



Let Me Take You Down (Under)

Twist and Shout

Disco Fever

This quarter's shipment from the Red Rogues comes with a musical riddle. See if you can find all of the connections. When I think about Australia, I think about kangaroos, the BeeGees, and Shiraz.

While Cabernet Sauvignon is the king of red wine in the USA, Shiraz is synonymous with Australia. Yes, Shiraz is the same grape that we call Syrah, although there is much controversy about the origin of the grape. Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa all refer to the Syrah grape as Shiraz, which is genetically identical.

Introduction to Shiraz 101. Shiraz was originally thought to hail from ancient Persia, thus it was named Shiraz honoring the now Iranian city. That myth was debunked by Dr. Carole Meredith of the University of California, Davis, and Jean-Michel Boursiquot of the wine research facility in France. Shiraz/Syrah originated in the Rhone area of France descending from two very obscure grapes—Mondeuse Blanche and Dureza. The beauty of Shiraz is its powerful flavors, its versatility with food, and its rustic full-bodied nature.

Australian Geography 101. The Land Down Under is approximately the same size geographically as the USA, and it has five different states where grapes are grown—New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Queensland/Tasmania. The best wines and the most well known are the wines from South Australia where there are seven appellations, and we're going to introduce you to three wines from three different appellations. These selections are from McLaren Vale, the Barossa Valley, and Langhorne Creek—all from the state of South Australia.

Cork Dorks become frustrated with cork! As you may know PlumpJack Winery in Napa led the pack using a "screw top" to seal its most expensive Cabernet Sauvignon. Wineries have long been frustrated by sealing their precious wines with cork, which sometimes become tainted, and have been searching diligently for various ways to seal their wines. Many wineries claim that they lose up to 10% of their production due to tainted corks. In addition to PlumpJack, just to further prove to people that there can be world-class wines with a screw top seal, two of the three quarterly selections are sealed with a screw top.

Some of the most common descriptors for Shiraz are: Black currant, blackberry, leathery, peppery, smoky, juicy, and Cassis.

Five Reasons why PlumpJack loves Shiraz:

1. It's delicious—why not?
2. Think barbecued ribs!
3. Many of these wines can be drunk early or aged for 5-10 years.
4. We love to say "Scheer-OZ"!
5. It's the closest thing to Zinfandel outside of the USA.

2000 Oddfellows, Langhorne Creek, South Australia

\$27.99

Here are the facts:

Location of Winery: Langhorne Creek is 55 km southeast of Adelaide

Owners: A group of the Creek' locals

Vineyards: Fruit is selected from the finest vineyards possible to highlight the wine from this appellation

Climate: Cool climate with cool breezes from Lake Alexandrina, sunny days

Approximate age of vines: Unknown, but Shiraz vines were planted in the area in 1860

Cases Produced: Exact quantity unknown, but very limited production

Winemaker: Greg Follett

Alcohol: 14.6%

Tasting Profile: Robust, with lively fruit, lots of blackberry fruit, and black pepper. Opulent with a viscous mouth feel.

Aging Potential: Drink now or hold for 2-3 years.

Varietal Components: 100% Shiraz

Fun Fact: Oddfellows isn't a winery or a vineyard. It is a collaboration of local vineyard owners, winemakers, and local business people from the Creek. This group was formed to showcase the wines from Langhorne Creek.

2001 Hanenhof, Barossa Valley, South Australia

\$19.99

Here are the facts:

Location of Winery: Near Tanunda in the Barossa Valley

Owners: Hans and Fransien Haan

Vineyards: 45 Acres

Climate: Mediterranean climate with dry summers and cool wet winters

Approximate age of vines: Originally planted in 1853, but new plantings since mid 1960's

Cases Produced: Extremely limited

Winemaker: James Irvine, a.k.a. the "Merlot Magician"

Alcohol: 14.5%

Tasting Profile: Lip smacker, think red velvet cake, jammy, chocolate, cocoa, tropical fruit (from the Viognier); deep blackberry flavors, cassis. Finishes with toasty oak. Yummy!

Aging Potential: Drink now or within 3 years

Varietal Components: 95% Shiraz, 5% Viognier

Fun Fact: They have committed to making world-class wines and use new French oak barrels to age their wines.

2001 Jester, Tarlton, McLaren Vale, South Australia

\$19.99

Here are the facts:

Location of Winery: McLaren Vale

Owners: Frank Mitolo and Ben Glaetzer

Vineyards: Number of acres unknown

Climate: Heady mix of gentle sea breezes with ancient soils

Approximate age of vines: 70 years old Shiraz vines—low yields

Cases Produced: Very limited

Winemaker: Ben Glaetzer, one of the most highly regarded winemakers in South Australia

Alcohol: 14%

Tasting Profile: Filled with finesse, very balanced, barnyard nose (that's good), earthy, lots of tannin, blackberry, rich cassis, elegant, new French oak

Aging Potential: 3-8 years

Varietal Components: 100% Shiraz

Fun Fact: Ben Glaetzer won the prestigious George Mackey Memorial Trophy for winemaking in Australia.