C// CELLARHAND NEWSLETTER February 2017

Welcome to the CellarHand newsletter for February 2017. Here's a little taste of what's going on this month...

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AUSTRALIA & NZ

FRANKLAND FLIPS

It's always exciting when the new single-vineyard Rieslings from Frankland Estate come out. Isolation Ridge and Poison Hill are two of the finest Riesling sites in Australia, true and expressive patches of dirt that bring out the beauty of this grape and the pristine growing conditions of the Frankland River region in WA. Quality-wise, these go neck-and-neck every year and the bar is set dizzyingly high. The 2015s were tied on 97 points each in last year's **Halliday Wine Companion** and it would be no surprise to see history repeat itself. Also out is the fragrant, super-classy Shiraz from Isolation Ridge and the 2014 harvest. The wine shares with its Riesling counterpart lovely ripe fruit, beguiling aromas, texture and an ironstone minerality. Shiraz from here is exceptional, and tends to live in the shadow of the rizza – but there's room in your life for both!

2016 Isolation Ridge Riesling RRP \$42

Complex and perfumed on the nose, this has alluring citrus pith, zesty orange, lime and cumquat, which unfolds with the delicate flavours of spice and ironstone mineral undertones. There is a real softness and generosity of fruit on the front- and mid-palate. The evident fruit weight is kept in check with rounded yet apparent acidity giving the wine direction, tightness and length. A fusion between fruit intensity, ironstone flintiness and saline mineral acidity is complemented by an overlying silky-texture. The wine is balanced by a fragile delicacy and lightness of touch that persists through the long refreshing finish of this distinguished Riesling.



2016 Poison Hill Riesling RRP \$42

Aromas of lavender, rose petal and jasmine tea are complemented by hints of spice and chalky-talc notes which lead into a soft, elegant yet flavoursome palate. A luxurious wine with a tautness on the palate giving it real focus, it is distinguished by a pronounced juicy citrus tone and underlying talc/quartz-like minerality. The finely textured acidity provides a sensuous mouthcoating of expressive fruit; think funky-tropical, making this a charmingly complex wine.

2014 Isolation Ridge Shiraz RRP \$42

Deep crimson. Highly perfumed - with rich fruit and a light floral quality. Very intense and deeply fruited on the palate but the fruit is not overly sweet (that's good). Darker and more savoury on the palate, with a touch of black olive already. Spice and pepper from oak and fruit. Chewy and fresh on the long, tangy finish. 17/20 Julia Harding MW, jancisrobinson.com December 2016

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NOCTURNE SWEET

Nocturne is a husband-and-wife partnership between recently-crowned Jimmy Watson-winner Julian Langworthy and his wife Alana. The two met as young winemakers in South Australia and have been producing their own side-project wines together for 10 years.

Nocturne, however, is a serious new venture producing single-vineyard wines from exceptional sites in Margaret River. This is the region where Julian grew up and where he's transformed Deep Woods Estate since becoming chief winemaker in 2011. In the process he's won just about every prize imaginable, culminating in the 2016 Jimmy for his Reserve Cabernet. Julian and Alana are smart, ambitious and acutely sensitive to the best fruit sources in the region – including their pride and joy, the newly acquired Sheoak Vineyard and its beautifully mature Cabernet vines. It's a pleasure to commend to you these dazzlingly vibrant, stylish and engaging wines that are a real joy to drink.

2015 Nocturne Chardonnay RRP \$42 (*Limited. Speak to your account manager)

2015 is the best Chardonnay vintage we have experienced in Margaret River. Despite a very warm January and generally early picking dates, the fruit largely had great flavour and amazingly vibrant acid levels. This is a 100% single-site wine from the Tassel Park Vineyard in the Treeton subregion of Margaret River. This tiny 0.37Ha vineyard is interplanted, somewhat unusually, with Western Australia's classic gin gin clone and the Burgundy 277 clone. The gin gin affords great fruit weight and texture while the 277 has great acidity and mineral line. The vineyard is southfacing and is planted on deep, silver-grey sands. The picking date is generally very late compared to the rest of the region.

The fruit was handpicked on 22nd February and whole bunch-pressed directly to one new and one two-year-old puncheon, with no settling or fining processes. This juice was then carefully monitored and spontaneous fermentation kicked off on day three after pressing. After a five-week ferment the wine remained unsulphured on gross lees until November of that year. It did not undergo malolactic fermentation. At that stage the wine was emptied from barrel, then settled,

filtered and bottled.

It's a spectacular site this one, making spectacular white wines. It's generous in flavour and has oodles of personality. That vibrant acidity chimes clear as a bell and an upper class accent from very expensive oak rounds it nicely. - **Julian Langworthy**

2016 Nocturne Nebbiolo Rosé RRP \$35

2016 was pretty idyllic for rosé production. Light, fine flavours became present in the fruit at low sugar levels allowing expressive, generous wines with the alcohol nicely in check. This is a 100% single-site wine from the Lentondelle Vineyard in the Carbanup subregion of Margaret River. It's a flat, warm site with fertile, red sandy soils. The fruit was picked by hand on 3rd March at what would generally be considered perfect Chardonnay numbers.

It was whole bunch-pressed directly to old oak for fermentation as per high-end chardonnay production. The juice was fractionated into free-run and pressings but

ultimately all of the fractions were used in the final blend. Fermentation was wild and no additions were made to this wine at all. After 10 weeks unsulphured in oak on gross lees, the wine was emptied from barrel, then settled, filtered, sulphured and bottled.

We're extremely happy with the resulting wine. The texture and phenolic structure are highlights for us. We feel that, although extremely different from Bandol, this may be very ageworthy in a similar vein. That said, drink it on a boat, wearing white. - Julian Langworthy

2015 Nocturne Cabernet Sauvignon RRP \$42

Generous proportions but maintains a neat medium weight feel. Soft, ripe fruit spreads well across the palate, cassis, blueberry, Provencale herbs, black pepper and some subtle, cedary wood tannin. The perfume is reserved, black currants, bay leaf, faint sea spray and tobacco-scented oak. The tannins build nicely, classily, to a secretive but defining pucker. Though fuller and less structured than some wines from around the region, this does have a certain elegant feel. 93 points. **Mike Bennie, The Wine Front** February 2017

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PINK n' PURPLE PANNELL



A couple of colourful numbers from McLaren Vale's master of modern Aussie drinking. The Montepulciano is a more occasional release. It was inspired by the vibe of *3 Feet High and Rising*, the debut studio album by American hip hop trio De La Soul – a record close to Stephen Pannell's heart. As for the Grenache Shiraz Touriga, it's a wine that needs no introduction ever since the 2014 swept the national wine show circuit in

2014 swept the national wine show circuit in a cloud of spice, berries and violets. The 2016 is silky and inviting, with that effortless flow that spells repeat play.



2016 S.C. Pannell Montepulciano RRP \$31

Great colour - ruby with a particularly vibrant rim. Sweet-fruit nose - raspberry and mulberry, summer pudding-like, but with some hay, Italian herb and earth, too. Sweet fruit on entry; juicy, medium-bodied with a nice flow; not too sweet through the palate with generous fresh fruit. Tannins are soft and dusty; fairly sharp raspberry acid, fresh but not searing. Not long but fresh fruit finish with echoes of herb. Good fresh summer quaffer.

2016 S.C. Pannell Grenache Shiraz Touriga RRP \$31

Attractive red fruit nose - quite Grenache. Raspberry and strawberry notes with floral notes, too rose petal but also the Touriga violets. Pink marshmallow and cola cube. A little bit of richer plummy fruit too, with Christmas cake. The palate is medium weight with a nice "vertical spectrum" of red fruits through to darker, blackberry and plum. Juicy, soft flow in the mouth, good dose of spice and earth on the finish, with sandy tannin grip. Lingering violet prettiness, too.

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CLOS NOUVEAU

Florita. Pretty name, pretty vineyard, and pretty bloody gorgeous Riesling. It's here, in the heart of Watervale, that Barry brothers Tom and Sam tend the neat little plot that becomes the clos Clare Riesling.

The region had a good time of it in 2016, and this new release from the Barrys is a belter.

2016 clos Clare Riesling RRP \$32

Almost cumin spiced top note over lemon barley, lime and lilies. Intense acidity and burst of lemon/lime flavour, firm chalky texture, a sort of lavender perfume wafting in the finish, but it's mouth-watering in the main, and quite powerful. Good wine this vintage, though I'd say it needs a couple of years to soften. 94 points. **Gary Walsh, The Wine Front** November 2016

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STEFANO'S SPARKLERS

"Steve and Monique Lubiana have recently extended their portfolio of beautifully refined sparkling wines from their Granton Estate in Tasmania's Derwent Valley, and their NV blend remains rock solid." So wrote **Tyson Stelzer** in his **2016 Australian Sparkling Report**, in which the Lubiana's previous NV blend and the prior vintages of rosé and grande vintage were all runners-up in their respective categories.

There's no doubt that the best Tasmanian sparkling is world-class stuff, and the Lubianas have, from day one, had their sights set on being right at the top of the tree. These new wines, with new packaging reflecting conviction and individuality, speak of mastery. The judgement in terms of fruit, blending and élevage, is impeccable. The value, as well as the quality, is irresistible.

NV Stefano Lubiana Brut Reserve RRP \$42

A 50:50 blend of Chardonnay & Pinot Noir, predominantly estate-grown with some select parcels of Derwent Valley fruit. The home vineyard takes in two terriors: grey gravelly loams over clay and red loam over gravel. The majority of this blend comes from the 2013 vintage with roughly 15% reserve wines sourced from the 2011 and 2012 vintages. The must was vinified in a blend of small oak, large oak and stainless steel and given full malolactic conversion. Made according to the méthode traditionnelle, with a minimum of two years on lees and one year on cork pre-release. The natural viticulture, low yields and incorporation of reserve wines create a sparkling wine that tastes fruit-pure, intense, rich, creamy and complex.

2011 Stefano Lubiana Brut Rosé RRP \$48

100% estate-grown, single-vineyard Pinot Noir. The fruit comes from a mix of two terroirs: grey gravelly loams over clay and red loam over gravel. At the time of harvest the vineyards were organically managed, in conversion to biodynamic certification. Made according to the méthode traditionnelle, with four years on yeast lees. Disgorged May 2016.

The 2011 is the second vintage sparkling rosé Steve and Monique have made. It has enough fruit and sweetness to entice but with a lovely dry finish to refresh the palate. There's no mistaking the effect the Pinot Noir fruit has on this wine in the absence of Chardonnay. It's rich yet delicate and impresses with its refined, hedonistic aromas and explosive, layered personality. The wine has more tannin, texture and assertiveness, which is beautifully balanced with the red berry fruit flavours of the Pinot. Sweet floral notes, chamomile, spice and citrus resonate with lots of class. A wonderful food wine (particularly breakfast!) and its pale pink hue is just perfect for celebrations.

2008 Stefano Lubiana Grande Vintage RRP \$63

A blend of estate-grown, single-vineyard Chardonnay (60%) & Pinot Noir (40%). The fruit comes from a mix of two terroirs: grey gravelly loams over clay and red loam over gravel. At the time of harvest the vineyards were organically managed, in conversion to biodynamic certification. The base wines go through 100% malolactic conversion and the wine is according to the méthode traditionnelle. It is aged for seven years on the yeast lees. Disgorged May 2016.

The 2008 Grande Vintage is the 10th such release in the 23 years Steve and Monique have been making sparkling wine. Their Grande wines are made to show off the vintage they were grown in, selecting the best parcels of fruit to give freshness, elegance, balance and intensity. Only made in the best years, they are drier and more refined than the NV and are made entirely from the one vintage. This is seamlessly crafted, showing exceptional purity and approachability, with a rich but poised palate singing with white peach and brioche, along with notes of dry hay lingering though the dry finish. It's a wine of tremendous personality and

sophistication, demonstrating again that Stefano Lubiana creates some of the most exciting sparkling wines from the southern hemisphere.

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PAEAN TO PATRIARCH

Garry Farr gave a revealing interview in the February edition of Gourmet Traveller WINE - the magazine that named him Winemaker of the Year way back in 2001. Asked about his most memorable moment in wine, he responded: "Having my kids want to follow my path into agriculture and the wine industry is right up there." Think about it, and it's understandable. After all, Gary Farr toiled in the vineyards of Bannockburn for four decades before handing the keys to the Farr family estate to son Nick in 2009. By that time Gary Charles (GC) Farr had firmly transformed this place into one of Australia's undisputed grands crus for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. These are wines of exceptional definition, utter conviction and understated finesse.

and clarity of vision. Year in, year out, the now-famous sites of Sangreal, Farrside and Tout Près give their beguiling recital: ripe, resonant fruit, ethereal top notes and bass tones throbbing with the echo of the hungry local soils. The Three Oaks Chardonnay, from the Sangreal site, likewise hums with flavour and tension.

"We've been making wine at Bannockburn for the past 30 years, and the last four or five years

are the best we've ever had," said Gary in that same interview. It's timely, then, that Nick should have delivered this tribute to his father - GC Chardonnay by Farr - from the sensational 2015 vintage. It is a wine to celebrate. "The Europeans are all about maintaining their vineyards and wineries, ready to hand down to the next generation," says Gary, "but the way Australian businesses are set up, unless they are continually growing, it's extremely difficult to achieve that."

It is indeed a hard-won achievement, and worthy of an homage to the founding father. This Chardonnay is what patience and brilliance tastes like.



2015 GC Chardonnay by Farr RRP \$120

The most exciting wine from the 2015 vintage is without doubt the new GC Chardonnay by Farr. With all the knowledge that I have been able to extract from my father (not always easy) we created a high-density planting of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir on an exposed côte. These hillsides facing east, north east and north will be the backbone of the Farr destiny for decades to come. They consist of the most suitable clones, rootstocks, trellising and management you'll find. This is our tribute to what 'Gazza' has achieved and provoked over 40 years not only in our region but for the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir of Australia. – **Nick Farr**

The winery yeast always has a nougat aroma and nothing has changed here. You know it's ripe but the aroma spectrum is savoury all the same. Good oak, expensive. A little fennel too. Cool, river pebble minerality from front to back, follows a nice line of acidity. Some phenolic firmness. That savoury stuff is on the palate as well. But some lime and pineapple fruit as well as some marshmallow (oak). Pushes on to great length. Autmumnal flavours linger. This is seriously good booze. **Sam Hooper, CellarHand**

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WEISS, WEISS BABY

Something new and ultra-refreshing from the boys down at Napoleone Brewers in the Yarra Valley. Stylish packaging on this, and the brew inside is equally fresh and characterful.

Napoleone Brewers Weissbier RRP \$115 (12 x 500ml) Yarra Valley born & bred, unfiltered, unpasteurised & naturally carbonated - a living beer. A classic triple decoction Weissbier, no less. A big fruit bowl of aromas & flavours: ripe stone fruit, orange, with a hint of banana & musk. It has a rich mid-palate with a refreshing, dry finish. **ABV:** 5.3%; **IBU:** 16; **YEAST:** WB-06; **MALT:** Wheat & Pilsner malts; **HOPS:** Magnum (bittering), Saaz (10 minute).

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GAMAY RELAY

Nick Farr's 2016 has just been released, and it's precisely where you'd want it. This is the third vintage for the wine, and we've loved it from the word go. However, the stylistic leaning this time – structure a little less strict, giving way to a more charming rendition that's probably truer to the grape – has taken things up a level.

2016 Farr Rising Gamay RRP \$40

The 2016 Farr Rising Gamay is light but ultra-bright ruby in colour, with a vibrant purple rim. Attractive red fruits of raspberry, cherry and a hint of raspberry yoghurt on the nose, along with whole bunch-like notes of tomato vine, beetroot and spice. The immediate impression is fruit before structure – it's nice and juicy, silky feeling, red and pretty with medium body. Acidity pushes through really nicely, with fruit clinging through the finish. Feels really together, easy to drink and with good shape. Bit of peppery spice, cherrystone tang and fine powder tannin on the end. An evolution of the Farr Rising Gamay that is more open and more expressive of the fruit and the Gamay grape.

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IMPORTS

KAMPTALER QUINTESSENCE

It was really nice to host Andreas Wickhoff MW of Bründlmayer when he was in Melbourne at the end of January. A thoroughly knowledgeable and engaging speaker, his insight into Austrian whites - and the wines of the Kamptal in particular – was hugely enlightening. (We wrote up an interview with Andreas for our website - well worth a read if you get a moment.) The Rieslings were on song as you'd expect, with the 2013 Heiligenstein Lyra in a beautiful zone right now and the 2015, arriving later this year, a quite astonishing proposition. But for now we'll focus on the **Grüner, because the 2015 Kamptaler Terrassen is pitch perfect -**

aromatic and flavour complexity, juicy but cool and elegant with typical minerality. The 2013

from the Erste Lage site Loiser Berg is a hidden gem, especially at the price. And the Lamm – only a dozen or so bottles remaining – is a singlevineyard, oak-influence **Grüner** that would smack down many a premier cru Burgundy. A real eyeopener for those unaware of the depths this grape can reach.

2015 Bründlmayer Kamptaler Terrassen Grüner Veltliner RRP \$42

This is layered and delicate, with stonefruit aromas and a slight vegetal hint. Smooth and creamy, there's a nice drying grip to the lime and apple



flavours on the finish. 92 points. Ben Thomas, The Weekly Review February 2017

2013 Bründlmayer Loiser Berg Grüner Veltliner RRP \$47

From an elevated vineyard with a specific sort of Gföhler gneiss the pale citrus coloured 2013 Grüner Veltliner Loiser Berg Erste Lage is a true Kamptal classic made of ripe but not overripe grapes. Fermented in stainless steel at temperatures between 15-20° C and aged in larger barrels, it offers a very clear, fresh and aromatic flavors of freshly squeezed limes and Golden Delicious apples on the nose which lead to a medium-bodied, straight forwarded, refreshing and surprisingly complex Veltliner on the palate with a nice, spicy-mineral and slightly edgy length. This is definitely a more German than French style of Austrian wine you should enjoy with classic dishes from the Austrian and German kitchen, i.e. Wiener Schnitzel. With an alcohol level of moderate 12.5% you can also save water if you just have another bottle of the Loiser Berg. 90 points. **Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate** October 2014

2015 Bründlmayer Lamm Grüner Veltliner RRP \$115

Very different from Brandl's Lamm. Smells and tastes as if there was a mild oak influence. Creamy and spiced and good harmony between the oak influence and the fruit, plenty of spice from both. Very good freshness and zesty length. A successful oak-fermented Grüner. 17/20 **Julia Harding MW, jancisrobinson.com** August 2016

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BASK IN BEAUJOLAIS

"Good Beaujolais really delivers so much drinking pleasure," wrote **Gary Walsh** of **The Wine Front** as he concluded his write-up of the 2015 Piron Beaujolais Brouilly. Who can argue, really?

This region was the focus of the latest edition of trendy UK wine mag **Noble Rot**. "Beaujolais, at least the best of it, is now serious stuff, a wine allowed to play in the shoals of Burgundy, while creeping open the door to just a touch more pleasure, all while offering what Burgundy typically hasn't: consistency," wrote **Jon Bonné** in his article **The**

Pleasure of Now. The piece written in the same magazine by **Jamie Goode** was entitled **Gamay: A Grape Whose Time Has Come**.

Dominique Piron, president of Inter-Beaujolais regional body, couldn't agree more. He's been waiting a while for this, with a family history in Morgon going back to the late 1500s. "The fashion for heavy, powerful wines has gone," he says. "We have a grape that's right in the slot. Beaujolais' moment is now."

That sentiment has been given all the more resonance by the arrival of the 2015 wines. It was a harvest to shine a bright beam of light on the grace, perfume, poise and pleasure of Beaujolais. Don't hesitate for a second.

2015 Dominique Piron Brouilly RRP \$37

Pretty, perfumed with a suggestion of bubble gum, flowers, spice, aniseed, and cherries. Light, supple, fine grained tannin, juiciness of cherry/raspberry fruit, light pippy tang of acidity, fresh and

spiced to close. Love that little slurry of tannin on the finish. Good Beaujolais really delivers so much drinking pleasure. 92 points. **Gary Walsh, The Wine Front**

2015 Dominique Piron Fleurie RRP \$42

Raspberry, dried roses, spice, a bit of polished cedar, minerally feel to it, and a certain sharpness to the acidity. It's tight and the tannin makes a play, almost an emery feel to them, fresh berries and cherry, with a tang and severity to the finish. Energetic. It's a fine thing to drink. 92 points. **Gary** *Walsh, The Wine Front*

2015 Dominique Piron Morgon Côte du Py RRP \$42

The big boy is in the kitchen. Dark cherries, raspberries, liquorice and sniff of spiced wood. Fleshy, open weave tannin, dark raspberry, cherry, depth and derring-do, crisp strawberry acidity, touch of meaty gamey stuff too. The finish is pretty long, closing with a satisfying chomp of tannin. Vigorous. 93 points. **Gary Walsh, The Wine Front**

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YOURS SANCERRELY

Sancerre is one of those things. A member of the appellation aristocracy in some senses, but a bit like one of those foreign royals whose modern relevance you question.

Difference is, though, that Sancerre has earned its place in the hierarchy, and tasting this from the latest shipment was a refreshing reminder. Distinctly Sauvignon Blanc, but wearing its mineral and acid profile like a coat of arms. It's classic, this 2015, but with winning aromatics and mid-palate juiciness. A bit like one of those next-generation princes that know their etiquette but still love a party.

2015 Roland Tissier Sancerre RRP \$42

Prettily aromatic, white flowers (chamomile), wet stone and some stone fruit, a vague pink fruit suggestion, and blackcurrant leafiness too. Touch of citrus on the palate, juicy but with a quite firm, stony texture. Typical elevated acidity, giving a nervy, mouthwatering finish with good length. This is really good to drink - excellent typicity, though with a modern, fruit-driven slant.

OF BADGERS & BAROMETRY

"Bloody marvellous." That's how **Max Allen** concluded his tasting note on the 2011 Blanc de Blancs from Hattingley Valley, the English sparkling wine producer that is, Max notes, "at the forefront of the boom in English sparkling wine".

We started bringing these wines into Australia at the end of 2016, and they've met with a pretty rapturous response - so much so that we've sold out of the vintage rosé. (Don't worry, another shipment will soon be on its way.)

We've appropriated this subheading from Max's article, which alludes to berry-eating badgers' penchant for crapping in the vine rows. Anyway, it's



great to see how members of the wine trade and press here have embraced English sparkling. You really must give it a go, old chum.

2011 Hattingley Valley Blanc de Blancs RRP \$125

This wine is 100% chardonnay from an unusually good vintage (a record-breaking 29 degrees at harvest time!), grown in vineyards with particularly chalky soils, and it spent four years on lees before disgorging. It has beautiful aromas of elderflower and lightly buttered toast, with elegant richness and a hint of Marmite. Bloody marvellous. **Max Allen, Financial Review** January 2017

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RETURN OF ROTHENBERG



"Every wine sold by Gunderloch as a Nackenheimer Rothenberg has the imprint of this vineyard's earthy white peach flavour, the sort of phenomenon to warm the heart of us terroiristes." That's **Jancis Robinson** writing about the Hasselbach family's wines some 15 years ago. And it's true, there's a real vineyard imprint from this picturesque patch of the Roter Hang (red slope) – although some might argue that piquant ruby grapefruit is as much of a signature.

Certainly, Rothenberg is an experience not to be missed – and never forgotten. Johannes Hasselbach, whose lovely father Fritz passed away from illness late last year, has

grown to inhabit this inimitable place on the Rhine, and these 2015s are proof once again that he really belongs.

2015 Gunderloch Rothenberg Grosses Gewächs RRP \$96

Complex nose of red berries, pink grapefruit and fresh herbs. This may only be medium-bodied, but a great deal of mineral and herbal character has been packed into this sleek frame (only 12% alcohol), and the finish is really long and polished; excellent ageing potential. 94 points. **Stuart Pigott, jamessuckling.com** October 2016

2015 Gunderloch Rothenberg Riesling Auslese 375ml RRP \$49

Gunderloch's 2015 Nackenheim Rothenberg Riesling Auslese is beautifully clear, intense and fresh on the nose, where ripe fruit aromas are intertwined with spicy honey, raisin and a touch of grapefruit aromas. Noble and elegant on the round and piquant palate, this is a rich, dense and lush, yet precise and stimulating Auslese. It has a long, aromatic and salty finish. Very stimulating, but this wine should be aged for at least five years. A lot of grip and mineral tension here. 93 points. **Stephen Reinhardt, Wine Advocate** August 2016

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