

MASSENA

barossa valley

TASTING NOTES

2010 the surly muse

Grape Variety: 100% Viognier

Background: Viognier has found its current recognition in being a 'muse' to shiraz wines, adding its unique aromatic lift and richness when added in tiny quantities. When some Viognier became available from grapes to be co-fermented with Shiraz, we jumped at the opportunity to explore a new wine style to Massena.

Winemaking: The grapes for 'the surly muse' are sourced from a single site in the Koonunga Hill sub-region, adjacent to our blocks of old vine Mataro and Grenache. This is one of the coolest regions of the Barossa Valley with an altitude of over 300 metres above sea level. Koonunga Hill is renowned for its deep red, heavy clay soils. We harvest the block at two different stages (up to four weeks apart). The early pick giving the wine great natural acidity and green tinges, whilst the later yields the rich and ripe fruit flavours usually associated with Viognier. Fermentation and ageing of the Viognier was completed 'sur lie' (on lees) in French Barriques for 6 months.

The Wine: The wine is pale gold in colour with bright green highlights. The nose displays aromas of apricots, honeysuckle, wild fennel and grapefruit. The palate is rich yet restrained, with succulent tropical flavours that are matched with fresh acidity, a taught band of minerality and a creamy texture.

2010 barbera

Grape Variety: 100% Barbera

Background: Italian varietals are new to the Barossa's viticultural landscape and many are well suited due to their ability to ripen fully whilst retaining naturally high acid levels. Barbera can reach the desired flavour ripeness without the need for acidification and allows us to make a completely natural wine (with a small dose of SO2 the only addition).

Winemaking: The grapes are sourced from a single vineyard nestled amidst the hot sands of Kalimna in the Barossa's north. A large percentage of whole berries in the ferment and gentle maceration have retained the freshness of the variety. After pressing, the wine is elevated in tank and is bottled without the need for fining or filtration.

The Wine: The ripe, spicy nose is laced with hints of apricots, Christmas cake and an underlying savoury edge. The palate is full of flavour and displays vivid red fruits supported by racy acidity, ensuring the palate finishes light on its feet. Vibrant, fresh fruits play the main role in this show, making it the perfect lunchtime tipple.

2010 primitivo

Grape Variety: 100% Primitivo

Background: Primitivo is what the Italians call the variety Zinfandel, which is revered in the Napa Valley in California. After trying the UC Davis clone of Zinfandel for a few years, we were sure that this variety would make generous and interesting wine, but somehow it just missed the mark. We sought Primitivo cuttings from the Puglia region of Italy and planted them on the gentle south slope of our 'Dadds' vineyard, which has yielded the perfect example of this intriguing varietal.

Winemaking: We hand harvest our vineyard to ensure the grapes are delivered to the winery in whole clusters. Destemming only into seasoned wooden vats, the ferment is allowed to start naturally and is in contact with skins for around 7 days with gentle extraction by pumping over and then basket pressing. The Primitivo in previous years has gone to seasoned barrels, but this year we have followed our success with the Barbera and left the wine unoaked and uncomplicated.

The Wine: Ripe and sweet fruited, the Primitivo carries a bit more weight and richness when compared to the Barbera. The nose is complimented with a slight smokiness, with dark cherry, pastille and jubey fruit flavours.

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2010 saperavi

Grape Variety: 100% Saperavi

Background: Saperavi means paint or dye in the Georgian dialect, where it finds its origins. Georgia is known as one of the oldest winemaking regions of the world, with archeological research showing evidence of cultivation dating to 6000-5000 BC, with Saperavi being the most commonly cultivated vine over this time. Its most distinguishing feature is that it is one of the rare varieties that has colour in the pulp as well as the skin, which gives a deep colour and full-bodied palate.

Winemaking: The grapes are sourced from a single vineyard outside of Nuriootpa, where we have planted experimental varieties. Destemming into concrete open fermenters and a long, slow and cool fermentation have retained the dominant fruit flavours without any astringency. After basket pressing, the wine is elevated in seasoned French Oak barrels and bottled without the need for fining or filtration.

The Wine: A dense bright inky purple colour lives up to its varietal meaning. Red liquorice, Turkish delight and exotic spices jump out the glass. A plush and silky mouth feel gives immediate enjoyment, before the dark and intense tannins round out a full but surprisingly delicate fruit palate. As with any Massena wine, the wine can be enjoyed straight away to delight in its fruit purity, or throw one at the back of the cellar for a few years for a softer drinking experience.

2010 tannat

Grape Variety: 100% Tannat

Background: Tannat finds its home in the Basque-influenced regions of France near the Pyrenees. As its name suggests, Tannat is known for its high tannin levels. Efforts to solve the high tannin levels eventually lead to the modern winemaking technique of micro-oxygenation. With its thick skins, it is also one of the highest in oligomeric procyanidins, which give red wines their health benefits. Residents in the Madiran region have double the French average of 90 plus year olds, despite a diet of cassoulet, foie gras and numerous cheeses.

Winemaking: The grapes are sourced from the same vineyard as our Saperavi and Primitivo, which we planted to emerging varieties at the turn of the century. Long, aerative pump overs twice per day ensured the tannins have been retained, without being too overt or drying. Ageing in seasoned French Oak barrels has ensured further softening whilst retaining the varietal characters.

The Wine: An impenetrable bright purple colour that stains the glass gives the impression of intensity and purity and the wine doesn't let us down. The nose has slight briary and leafy hints before a rush of fresh raspberries fills the nose. Chewy, but supple tannins backed with dense blackberry flavours ensure a gob full of flavour. Chuck one of these into your next wine options game and see if anyone guesses a ripe and powerful Cabernet!

2009 the moonlight run

Grape Variety: 54% Grenache, 24% Shiraz, 16% Cinsaut, 6% Mataro,

Background: 'the moonlight run' was the repetitive nightly drive from the Barossa to the Clare Valley that Dan and I would endure whilst working Harvest in 1999. During the drive home, we would often crave a soft slurpy wine to wash down a hard night's work. Out of this ideal we decided to make a Grenache based wine to be enjoyed whenever the mood takes hold.

Winemaking: 2009 was a mild growing season, which ensured that the later ripening varieties such as Grenache and Mataro reach full potential and full flavour. Based around fruit from two old vine Grenache vineyards in Marananga, each parcel of fruit was vinified separately and aged in old French oak hogsheads for 19 months. Our 'Dadds' block vineyard in the South of Moppa has our dry grown Mataro and Cinsaut, a rare Rhone Varietal, which make this wine a real Chateauneuf style blend.

The Wine: Dense and brooding with delicate notes of black cherries and brambly fruits the moonlight run has already proven itself a favourite during the cool Autumn evenings. Gentle and very approachable with underlying flavours of black cherries, gamy Grenache flavours, wild berries with a back bone of Mataro tannins, this vintage is truly a step up from previous releases.

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2009 the eleventh hour

Grape Variety: 100% Shiraz

Background: The sixty year old Shiraz vines from Greenock that produced the original wine were ready to be uprooted due to the lack of yields and the reluctance of other companies to pay a premium for this excellent fruit. After repeated requests for access to these grapes, at 'the eleventh hour' our growers decided to stop the bulldozer and retain a small area of these vines.

Winemaking: Sourcing grapes from old vine vineyards in the North West corner of the Barossa, we vinify each parcel separately in open concrete fermenters. Ageing in seasoned French oak barrels for 16 months, the wine was moved to tank in individual components for several months before blending and bottling without fining or filtration in April 2011.

The Wine: The dense and brooding 2009 reveals dark red cherry and blackberry fruits supported by licorice, black pepper and hints of roasted Indian spices. The opulent palate is full of dark cherries and plums and rich chocolate, with typical Barossa plummy fruit sweetness. Its supple tannins and engaging acidity ensure the wine eases in its youth without sacrificing the all important skeleton of structure required to reward drinkers for many years to come.

2008 the howling dog

Grape Variety: 100% Petite Sirah (Durif)

Background: Early experimental batches of Petite Sirah (some as small as 120kg's) produced wines that were rich and deep, but had pronounced tannins that caused tasters to release a slight howl as it crossed the palate. The name Petite Sirah acknowledges that the variety produces Shiraz like berries that are smaller, giving a much darker colour and rich deep tannins.

Winemaking: We leave some parcels of Petite Sirah on skins for up to six weeks to integrate the tannins and produce a wine that is a lot softer and more approachable when young. Destemmed into open fermenters, left to spontaneously ferment, then pumped over twice daily for 7 days before extended post fermentation maceration for up to 6 weeks. Gentle basket pressing followed, with each vineyard parcel being kept separate in 2nd and 3rd use French oak hogsheads until just prior to blending and bottling in October 2009.

The Wine: Black as night and laden with an abundance of natural structure and personality. 100% Petite Sirah, open fermented and left on skins for up to 8 weeks prior to an élevage in new and used French barriques and puncheons. Built more along the lines of a marathon runner than a sprinter, it is already approachable but will greatly reward those who choose to keep a few bottles well into the future.