



The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine

AUSTRALIA: STILL HOT

by Dr. Jay Miller

The state of Australian wines has never been better. There is a huge variety of wines to try from Australia's 60+ Geographic Indicators (GIs). While most consumers still tend to think of Australia as consisting of Barossa and McLaren Vale, the range continues to expand as more and more importers seek out new and different wines.

Most of the wines in this report are from the 2004, 2005, and 2006 vintages. 2005 appears to have been uniformly excellent across this giant continent while 2004 and 2006 are a notch below. Of course it is impossible to generalize across such a vast landscape, but these three vintages are all excellent to outstanding.

The only negative note is the weakness of the American dollar. The Australian dollar is now worth \$0.85 American, a

major increase over just a few years. Sadly, best sellers that were once \$10 a bottle will now be \$12. Nevertheless, Australia, along with Argentina and Spain, offers better bang for the buck than virtually any other major wine producing country.

The one disquieting aspect concerning Australia is the noisy minority of European wine lovers who seem to freak out over wines with more than 14% alcohol and too much flavor. While some producers seem to have scaled back the exuberance of their wines, I tasted very few wines that were out-of-balance. The fact of the matter is that nature provides what it does, and the best winemakers put that directly into the bottle. It should not be any other way.

Wines for this report were tasted from July through September 2007.

KAESLER	2006 CABERNET SAUVIGNON	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$29.00)	RED	(89-91)
KAESLER	2006 GRENACHE 'THE FAVE'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$50.00)	RED	(89-92)
KAESLER	2006 GSM 'AVIGNON'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$30.00)	RED	(90-92)
KAESLER	2006 GSM 'STONEHORSE'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$23.00)	RED	(88-91)
KAESLER	2005 SHIRAZ 'OLD BASTARD'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$140.00)	RED	98
KAESLER	2006 SHIRAZ 'THE BOGAN'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$TBD.00)	RED	(93-96)
KAESLER	2006 SHIRAZ 'OLD VINE'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$60.00)	RED	(90-93)
KAESLER	2006 SHIRAZ 'STONEHORSE'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$30.00)	RED	(90-93)
KAESLER	2006 SHIRAZ-CABERNET 'WOMS'	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$65.00)	RED	(87-90)
KAESLER	2006 VIOGNIER	BAROSSA VALLEY	(\$29.00)	WHITE	90

The Kaesler family, of Silesian origin, emigrated to the Barossa in the 1840s. The winemaking is in the hands of Reid Bosward and Stephen Dew. One white wine made the grade, the **2006 Viognier**. The wine was aged in a combination of stainless steel and used French oak for 10 months. Medium straw-colored, it offers aromas of mineral, toast, apricot and peach. This leads to a full-bodied, smooth-textured wine with layers of spicy pit fruits, good depth as well as concentration, and a long finish. Drink it over the next 1-2 years with full flavored fish courses and roast chicken.

The reds were all tasted from barrel samples with the exception of the 2005 'Old Bastard.' They are scheduled for bottling over the next few months. The reds begin with **2006 GSM "Stonehorse"** is a blend of 45% Grenache, 44% Shiraz, and 11% Mourvedre that was aged for 12 months in seasoned French and American oak. Crimson-colored, it offers up a fragrant bouquet of damp earth, mushroom, sage, black cherry, and blueberry. Supple-

textured, sweet, and succulent, the wine has excellent flavors and some light tannin that will support 2-3 years of bottle age. Drink it through 2016. The **2006 GSM "Avignon"** is composed of 49% Grenache, 32% Shiraz, and 19% Mataro (Mourvedre) from considerably older vines than the Stonehorse bottling. It spent 15 months in seasoned French oak. It is a brawnier, more muscular effort than its sibling with a glass-coating purple color, aromas of mineral, forest floor, leather, kirsch, blueberry, and black cherry. This leads to a full-bodied, structured, well balanced wine with a plush texture and serious depth. The ripe tannins are well-concealed and the finish is long and pure. Give it 3-4 years to evolve and drink it through 2021. The **2006 Grenache "The Fave"** spent 18 months in seasoned French oak. It is crimson-colored with an alluring perfume of cedar, truffle, leather, and kirsch. This is followed by a smooth-textured, ripe, layered wine which narrows slightly on the mid-palate. It has enough balance to

KAESLER



continued ...

develop additional complexity over the next 4-6 years but can be enjoyed now. The **2006 Cabernet Sauvignon**, which includes 5% Petit Verdot, was aged for 16 months in new and used French oak. Purple-colored, it offers aromas of cedar, smoke, black currants and blackberry. This leads to a full-bodied, structured wine with plenty of spicy black fruits, good balance, and a lengthy, pure finish. Give it 4-6 years to round out and drink it through 2021. The **2006 Shiraz (65%) – Cabernet (35%) “WOMS”** is an old vine cuvee aged for 18 months in new and one-year-old French oak. It coats the glass and has an enticing fragrance of smoke, scorched earth, tar, and black currants. However, on the palate, it is tightly wound and tannic. Extended cellaring may smooth out this muscular blend but that is a gamble. The **2006 Shiraz “Stonehorse”** spent 15 months in new and used French and American oak. Opaque purple, it exhibits an aromatic array of smoke, pencil lead, tar, blueberry and blackberry. This is followed by a full-bodied wine with gobs of flavor buttressed by well-integrated tannin. Cellar this lengthy wine for 2-3 years and drink it through 2020. The **2006 Shiraz “Old Vine”** was sourced from a 44-year-old estate vineyard and aged for 18 months in French oak. Crimson/purple in color,

it has an expressive nose of cedar, pepper, meat, game, and blueberry. On the palate, it is full-bodied, supple-textured, plump, and sweet, but becomes slightly narrow in the finish. Well-balanced and with good length, this tasty Shiraz can be enjoyed over the next 10-12 years. The **2006 Shiraz “The Bogan”** is sourced from 100% bush vine Shiraz that was planted in 1899 in the sub-district of Marananga in western Barossa. It was aged for 17 months in new and seasoned French and American oak. Opaque purple-colored, it offers complex notes of pain grille, pencil lead, tar, blueberry, and blackberry. Full-bodied, layered, and opulent, all components are well-integrated with a finish that is very long and intense. Allow 4-6 years in the cellar and drink it through 2026. As good as the preceding wines may be, they pale in the shadow of the **2005 Shiraz “Old Bastard,”** sourced from a 114-year-old vineyard, and which spent 22 months in new and one-year-old French oak. It presents a superb perfume of cedar, violets, lavender, smoked meat, game, black raspberry, and blueberry. This leads to a voluptuous, velvety-textured, layered, super concentrated Shiraz in perfect balance with well-concealed tannins and a 60-second, pure finish. Give it 6-8 years and drink it through 2035.