

The Advertiser

Edition 1 - StateWED 23 NOV 2005, Page U08
Australia's top 100 wines
Semillon

7 recommended 58 entries

SEMILLON and sauvignon blanc are the major white grapes of Bordeaux, where they are generally used for crunchy, elegant dry whites, as well as for lush botrytised stickies in Sauternes and Barsac. They need precious little oak, blended or neat. In Australia, the mega-trendy savy b has all the limelight, perhaps because marketers follow the winemakers who persistently give easily recognised watery old Hunter semis the top gongs at all the shows. These are never the wines the punters see on shelf or table, and they're never as green and tight as the best young semillons, which are really more like sauvignon blanc in style. So don't be shy: there are much better wines here than in the sauvignon blanc class, and of a similar genre. Check those neat, modest alcohols, and prices to match. Semis way cool. Savys for solicitors.

Mt Jagged

Southern Fleurieu Semillon 2005

\$14

92 points

12.5 per cent alcohol

Screw cap

As tight and pinched as a Telecaster (guitar) on treble, this sinuous beauty from a windy ridge near Mt Compass releases impossibly fine, pristine whiffs of citrus blossom and citronella. It's lightly spicy, although it has no oak, and it draws its cleansing palate out over a frame of firm, natural acidity and persistent mealy tannins. Throw this at your squid. www.mtjaggedwines.com.au

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Australia's top 100 wines
Bargains: 40 great wines under \$15

AS this huge tasting progresses, I come across many wines which don't quite make the final cut, but are sound, enjoyable, healthy wines at very good prices. This selection of 40 such bargains is a great indicator of what our wine industry has always done very well: getting us wholesome, pleasing wines of high quality at prices that often confound. This category, which was once occupied almost solely by the biggest companies, is increasingly filled by small or medium-sized producers who simply have to keep their prices down to sell anything against the sheer force of the huge refineries. I don't know how they do it, but they sure do it well. You may find difficulty, however, in obtaining some of them from the megastores, which tend to deal mainly with the largest manufacturers.

So be patient, check the websites and do some sleuth work of your own.

Happy Holidays,

Philip White

TOP POINTS

Mt Jagged

Semillon Sauvignon blanc 2004

\$14

91 points

12 per cent alcohol

Screw cap

Refined and elegant Southern Fleurieu/Hills blend reeking of lime rinds and lemon butter, with a dash of chalk. Clean, slender, viscous with good acidity. Fresh oysters. www.mtjaggedwines.com.au

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Australia's top 100 wines Cabernet sauvignon and blends

10 recommended 258 entries

LOOK what happens to prices when there's a cabernet glut. A class usually dominated by expensive sophisticates from posh little makers suddenly becomes rudely, beautifully affordable. Of course, there were grand wines in this class, mainly built for extended cellaring, but most suddenly looked awkward and quaint against these vibrant, audacious cheapies from the biggest manufacturers.

While the price squeeze sees many smaller producers maintaining or improving their quality at more modest prices than they'd prefer, I don't know how long this can last without wreaking utter havoc. Not everybody can keep this quality up without making a fair profit. First to go will be littlies.

So enjoy this good stuff while it lasts: at the other end of this cycle, quality can only plunge as winemaking budgets inevitably follow income.

Mt Jagged

Cabernet Merlot 2003

\$19

92 points

14 per cent alcohol

Screw cap

Genuine cool-climate claret from the windiest ridge on the Southern Fleurieu, this sure don't taste jagged.

It's more like a petit Pomerol or St Emilion, and it will look even more so with a few mellowing years of dungeon. Prettily scented, tight and leafy, juicy and sweet - piquant fragrance in contrast to McLaren Vale's mellow smoothness. www.mtjaggedwines.com.au