



Welcome to the CellarHand newsletter for May 2019. Here's a little taste of what's going on this month...

RELEASES

[EBENEZER GOOD – Shaman of Shiraz Ben Glaetzer on enchanting form in cooler '17 harvest](#)
[GO WESTERN DISTRICT – Best-yet wines from Nick Farr's alluring Irrewarra project](#)
[HUNTER & THE HUNTED – Sink your teeth into new single-vineyard Frankland Estate releases](#)
[MARLI AND ME – Up close and personal with the 2017s from Mount Mary's Rhône project](#)
[NO MORE FIZZERS - What world-class, no-compromise sparkling wine really looks like](#)
[CARRY ON CAMPÈ – Uproariously good set of releases from Rivetti family of La Spinetta](#)
[VAJRA VIAGRA - From Rosso to Ravera, new G.D. Vajra shipment gives endless stimulation](#)

RELEASES



AMON FIRE

Ben Glaetzer's follow-up foursome to the outstanding 2016s are the fruit of another cooler vintage in the Barossa. There was a good dose of rain through the winter and freshening rains fell intermittently through the ripening season, where a cooler-than-average spring was followed by a later-than-normal harvest.

It's a recipe for another round of brilliant Barossa reds, with lift, layers and freshness marrying the succulent fruit in that typical Glaetzer way. "The 2017 wines are of excellent quality, exhibiting purity and lift with firm tannins and exceptional length," says Ben.

Those who get the wines find that balance remarkable every time. The reviews are yet to roll in on the '17s, but the comments on their immediate predecessors bear this out. "Juicy and plush... in a harmonious mix," was **Wine Advocate's** take on the '16 Wallace. "The essence of balance and pleasure results," was **Tony Love's** conclusion from the same-vintage Bishop, while **Huon Hooke** declared the Anaperenna "a tour de force". And top of the tree, the '16 Amon-Ra was for **Mike Bennie** "beautiful"; "a wine of outstanding refinement" as far as **Matthew Jukes** was concerned; and had "lovely richness and volume with persistence" in the eyes of **Andrew Caillard MW**. And so to '17, then, and Mr Glaetzer has once again coaxed a winning line-up from that noble, old-vine fruit from Ebenezer.

2017 Glaetzer Wallace Shiraz Grenache RRP\$23

Blackberry, raspberry, roast beef, flowers and mint. Medium-bodied, a little earthy, spearmint and chocolate, tart acidity buried in ripe fruit, grainy tannin, decent length. Solid. 90 points. Gary Walsh, The Wine Front April 2019

2017 Glaetzer Bishop Shiraz RRP \$37

Glaetzer Bishop is a true expression of Barossa Shiraz that is elegantly structured with a long finish. In the glass it's dark red with garnet edges, giving aromas of black cherries, dried spice and

blackcurrant. The palate is plush yet focused, with ripe tannins providing structure to the flavours of blackberry and plum. Great drinking now but this wine will also benefit from 10–12 years of careful cellaring. – Ben Glaetzer

2017 Glaetzer Anaperenna RRP \$55

Stylish packaging. Kahlua, black fruit, mint, sage and vanilla. Full-bodied, sweet tannin, good length, the flavours packed with chocolate, salted beef and herb. Plush. No prisoners. 93 points. Gary Walsh, The Wine Front April 2019

2017 Glaetzer Shiraz Amon-Ra \$100

Amon-Ra Shiraz is an iconic wine that epitomises my passion to create wines that are full-flavoured, multi-layered and intense but still elegant, stylish and finely balanced. In the glass it's a brooding, vibrant black with bright purple hues. The nose has absolute purity, with black fruit aromas complemented by notes of fragrant spice. The palate is seamless, rich and full-bodied with black plum flavours intermingling with dried spice and finely balanced supple tannin. Impressive yet restrained. This is a wine that will develop beautifully with long term cellaring over decades. Alcohol 15%; pH 3.5; total acidity 6.6g/L. – Ben Glaetzer

[Back to headlines](#)

GO WESTERN DISTRICT

It's three years now since Nick Farr unveiled Irrewarra to the world. A new canvas and a different palette to work with out there in the Western District, somewhere between Geelong and Henty but distinct from both. The damp-earth aspect to the wines, the unique fruit spectrum and the super-cool acid profile were enticing ingredients to this master of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. And Irrewarra has delivered. The project named for an Aboriginal term meaning "long spear throw" has hit the mark every time. The Chardonnay – a year younger than its sibling – has irresistible line and drive allied to flint-mineral notes, setting it up beautifully as the wine continues to grow. The Pinot Noir flaunts its contradictions of precision and wildness with effortless grace. As well as being a worthy addition to the Farr family of wines, these add another subtle and alluring shade to the complex picture of great Australian Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.



2018 Irrewarra Chardonnay RRP \$66

A fair bit of spicy vanilla oak over lean limey fruit. There's tang and smoke, vanilla, crème brûlée richness, flinty texture, and a zippy finish of fine length. Really needs some time to come together, but high quality here. 92+ points. Gary Walsh, The Wine Front May 2019

2017 Irrewarra Pinot Noir RRP \$66

100% destemmed, as always. Poached rhubarb, damp earth, Indian spices and a herbal/green

peppercorn note lie beneath crushed rose petals, raspberry and cranberry on a complex and compelling nose. Superb suede tannin accompanies this on the palate, where sour cherry and cream chime in before a crunchy acid kick on the long, raspberry-inflected, peppery finish. Its quality really shines on the gliding convergence of acidity, tannin, fruit and spice as the wine goes down. The best rendition of this wine so far. - **Ed Merrison, CellarHand**

[Back to headlines](#)

HUNTER & THE HUNTED



The trajectory of the not-so-new generation at Frankland Estate is as sure, true and thrilling as the finish on the Isolation Ridge Riesling. “An issue facing family wineries in Australia, now and always, is the question of generational change,” wrote **Peter Forrestal** for **Gourmet Traveller WINE** last year in extolling Judi Cullam, new-crowned recipient of the **Len Evans Award for Leadership**. “Judi and Barrie Smith have tackled handing over to their children, Hunter and Elizabeth (and her winemaking husband, Brian

Kent) in an exemplary manner,” Forrestal continued. “They handed over control of the winery and vineyard when their children had the maturity, energy and drive to make it their life’s work, despite being happy to continue. Mutual respect and timing were key.”

Those virtues of respect and timing are again in play as Hunter, Lizzie and Brian reveal their latest work. That is, respect for the vineyard – be it organic-certified Poison Hill or the family’s famous coffee-rock strewn base of Isolation Ridge. And timing, in that the 2018 single-vineyard Rieslings are beautifully integrated and ready to flaunt their myriad charms, as is the 2016 Isolation Ridge Shiraz.

This family’s integrity, taste and sense of generosity flows through all these wines. They are, as always, an elegant, pleasure-giving invitation to explore this pristine pocket of the Great Southern.

2018 Frankland Estate Poison Hill Riesling RRP \$43

Poison Hill vineyard lies on the northern edge of the Frankland River township. Its distinctive name comes from its location on a hill where the heart-leaf poison bush is found, which is poisonous to all but indigenous animals. This tiny 3-hectare Riesling vineyard is planted on a unique white clay and weathered quartz soil, which is reflected in a complex, alluringly perfumed and silk-textured wine. Like all vineyards in the Frankland river region, it benefits from the cool nights and long, slow ripening period prior to harvest that promotes maximum flavour development while maintaining the distinctive vibrant acidity for which Rieslings from this region are renowned.

The fruit was lightly pressed and allowed to settle overnight before being racked to fermentation vessel. The wine was then fermented at low temperatures (less than 15°C) over eight weeks with minimal intervention in order to obtain the purest expression of the pristine, organically-grown fruit from the Poison Hill vineyard.

The nose shows lovely lifted aromatics of white stone fruits, fresh lime and delicate citrus blossom accompanied by spice. There is real intensity to the flavours, classic signatures of the

Poison Hill vineyard. Seamless texture with beautifully integrated acidity gives the wine some lovely mouth-watering minerality. The flavours are focused and persistent, with beautiful fruit generosity and a lovely pithy textural component. The wine has lovely balance that builds richness along the palate. – **Hunter Smith, Frankland Estate**

2018 Frankland Estate Isolation Ridge Riesling RRP \$43

This wine was made from 100% Riesling grown in the Isolation Ridge vineyard at Frankland Estate. Riesling vines from two different clones were planted in 1988 on undulating north- and east-facing slopes with duplex soils of ironstone gravel over a clay sub-soil. A number of trellis systems are used throughout the vineyard, which is situated 256 metres above sea level. The cool nights and long, slow ripening periods typical of the Frankland River region allow maximum flavour development while maintaining the distinctive vibrant acidity for which Rieslings from this region are renowned. The vineyard is farmed according to certified organic principles and this is reflected in the clarity and complexity of the pristine fruit from the vineyard.

Grapes are pressed immediately on arrival at the winery with the juice left to settle in tank overnight before being racked to fermentation vessel. The wine is fermented in stainless tanks at low temperatures (less than 15°C) over eight weeks with minimal intervention in order to obtain the purest expression of the pristine, organically grown fruit from the Isolation Ridge vineyard. The wine is then left on its lees for six months. A small parcel of Riesling was fermented and aged in (neutral) oak for 10 months where it attains lovely complex textural components and enhances the opulence of the wine.

The nose features intense mineral slate-stone notes, shy white citrus florals, spice and young fennel. It has grace and poise on the palate, with a clear and resolved acidity that carries the fruit all the way into a long saline, mineral finish. Elegant yet powerful, tight and delicate, it has tension that builds wonderful mouthfeel, highlighted by a seamless texture. This wine possesses the hallmark traits of great dry Riesling with delicacy, purity and a pristine fruit profile. It's a true testament to its unique site. – **Hunter Smith, Frankland Estate**

2017 Frankland Estate 'Smith Cullam' Riesling RRP \$53

This is excitingly youthful. Yet, it has a very complex array of spices, white peaches, citrus and stony minerally accents. The palate is very powerful, and the fruit ripeness is right on. There is a strong and tart grapefruit-like thread that holds the long finish. Best from 2022. Screwcap. 96 points. Nick Stock, jamesuckling.com August 2018

2016 Frankland Estate Isolation Ridge Shiraz RRP \$43

Dry mild conditions provided another ideal vintage in the Frankland River region. This provided balance, elegance and complexity. Fruit for this wine was sourced from three different locations in the Isolation Ridge vineyard at Frankland Estate. The Shiraz canopy is trained on a combination of vertical shoot and Geneva Double Curtin (GDC). This wine was fermented as long and slowly as possible, at temperatures not exceeding 20°C in open fermentation tanks that allowed the cap to be worked by plunging and gently pumping over. An extended maceration period followed completion of the ferment to allow optimal flavour and tannin extraction. It was aged for 18 months in 500-litre French oak puncheons. Initially brooding and dark, opening up to a



bright fresh wine. Hints of black olive and an iodine saltiness combine with fresh toasty oak, spice and black pepper. A sweet core of redcurrant and plum flavoured fruit leads into the subtle use of French oak which sits comfortably with the fine-grained tannins giving the wine a presence and length. Savoury, briary fruits lead into an enticing ironstone flinty note and mineral complexity. The small addition of Viognier and Malbec add to the wine's complexity. A fine example of an outstanding vintage in Frankland River, it is approachable now but has the structure and finesse to reward long term cellaring. To truly experience it, decant this wine while young. - **Hunter Smith, Frankland Estate**

2015 Frankland Estate Olmo's Reward RRP \$89

An elegantly structured and poised wine showing an increased amount of Cabernet Franc. It is a strongly Right Bank-influenced wine, showing a taut, controlled palate. Lifted notes of red berry and savoury earthy notes, with a little rich mocha character. Characteristic gravelly tannins support an extended finish. Has some ageing potential. 95 points. Ray Jordan, The West Australian June 2018

[Back to headlines](#)

MARLI AND ME



Seems like only yesterday this was little more than a curio as far as some were concerned. "Flag-bearing family masters the Bordeaux and Burgundy varieties and turns its attention to Rhône as a flight of fancy" – something like that. "Grenache in the Yarra? Let me know how *that* works out!" But those in the know knew from the outset the Middletons don't do things on a whim. The long-term vision was imbued with the same fixity of purpose as anything else here, and the planning and execution was as meticulous as one might expect from an estate that started planting these grapes 10 years before being announced as **James Halliday's 2018 Winery of the Year**.

Now four vintages in, we can tell you how it worked out – although we'll borrow the words of those paid to make such judgements. "This is a fantastic, understated yet elegant wine. And drinkability is through the roof," was **Mike Bennie's** verdict of RP1 from 2016. Meanwhile the **Wine Front** scribe was equally effusive about the 2016 RP2. "Lovely perfume. Has a softness to taste, supple, very long, very pretty in its just-ripe fruit characters and set on sheets of lively acidity and faint peppery spice," wrote Bennie. "Lots of charm, sleekness, drinkability."

To recap, these are the wines named for the grandmother of third-generation winemaker Sam Middleton. Marli Middleton (née Russell) always showed enthusiasm for the boundary-pushing ideas of the family – and that's precisely what this was when they began planting new plots in 2008. Partly in response to the changing climate, they chose seven varieties traditionally grown in the Rhône Valley. Marsanne, Roussanne and Clairette were the white trio, while the red quartet

comprised Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Cinsault. In 2016, the white and red blend – rechristened RP1 and RP2 respectively – contained all the varieties between them for the first time since the tiny debut bottlings of 2014.

2017 Marli Russell RP1 40% Marsanne, 40% Roussanne, 20% Clairette RRP \$53

This blend is made from Marsanne, Roussanne and Clairette and will vary from vintage to vintage. We have adopted a similar approach to the way we make our other white wines at Mount Mary. Barrel fermenting, lees stirring and relatively hard pressing

give this wine great texture and depth of flavour. We choose to pick these varieties relatively early to avoid excessive viscosity which can occur when they are grown in warmer climates and picked riper. We believe this helps to achieve a food friendly style. We are excited by how well these varieties seem suited to our site, and look forward to seeing how this blend continues to evolve.

2017 in the Yarra Valley was one of the best white wine vintages we have seen in decades. These varieties were no exception. The 2017 Marli Russell RP1 displays a tremendously expressive nose of honey, pear, citrus and wildflowers. The pure fruit expression seen on the nose is also reflected on the palate. There is an array of flavours on display here from riper fruits including pineapple and melon through to citrus (lemon, lime and orange). This wine is powerful and concentrated with brilliant length and persistence but shows a pristine acid profile and freshness thanks to the brilliant 2017 growing season. We believe this wine will age beautifully, building richness in bottle. In time, expect the dominant fruit characters to subside and make way for nutty, more savoury complexities. – **Sam Middleton, Mount Mary**

2017 Marli Russell RP2 55% Grenache, 20% Shiraz, 20% Mourvedre, 5% Cinsault RRP \$66

This blend is made from Grenache, Shiraz, Mourvèdre and Cinsault and will vary from vintage to vintage. This wine stylistically follows on from other Mount Mary red wines as well as showing all the hallmark characteristics of these fascinating varieties, when grown in cool climates. These varieties are fermented using a large percentage of whole berries as we feel this helps to maximise the expression of the fruit. This wine is matured in barrel (the Grenache in large format oak) for 16 months with only a very small percentage of new oak used in order to preserve the natural complexity of the fruit.

2017 marks the fourth rendition of this blend from our vineyards here at Mount Mary and seems quite obviously the most expressive, fruit forward example we have made to date. The cooler growing season allowed these varieties to hang on the vine longer than is often the case in



warmer seasons, encouraging beautifully ripe flavours to develop at moderately low alcohol levels. There is an array of fruit present on the nose including poached strawberry, cherries, redskin, and spice. The palate is light to medium bodied but shows so much persistence and length. There is a very fine line of tannin through the spine of this wine offering some structure and giving it a savoury edge. While this wine is ready to be drunk and enjoyed immediately, we believe it will continue to improve over the next 5-10 years. – **Sam Middleton, Mount Mary**

[Back to headlines](#)



NO MORE FIZZERS

A weird thing happens with fizz. It's the wine most closely associated with unbridled, devil-may-care excess and exuberance. "This calls for a celebration!" we yell, before ripping the foil off a bottle with gay abandon. And yet this show of special-occasion extravagance is so often greeted with a wine that doesn't fit the bill – a compromise where none should be brooked. Well, to hell with that! Here are some proper, no-compromise sparkling options to rise above the run-of-the-mill.

2009 Stefano Lubiana Grande Vintage RRP \$67

A blend of estate-grown, single-vineyard Chardonnay (70%) & Pinot Noir (30%). 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. Aged for nine years on lees until disgorging on the 16th of November 2018. Dosage 4g/L. The 2009 Grande Vintage is the 10th such release in the 24 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.

NV Hattingley Valley Classic Reserve RRP \$80

Powerful, acid-driven sparkling of scintillating drinking and charisma. Scents of faint toast, ripe and dried apples, ginger, roasted almonds. The palate is blistering in its pace, ultra-refreshing, has some toasty-oxidative characters and brisk, ripe and dried apple flavours. Hold onto your hats! 94 points. Mike Bennie, The Wine Front April 2019

NV Jacquesson Cuvée No. 741 RRP \$124

Fragrant, complex, detailed wine of fruit, spice and yeast-derived complexity. Opens with a pretty almost floral perfume with candied citrus, light honey and fresh brioche scents. The palate is likewise pretty, delicate citrusy flavours, some light marzipan notes, faint nuttiness and a brisk, tightly wound bead that fizzes long through the mouth. This feels high quality, delicious to drink. 94 points. Mike Bennie, The Wine Front April 2019

NV Champagne Labruyère Prologue RRP \$108

Funky fizz here – toasty, yeasty aromas with whiffs of ginger and clove, apple, brown sugar-on-porridge. The palate is chewy and toasty, freshened with big, vigorous bubbles and drawn long on ginger biscuit and apple tart kind of flavours. It's got some power, yet grace, and feels complex in its make-up. I'm drawn back to it. 93 points. Mike Bennie, The Wine Front April 2019

[Back to headlines](#)

CARRY ON CAMPÈ

“Full body, soft and silky tannins and a beautiful finish. So much fruit here,” wrote **James Suckling**. “These are beautiful results,” declared **Monica Lerner** of **Wine Advocate**. “Another impressive Barolo from La Spinetta,” mused **Antonio Galloni** of **Vinous Media**.

The wine they’re talking about is the newly landed 2013 Campè, La Spinetta’s flagship Barolo. The wine arrives with the Rivetti family firing on all cylinders. “The 2015 Barbarescos are racy and intense – as they always are – but the wines are also increasingly translucent and finessed,” wrote Galloni of that particular suite, which we’ve added to here. The quality is equally evident in other appellations of Piedmont and Tuscany.

In fact, with this latest shipment you'll find the range at its most eclectic. But for those who've come to know and love La Spinetta - and there are many among you - the wines have never been more characterful and compelling.



2018 La Spinetta Vermentino RRP \$39

100% Vermentino grown on mixed clay and sand on a south-exposed slope at 180m elevation. Spontaneous fermentation over three months in stainless steel with natural yeast. Aged on lees for five months all up, and bottled six months after harvest. It's pale gold in colour and shows aromas of pear, pungent flowers and herbs. It's nuanced and wonderfully focused, with the energy of Vermentino driving the wine's personality. Citrus, orchard fruit and floral notes are nicely delineated through the palate. – **La Spinetta**

2014 La Spinetta Langhe Bianco RRP \$96

100% Sauvignon Blanc from 36-year-old vines on the south-facing sandy soils of the Mango site, which sits at 500m above sea level. Barrel fermented in 2,000-litre French oak casks, where the wine undergoes malolactic conversion and about 12 months' maturation. It's then transferred to stainless steel for almost two years before bottling. – **La Spinetta**

2015 La Spinetta Lidia Chardonnay RRP \$153

Plenty of smoky oak here, but the concentrated, dried-pear character takes it in its stride. Vibrant for a 2015 with a ton of energy at the long, clean finish. Drink or hold. 93 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com September 2018

2015 La Spinetta 'Il Nero di Casanova' Sangiovese RRP \$35

The wine comes from Tuscany's Terre di Pisa Sangiovese DOC. It's 100% Sangiovese, of which 80% comes from the Casanova vineyard in Terricciola with the balance from the Sezzana site in Casciana Terme. The vines are 21 years old and the soils are calcareous with ocean sediments. Fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled stainless steel over 9-10 days, and is followed by malolactic conversion in medium-toast French oak barrels, where the wine spends nine months. It's then transferred to stainless steel vats for two months before bottling, and is then rested in bottle for another six months. It's intense ruby red with a nose of dark cherries,

leather, licorice and tobacco. The palate is medium-bodied with a relatively delicate frame typical of Sangiovese. Il Nero di Casanova shows lovely inner sweetness and perfume through to a long finish. - **La Spinetta**



2015 La Spinetta Langhe Nebbiolo RRP \$53

*Reductive, sausage, red fruit, aniseed, dried herb and spicy oak. Grippy, dry, juicy red fruits, liquorice, good flavour, decent finish. Needs a bit of air, and perhaps a little muddy as at now, but a good wine with potential to improve. 90+ points. Gary Walsh, *The Wine Front* April 2019*

2015 La Spinetta Barbaresco Bordini RRP \$117

Decadent and rich aromas of smoked meat, ripe fruit and rose stems. Lots of leather, too. Full body, round and soft tannins and a delicious finish. Give it a year or two to come

around more, but already delicious. 92 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com September 2018

2016 La Spinetta Barbaresco Bordini RRP \$117

100% Nebbiolo from the Bordini site, 270m high in the village of Neive in the Barbaresco production zone. It's a four hectare south-facing site on calcareous soils, and the vines have an average age of between 26 and 29 years. The site is sustainably farmed with no use of chemical herbicides or pesticides. Alcoholic fermentation takes place in temperature-controlled rotofermenters and lasts between seven and eight days. The wine undergoes malolactic fermentation in oak, where the wine is aged for between 20 and 22 months. From these medium toast French oak vessels (50% new and 50% one-year-old) it's transferred to stainless steel vats for three months before bottling with no fining or filtration. It is then rested for a further 24 months in bottle before release.

2015 La Spinetta Barbaresco Gallina RRP \$272

The 2015 Barbaresco Vigneto Gallina is absolutely gorgeous. Vivid and nuanced on the palate, the 2015 is fresh, juicy and flat-out delicious. The Gallina is often a shy wine that needs time in bottle to truly blossom, but the 2015 seems to have skipped that initial phase of reticence. In two separate tastings, the 2015 has been incredibly sensual and polished. Historically, the Gallina has the most consistent track record in aging of the three top Barbarescos in the range. It will be interesting to see if that is the case here as well. For now, the 2015 Gallina is one of the finest wines I have ever tasted from La Spinetta. 96 points. Antonio Galloni, Vinous Media October 2018

2015 La Spinetta Barbaresco Staderi RRP \$293

The 2015 Barbaresco Staderi rounds out this series of Barbarescos from La Spinetta in grand style. I don't think the Staderi has ever been so elegant or refined as it is in 2015. Medium in body and translucent, the 2015 possesses remarkable purity and nuance in its red-toned fruit and floral aromatics. The oak needs time to fully integrate, but readers should not be planning on opening bottles anytime soon, as the youthful tannins are also imposing. Bright citrus and floral notes add the closing flourishes. 95 points. Antonio Galloni, Vinous Media October 2018

2015 La Spinetta Barolo Garretti RRP \$131

The tar and roses are certainly here on the nose with ripe fruit, too. Full-bodied, dense and chewy with beautiful fruit and length. Chewy, polished and compact. Needs two or three years to soften. Drink in 2022. 94 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com January 2019

2013 La Spinetta Barolo Campè RRP \$314

Intense aromas of sweet tobacco, strawberries and light meat. Full body, soft and silky tannins and a beautiful finish. So much fruit here. Drink in 2019. 96 points. James Suckling, jamesuckling.com January 2017

[Back to headlines](#)

VAJRA REVIVAL

We made no secret of our rapture at gaining a chance to work with the Vaira family as importer of their fantastic wines into Australia.

Since our first shipment a year ago, both Giuseppe Vaira and winemaker Eugene Qiao have made it over to these shores, revelling in the warmth of the welcome they received from the Australian trade and wine lovers more broadly. This is a family that communicates its joy and pride in Piedmont – the wines and culture of this northeast Italian idyll – wholeheartedly. In the wines you feel the vivacity, charm and class no matter whether you're knocking back Barbera,



contemplating cru Barolo or succumbing to the sweet allure of Moscato d'Asti.

The headlines here will be dominated by an exceptional suite of 2015 Barolo, ranging from the Albe – “terrific entry-level Barolo, not to mention one of the finest value in Piedmont” according to **Antonio Galloni** of **Vinous Media** – via ravishing Ravera to a “wonderful” Bricco delle Viole.

But as mentioned earlier, perhaps the finest virtue of this estate is the way it scatters its delights for all to enjoy. The runaway success of the bargain Langhe Rosso and Claré J.C. attests to this point, as does the fact that the Dolcetto, Barbera and Langhe Nebbiolo are resplendent examples of these characterful native grapes, offering great value to boot.

Once again, then, it's not so much something for everyone as everything for everyone – the only issue being that demand for the top Barolo wines far outstrip supply. Bearing that in mind, we invite you once again to dive into the myriad charms of this jewel in the Barolo crown.

2017 G.D. Vajra Langhe Rosso RRP \$35 *screwcap*

Our Langhe Rosso is a hug from Piedmont. It's an invitation to explore its different varieties and to get to know its personality. From young vineyards, it is a fruity, delicately complex wine - an ideal companion at the table. It's predominately Nebbiolo, Barbera and Dolcetto, with smaller quantities of Freisa, Albarossa, Pinot Noir. Each vineyard is harvested when it reaches perfect ripeness. The varieties are vinified one by one, to express their personality and uniqueness. The wine is aged for 18-24 months partially in steel and then in first-, second- and third-use pièces. - **Giuseppe Vaira**

2017 G.D. Vajra Dolcetto d'Alba RRP \$39

Dolcetto is sometimes considered the ugly duckling of the Langhe. But in a hot vintage such as this, the grape flaunts its inner beauty and charm. The 2017 Dolcetto d'Alba delivers earthy and raw aromas of black fruit, plum and black olive. There are dusty sensations of crushed mineral or granite on the close. The finish offers vibrancy, depth and freshness. 90 points. Monica Lerner, Wine Advocate June 2018

2017 G.D. Vajra Barbera d'Alba RRP \$49

G.D. Vajra Barbera d'Alba comes from the wonderful range of Vajra estate vineyards, belonging



to three different geological ages: Tortonian, Serravallian and Messinian. It's fermented for an average of 20 days on skins and matured for no less than 12 months, respecting the rhythm of nature. This is a fine blend, a charming wine at the crossroads of finesse and texture.

Fruit for our Barbera d'Alba is harvested usually in the second half of September. Each vineyard is picked at its optimal ripeness, so as to capture the richest treasure of aromatics and phenolics. Quite often it takes more than 10 days to complete the entire harvest. Each parcel is then individually fermented for 15 to 20 days on average, at temperatures below 30°C. While Barbera is often treated with shorter and vigorous macerations, we love to work with gentle

punch downs and pumpovers for longer periods, in order to extract only the finest tannins from its skins. Malolactic conversion in stainless steel, followed by racking. Aged for a minimum of 12 months, mostly in stainless steel vats but with a minimal component (5 to 10% at most) aged in French oak. - **Giuseppe Vaira**

2017 G.D. Vajra Langhe Nebbiolo Claré J.C. RRP \$46

The latest twist of our lighter-styled wine times has been a rediscovery of “claret”—that is, the buoyant red wines, a couple steps past rosé, common prior to the 20th century, especially in Bordeaux. The idea has similarly migrated to Piedmont, and to the nebbiolo grape. The mischievous Giuseppe Vajra did deep historical research to attempt to rediscover the style of nebbiolo made in the 17th and 18th centuries (the “J” is for Jefferson, who described such wines, the “C” for wine savant Darrell Corti, who helped with research). Vajra used a light touch in vinifying fruit from younger vines in Barolo and nearby, and bottled it quickly, resulting in nebbiolo that shows more of orange-blossom fragrance than the grape’s usual burnt-orange low tones, plus a whispery mineral aspect and little of the grape’s aggro tannins. Think of it as nebbiolo masquerading as Beaujolais. Jon Bonné, Punch ‘The 25 Essential Wines of 2018’

2017 G.D. Vajra Langhe Nebbiolo RRP \$53

How’s the clarity? So much clarity. Red fruit, cherry, almond paste, spice. Medium-bodied, fresh and sure-footed, succulence of flavour without sweetness, gentle rasp of tannin, and that almond thing really hooks me, along with a clear and long finish. Delicate and beautiful. 93 points. Gary Walsh, The Wine Front November 2018

2014 G.D. Vajra Freisa Kyè RRP \$96

Freisa is a noble grape, rare and fighting for survival. It’s been part of the history and identity of Piedmont since ancient times, Freisa is one of the closest relatives of Nebbiolo, as demonstrated in 2004 by Professor Anna Schneider of Turin University. Our Kyè is the tribute to Freisa and its great and wild personality.

The fruit comes from our San Ponzio vineyard in Barolo, which sits at an altitude between 390 and 410m, on clay soil. The perfect time for harvesting Freisa is determined by alternating warm autumn days and cool nights; in general this happens in the second half of October, 20-30 days later than the average. The removal of stems, the most acidic part of the fruit and with the greater charge of green tannins, is essential. The must undergoes a fairly long fermentation, which allows the integration of grape tannins into the wine, followed by a malolactic conversion (equally important for this variety). It is matured for about 12-18 months, depending on the vintage, partly in large Slavonian oak casks and partly in barriques, to give the necessary balance to the wine. - **Giuseppe Vaira**



2015 G.D. Vajra Barolo Albe RRP \$98

Sourced from three Barolo crus: Fossati, Coste di Vergne and La Volta. Red fruits, aniseed, new leather, spice and roses. Youthful and primary aromatics, medium-bodied, ripples of smooth powdery tannin, a playful red fruit character, some tea flavour and a good long finish. It’s an excellent wine, but needs some time to settle down. High potential for attractive drinking in a few years. 93 points. Gary Walsh, The Wine Front May 2019

2015 G.D. Vajra Barolo Bricco delle Viole RRP \$163

Red cherry, strawberry, aniseed, fair old perfume, light dusting of spice and flowers. Medium-bodied, deft, fresh strawberry, brightness and energy here, with fine almost silky tannin that’s very persistent, super length and a wonderful sense of composure and class throughout. Sneaking

a second glass and coming back, it looks even better again, with a mineral and tea thing happening. Wonderful. 96+ points. Gary Walsh, The Wine Front May 2019

2015 G.D. Vajra Barolo Ravera RRP \$149

Spicy, red cherry to dark cherry, ironstone and mineral, dried rose/vanilla. Moving into fuller bodied, but still fine, firm but supple tannin, fresh, acidity is tight and controlling, and a feature of the wine. Length is top shelf. Superb. Quiet power with intensity and class. The aftertaste moves into raspberry and other red fruits. Yes, thanks very much. 96 points. Gary Walsh, The Wine Front May 2019

2017 G.D. Vajra Moscato d'Asti RRP \$39 screwcap

Bright straw-green. Very intense aromas and flavors of vanilla, white peach, orange blossom and lemon verbena. Ripe and luscious but fresh, featuring precise flavors of fresh citrus, vanilla and cinnamon. Finishes long and honeyed but with noteworthy floral lift. This is made with grapes grown in two vineyards in Mango (Riforno and San Donato) and one in Santo Stefano Belbo (Moncucco), both grand cru areas for Moscato Bianco. The 2017 Moscato d'Asti from Vajra is one of his best in recent years – and keep in mind that this is almost always a truly superb wine. In fact, as good as many of the Vajra family's wines are (such as, for example, many standout Barolos, a benchmark Freisa, an outstanding Dolcetto and Piedmont's most famous if not best Riesling wine), their Moscato d'Asti is almost always, each year, one of the denomination's best. 93 points. Ian D'Agata, Vinous Media December 2018

G.D. Vajra Barolo Chinato RRP \$140

Barolo Chinato is an ancient Piedmontese digestif. The wine used as a production base is Barolo Albe of the current vintage. The "chinatura" is the addition of infusions of about 30 herbs, rinds and roots, including Cinchona Calisaya, hence the name. The blend is about 85% DOCG Barolo Albe and 15% hydro-alcoholic extracts of aromatic and medicinal herbs. We choose those favoured for their specific digestive, decongestant and relaxing properties, drawing liberally from the rich floral heritage of the Alps that hug Piedmont. Spices, brown sugar and the peel of organic oranges from Sicily complete the process.

It's intense ruby red in the glass, and the nose displays typical freshness of our Barolo, with a weave of roses and ripe cherries, fresh mountain herbs and orange zest. In the mouth it's bittersweet and persistent - beautiful as a digestif or paired with dark chocolate. – **Giuseppe Vaira**