and a core of black fruit. It's concentrated and well poised, but I think it's got another decade ahead of it at least, with delightful fruit concentration and classic Barossa character. **18**

GB: Medium-full ruby. Plum and a touch of tobacco on the nose. Powerful structure, very firm tannin, medium-short finish. Starting to tire. **11**

SL: A more youthful hue. The aromatics also show a far fresher accent than most, with exuberant, ripe berry fruit. Pleasing mouthfeel, quite expansive, generous, textural. There is a welcome intensity here; warm plum/damson fruit with admirable freshness. There is some warmth on the finish, but this can be forgiven. An appealing effort. **13.5**

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2002 Yalumba The Octavius - 14.5
TA: Dense, rich, near-opaque purple. Ripe, expressive, concentrated nose. Very much a modern, ultra-ripe style. Touch of reduction, possibly some ascendency. Black cherry and an almost recalcitrant acidity. Layered, ripe, very textural, with fine tannins

2002 Grant Burge Meshach - 14
TA: Dense purple. Young wine. Nose a little Porty and overripe. Palate ditto. The tannins and the structure of the wine dry out the fruit here. A hint of volatility on the finish also detracts from the overall impression. **10**

2004 Grant Burge Filsell - 14
TA: Thick, opaque purple. Alcohol-dominated nose. A thicket of a wine, thick, rich, oak-saturated flavors. Impressive, without really being enjoyable. Tannic, gloopy, unbalanced finish. Just too full on. **14**

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Simon Larkin MW
 I found this an interesting tasting. The more mature examples seemed to show in a finer light, with a greater sense of balance and less marked alcohol. Some proved more than a pleasant surprise. As one progressed toward the more recent vintages, however, it became apparent that there was a stylistic change—with more extraction—and heady, more overt styles resulted, more akin to raisin juice. One has to wonder when such wines would be consumed. It was difficult to isolate any one vintage as a notable success, but as one approached the 2004s, the degree of trepidation increased.

1991 Penfolds Grange - 13.5
TA: Intense mid-ruby/garnet. Oak-dominated nose, with vanilla and coconut to the fore, though the wine has mature notes of black fruit, earth,

SL: Deep in hue, warm berry fruit on the nose, but fairly mute. Deep dark berry on the palate, with a little red-fruit lift, but does not come across as overly raisiny. Very appealing sense of ripeness; cool, generous, yet restrained.

TA: Mid-purplish, very youthful for a 1999. Oak-dominated, vanilla-pod nose with an undertone of baked fruit. Palate swamped by oak, with the fruit barely able to express itself. The added acid makes the wine taste tiny and metallic. **10**

GB: Medium-full ruby. Sweet spices, black cherry. Powerful and medium-long finish. Very powerful wine. **15**

TA: Medium-deep ruby. Very scented, Indian spices, intense, with an elegant tannic structure and medium-long finish. Great character. **15.5**

SL: Aromatically this seems evolved. Leafy, tiring. The fruit here seems dull, which suggests it is fading fast. Not very complex, minty, leafy fruit. Would have been more enjoyable several years ago. Lacks life and freshness, as well as any great complexity. Sound—nothing more. **8.5**

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1999 Thorn-Clarke William Randell - 14
 A straight-forward effort. **12.5**
 do not have much faith on this showing. ever transcend the oak? A shame, but I promise, but will the fruit characters the character of the fruit. Shows some but sadly this mocha nature overplays here, no suggestion of overripeness, nature on the palate; no heady pitfalls coffee/esspresso notes overlay ripe **SL:** Deep in the glass, almost ground-long finish. Full, powerful wine. **16**

GB: Very deep ruby/purple. Blackberry and pepper. Rich and intense, medium-at its best. **14**
 Needs at least three years to show succulent, fleshy, ripe, high alcohol. hasn't come together yet. Sweet, plummy fruit, sweet oak, but the wine ripe Barossa notes. Lots of dense, ripe, Powerful, youthful, assertive, very **TA:** Deep, concentrated purple. medium-long finish. Has stood the test of time very well. **16**

GB: Medium-light garnet and lovely honeyed viscosity. **17**
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 notes, supple tannins, attractive oak, very attractive, with wild-strawberry sweetness and concentration. This is tertiary nose, with much more fruit the nose. Complex, fragrant, mature, less indication of random oxidation on Color a little more vibrant. And far and the tannins are quite fine. **17**

GB: Very deep purple, with a very bright, thin, pink rim. Strong, sweet spices, wonderfully pure chocolate, intense flavors, long finish. Excellent. **17**

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2004 Kessler Old Bastard Shiraz - 14
 Thick, dense, opaque red. Massive, ultra-ripe nose. High alcohol in evidence, to the point of caricature. Lots of oak, lots of flavor, mouth-filling, ultra-rich. Impressive, but hardly pleasurable. Dry, overoaked finish. **13.5**

2004 John Duval Wines Entity - 13.5
 Youthful, dense color. Fragrant, attractive; some Vioigner? High alcohol. Ultra-ripe, concentrated, lots of oak, dense, textured. Slightly too sweet and apricot. A little sickly. **15**

2001 McLean's Farm Shiraz - 13.5
 Mid-ruby/garnet, showing some development. Attractive, fragrant, cedarwood and spice nose. More restrained alcohol makes this a far more pleasant drink than most. Nice, soft, supple tannins, sweet red fruits, more restrained and delicate than many of the younger wines. **16.5**

2001 Penfolds Grange - 14
 Deep, concentrated purple. Powerful, youthful, assertive, very ripe Barossa notes. Lots of dense, ripe, plummy fruit, sweet oak, but the wine hasn't come together yet. Sweet, succulent, fleshy, ripe, high alcohol. Needs at least three years to show at its best. **14**

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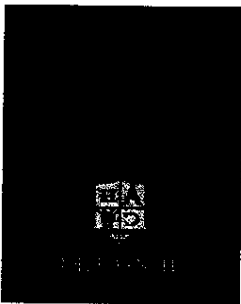
its sheer proportion, but when would you drink it? Too overbearing for me. **11**

2002 Henschke Hill of Grace - 13

TA: Mid-ruby/purple. Scented, almost floral, red fruit and violets nose. Lifted aromas. Palate overoaked, some VA, rather foursquare and hard. The nose and the palate almost seem to belong to two different wines. **11.5**

GB: Deep ruby/purple. Plum and dark chocolate. Powerful structure, alcohol a bit prominent but not unpleasant, medium finish. Very concentrated wine. **16**

SL: Deep in the glass, the aromas are certainly subdued. Ripe black fruit comes through nonetheless. On the palate, more capsicum notes, not hugely generous, but shows some focus. Not a particularly harmonious showing. Lingering coffee notes on the finish. **12**



TA: Developed garnet/brick red. Lovely, expressive, peppery, savory nose, possibly with a little Brett. Rather northern Rhone-like, with pepper spice and complexity. The palate is similarly un-Australian, is this a ringier? Delicate, poised, minty, silky-soft, with elegant tannins, red fruits, integrated oak, and real complexity. **17**

1996 Henschke Mount Edelstone - 13

GB: Medium-light garnet and slightly cloudy. Mushroom and truffle nose. Tight structure, modest retro, medium finish. Simple. **11**

TA: Dark, dense, opaque. Ripe nose, even overripe. High alcohol. Palate a little better, but still dominated by alcohol and oak. If the wine were picked at lower sugar levels, it might have the chance to show some balance. **14**

GB: Very deep purple. Chocolate, cocoa, and plum tart. Voluptuous and very intense, long finish. Very sexy style. **17**

SL: Stewed black fruit here. Fresher accent on the palate, coarse tannins and some capsicum characters. Disjointed. What can one say? There is a horrible mix of gloopy, sweet, sticky black fruit and heady alcohol. Little enjoyment. This is out of kilter and dull. **9.5**

2004 Turkey Flat - 13.5

TA: Dense, youthful color. Sweet vanilla-pod oak, lots of ripe fruit. High alcohol. **13.5**

GB: Very deep purple. Summer pudding, coconut, and cashew nuts. Full, with an appealing velvety texture, medium-long finish. Classic style. **15**

2004 Rolf Binder Hanisch - 13

TA: Deep, deep color. Quintessence of Shiraz. Mandarin-orange nose, super-concentrated, ultra-ripe. Masses of alcohol. The sumo wrestler of wine. This is impressive, and very ripe, but what on earth would you drink it with? An all-day barbecue of a wine. **16**

GB: Very deep purple. Very perfumed black berry and chocolate truffles. Strong, powerful structure, long finish. Great character. **17**

2004 Torbreck Descendant - 13.5

TA: Deep, deep color. Quintessence of Shiraz. Mandarin-orange nose, super-concentrated, ultra-ripe. Masses of alcohol. The sumo wrestler of wine. This is impressive, and very ripe, but what on earth would you drink it with? An all-day barbecue of a wine. **16**

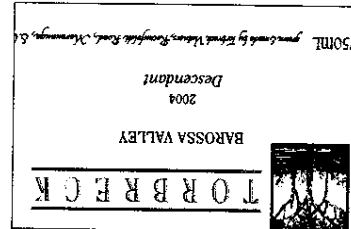
GB: Very deep purple. Very perfumed black berry and chocolate truffles. Strong, powerful structure, long finish. Great character. **17**

SL: Sweet, ripe black fruit. Licorice, and almost unripe, capsicum-nuanced fruit. Cough syrup. Hefty, cumbersome, ugly. **8**

and truffle. The acidity (probably added) is a little clumsy and foursquare on the palate, poking out of the wine like an arrow from a target, but this is still hanging on in there. Again, it would have been better five years ago, and in my view it will not improve further. **13**

GB: Medium-full garnet with brick rim. Plums in alcohol, bitter cherry. Very tight palate, medium finish. Slightly past its best. **12**

SL: More solidity to the color here, less evident bricking. Aromas suggest a cooler nature, with a more minty aspect to the ripe, fresh berry fruit. Almost a medicinal quality. Pleasing balance here, with a layered sense of complex dark plum and berry fruit allied to discreet cigar-box nuances. There is an appealing character of dried fruit, almost fruitcake-like. An elegant example for the genre, with appealing texture and long, flowing finish. **15.5**



SAVOR
BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ

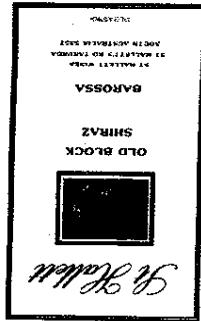
SL: Sweet aromas here, almost creosote-like. Palate shows better generosity than anticipated. Fresh black fruit, dramatically high alcohol, hot on the finish. This is concentrated but lacks precision and poise. **9**

1998 Torbreck Runrig - 13
TA: Mid-ruby/purple. Youthful for a 1998. Oaky, rich, powerful, burly nose. Palate pretty similar. Four-square, oaky, Porty, slightly sweet and raisiny. Correct, but doesn't give me much pleasure on the palate. **9**
GB: Bright, full ruby. Blackberry and milk chocolate. Smooth texture, medium-long finish. Good Barossa example. **15**
SL: Inky, intense in the glass. Ripe black fruit on the nose, unyielding. Intense, rich, licorice-nuanced, blackberry, and spice. Generous and yet held in check. Good volume and weight. Needs some time to really show. Rich and bold but shows potential. Almost damson confiture-like quality. Not yet into its stride. **14.5**



1998 Barossa Valley Estate E&E Black Pepper Shiraz - 12.5
TA: Vibrant mid-ruby color. A dense, concentrated nose. Very youthful. Masses of fruit. Very much modern Barossa in style. Sweet, assertive, lots of fruit, high alcohol, but rather raisiny. A classic one-glass wine. **11**
GB: Deep ruby. Rich nose, coconut, fruitcake. Full body, medium finish. Enjoyable nose, but let down by the palate. **13**

comes across as quite plush, soft, and accessible. It lacks some sophistication and remains a luscious, mid-weight, early-drinking style. Sound—nothing more. **10**

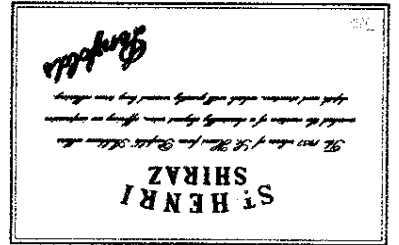


1993 St Hallett Old Block Shiraz - 12.5
TA: Mid-ruby/garnet. Ripe, faintly resinous nose from high alcohol? Palate rich, concentrated, but a little soupy, with tannins drying the wine on the back palate. A wine that won't improve but would be decent enough now, albeit with food. **12.5**
GB: Very light garnet. Very scented, retro, medium finish. Enjoyable, but not very typical of Barossa. **13**
SL: Shows slightly evolved in the glass. Aromas are quite mute, almost something slightly savory discernible. The palate is fresh, leafy, with plummy/damson fruit to the fore. Mid-weight in style, with a pleasing texture. This is relatively appealing but reveals only modest complexity. Good length, a little warming. Correct, but does not stand out from the pack. **12**

2004 Spinifex Shiraz/Vioignier - 13
TA: Super-dense, concentrated color. Rich, savory, spicy nose, ultra-ripe. Lots of oak, quite tannic, built to last, but this has all the subtlety of a knee in the groin. Slightly reduced character. Touch of Brett. This should soften and develop over the next 5+ years. **16**
GB: Deep and slightly inky. Savory, with a touch of white pepper. Medium-full bodied, medium finish. Well made. **14.5**

SL: Something slightly sweaty here, medicinal too: Brett? Cooler nature on the palate, and a quite gentle, flowing style. Light in fruit and equally in definition. Clipped on the finish. Decidedly average showing. **9**

2004 Langmeil The 1843 Freedom Shiraz - 13
TA: Youthful, dense, opaque red. High alcohol, candied, slightly confected nose. Reduced. Far, far, far too much oak. The fruit is struggling to express itself. **12**
GB: Medium-deep purple. Blackberry, tart, licorice. Powerful structure, medium-long finish. Classic. **15**
SL: Very punchy, fresh black-fruit aromas. On the palate, this exhibits bold black fruit, some capsicum spice. Layered, concentrated, intense, slightly stewed. A bold interpretation. Little harmony. An extrovert, but out of kilter. **11.5**



2002 Penfolds St Henri - 13

TA: Massive, dense color. A blockbuster. Closed in, yet powerful. It's like the wine has a moat around it. Super-concentrated, Robert Parker-friendly, essence-of-Barossa style, but I fail to see the pleasure in this. It won't improve and it's rather clumsy now. **11**
GB: Deep purple. Strong raisin, chocolate truffle. Sweet attack, very pleasant retro of wonderful chocolate. Long finish. Excellent wine. **17.5**
SL: Inky, vivid purple in the glass. The nose has a floral aspect with some ripe berry fruit behind. On the palate, it

gives the wine a rawness on the palate. There's some spicy oak, but not much in the way of balance or complexity. Raw, unbalanced finish. **14**

GB: Medium-full color. Chocolate tart, very ripe blackberry. Extremely intense, rich retro, long finish. Very concentrated. **15**

SL: Fresher aromas: licorice and black notes of mocha and coffee, but not too overlaid. The fruit remains fresh, revealing good purity. Not hugely complex but nonetheless relatively appealing, with coffee notes lingering to the finish. **13.5**

Again, I struggle to find any pleasure in this. **10**

GB: Very deep purple. Stewed plum and Indian spices. Very tight attack, medium finish. Firm style. **14**

SL: Sweet berry fruit on the nose. Plummy on the palate, with a cool sense of layered ripe fruit. There are notes of mocha and coffee, but not too overlaid. The fruit remains fresh, revealing good purity. Not hugely complex but nonetheless relatively appealing, with coffee notes lingering to the finish. **13.5**

TA: Mid-ruby/garnet rim. Baked, simple, rather pruney nose. Tannic, but sweet, concentrated, lots of oak. A bit of unexciting. Overripe. **10**

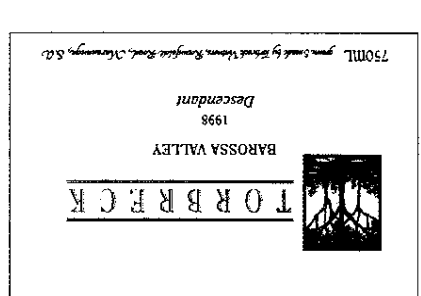
GB: Medium-ruby but slightly cloudy, intense spices, leather. Vigorous attack, excellent retro, medium-long finish. Enjoyable, even if showing its age. **15**

SL: Aromas suggest characters of raisin/black fruit pastille. Cool sense of ripeness on the palate, the leafy nature suggesting it's evolving fast. A slightly schizophrenic showing: clearly evolved, with leafy, ashy characters, but remains youthfully plummy, with fresh enlivening acidity. Some warmth on the finish. A well-balanced wine but unusual. **12.5**

TA: Dense, youthful purple. Alcohol-dominated nose, with stewed fruits and marked oak, impressive in a way, but I can't think what I'd drink this with. Even a barbecue wouldn't stand up to it. Ultra-concentrated, ultra-rich, but is this an expression of place or an expression of dead fruit? **9**

GB: Medium-full ruby. Mocha, blueberry muffin with a chocolate covering. Rich and luscious; long finish. Very appealing. **17**

SL: Deep, intense in the glass, completely opaque. Some ripe black-fruit notes on the nose, as well as the suggestion of green bell pepper. Headily rich, extravagant, reduced (like a sauce), but lacks poise. A cumbersome, clumsy effort. This is decidedly average. **11.5**



2002 Torzi Matthews Frost Dodger Eden Valley Shiraz - 12.5

TA: Mid-purple/ruby. Black olive, apricot, and blackberry nose. Possibly some Vioigner in this, adding perfume and complexity. Sweet, apricoty, lots of flavor. Vioigner nicely done. Australian Côte-Rôtie? Not quite, but a good try. **16**

GB: Medium-full ruby. Praline, blackberry, medlar fruit, wild flowers. Rich and smooth, long finish. Superb. **17**

SL: Capsicum aromas here, unappealing and sweaty. Loose, lacks direction and ripeness. At once remarkably green and stewed. Poor. Out of kilter. **4**



2003 The Willows Vineyard - 12.5

TA: Mid-purple, youthful color. High-octane, lighter-fuel nose. Fine if you want to light a barbecue, but I find this overoaked and totally overripe. **9**

GB: Medium-deep purple. Rich nose of plum in alcohol, chocolate fondant. Voluptuous character, long finish. Very rich style. **16.5**

2002 Peter Lehmann Stonewell - 12.5

TA: Opaque purple. Minty, dense, super-concentrated, essence-of-Shiraz nose. Smells rather ashy and dry. This is verging on a dead-fruit wine: charmless, overripe, and overextracted.

2004 Bethany GR9 - 12.5

TA: Dark, intense in the glass. Vanilla, mocha-infused brambly fruit on the nose. Toasty. Striking cool, ripe fruit on the palate, with a pure accent and a pleasing sense of restrained volume. Certainly something more to give. Generous rather than full-throttle, but likely to remain a wine that will impress by volume rather than complexity. Some very evident heat on the finish detracts from the score. **13**



2004 Torzi Matthews Frost Dodger Eden Valley Shiraz - 12.5

TA: Mid-ruby/garnet rim. Baked, simple, rather pruney nose. Tannic, but sweet, concentrated, lots of oak. A bit of unexciting. Overripe. **10**

GB: Medium-ruby but slightly cloudy, intense spices, leather. Vigorous attack, excellent retro, medium-long finish. Enjoyable, even if showing its age. **15**

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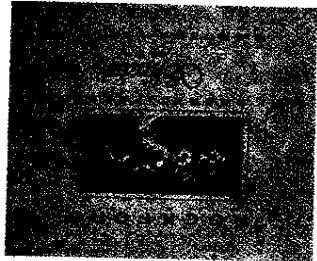
Tim Atkin MW
I vastly preferred the older wines, which were less extracted and sweet and alcoholic. My feeling is that the Barossa has changed style over the past decade, moving toward much more alcoholic and oaker styles. On this showing, the Barossa has gone too far down the Robert Parker route.

2002 Henschke Tappa Pass Shiraz - 11.5

TA: Rich, opaque ruby/purple. Oak and some reduction on the nose. Still closed and turned in on itself. Palate is ultra-concentrated, hinting at low yields, high alcohol, and considerable extract. If decanted, the wine would show better. I think it needs five years or more, but there is a lot of flavor here, and it's not overblown. The finish is possibly a little bitter and charry. **16**

GB: Very deep young ruby. Savory nose, touch of Marmite. Full and rich, with an interesting array of flavors and a long finish. Excellent wine. **16**

SL: Sweaty, leafy, green capsicum on the nose. Palate lacks ripeness—the capsicum quality overrides all. Really poor. Not sure this is out of condition, it just lacks ripeness. **3**



1991 Rockford Basket Press Shiraz - 11.5

TA: Medium to light garnet/brick red. Mature. Warm alcohol dominates the nose, leaving very little space for fruit. Big, ripe, slightly Porty palate, with

GB: Very deep black/purple. Licorice and black cherry in chocolate. Powerful, with intense retro, long finish. Very intense. **15**

SL: Sweet, ripe, black-fruit nose. The palate shows black cherry, oak, and high alcohol. The tannins here are coarse, and the alcohol is again very marked on the finish. This comes across as Port if not cough syrup. Unbalanced and out of kilter. **7.5**

1994 Bethany GR2 - 11.5

TA: Mature ruby/garnet. Candied, vanilla nose, showing pleasant development. Ripe, red-cherry and raspberry notes still to the fore on the palate, with well-integrated oak. The problem with this wine is that it's rather short and finishes with acidity and tannin in the ascendant. Comparatively simple, but pleasant. **11**

GB: Light garnet with big rim variation. Leather and dark chocolate. Slightly aggressive tannin and weak in retro, not completely balanced, with a medium finish. A touch unbalanced. **10**

SL: Overt, sweet, licorice-laden aromatics here. On the palate, ripe berry, licorice, and dried fruit. Quite fruity, almost high-toned, with the suggestion of a little VA—not that it detracts overly from the fruit. Almost a minty lift to the finish, as well as a noticeable warmth. **13**

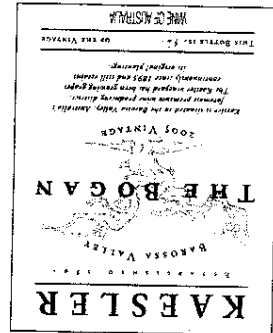
2002 Elderton Command Shiraz - 11.5

TA: Dense, youthful, vibrant color. Ripe, high octane, and oak nose. Spirited. Masses of chocolate and mocha oak; quite tannic, sweet, Porty. The oak is just too dominant here. Almost a quintessence. Some might enjoy it... **9**

GB: Full ruby/purple. Mocha, licorice. Very rich wine, medium finish. Extremely powerful overall. **14.5**

SL: Slightly subdued aromatically. Warm berry on the palate, and very creamy. Loose, lacks some direction, but it nonetheless shows a layered, creamy, plummy fruit. Clipped on the finish, with noticeable warmth. **10.5**

SL: More dark-cherry aromas here. Fresh, more-to-cherry fruit on the palate, with lively, slightly sour qualities. The oak seems less assertive, though there are background mocha notes. This is far more grippy than some. Fails to convince in terms of harmony, though fruit makes a welcome showing. Warmth to finish leads to a lower score. Nonetheless, a good if slightly heady interpretation. **12.5**



2005 Kaesler The Bogan Shiraz - 12

TA: Rich, dense, concentrated, purple-hued. Verging on an LBV Port. What on earth is going on here? Who is this wine being made for? Tannic, dry, some fruit, but above all, *massively* alcoholic and overblown. I don't think this will improve with age. **13**

GB: Powerful blue ink. Cherry in alcohol, strong licorice. Rich and ample, medium-long finish. Extremely concentrated. **16**

SL: Bolder aromas. Capsicum, stewed fruit. Hideous mélange of sickly black fruit and alcohol. Warm if not hot. Horrific alcohol, so marked, so much of a burn, it proves to be close to LBV Port. 16% ABV? When would you drink this? And why? **7**

2004 Penfolds RWT - 12

TA: Dark, brooding, super-concentrated. Smells like an LBV Port. High octane, Porty, very ripe; lashings of oak and confected fruit. Masses of extract and concentration, added acid. Unbalanced wine. **13**

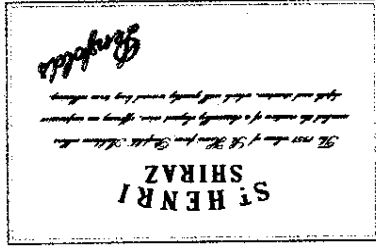
1998 Elderton Command Shiraz - 10.5
TA: Mid-ruby; touch of development at the rim. Green, slight sweetcorn nose. There is lots of oak, but with a green undertone. Stemmy? Palate considerably better. Big, brassy, boldly flavored wine, with lots of toasty, sweet, vanilla oak and blackberry fruit.



2004 Rockford Basket Press Shiraz - 11
TA: Youthful, vibrant ruby/purple color. Very high-alcohol, low-acid style. Quite a bit of US oak, Coca-Cola-like, sweet, confectioned, and rather dull. A wine that you have to pitchfork your way through...
GB: Very deep purple. Chocolate fondant, sweet spices, intense, medium finish. Enjoyable.
SL: Ripe black-cherry fruit on the nose. Fresh accent on the palate, luscious touch, still some sense of bell pepper. Very dense, loose-knit; heady in alcohol, hot on the finish, struggling here. Out of kilter. A caricature. 8

1998 Penfolds RWT - 11
TA: Mid-ruby/purple. High-octane, oak-dominated nose. Very, very oaky palate. Is the producer of this wine married to a cooper? Why spend so much on oak? It detracts from the wine's qualities rather than adding to them. Again, this is Barossa meets Amarone. 9
GB: Deep ruby. Sweet spices and vanilla. Powerful and alcoholic structure, not unpleasant, but a bit too heavy. Medium finish. Generous aromas. Fresh, ripe nature—quite full, layered, and expansive. Feels slightly out of kilter—no great harmony here. Raising, with a drying touch to the palate. 10
SL: A sweet, raising touch to the wine. 13.5
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1991 Penfolds St Henri - 11
TA: Very developed, almost Barolo/Pinot Noir-like color, with a browning rim. Flat, mature, rather etiolated nose, with hints of wet undergrowth. Feral, light, tiring palate whose fruit has faded. Once again, the acid is clumsy, and there is an underlying greenness to the wine. 9
GB: Medium garnet and slightly cloudy. Not very expressive, with just a bit of blackberry jam. A bit tight with



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some mulberry/plum flavors, added acidity, and reasonably well-handled oak. Decent without being exciting or outstanding, partly because it tastes like a wine that has been assembled in a winery rather than shaped in the vineyard. 9
GB: Medium-deep garnet. Russian leather, cinnamon. Rich and powerful, intense retro of spices; medium-long finish. Powerful wine, still in good shape. 15
SL: Similar in hue to [the 1991 Peter Lehmann Stonewell]. Aromas

Gerard Basset MS MW
 I really enjoyed this tasting, even though I could not taste very well due to a slight cold, and that is reflected in my short tasting notes.
 Overall, I thought the tasting was very representative of what Barossa wines are. I found the younger wines more interesting because, for me, Barossa should be fruity, opulent, and voluptuous in texture, and this is what I found in most of the young wines. I thought many of the wines were superb. My only concern is that it is not to the advantage of these wines to taste 55 of them in a row: 25 to 30 would have been a better number, so focusing on one vintage would have been better for me!
 I would have no hesitation in drinking many of these wines at home during a romantic dinner and Torbreck is a great favorite at home. The Barossa producers have a unique style and should carry on defending it. They are known for wines that are fruity, smooth, and with high alcohol—and why not? In that style, they produce some of the best wines in the world. Bravo to them!

BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ

SAVOY

1996 Turkey Flat - 9.5

TA: Mid-garnet. Reductive, slightly feral, mushroomy nose. Overoaked, quite dry, horsey. Dull wine that will not improve. Old-fashioned. 4

GB: Medium-full ruby. Gamey character with some blueberry fruit. Full and solid, firm tannin, medium finish. Correct but not exciting. 13

SL: An inky hue. Aromas quite reticent. Broad, rich, a sweet sense of ripeness. Something a little disjointed here, pinched on the finish, which is lean and angular and detracts from the bolder accent of the deep, dark cherry fruit. Sadly fails to convince. 11.5

2000 Grant Burge Filsell - 8

TA: Profound ruby/purple. Horsey, Brettly nose. Palate ditto. 4EP drying out the wine. Shame, because the underlying fruit is clearly good. 4

GB: Medium ruby. Mousy and not very clean. Acidic, short finish. Faulty wine. NS

SL: Mocha, raisin, and dried fruit on the nose, berry fruit behind, but sweaty and medicinal. The palate shows a certain leafiness and coffee-infused berry fruit. One-dimensional and slightly lackluster. Just seems to lack vibrancy. Flat but correct. 12

1994 The Willows Vineyard - 3.5

TA: Mid-ruby. Nose dominated by VA. Palate ditto. Unacceptably so. Porty, pruneey. Amarone-style... 4

GB: Medium-full ruby. VA prominent. Very acidic. Faulty. NS

SL: Bottle 7: Dried out, almost raisiny. Amarone-like fruit on the nose and volatile acidity. Porty on the palate, if not as raisiny as anticipated. Still a sour, morello cherry-like fruit. There is an overriding sense of oxidation and volatile acidity. Out of condition. *Bottle 2:* Fresher, but just opened. VA still apparent. 3

Have your say! Visit our interactive website, www.flnwinemag.com, and join the debate.

GB: Deep purple/ink. Very powerful blueberry tart, milk chocolate. Concentrated, medium finish, with a strong berry character. Very pleasant. 16

SL: Giving little away on the nose, this reveals modest black fruits. On the palate, more freshness than anticipated. Rich, ripe blackberry *mures*. Grippy tannins—a real effort to make a statement in a glass. Just far, far too much, with considerable heat on the finish. When could one drink this? 7

1994 Charles Melton Shiraz - 10

TA: Mature garnet. High-alcohol, nostril-clearing nose, with hints of jammy overripeness. Palate similarly overripe and Porty, with hot fruit flavors and rather dry, pruneey tannins. Rather charmless and foursquare. 9

GB: Medium-full garnet. Tobacco, leather. Medium-full, modest retro, medium-short finish. On the decline. 11

SL: Aromas here suggest mocha, capuccino-infused berry fruit. The palate shows cool, ripe fruit, slightly leafy, mid-weight, with again a heavy mocha overlay. Lacks some freshness and is seemingly one-dimensional. A little heat to the finish, too. Just lacks some character. 10.5

2003 McLean's Farm Trinity Corner ("to be released late 2007") - 9.5

TA: Mid ruby/purple. This is a more restrained style. Some reduction. Tannic, extracted, baked fruit. Finish dominated by alcohol, tannin, and dryness. There is zero pleasure on offer here. 8

GB: Medium-full ruby/purple. Chocolate truffle and blueberry. Powerful and solid, medium-long finish. Slightly aggressive. 13.5

SL: Sweaty touch to the aromas. Evolving on the palate—rich, but has gained a leafy complexity. Ripe, comparatively loose-knit, but some bizzarely grippy tannins, and a disjointed, hot, rasping finish. 7.5

But the greenness and added acid reassert themselves on the finish. 12

GB: Very bright ruby. Coffee and leather. Very rich texture, almost creamy, with a medium finish. Overly rich style but still alive. 13

SL: Bottle 1: Dried out, raisiny, Port-like aromas; VA too. Similar on the palate—this is faulty, out of condition. Impossible to judge. *Bottle 2:* Better but overly confectioned, sickly, very creamy, and the same sense of VA. Just fresher for being open for a shorter period. 6

TA: Youthful, medium density, purple-hued red. Alcoholic, touch of oxidation/baked-fruit character. Added acid and sourness. Some oak. Dry finish. Charmless. 8

GB: Medium-full ruby. Dried flowers, plum, and gamey hints. Full and firm, medium-long finish. Intense. 15

SL: Ripe black fruit and toasted oak on the nose. On the palate, it continues in a similar vein. Leafy almost, with succulent fruit to follow, but this is still more dried out than anticipated. Not sure this has much future; it appears to be drying out at its current age. 8

2004 Thorn-Clarke William Randell - 10.5

TA: Super-dense and super-opaque. Massively alcoholic nose; ripe, extracted, confectioned toothpaste-in-a-glass style. Too much oak, too much flavor, too much tannin, too much everything... 9

