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BY JOHN GERUM



T O R B R E C K

## AUSSIE WINERIES BUCK SHIRAZ TREND

It may be that Australia is stuck in a rut. The big, fat, ripe overbearing Shiraz is a dime a dozen in the Land Down Under. Every Shiraz is more or less the same it seems, but there are wineries that buck the trend of fruit-forward wines, and one of them is Torbreck Winery from Barossa Valley.

Founding winemaker David Powell creates wines that are subtle yet powerful in flavour and length. Founded in 1994, Torbreck bucked the trend that the Australian government mandated in the 1980s, which required wineries to pull out old Shiraz vines.

Instead, Torbreck nurtured them back to health to create a blend of Rhone-style syrah and other varietals with a touch of Aussie freshness and complexity.

The most famous wine critic in the world, Robert Parker, said of Torbreck "They capture the greatest of the old vine vineyards in the Barossa with sensitivity toward fruit purity and overall balance ... the upcoming releases are among the most exciting wine being made on the planet. That's how good this guy is!"

In tasting Torbreck, I can say I agree 100 per cent with Parker. Low yields, hand harvesting and minimal fining and filtration bring quality and a degree of finesse that is sorely lacking in most Australian exports.

These wines are only available in speciality retail government and private wine stores, but are well worth the search. At a recent tasting, I made a few tasting notes that may guide you to a Torbreck wine that suits your palate.

The first wine is a de-classified GSM (Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre). De-classified wines are wines that are usually bottled for the reserve line but for a number of reasons are released at a much lower price than their quality suggests.

The Torbreck, Barossa Valley 2006 Old Vines GSM is unfiltered and unfinned with red berry, dark cherry and a smoky, herbal nose. The ripe fruit is balanced by amazing silky tannins. The wine proceeds to a medium long finish and is supported by a fresh sense of acidity.

followed by a touch of peppery spice: A nice value addition to the lineup of high quality wines that Torbreck is famous for around the world.

In the world of industrial winemaking it is refreshing to see and taste such wonderfully different wines that buck the typical Australian wine style. Don't take my word for it. The only way in which you'll understand these complex wines is by trying and enjoying them yourself.

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The Les Amis Grenache 2006 is an interesting and complex wine. Black cherry and dry earthiness lead to a smoky, floral and spice flavour that shows layers of interesting textures.

This is an intense and finesse-driven wine that complements David Powell's vision.

An affordable choice is the Woodcutter's Shiraz 2006. The Woodcutter moniker stems from the days when the winery founder was labouring as a woodcutter in the Torbreck forest in Scotland. This is a slightly richer style of Shiraz with blackberry and blueberry notes

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