

SYRAH//Shiraz

Rob Geddes MW asks "Is there any place in Australia that can't grow Syrah/Shiraz?"

Is there any place in Australia that can't grow syrah/shiraz? Certainly there are exceptions but shiraz has shown magnificent ability to adapt to the needs of the industry and the dry, warm Australian climate to consistently produce a distinctive big burst of recognisable flavour wherever it is grown. Australian shiraz delivers like a Formula One driver in their prime with great lines and strength all the way to the finish.

In Australia shiraz has great style, a sense of place and occasion. It is like a great actor; able to perform on different stages in different roles and still call them all their own.

For this reason alone Australia is a lucky country where syrah/shiraz, like so many other migrants has been able to put down roots and achieve personal bests across a range of climates and winemakers.

The success of shiraz comes down a mix of factors including the tough and robust nature of shiraz and love of sunshine, its amiable and hard working nature able to cope with a range of cross country

experiences creating wines that taste of the place they were born.

While Australia is an extraordinary land of contrasts – the oldest continent with the oldest wine growing soils – it also one of the relatively (at 200 years) youngest wine industries.

The lines of shiraz are well defined with structured abundant red and black berry fruit and pepper/clove spice flavours that continue evenly along the palate. Its ability to produce wines with length of flavour has been critical to its ongoing success.

Such is the sweep of shiraz that fashion has always taken a role in its identity, first as variety for fortification and ports which, in turn, its identity has now become increasingly attached to old vine bottlings and an exciting number of cool climate regions where the spiciness is increasingly apparent.

The trend to pick riper, above 14%, gives softer tannins and has given us ripe plump flavours that can sometimes struggle to find length and finish past the middle of the tongue. The great

shiraz delivers on length of fruit and tannin on finish that allows you to enjoy the wine for minutes after swallowing.

Shiraz has a long history and strong regional characters, making a regional tour worthwhile to explore the nuances of this great grape and its memorable wines.

With the oldest shiraz in the world the **Barossa Valley** is a fine place to start and with the tradition of blending between vineyards and sub regions. St Hallett Old Block is made from a selection of the finest old blocks of vines between 60 to 100 years of age across the four corners of the Barossa. A favourite with collectors this wine delivers complexity, seamless tannins and elegance and is less ponderous than some of its cousins.

A different take comes from the Kalleske family at Greenock end where they have been farming their vineyard, first planted in the 1850's, organically for over 20 years. The ripe rich intense blackberry fruit of their Greenock Shiraz achieves a seamless intense power that makes them one of the most exciting new wineries, even if they have been grape growers for over 130 years.



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| 1. Barossa Valley | 4. Western Australia |
| 2. Adelaide Hills | 5. Yarra Valley |
| 3. McLaren Vale | 6. Hunter Valley |

The **Adelaide Hills** to the south of the Barossa have been home to new generation of grape growers led in part by Shaw & Smith who produce wines of immaculate freshness and ripe blackberry fruit with licks of sage and black pepper spice marking the detail that makes them different from their Barossa neighbours.

South of the Adelaide Hills, **McLaren Vale** in South Australia is another region with abundant fruit and soft tannins creating mouth filling wines abounding cherry and black berry fruit and soft sweet tannins. These are some of the most supple of ripe styled wines such D'Areberg Dead Arm Shiraz.

Western Australia shiraz while not as mouth filling as South Australia show fresh, very food friendly red berries and cracked white pepper when young with a refreshing acidity. To appreciate how much brighter, more elegant they are

try Howard Park Leston Vineyard Margaret River Shiraz.

The **Yarra Valley** adjacent to Melbourne is home to the flip side of the South Australian style with a medium body and more spice and savoury flavours adorning the red and black berry fruit. A nice try is the De Bortoli Estate Reserve Syrah showing that not all Australian shiraz is the same.

Hunter Valley shiraz has more moods than the sea. Don't be deceived by these wines such as Brokenwood Graveyard Shiraz. This medium bodied savoury spiced cooked plum and clove wine wrapped in ripe fruit with a profound velvety medium full-bodied texture.

The strength of regional characters and local accents in Australian shiraz means it is truly liquid geography with many the nuances to this great grape and its memorable wines just waiting for your glass. ■



ROB GEDDES MW

Robert Geddes MW is a professional wine taster, author and consultant with extensive experience of Australian and International wine styles and regions. He has tasted wines from vintage 1838 onwards in a professional capacity. Robert was admitted to the Institute of Masters of Wine in 1992, becoming the third Australian member of this body. Today there are 350 Masters of Wine worldwide. He has recently written three books, with two in development, finds time to be a wine judge, and truly great grape raconteur. Rob loves to demystify the wine tasting journey and is always generous, down to earth and entertaining in sharing his knowledge.