



**The 2023 Halliday**  
**Trends Report**

A Halliday Wine Companion Production

Between June 2022 and April 2023, the Halliday Tasting Team reviewed nearly 8500 wines for the 2024 *Halliday Wine Companion*. Couple this with immeasurable winery visits and conversations with winemakers, retailers and sommeliers, and there's not a lot happening in the Australian wine industry that they don't know about. This report details their **top wine trends** for the year.



**2023**

# Key Trends



- 1** — **Redefining value**
- 2** — **Amphorae, eggs and concrete tanks**
- 3** — **Residual sugar in textural whites**
- 4** — **Variety of varieties**
- 5** — **Nouveau-style reds**
- 6** — **Cans, pouches and casks**





# Redefining value



## Trend One

# Redefining value

Some delightfully affordable wines received sky-high scores and awards this year, further cementing the notion that price is not always an indicator of quality. Murdoch Hill's \$51 Adelaide Hills syrah won Shiraz of the Year against \$950+ legacy reds (winemaker Michael Downer was also nominated for Winemaker of the Year). And at Oakridge, our 2024 Best Value Winery, 10 absolute top-scoring wines are priced at under \$50. Overall, an unusually high number of sub-\$50 wines won awards (up 16 per cent on 2023), 76 per cent of varietal winning wines were under \$100, and we tripled our number of Special Value wines.





| Philip Rich

## From the experts

“The quality is really coming in at sub-\$50 wines, which shine alongside Australia’s icon wines. In my opinion, most of the best wines out there are between \$50 and \$90.”

*Jane Faulkner, Halliday Tasting Team*

“The best pinots from Victoria and Tasmania represent great value for money on a world scale, particularly as the price of red Burgundy continues to go through the roof. You’d be lucky to get a good Bourgogne Rouge for the price of Giant Steps’ Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir 2022 (\$90), this year’s Pinot Noir of the Year.”

*Philip Rich, Halliday Tasting Team*

2



# Amphorae, eggs and concrete tanks



## Trend Two

# Amphorae, eggs and concrete tanks

It's still early days, but the number of winemakers choosing concrete tanks, clay amphorae and/or ceramic eggs over oak vessels continues to grow. It's a trend partially driven by the financial and environmental cost of oak – concrete and clay are a larger one-off expense, but they will outlive barriques and puncheons by decades, and the trend towards lighter, more fruit-forward reds.







## Industry leaders

Peter Fraser at Yangarra, who made our 2024 Wine of the Year, is probably the best known and most successful adopter of ceramic eggs and terracotta for wine production. Byran Martin at Ravensworth champions large format maturation; his use of Italian amphorae, ceramic eggs and concrete vessels give his minimum-intervention wines superb texture. And Clay Pot Wines, a side label for Jo Marsh and her winemaker husband, Glenn James, is a particularly exciting player. Each wine is made in a single clay amphora.

## From the experts

“This year we saw fruit front and centre, with oak taking the backseat. I think both the cost of barrels coupled with the desire to craft wines that speak of quality fruit and terroir is driving this trend.”

*Shanteh Wale, Halliday Tasting Team*

“Large format vessels, including foudres and concrete tanks, are definitely on the up. It’s really cool, the way it does change the flavour profile of the wines.”

*Jane Faulkner, Halliday Tasting Team*



3



# Residual sugar in textural whites



## Trend Three

# Residual sugar in textural whites

The diversity of aromatic white styles in Australia continues to grow as wineries experiment with off-dry styles. Halliday editor in chief Campbell Mattinson says there were higher levels of residual sugar (RS) across the board this year, although this doesn't automatically equate to sweeter wines. In many cases, it's about adding texture and balance. You don't notice it's there, but you'd know if it wasn't. On the texture front, the Tasting Team also noted more extended skin contact, time on lees and seasoned oak use, particularly in riesling.



# Top-rated examples



## Vignerons Schmölder & Brown

2022 Obstgarten T Riesling,  
King Valley

Sherbety brisk throughout with real zing to the acidity, the palate showcases a dry, distinctly cool-climate riesling of class. Great focus and drive.

JP 6g/L RS, 11% alc.



## The Story Wines

2022 Whitlands Close Planted  
Riesling, King Valley

This is a gorgeous style of wine. It offers lemon, makrut lime and chalk notes with the most delicious burst of flavour-carrying acidity through the finish.

CM 7 g/L RS, 11.5% alc.



## Holm Oak

2022 Pinot Gris, Tasmania

This wine has been beautifully made, with the lightest of touches from Rebecca Duffy: 10% wild fermented in used oak and 10% in tank, with 3 months on lees. 7g/L acidity and 4g/L RS complete the deal.

JH 12.8% alc.



## Mac Forbes

RS15 Riesling 2022,  
Strathbogrie Ranges

Chalky textured, finely detailed and with balanced and perfectly integrated acidity, you'd struggle to guess that this has 15g/L of RS. A beautifully put-together wine.

PR 10.5% alc.



## From the experts

“The idea that RS is a faux pas or that a ‘sweet’ riesling is going to be cloying has really changed. I think consumers have not only accepted a sugar and acid balance, it is something they’re actively looking for.”

*Shanteh Wale, Halliday Tasting Team*

“For many of us who studied in the 1990s and ‘00s, I think our tertiary institutions did us a bit dirty on riesling. They taught us production methods that were quite limited, how it historically would have worked for the commercially successful, very dry SA examples, but I think the mindset has probably limited the style in Australia until the last five or 10 years.

Working harvest overseas have shown us just how versatile riesling is and how many choices you actually have: multiple picks, some skin contact, lees work (or not), oak or stainless, natural yeast or inoculated. Plus, we’re growing riesling in sites far better suited to retention of acidity (high-altitude mainland sites and in Tasmania) and this leads to a very different range of expression in the variety coming through in the wines, particularly with respect to supporting natural acidity, which makes residual sugar more of an option.”

*Tessa Brown, Schmölder & Brown*

4



# Variety of varieties



## Trend Four

# Variety of varieties

The rise and rise of alternative varieties – those ending in ‘o’, as Tasting Team member Dave Brookes says, shows no signs of slowing. This year, montepulciano knocked durif out of the top 10 most-reviewed red varieties for the 2024 Companion and Georgian grape saperavi made headway with 19 wines reviewed for 2024, nearly a 50 per cent increase on the 2023 Companion.



This ‘alt’ surge is partly environmental – these are hardy grapes native to warmer climates and therefore, growing conditions that aren’t as reliant on irrigation or susceptible to sun damage, and partly import related. It was only after exceptional nero d’Avola began arriving from Sicily, or algianico from Campagna, for example, that local producers started to wonder if they would grow well here (and they do).



## From the experts

“Australian winemakers are continuing to experiment with varieties that are suited to both their regions and climate change. The latest is nerello mascalese, native to Mount Etna in Sicily, for which Chalmers’ nursery already has a waiting list, to quote Kim Chalmers, ‘as long as your arm’.”

*Phillip Rich, Halliday Tasting Team*

“It’s not that warm-climate grapes are better than cool climate grapes – they’re not, they’re just better suited to their growing environment. And we need grapes that are better suited to warming climates because global warming is a reality.”

*Jane Faulkner, Halliday Tasting Team*

“Stanton & Killeen leadings the Portuguese movement with terrific arinto and alvarinho whites, in addition to red varieties previously blended away as fortified wines. The Terra Mãe red blend (tinta roriz – aka, tempranillo, tinta cão, tinta barroca and touriga nacional) is a very exciting, quality addition.”

*Jeni Port, Halliday Tasting Team*

| Jeni Port



5



# Nouveau-style reds



## Trend Five

# Nouveau-style reds

Tying in with the amphora/terracotta trend is a growing movement towards lighter, more ethereal styles of red wines, particularly from regions traditionally associated with high alcohol, high tannins and new oak. From the Barossa, we're seeing fewer full-bodied powerhouses and more light, airy 'nouveau' styles that can take a chill in the fridge. In Coonawarra for example, Winemaker of the Year Kate Goodman makes beautifully pitched red wines that balance freshness, substance and structure.



### One to Watch

Keep an eye on Tasmanian shiraz/syrah. It's decidedly cool-climate, but plenty of sunshine hours make for a mid-alcohol syrah with spice, aromatics and white pepper notes. Producers such as Domaine Simha, Quiet Mutiny and Mewstone lead the charge.

# Top-Rated Examples



## Alkina Wine Estate

Polygon No. 3 Grenache 2019,  
Barossa Valley

Whole bunches (70%) aged for six months in a 10-year-old puncheon. I've been blown away by the grenache from Alkina – we're edging towards the Australian version of Rayas here. Airy, detailed and ethereal with clarity of both aromatics and fruit.

DB 13.5% alc.



## MMAD Vineyard

Blewitt Springs Shiraz 2021,  
McLaren Vale

Deep but bright colour announces a wine of tremendous presence, the whole-bunch component (15–20%), 15 days on skins, 33% in concrete vessels, the balance in stainless steel and used oak. A magical combination of techniques to produce blackberry, licorice and dark chocolate flavours, the tannins so fine they are almost silky.

JH 13.5% alc.



## Penley Estate

Project E Cabernet Sauvignon 2021,  
Coonawarra

A strict wine with noteworthy length and no shortage, despite its slender feel, of fruit power. It makes you re-evaluate the ways and wonders of wine. Plum and blackcurrant flavours merge with dried herbs, resin, root vegetables and hay. Tannin is fine grained, stringy, and assertive at once. Everything lingers.

CM 14% alc.



## Entropy Wines

Warragul Vineyard Syrah 2022,  
Gippsland

A spicy, peppery and lively wine, nothing stemmy or bitter. Dark fruit, kirsch and earthy with tar and licorice plus supple, plump, squishy tannins. No new oak influencing the outcome, just beautiful fruit and a savoury perspective.

JF 13.5%



## From the experts

“Lots of Australian wines in the past have been pretty percussive with a ‘no wood, no good’ mantra and the ethos that concentration and palate heft was the be all and end all. Less so these days... winemakers are seeking a little more grace, a little less winemaking artifact and a truer reflection of site and growing season. Consumer tastes are changing towards the lighter end of the spectrum, too.”

*Dave Brookes, Halliday Tasting Team*

“In an everyday drinking culture, a glass of wine with an abv of 15% often means only one glass. I think consumers are looking for something that makes them feel energetic rather than lethargic. Long gone are boozy long lunches and unproductive afternoons at work. We want to work smarter and create balance within our lives.”

*Shanteh Wale, Halliday Tasting Team.*

6



# Cans, pouches and casks



## Trend Six

# Cans, pouches and casks

While almost all of the wines sent to Halliday Wine Companion for review are in glass bottles (many of them far heavier than they need to be), we've watched with interest the burgeoning range of non-traditional packaging options on the market. The best put sustainability first without sacrificing quality. Hey Tomorrow, for example, sources from producers such as Syrahmi and Koerner for its recyclable 2L bag-in-box range. Shiraz Republic, Riot Wines and Fourth Wave champion wine in a can. Best for everyday drinking, they're convenient, recyclable and lightweight. Another nod to Penley Estate here, too, for releasing wine in lightweight glass and 2L casks.





## From the experts

“Wine in all formats, consumers are embracing it all. This is a 100 per cent sustainability/mindfulness-related choice, in my opinion. People want to drink better, with quality over quantity, and make decisions that will be lasting for our planet.”

*Shanteh Wale, Halliday Tasting Team*

“One of the more interesting releases I came across this year was Mac Forbes’ By Any Other, a new sustainability-focused project that Mac has been working on with friends from around the globe. Aimed at reducing waste and emissions (for that reason, only sold on the east coast of Australia), the first release of the By Any Other X01 Rosé 2022, Strathbogie Ranges, was packaged in both a lightweight bottle and 2L cask.”

*Philip Rich, Halliday Tasting Team*



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