



CELLARHAND NEWSLETTER December 2017

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

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SIGN UP

RIESLING DOWNUNDER



Here's your last reminder before the Christmas haze descends. The new year's set to go off with a bang with the biggest Riesling celebration in the southern hemisphere hitting Australia. There's an irresistible program for this triennial event, with a raft of

ways to celebrate the great grape between **Friday, 2nd February** and **Wednesday, 7th February 2018**. Great Southern great *Frankland Estate* is once again spearheading proceedings, while European producers coming out to take part include *Dönnhoff, Heymann-Löwenstein, Georg Breuer, A Christmann, Wittmann, Dr Loosen, Gunderloch, Bründlmayer* and *Paul Blanck*

Riesling Riot is the major tasting taking place in Melbourne and Sydney, while a tantalising

masterclass program in Melbourne features sessions on site & style, trials & traditions and the global relevance of Riesling – as well as the big international dry tasting showcasing the finest vineyards of the world’s best estates.

Click [here](#) to view the full Riesling Downunder program, and to purchase tickets to Riesling Riot!

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DOMESTIC

GOLD, FRANKLAND SENSE & MIRTH



It was a delight to pick up the latest copy of **Gourmet Traveller WINE** and see the highest praise heaped upon a family that so deserve it. “Visits to Great Southern and time spent with winemakers Hunter Smith and Brian Kent and viticulturist Elizabeth Smith have cemented my opinion Frankland Estate is one of Australia’s greatest wine producers with a thirst for excellence,” wrote **Mike Bennie** in a feature entitled “Constant Evolution”. It was a worthy and timely nod to

an estate that continues “to tirelessly fine-tune, evolve and improve their established wine styles, elevating an existing offering” – the kind that often gets overlooked in people’s quest to celebrate shinier, newer things.

We, of course, are in constant admiration of the Smith Cullam family, their values, their vineyard and their wines. The sense of place is palpable down on Isolation Ridge, and there’s nothing like precise, painstaking organic viticulture to bring it out. “Frankland Estate is to be revered and celebrated in equal measure,” concluded Bennie. “Quietly going about its work, it continues to delight and surprise with these latest releases.”

2016 Frankland Estate Isolation Ridge Riesling RRP \$43

All the hallmarks of this site are at play with camomile and blossom, the lightness of touch on the palate with its citrus notes, some concentration and texture yet the steely freshness and acidity so pure it creates an ultra-fine and long finish. 96 points. Jane Faulkner, Halliday Wine Companion 2018

2016 Frankland Estate Poison Hill Riesling RRP \$43

An outstanding single-vineyard wine from Frankland River. Aromatically engaging with gentle lime juice and blossom aromas. The palate has a core of sweet lemon creating a mouth-watering sensation, and there is a minerally undercurrent that adds depth and class. The wine is incredibly focused and intense. Limited quantities made. Excellent cellaring potential. Highly recommended. 96 points. Toni Paterson MW, The Real Review

2014 Frankland Estate Isolation Ridge Shiraz RRP \$43

The sheer power of red and black cherry fruit, spice, bramble, earth, tannins, oak and a twinkle of acidity all demand your attention. Paradoxically, no one player captures the loud applause the wine generates. 95 points. James Halliday, Halliday Wine Companion 2017

2014 Frankland Estate Olmo's Reward RRP \$88

The finest, most complete Olmo's Reward to date comprising cabernet franc 58% /cabernet sauvignon 26%/malbec 11%/petit verdot 5%. Red fruits, earth and spice sashay across the medium-bodied frame meeting finely crafted tannins. Pure and long on the finish and seems effortless. Certainly effortless to drink. 96 points. *Jane Faulkner, Halliday Wine Companion 2018*

2017 Frankland Estate Riesling RRP \$29

For an estate-wide expression, 2017 Frankland Estate Riesling offers quality and value hand-in-hand. It's a limey, bright Riesling of zingy acidity and crunchy texture. The perfume is voluminous in Thai spice, mixed citrus character and dried apple scents. The palate is bracing with its citrus tang, but finishes with a pool of gently sweet, mouth-filling fruitiness. It's one of those summery whites that is best suited to a deep chill and consumed while your legs are dangling in a swimming pool. *Mike Bennie, Gourmet Traveller WINE*

2015 Frankland Estate Chardonnay RRP \$29

Lightly-toasted cashew and grapefruit aromas are apparent in this youthful Chardonnay. The palate is briskly tangy and tense with salty mineral notes and a lip-smacking refreshing aftertaste. Another year will see it in top form. Excellent value for money. 93 points. *Huon Hooke, Gourmet Traveller WINE* November 2017

2015 Frankland Estate Shiraz RRP \$29

Bright, full crimson-purple; the variety and the terroir seek to impose each one's stamp over the other, both failing in their attempt, the perfect win-win outcome. Blackberry fruit, spice and black pepper lead the way on the bouquet and medium-bodied palate alike, French oak (subtle) and tannins (ripe, but fine) completing a great portrait of cool-grown shiraz. 95 points. *Jane Faulkner, Halliday Wine Companion 2018*

2015 Frankland Estate Cabernet Sauvignon RRP \$29

Rich mixed berries and hints of cedar and herbs leap out of the glass. The palate is complex and focused balanced with fresh sweet mulberries and grainy mouth coating tannins that glide across the mouth. A classic cool-climate Cabernet. – *Hunter Smith, Frankland Estate*

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KEVIN HEAVEN

Once again, one of Australia's great white wines gets the jump on the release of its flagship sister wine, Diana Madeline. Vanya Cullen's 2016 Kevin John has long proven its pedigree. The vines turned 40 last year, and the 2015 release marked the 10-year milestone since the wine was renamed in honour of Vanya's father. An unbroken seam of outstanding releases has confirmed its place among the Chardonnay aristocracy – and indeed the wine itself announces its class as soon as you look at it.

The Wine Front's **Campbell Mattinson** was first out of the gate with a review of this new-release 2016, and



we'll let his words speak for themselves. It is with pleasure that we present the fruit – the glowing, pristine, biodynamic fruit – of the Cullen Vineyard and its assiduously devoted custodian.

2016 Cullen Kevin John RRP \$135

It evokes a certain reverence. I don't mean by the label, or the status, but by the taste of it in the glass. It's such a gorgeous thing; nothing quite beguiles like the fruits of nature. Peaches, rich with sunshine; grapefruit, all pulp and gravity; the cool of lime; the flush of sweet spices; a beach littered with nuts and sweet biscuits and flint. It's Margaret River Chardonnay and it never shies from it; why would it? It's flavoursome. It's silky and succulent, sunny, seductive. You just kind of swoon your way from one glass to the next. Quality is prime. 96 points. Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front

2016 Cullen Mangan Vineyard Semillon Sauvignon Blanc RRP \$32

57% Sauvignon Blanc, 38% Semillon, 5% Verdelho, 12% fermented and matured in oak (45% new). As ever, fresh, lively and highly expressive, fruit doing all the talking; all sorts of citrus on the bouquet and palate, with lemongrass, gooseberry and precisely judged acidity. 95 points. James Halliday, Halliday Wine Companion 2018

2015 Cullen Cullen Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc Semillon RRP \$34

A 74/26% blend fermented and matured in new French oak for 5 months. The complex bouquet brings toasty oak, cut grass and hints of stone fruit (also lurking in the Mangan SBS) into play, the palate pulling out all the stops with its mix of tropical fruits and citrusy acidity. 96 points. James Halliday, Wine Companion

2016 Mangan 'East Block' Petit Verdot/Malbec RRP \$48

51% Petit Verdot and 49% Malbec from the Mangan vineyard, this spends seven months in new and seasoned French oak. The 2016 Mangan East Block is beautiful, vibrant medium ruby in colour. The nose shows violets, red plum, blackcurrant, graphite and liquorice. Medium bodied with plenty of fine tannin running through, giving a fine-grained texture to the transparent fruit. It finishes with a sense of salty plum and cocoa powder. A hugely elegant wine of notable class and purity.

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RISING SUN

These wines are basking in the glow of Nick Farr's talent. Even as Nick has filled out the highest echelon of the Farr family's wines this year with his high-density Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the Côte Vineyard, he has continued to edge up quality – and thus value – at the other end of the scale with Farr Rising firing on all cylinders.

2016 Farr Rising Chardonnay RRP \$48

Chardonnay by Nick Farr. Not a hair out of place. It unfolds in the glass slowly. It's as much savoury as fruit-driven though given time to breathe it certainly offers plenty of the latter. Green pineapple, pear, grapefruit and meal-like notes drift slowly into woodspice and smoke. Everything here seems harmonious and well placed. 93 points. Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front November 2017



2016 Farr Rising Pinot Noir RRP \$51

This is a particularly jellied pinot noir. Port wine jelly mixed with cranberry, orange peel and Turkish delight. It seems both sweet and exotic at once, though before any conclusions are drawn let me also mention that there are ample inputs from earth, spice, twigs and peppers; savouriness walks in lock-step with the exaggerated, or lifted, fruitiness. It's immensely inviting and enjoyable now, though the longer you sit with it the more you think

its best days are ahead. Balance, finesse, length etc; all cannot be faulted. Score here could well be stingy. 93 points. *Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front* November 2017

2015 Farr Rising Shiraz RRP \$51

Geelong shiraz at the hand of Nick Farr. Some whole bunches and wild ferments but the fruit is the thing. The fruit feels ripe but it also feels fresh and juicy. You'd call this an elegant wine but the swoosh of boysenberry, redcurrant and black cherry certainly fills your mouth with fruit flavour. Herbage, peppers, coffee, nuts and florals all make positive appearances. It's a walk in a green garden in full bloom. It's seamless and yet there's so much going on. Yes. This is excellent. 94+ points. *Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front* November 2017

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CLASSIC REFINEMENT

Anna and Jason Flowerday of biodynamic Marlborough estate Te Whare Ra (TWR) came up smelling of roses after **Nick Stock's** recent visit to New Zealand as contributor to [jamesuckling.com](#). "The depth and quality of the wines tasted, shared across regions from north to south, has left me with a strong feeling that New Zealand has hit a stage that I will describe as classic refinement," commented Stock of the overall experience. That description certainly appears to sum up what he found chez Flowerday, from the "striking purity" of the barrel-fermented Sauvignon Blanc to the "elegant...silky smooth... almost Pinot-like" Syrah - and everything in between.



2015 TWR Sauvignon Blanc SV 5182 RRP \$43

A benchmark for barrel-fermented Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. This gathers subtle aromatic and palate complexity and takes nothing away from the strong, pure lime and green passion fruit that underpins the wine. Striking purity. Drink now. 94 Points. *Nick Stock, jamesuckling.com* November 2017

2016 TWR Riesling 'D' SV 5182 RRP \$33

This dry expression of Riesling is in a more floral mode with gently waxy lime blossom and melon fruit aromas. Hints of pastry, too. The palate has assertive weight with impressive freshness. Spiced lime citrus flavors run long. Drink now. 93 points. *Nick Stock, jamesuckling.com* November 2017

2016 TWR Pinot Gris SV 5182 RRP \$33

An extremely polished style that has effortless flowing shape, plenty of citrus, apple and pear fruit aromas and flavors and a subtle savory twist through the finish. Drink now. Screw cap. *92 points. Nick Stock, jamessuckling.com* November 2017

2015 TWR Syrah SV 5182 RRP \$79

A boldly expressed Syrah with real fruit intensity. A large serve of toasty oak, pepper and spice as well as ferment-derived charcuterie meats, blackberry and dark cherry fruits. The elegant palate has silky smooth tannins and is almost pinot-like in texture. The mocha flavors are assertive but the fruit tannins and depth of pure dark cherry-berry are up to the task. Needs time, try from 2020. *96 points. Nick Stock, jamessuckling.com* November 2017

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GEE WHIZZ, GC

The second edition of Nick Farr's paean to the patriarch has picked up where the last one left off. We're only a few months on from when the inaugural Chardonnay – named for Gary Charles Farr – was described by **The Wine Front's Campbell Mattinson** as “rock solid from start to finish but the boom of flavour as you swallow is quite something else”. (Incidentally, this wine came equal top in last week's annual blind tasting of The Wine Front's 23 top-rated Chardonnays by a panel of subscribers in Brisbane.)

Now it's the turn of the 2016 GC Chardonnay by Farr to wow the crowds, with Mattinson calling it “so settled and so pure”. The wine comes from a high-density planting on the family's Côte Vineyard. It's joined at the very top of the Farr tree by the '15 RP (Robin Pamela - for mum – also from the Côte site) Pinot Noir and Tout Près from the same vintage. All here now, all awesome.

2016 GC Chardonnay by Farr RRP \$115

It's so settled and so pure. It pleases from the outset and all the way along the line but it really sparks up as it passes through the finish. Grapefruit, white peach, lime spider and a mass of crackly spice notes. It's not a showy wine, it has no need to be, but it's not low key either. It's like old money in that sense; it's not gaudy but it still tastes rich. 95 points. Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front December 2017

2015 RP Pinot Noir by Farr RRP \$115

Assertive floral perfume on the nose with rose petals underlain with rhubarb, hay, fennel and ginger snap. There's also an intense sense of fruit, firmly in the red spectrum. The palate reaffirms this, with a pure core of raspberry and cherry. Whole-bunch characters and Szechuan pepper are there, too, but at this stage the sense of depth is almost overtaken by the sense of length; this is a wine that drives forward with lovely pure fruit expression heightened by very fine, flavourful tannins. Pulsating Pinot, and a lot still locked up in this, I think. - *Ed Merrison, CellarHand*

2015 Tout Près by Farr RRP \$115

Beetroot, earth, strawberry compote, spiced red cherry and creamy oak on the nose – integrated, complex and ambitious. Very concentrated on the palate, with cream-backed red fruits, pepper, roasted root vegetables and spicy tannins giving lots of substance. Almost dizzying complexity here – and, of course, all dialled up with the bunches, oak and close-planted concentration. A sense of excitement about the very long, zesty finish. Great Pinot. - *Ed Merrison, CellarHand*

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NOW & FOR EVER, AMON

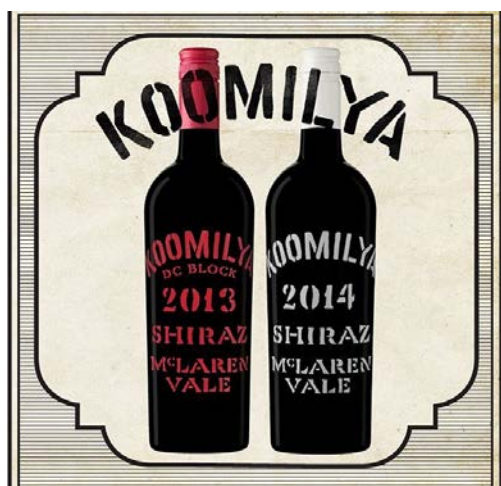
Say your prayers this Christmas - if you're good you might be gifted a bottle of Ben Glaetzer's flagship Shiraz. Otherwise you can take it into your own hands and buy some. **Huon Hooke** reads it as a "dense, full-bodied, ultra-impressive Shiraz with long-term cellaring potential". It's also, of course, an Australian classic in its own right, from vines aged between 50 and 130 years old and yielding 2 tonnes per hectare in that most Australian of landscapes: the Barossa sub-region of Ebenezer. Good.

2015 Glaetzer Amon-Ra Shiraz RRP \$100

A dense, full-bodied, ultra-impressive Shiraz with long-term cellaring potential. The bouquet is all about dark chocolate, toasty oak and roasted nuts. The palate is concentrated and powerful, super-ripe and decadently rich with terrific balance despite its massive size. 95 points. Huon Hooke, Gourmet Traveller WINE November 2017

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KARMA KOOMILYA



What goes around comes around, they say, so we must've done something good in another life to have been gifted a second bite of the cherry with Koomilya, the Shiraz from Stephen Pannell's long-coveted viticultural paradise in McLaren Vale.

To recap, these wines are a culmination of Steve's years spent delving into the mystery of wine, gleaning wisdom from other great wines and digging into the secrets of their place. There are 30 acres under vine, surrounded by native bush land - almost nestled amid the forest - which helps moderate the climate. This mesoclimate, allied to three distinct soil types and

geology dating back 520 million years, gives the place a unique geological and viticultural foot print.

An extra parcel of these wines has become available to us, and in the spirit of good karma, we'd like to share them with you. We have limited stocks of both the 2014 Koomilya Shiraz and DC Block Shiraz from 2013.

2014 S.C. Pannell Koomilya RRP \$71

It's an interesting wine. Different, in a good way. It's rich, sweet and porty in some ways; it's very McLaren Vale. But then it's dry, meaty, ferrous and earthen in others; the back label uses the words "Dry Red", and it's like the definitive version of those words. It's a hulking wine, strapped with liquorice, firmly tannic, tense and taut but powerful and dense. It feels old-fashioned but not in a dirty way; in demeanour. If anyone ever says to you that They Don't Make Things The Way They Used To, get them to taste this wine. It's built to last. You'll wear out before it does; your grandchildren will be swapping it around at collector's meets in 100 years' time. 96 points. Campbell Mattinson, The Wine Front October 2016

2013 S.C. Pannell Koomilya DC Block Shiraz RRP \$112

Steve Pannell has long had his eye on the 85 year old shiraz block next to Kay's vineyard. He finally acquired it in 2012 and this is the first release of the finest parcel of the block, to the tune of just 250 cases. An articulate voice of ancient vines, it's wonderfully spicy and fragrant with sarsaparilla, anise and red and black berry fruits of all kinds, framed masterfully in Steve's signature finely textured tannins, yet with a confidence and endurance that promise a long life. It captures the character of this special site. 96 points. *Tyson Stelzer, Australian & New Zealand Wines of the Year 2017*

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GAMMA RAY GAMAY

At last, it's game on for Tim Shand's Gamay. This is the second rendition of Punt Road's single-vineyard rendition of the variety. They got it spectacularly right first time round, but this one's even better.

So what has Shandy learned? "First, Gamay will set a big crop, with big bunches and big berries. It needs to be thinned hard; 30% went on the ground. In the winery, bunches and bags were key. With those big berries, and in a benevolent year like '17, Gamay would have a tendency to be one-dimensional."

The team appears to have homed in on a house style that's a 50:50 blend of 100% whole bunch ferments, and 100% carbonic maceration whole-berry

ferments in goon bags. The combo gives heightened perfume, funk and spice. And then there's oak. "The time in (old) oak is crucial," explains Shandy. "The wine fills out and sweetens. So we added two months in oak this year. Still left it on lees, unsulphured for this time. No finings, minimal filtration on bottling. Got a small SO2 addition just before bottling."

The wine makes itself, he adds. And here it is to make your summer.



2017 Punt Road Gamay RRP \$29

Freeze-dried raspberry, cherry, rose petal/musk florals, cherry, a touch of herbal interest and sweet spice, too. Light-bodied, actually very pure and transparent on the palate but not simple; some good cherry depth again with spice and then a lovely, gentle, flowing length to it - like the acidity is calmly insistent. The word delicious gets bandied around a lot these days - but this is what delicious looks like. - Ed Merrison, CellarHand

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ALTO E BASSO

Pannell picnic time. The McLaren Vale master has conjured up something perfect for the footloose n' fancy free festive season. It's no secret that Stephen Pannell loves Grenache, believing it to be the best established red variety for conditions in the Vale. Indeed, his flagship Grenache has won the hearts and minds of Aussie drinkers several times over.

Time, then, for a highly accessible rendition to stick on repeat play this summer. The wine is made



from 100% hand-picked Grenache grapes, with free-run juice vinified with minimal pressings. It's raised in neutral 2500-litre French oak vats for six months, racked and then bottled unfiltered, with just 25ppm SO2 added in the whole process.

The release of this wine means that S.C. Pannell's varietal range is looking well rounded and brimming with freshness. Can't go wrong here.

2017 S.C. Pannell Sauvignon Blanc RRP \$27

I make no apologies, I love Sauvignon Blanc! 2017 was cool, mild vintage that produced exceptionally natural fruit-driven wines. This has aromas of guava, passionfruit, pink

grapefruit, white currant and kaffir lime. It's light- to medium-bodied and shows zip and length. Truly varietal Sauvignon Blanc. - Stephen Pannell

2016 S.C. Pannell Pinot Grigio RRP \$28

Reminiscent of apple crumble: spice, pastry and all, with a skinsy drift from beginning to end. 92 points. Ned Goodwin MW, Halliday Wine Companion 2018

2017 S.C. Pannell Arido Rosé RRP \$27

Highly-perfumed with aromas of rose, strawberry, blood orange and Campari. A pink white-wine rather than a light red. The palate is immediate, with balanced acidity and a driving finish beckoning for the second sip. - Stephen Pannell

2017 S.C. Pannell Basso Grenache RRP \$28

Pale, pretty ruby in colour with a pronounced nose – Grenachey perfume leaping high from the glass. It's got musky, rose-petal florals in spades, along with raspberry yoghurt and red liquorice. Medium-bodied, red-berried palate is plump, pulpy and juicy with a natural feel to it, leading to a pippy finish with sandy tannins. Drinks like a warm-climate rendition of "natural" Pinot. - Ed Merrison, CellarHand

2016 S.C. Pannell Dead End Tempranillo RRP \$28

Fruit from Amery Road, Sellicks Hill and Blewitt Springs in McLaren Vale. Traditionally vinified in small open-top fermenters for 10 days. Aged for 12 months in large format French and Hungarian oak vats and puncheons, 20% of which were new. This third release of the Dead End Temp is the most serious to date. It is a wine of real presence, complexity and depth. Highly perfumed, vibrant and complex with sweet black cherries, sarsaparilla, coffee beans and good hints of roasted exotic spice. Juicy, full and supple, but tannic right on the finish. The persistence of the tannins is the signature. - Stephen Pannell

2016 S.C. Pannell Field St Shiraz RRP \$27

I love this wine and I love drinking it. It's been stripped back from the artifice of winemaking to express the purity and breadth of McLaren Vale Shiraz. As with all the 2016s the tannins are in the driving seat, balancing the sweetness of the fruit. On the nose you get violets, a punnet of fresh berries. It's all about the fruit. It's medium- to full-bodied with abundant and lovely tannins. It's velvety, plush, even and long. - Stephen Pannell

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IMPORTS

PICHLER'S PERFECT KELLERBERG

“After a week of intensive tasting in the Wachau and the other wine regions in the Danube Valley of Austria, we came to the conclusion that 2016 is an excellent vintage both for the indigenous Grüner Veltliner grape and for the sought-after dry Rieslings,” wrote **James Suckling** in a report entitled **The Danube is White Hot in 2016**. “The Wachau was the source of a slew of our highest-rated wines, including the 2016 Ried Kellerberg Riesling from F.X. Pichler in Dürnstein with 100 points.”

Well, what incredible form Lucas Pichler is in. The Wachau, too, has enjoyed a string of favourable vintages, giving this gifted, resolute young winemaker a chance to show these superb sites at their absolute best.

Here’s a chance to dwell on – and dig into – this flawless Kellerberg and its magical renditions from recent vintages.



2016 F.X. Pichler Riesling Kellerberg Smaragd RRP \$163

MAGNUM RRP \$355

*An amazingly concentrated dry riesling that somehow manages to be extraordinarily light-footed. There's a super-wide spectrum of aromas from parsley through lemon grass, with ripe white peach, mandarin orange and white chocolate in between. The breathtaking balance is more important than all of this, extending right through the incredibly long, lingering finish. Drink any time during the next thirty years! 100 points. **James Suckling** jamesuckling.com October 2017*

2015 F.X. Pichler Riesling Kellerberg Smaragd RRP \$149

*A pungently smoky, incisive, savory mélange of sage, dark tobacco and black pepper is allied to ripe peach and garlanded with heliotrope in a head-turningly intense nose. That full range of elements reprises on a polished palate, whose textural caress and sweet sense of ripeness are combined with welcome, tangy, chewy counterpoint of peach skin and a refreshingly juicy squirt of fresh lime. The finish offers a mouthwateringly prolonged, kaleidoscopic interaction of fruity, savory and smoky elements – plenty rich, yet with rare cut and animation for its vintage. 95-96 points. **David Schildknecht**, *Vinous Media* February 2017*

2014 F.X. Pichler Riesling Kellerberg Smaragd RRP \$149

*Headily fragrant and lusciously mouth-filling honey-slicked peach and mango are complemented by incisive pepper, piquant peach kernel, pungent green herbs, smoky tobacco, zesty citrus peel and shimmering crushed stone. Sheer energy seems to reverberate in an unforgettably ravishing and sustained finish. 95 points. **David Schildknecht**, *Vinous Media* February 2016*

2013 F.X. Pichler Riesling Kellerberg Smaragd RRP \$149

From the estate's parade vineyard, the 2013 Riesling Smaragd Dürnsteiner Kellerberg displays a very rich and intense aroma of super-ripe and concentrated Riesling berries. Rich and powerful, but also precise, impressively concentrated and piquant on the palate, this well-balanced and highly elegant Riesling with its lemon and orange aftertaste is another signature wine of both the Wachau and the

2013 vintage. It's aging potential should be terrific. A serious, tension-filled Riesling of great expression, which I highly recommend. 95 points. *Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate* April 2015

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TOP OF THE EUROPOPS

Nice concept this, a kind of anything-goes panel tasting of European fizzy wines excluding Champagne. Think Franciacorta, Cava, Sekt, Crémant, méthode ancestrale and all that jazz. A few wines from the CellarHand portfolio went into the tasting, with two - Hattingley Valley of England and Dominique Piron of France – making it into the top six. Pittnauer's Pitt Nat also stood out for the right reasons.

If you're looking for something alternative on the fizz front this Christmas, consider one of these options.

2013 Hattingley Valley Classic Cuvée Hampshire, England RRP \$132

2013 Hattingley Valley Classic Cuvée has a beautifully fine, youthful nose with delicate red apple

aromas. I found the palate also had red apple plus subtle lees before a very dry finish with crisp, zingy acidity.

"Clean, clear, fresh and youthful with orchard fruits,"

[*Amanda Yallop*] told us. "Spicy, orange oil, ginger blossom and lees. Fine acid line, savoury and juicy.

Lovely wine." 93 points. *Gourmet Traveller WINE*



NV Dominique Piron Crémant de Bourgogne

Burgundy, France RRP \$35

NV Dominique Piron Crémant de Bourgogne shows ripe stone fruits on the nose with a little toast from reserve wine or development. The palate is full and balanced

with moderate acidity and light texture. "A rich bouquet of honey on toast, warm brioche and lemon curd," [*Peter*]

Bourne noted. "The palate is quite rich and round with some bottle-age complexity. Just what we'd expect of a sparkling white Burgundy." 93 points. *Gourmet Traveller WINE* November 2017

2016 Pittnauer 'Pitt Nat' Burgenland, Austria RRP \$48

"Strawberry, exotic spice, rosewater, faint clove," [*Mike Bennie*] told the panel. "The palate is racy, crisp, gently sweet then rolls into tangy tartness of a very pleasing kind. Faintly chalky, long in flavour, cool tug of sherbety acidity to close. This is delicious drinking, effortless stuff." 90 points. *Gourmet Traveller WINE* November 2017

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SINGLE-SITE FEDERSPIELS

We've been pretty revved up about this for a while, and now it's upon us. The fame of Domäne Wachau as one of the world's finest co-operative estates stretches far and wide. With such fabulous vineyard holdings across the Danube – and with winery director **Roman Horvath MW** adopting a regime of paying higher grape prices in exchange for first-rate farming – it has



managed to turn its Grüner Veltliner and Riesling in the Terrassen Federspiel range into Australian classics. It helps, too, that the wines offer outstanding value for money.

Earlier this year, we introduced three excellent Smaragd wines from two of the Wachau's very best sites, Achleiten and Kellerberg. Our latest move has been to bring a taste of this amazing region's single sites in a more everyday style, at a more regularly drinkable price point.

Enter the single-vineyard Federspiels. We've opted for Dürnstein's Kaiserberg vineyard for the Grüner

Veltliner, and the cool Bruck site in Spitz for the Riesling. These are passports to the remarkable terroir of the Wachau for premium economy passengers. Get on board!

2016 Domäne Wachau Grüner Veltliner Kaiserberg Federspiel RRP \$35

Wines from Kaiserberg ("emperor's hill") are renowned for their superb overall balance and their classical mineral character. Lively yellow colour with green tints. There's a succession of intense aromas including Golden Delicious apple, subtle hints of pears and smoky tobacco spices as well as elegant exotic fruits. In the mouth it is a well-balanced, fresh wine with lively acidity, flavourful fruit and a well-structured salty character causing it to linger on the palate. – Roman Horvath MW

2016 Domäne Wachau Riesling Bruck Federspiel RRP \$35

An intense bouquet of wild herbs and lime that's far removed from the riesling norm. Cool and rather powerful yet quite tart this is a challenging wine but it has a lot of character. Drink or hold. Screw cap. 91 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com November 2017

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ROSI OUTLOOK

We've had a lot of fun this year with the red wines of Rosi Schuster. Made by Rosi's son Hannes, these wines climb to tremendous heights with the single-origin wines from the likes of Donnerskirchen, Sankt Margarethen and Rusterberg. At the other end of the scale, though, is the pure, immediate varietal/regional pleasure of wines such as the sold-out Rotburger, the Sankt Laurent and now, for the first time, Blaufränkisch. Another wine making its Australian debut is the 2014 Rosi Schuster Reserve, a blend of 80% Blaufränkisch and 20% Sankt Laurent – "a pure and elegant yet still somewhat restrained red wine full of tension, grip and expression" according to **Stephan Reinhardt** of **Wine Advocate**.



2015 Rosi Schuster Blaufränkisch RRP \$35

Dark in colour, with earth, spice and brambly fruit on the nose. Pure on the palate in a way that seems

more honest than polished, shooting straight to the fruit and those peppery, gravelly, briary characters that Blaufränkisch does so well. Cleansing acidity and squeaky tannins make for a lively, moreish finale. – *Ed Merrison, CellarHand*

2014 Rosi Schuster Reserve Blaufränkisch / Sankt Laurent RRP \$58

The 2013 Reserve Blaufränkisch/Sankt Laurent is beautifully pure, deep, spicy and fleshy on the intense and concentrated nose, displaying calf liverwurst, herbal and graphite flavors along with dark cherry and berry aromas. Full-bodied, silky and fresh on the palate, this is a pure and elegant yet still somewhat restrained red wine full of tension, grip and expression. The wine lacks the finesse and purity and also the tension of the finest wines. 89+ points. *Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate* June 2016

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740 OUT OF 100

We've become used to Jacquesson's interpretation of vintage, expressed by its 700-series wines, bringing up original, unmissable hits year in, year out. **James Halliday** appears to have got used to it to, for in the handful of Champagnes that make his Top 100 Wines list, Jacquesson is a constant presence.

The same is true of the 740 in the 2017 list. This irresistible zinger of a wine shows that the flicker of magic – that frisson that only cracking Champagne can give – is a never missing chez Chiquet.

Jacquesson Cuvée No. 740 RRP \$117

NV in name, vintage in body (80% base wine) with a micro-dosage of 1.8g/l. A blend of 43% chardonnay, 30% pinot meunier and 27% pinot noir, it is tight and firm on release, with a citrus sherbet under gently sweet fruit, balance its saviour now, and in full flower in five years hence. 95 points. *Halliday Top 100 Wines 2017*

To properly respect the 700 series, treat it like a vintage wine, and don't be alarmed when it's introverted and tightly restrained on release. It will open beautifully a year later, and truly blossom five or 10 years on. The 740 is built around a core of grapefruit, nashi pear and almost ripe fig, with a dry focus that accentuates wonderfully present, salty oyster-shell chalk minerality. Large barrel fermentation brings impressive coherence, creamy seamlessness, fine-tuned texture and the slightest charcuterie nuances. It lingers with great line, persistence and integrity. A very classy 700 series. 94 points. *Tyson Stelzer, The Champagne Guide* October 2017

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GAGGLE OF GRÜNER

We've just had a shipment of 2016 wines from Austria, a harvest described by **James Suckling** as "an excellent vintage... for the indigenous Grüner Veltliner grape". We've experienced unprecedented interest this year from members of the public about Grüner. The interesting thing is that what sounds like an exotic grape from exotic climes is striking a chord with people who don't tend to stray from their go-to grape – and, what's odder, is that this might be

Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling or Chardonnay. Perhaps it's because at the lighter end of the scale these are crisp, pure whites – the kind of drink it's hard to quibble with. Then there's the recognition factor: Grüner tends to have a little bit of the green fruit and grassiness of Sauvignon Blanc, the spice and orchard fruit of Gris, the aromatics and purity of Riesling and something of the creamy roundness of Chardonnay.

Add to this general approachability the fact that these wines are from Austria's best white wine-growing regions and finest estates, and you have a pretty compelling proposition for the fridge, the list and the glass all year round.

2016 Emmerich Knoll Grüner Veltliner Steinfeder Wachau RRP \$39

Summer meadow and yellow apple aromas. Great balance, but very light. A crisp finish. Drink now. 88 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com October 2017

2016 Emmerich Knoll Grüner Veltliner Kreutles Federspiel Wachau RRP \$53

Intensely herbal with a hint of licorice this is a very distinctive mid-weight wine with a lot more depth than the regular grüner veltliner Federspiel. Drink or hold. 91 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com October 2017

2016 F.X. Pichler Loibner Grüner Veltliner Federspiel Wachau RRP \$53

Attractive ripe apple, white pepper and fresh herbs character. Juicy, but only medium-bodied with a finish that's fresh and elegant. Drink or hold. Screw cap. 91 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com October 2017

2016 Bründlmayer Grüner Veltliner Kamptal Terrassen Kamptal RRP \$37

Lovely fresh herbs, white pepper and green bean character. Medium-bodied, fresh and very lively, this is a prototypic Kamptal grüner veltliner, with a long delicate herbal-mineral finish. Drink or hold. 91 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com October 2017

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BANGIN' BONHOMME

"Readers looking for a classy, mineral-driven Chardonnay that won't break the bank need look no further than..." I literally just stumbled across a review that began with those words, and the wine in question was André Bonhomme's old-vine Viré-Clessé from 2013. If you happen to be one of those readers – and, indeed, someone that doesn't mind a bit of Chablis, white Burgundy and regional typicity – you would do well to check out the 2015 André Bonhomme Pierres Blanches from Bonhomme. It's organic, wild-fermented, classic Viré-Clessé from vines ranging from 10 to 45 years old. The main component of the blend comes from 30-year-old vines planted on the summit

of the hillside on the rocks, with many little white stones in the soil, hence "pierres blanches". It is made in stainless as well, to emphasise fruit and minerality – resulting in a wine that is somewhere



near Chablis in mineral/acid profile, Côte de Beaune in richness and then pure Mâcon in charm and fruit spectrum. Super stuff.

2015 André Bonhomme Viré-Clessé Pierres Blanches RRP \$43

(13.8% alcohol; done entirely in stainless steel and bottled at the end of July; from 40-year-old vines located near Bonhomme's Mâcon-Villages, but with more calcaire and little white stones in the soil): Pale yellow-gold. Strongly mineral-dominated aroma of flinty silex. Concentrated and complex on the palate; richer and deeper than the Mâcon-Villages Vieilles Vignes, communicating a tactile saline quality. Incidentally, the yield here was a generous 55 hectoliters per hectare but this borderline-austere wine will need time to soften in bottle and blossom. These vines are planted on a south/southeast-facing slope at an altitude of 384 meters; lower-altitude vines on both sides of this parcel are classified as Mâcon-Villages. 90 points. *Stephen Tanzer, Vinous Media* October 2016

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PINOT, JA

“Super exciting to see the rise and rise of German pinot, and for the pinot fancier, something to get involved with now,” wrote **Mike Bennie** of **The Wine Front** in the intro to a write-up of one of the new Heymann-Löwenstein Pinot Noir releases.



That last bit probably had you doing a bit of a double take. Yes, Heymann- Löwenstein, those guys with the mind-blowing Riesling off the best slate vineyards of the Terrassenmosel. They've teamed up with Baden Pinot producer Ziereisen, with the latter making the wine from the former's fruit.

These wines have arrived at the same time as those from an established German Pinot producer – the best, in fact. We're referring of course to Weingut Bernhard Huber, whose first 2014s have arrived, to be enjoyed

alongside the excellent GG wines of '13. “The qualities of both vintages, 2014 and 2013, are great when it comes to Pinot Noir,” **Stephan Reinhardt** wrote of Huber. “These wines are pure, fresh and aromatic, and really vivacious and transparent on the palate. They are less rich and powerful than in former years and need at least three years to develop their talents.”

Go for it.

2014 Heymann-Löwenstein Vom Schiefer Pinot Noir RRP \$112

Quite slender in its feel but there's loads of vibrant black and red cherry, a touch of dark chocolate, sprinkle of rosemary, touches of truffle. It's funky, in a way, but also quite fruit pure, flavours are bright and true, aromas fragrant and floral-pretty. Sweet-sour, sweet-bitter finish in the best possible, amaro-like way too. It's quite something, right down to the satiny nature of texture. Worth the visit. Cult wine in the making. 94 points. *Mike Bennie, The Wine Front* November 2017

2015 Heymann-Löwenstein Vom Schiefer Pinot Noir RRP \$112

Slippery, satiny red of light weight but full concentration of flavour. It's pleasingly sappy with ripe cherry, faint rhubarb/beetroot savoury fruit character, an almost mallow kind of sticky-sweetness but finishes with faint herb and a pleasing, light bitter twist. It's lightly mouth-coating in its flavours, unadulterated in

its fruit expression and lingers with command. You wouldn't call it complex, and it shows little in savoury detail, but it's composed and beautiful as it stands. Emphatically good. 93 points. *Mike Bennie, The Wine Front* November 2017

2014 Huber Pinot Noir RRP \$49

Mainly based on French clones cultivated on mighty loess layers over Muschelkalk subsoils, Julian Huber's 2014 Spätburgunder trocken is the first vintage the young man had to process after the early death of his father Bernhard, one of the doyen of German Spätburgunder. Fermented in large oak vats and aged for more than a year in used barriques, this is a beautifully pure and fresh-flavored Pinot with well-articulated berry aromas and some spicy forest aromas. Silky textured, finessed and very elegant, the 2014 is a well-structured, vital and medium-bodied Pinot with precise fruit, fine tannins and a lot of character. It can compete with the best red Burgognes and is a what I'd call a Best Buy. 88 points. *Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate* February 2017

2014 Huber Malterdinger Pinot Noir RRP \$64

From 22-year-old vines on loess and shell limestone soils, the cherry colored 2014 Malterdinger Spätburgunder trocken opens with a very clear, bright and spicy bouquet of wild red berries, cherries and beautiful earthy flavors. Medium to full-bodied, fruit-intense and vital on the palate, this is a very elegant, aromatic and silky textured Pinot in perfect balance. The acidity is remarkably fine and the finish, though still a very little bit reductive, is pure, dry, fresh and beautifully aromatic. This is an impressive village wine from Baden's Breisgau subregion. There is just a hint of toast and mocha flavors in the aftertaste. 89 points. *Stephan Reinhardt, Wine Advocate* February 2017

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