

Torzi Matthews Frost Dodger Shiraz

The region: Eden Valley (SA)

The alcohol: 14.5%

The vintage: 2004

The taste: Big, juicy, succulent fruit.

The price: \$35 or 10% discount in the dozen



More detail:

Made by Domenic Torzi and Tracy Matthews, this shiraz is sourced from a vineyard in the Eden Valley that is particularly susceptible to frost. Frost and wine grapes don't tend to mix very well, but Domenic decided to take the risk of planting the grapes in this particular vineyard because the naturally low yielding soil here produces fewer grapes but with a much more rich and intense flavour. So far the grapes have managed to dodge the frost and it has paid off for him, with the last two vintages getting rave reviews from just about anyone who happens upon a bottle.

Adding further complexity to the wine is the fact that some of the grapes are dried, Amarone style, similar to some Italian reds.

It shouldn't be any surprise that with low yielding vines and partially dried grapes, this is a big wine. It'll drink well from now until 2010 at the very least and should last well beyond that. The only problem is that it's so tasty right now that it's hard to keep your hands off it!

All of the staff in the shop have pretty much fallen in love with this wine... try it once and you'll see why.

Pondalowie Shiraz

The region: Bendigo (Vic)

The alcohol: 14.5%

The vintage: 2004

The taste: Rich fruit with enough body to go with just about any meat

The price: \$28 or 10% discount in the dozen



More detail:

Halliday rated this 94/100 and it's not hard to see why. I have always said that the wine inside the bottle is the important part, not the label. This wine is a great example of that, the label is ugly (really, look at it!) but the wine leaves you in no doubt that these guys know what they're doing.

The wine is hand-plunged, fermented in open fermenters and barrel matured in both American and French oak, indicating a real hands-on approach, rather than the more automated style that some of the less discerning winemakers sometimes use in their cheaper wines. The results of this hands-on process are evident in the more subtle and complex flavours in the wine. Essences of blackberries, spices, the usual shiraz notes, but it's the depth and length of these flavours that sets this wine apart.

It's not quite as big as the Frost Dodger, but it's very rich for a Victorian shiraz at this price point. It will cellar for up to 8 years if you're that way inclined.

The Pondalowie label has been around for awhile, but it's really starting to make some waves amongst the wine writers who keep an eye on the more interesting wines on the market. They only make red wines, and in very small quantities.

Punt Road Merlot

The region: Yarra Valley (Vic)

The alcohol: 14.0%

The vintage: 2004

The taste: One of the most complex merlots I have ever tried under \$50

The price: \$26 or 10% discount in the dozen



More detail:

The road that the winery is named after has been around since the 1850's, a quiet little dirt track. There's nothing quiet about this wine. Now I know that a lot of us tend to avoid straight merlots, considering them either wine for beginners or a blight on society, but this wine shows that merlots can (and often do) have a lot more body and taste than they are given credit for. In this case, it could even stand in for a cabernet, it's that well made.

The notes on the back of the label describe plum, cherry and violet characters, "layered with toasty French oak and silky tannins". Typical merlot really, but the silky yet structured tannins really give this wine an elegant mouthfeel.

So, if you can get your head around drinking straight merlot, even if you normally don't like it, do not miss out on this wine. It's made in small quantities, but definitely worth grabbing as much as you can. It will cellar for 6-8 years if you like, but it is the perfect wine to drink with friends. You could either use it to introduce newer wine drinkers to more interesting and full-bodied styles of wine, or you could drink it with the seasoned wine drinker who is looking to rediscover merlot.

Bress Heathcote & Bendigo Shiraz

The region: Heathcote & Bendigo (Vic)

The alcohol: 14.0%

The vintage: 2005

The taste: More subtle, more delicate, a beautiful example of Victorian shiraz.

The price: \$24 or 10% discount in the dozen



More detail:

The winemaker, Adam Marks, came through the shop the other day and we got chatting about all things wine (and cider actually, very interesting cider). He's one of those real personalities in the trade, a very nice bloke with a good grasp of all things wine and a phobia of barcodes. If you ever want to see what it's like working as a winemaker for a day, you can take a trip to the winery and see wine being made. In fact, he'll even let you join in and have a go. I thoroughly recommend it, although you might end up like this:



That's Adam... and that purple won't come off for weeks.

Now, the wines. They come in two basic levels, the “silver chook” label and the stunning “gold chook” shiraz. While we don't have any of the gold chook in store, we can certainly order some in (around \$40 per bottle in the dozen). The wine that we have is the silver chook regional blend, with fruit sourced from Heathcote and Bendigo. The grapes are treated gently, with minimal intervention. The use of whole bunch pressing gives the wine an interesting texture and 12 months in French oak gives it a lingering (but not overpowering) vanilla finish. It's a mouth stainer, almost blue ink in colour. Look for plum and fruitcake flavours.

At this price, it's worth throwing into any mixed dozen that you care to make up.

For more detail: www.bress.com.au Don't forget to check out the “care packages” that he does.

Zema Estate “Cluny”

The region: Coonawarra (SA)

The alcohol: 13.0%

The vintage: 2003

The taste: Wonderful Bordeaux (cabernet) blend, with a brilliant nose. Serve in a big glass

The price: \$29 or 10% discount in the dozen



More detail:

Now we all know that Coonawarra is famous for cabernet sauvignon, but what about cabernet's cousin? Cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot, petit verdot and malbec are all related and are used in Bordeaux blends, so it's not surprising to see similar blends appear from the Australian cabernet heartland. The Cluny is a fantastic example of what Australian winemakers can do with those grapes and shows why Zema Estate is one of the more famous brands from Coonawarra.

The resulting wine is rich and complex. The bouquet is a thing of beauty, be sure to serve it in a big glass and swirl it around a lot so that it really jumps out of the glass at you. The use of French and American oak gives it that a lingering finish with some hints of vanilla, but these are not overpowering and are in perfect balance with the fruit... look for hints of white chocolate and blueberry.

This wine tends to be a bit of a handsell, in that it doesn't tend to get picked up off the shelf unless we suggest it, but once we get someone onto it, they tend to buy a case or two. It's not hard to see why, the wine is drinking well now, but will peak in about 5 years and is well worth holding on to if you can.

Kalleske wines

The region: Barossa (SA)



In this case, I'm going to write about the winery, rather than an individual wine, because they're all outstanding.

When a number of the leading wine writers in Australia were asked which winemakers to keep an eye on over the next few years, most of them mentioned Troy Kalleske. The Kalleske family have been growing grapes for five generations, but it took Troy, the sixth generation to be involved in the family business to actually set up a winery and start making wine under the Kalleske label. With all of that grape growing experience, it's not surprising that they are working with premium grapes and making spectacular wine.

We currently stock three of their reds, with one other red in very very limited supply and a quirky white blend also available, not to mention a dessert wine.

Clarry's Red Blend - \$22

80% grenache, 20% shiraz, this wine is full bodied with a lot of fruit sweetness from the grenache. A high alcohol number which will go with some richer dishes. Osso bucco anyone?

Old Vine Grenache - \$45

Another high octane number, 15.5%. Don't take it out to dinner if you plan on driving home! The old vines mean low yielding fruit, more complex and structured flavours and a certain "wow" factor. If you've never tried grenache, or have only tried the quite sweet grenache styles of some producers, then this is worth a go to see just what everyone is raving about.

Greenock Shiraz - \$45

Named after the nearby village. Sitting at 15.0%, it's a big rich juicy number, with lashings of American and French oak. It's one of those numbers that needs cellaring, but it's a true family affair. All of the grapes are sourced from a single vineyard, with cuttings dating back to the 1800's. Buy it, thank me later.

All are wines from one of the most exciting prospects in the Australian wine industry.