



98

2019 RUNRIG

RATING: 98

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz, Viognier

The... how to describe this... it's like a kaleidoscopic vortex of midnight flavor (dark, dense, brooding and spicy), swirling tannins and endlessly plush length. The Viognier in this 2019 RunRig has been absorbed somehow, compressed by the warm, low-yielding vintage that birthed it. It has been pushed down into the reaches of the Shiraz, which is a very good thing, as its propensity for slinky-like bounce and spiral needs some limiting. This is insanely complex yet also balanced. Charry oak frames the wines from all sides, but like the gravity pull on the earth from the sun, the oak is drawn inexorably inward. Pretty impressive, but this wine always is. A beast unto itself, wines like this have few peers.



97+

2019 DESCENDANT

RATING: 97+

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz Viognier

2019 followed the warm (but excellent) 2018 in the Barossa, and was marred by low yields and very concentrated fruit. 2020 was another step further down that low-yielding, dry track, completing a trio of concentrated, brooding vintages that are, as the years go by, harder and harder to get hold of. So, the 2019 Descendant includes Viognier skins in the ferment, usually around 2%, and the fruit is sourced from vines planted from cuttings from the RunRig Vineyard. A baby Runrig, if you will. So, this is silky, slippery, tannic and intense, with layers of vibrant raspberry, jasmine tea, red licorice, jelly snakes and deli meat. As usual for the Torbreck reds, the texture of the wine is velvety, plush, intense and enveloping. This ages very well, we know it does, but if you must drink it early, decant it!

2017 THE LAIRD

RATING: 97+

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

I poured the 2017 The Laird, set it aside and got about doing other jobs for 45 minutes or so, to give it some room to breathe. And it does breathe. It has its own pulse and beat and life, and it flexes and moves in the mouth. This is incredibly enveloping, with aromas reminiscent of campfire coals, charred eucalyptus, lamb fat, roasted beetroot, black tea and a prowling sort of countenance. In the mouth, the wine is bonded and cohesive and seamless, there are no gaps between anything, no space between fruit, oak and tannin; it all comes as one. While this is a singular wine, it is so big and concentrated that it needs no accompaniment other than some fresh air and a good mate. It's denser than osmium and is impenetrable at this stage. complete, harmonious whole.

97+



96



2019 THE FACTOR

RATING: 96

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

This is quintessential Barossa. The red dirt in the ground rises up in the glass and transports me right back there: middle summer, hot, spicy air blowing across the tops of old vines. It's evocative. This 2019 The Factor is Port-y, concentrated and savory as all hell, with charred barrels, lamb fat, black pepper, salted licorice, pomegranate molasses and aniseed. This is about as big as I can cope with and still enjoy it; it takes density and intensity to a whole new level—no surprise for the vintage, the region and the producer. A perfect storm of thunderous strength. Like staring into the abyss... a little bit scary, but transfixing nonetheless.

2020 THE GASK

RATING: 95

FROM: Eden Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

The 2020 The Gask is dense and muscular, with a wall of fruit that rises up in the mouth. It's inky and concentrated, with mulberries, blueberry compote, salted licorice, blood plums and layers of earth, black tea and silty tannins. There's a blackcurrant pastille elegance here that tells us it's Eden down to its blood and bone. Speaking of . . . there's a marrow/charred lamb fat character that edges the fruit. It only serves to make it all the more delicious.



2019 LES AMIS

RATING: 95

FROM: Barossa Valley, Eden Valley
South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache

Wow. This 2019 Les Amis Grenache is a totally different beast to the other Torbreck Grenaches. This is savory and resinous—the maturation in barriques (40% new), as opposed to older foudres in the Harris and Hillside Grenache, shows in the toasty, chappy oak character that entwines the finish. There are notes of mustard seed, licorice root, alizé (the raspberry, ginger root and black cherry components anyway), hung deli meat, cigar box and tobacco leaf, too. This eschews its lighter Grenache characters and instead presents a gnarly, muscular and complex—brooding and moody, too—wine of weight, depth and circumstance.

2019 HILLSIDE VINEYARD GRENACHE

RATING: 94

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache

The fruit for the 2019 Hillside Vineyard Grenache was handpicked from vines planted in 1949, destemmed and fermented in open stainless steel fermenters. It matured in large format (2,400-liter) French foudre for 18 months. This is a good example of a ripe style of Grenache done well. It has muscle and gnarly tannins, but the fruit that wraps around this scaffold is cushioned, plump and even a little bit savory, too. It has notes of salted redcurrants, raspberry coulis, mulberry, beetroot, plum skin and licorice. A big one. And a good one.

95



95

2020 THE STRUIE

RATING: 95

FROM: Barossa, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

If ever there was a high-octane vintage in the Barossa, it would be 2020. Warm and the second in a row of drought conditions, yields were down as much as 70% in some areas. So, to look at this inky black 2020 The Struie in the glass, the year that birthed it makes sense. As ever, a blend of Barossa and Eden, with cigar box, tobacco leaf, blackberries, mulberries, salted licorice and more density of tannin than you can poke a stick at. In the mouth, the texture is velvety and plush; however, the tannins need air to help them release the fruit as we know they will. Decant it or risk missing the best this has to offer. I would say this also: this kind of wine is what made Barossa (and by extension, Australia) famous, and the modern iteration of it here shows the big, muscly style is still valid and exciting, especially when executed with this kind of nuance and detail. Really impressive.

2019 THE PICT

RATING: 94

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Mataro

I do love varietal Mataro. Earthy, tannic, muscular, a touch rustic, always plush, and there's something really mouthfilling and satisfying about it. Like a stew in winter. Here, the 2019 The Pict Mataro is so big—bigger than the 2018 that preceded it—and layered with brooding dark fruit, resinous spice and toasty, chappy oak. The finish pushes a plume of heat and warmth into the throat, the alcohol revealing the warm season that birthed it. This remains the benchmark Barossa Mataro in my opinion; perhaps it was my early dealings with it, or the pleasure I found in the early 2000s museum re-releases. Either way, this is what Mataro will do under the heat of the Barossa sun.



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93



93



92+

2020 THE STEADING BLANC

RATING: 92+

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Roussanne Marsanne Viognier

My god. Stylistically, there is a chasm between the reds and whites at Torbreck. The 2021 The Steading Blanc is pristine (the reds are also pristine; however, the abundant tannin and concentrated fruit require different descriptors), with moderate alcohol and bright acidity laced throughout. Salted pineapple lumps, honeydew melon, white flowers, summer apricot and green apples define the fruit in the mouth, while the wine is shaped by fine but firm phenolics through the finish. This is not hedonistic but textbook. Lovely.

2020 THE STEADING

RATING: 93

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache, Shiraz, Mataro

The Steading is a mainstay in the Australian market—it has been loved for years for its consistency and reliability, and the 2020 The Steading here today shows us exactly what we want. This is ripe and full-bodied (15% alcohol), however as is usual for Torbreck, the wine is executed in a sophisticated and seamless manner. There are notes of campfire, singed eucalyptus, salted mulberry, blueberry compote, black cat licorice, pink peppercorns and dark cocoa. All kinds of good.

2021 WOODCUTTER'S SHIRAZ

RATING: 91

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz

Ever the reliable wine in the Torbreck lineup (challenged only by the beauty of the Steading, but nevertheless), the Woodcutters has tightened up over time. My first introduction to it almost 10 years ago recalls a plush, full-bodied wine that delivered all the Barossa feels and flavors that one could possibly hope for. These days, and today specifically, the 2021 Woodcutter's Shiraz is tight and tense, with black brooding fruit set to a rigging of firm, savory tannins. The oak is subliminal in this wine, leaving only the tannins to shape the fruit. Really handled well. Impressive.

2021 HILLSIDE VINEYARD SHIRAZ ROUSSANNE

RATING: 93

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Shiraz, Roussanne

This is interesting—the Roussanne acts somewhat as Viognier does in the blend—it lifts the florals out of the glass and impacts the texture in the mouth. However, where it differs is the impact on the tannins. The Roussanne seems to open up the tannins and loosen the knit, while Viognier can amplify but slick the tannins, tightening everything up, contributing to that visceral feels that they can have. This 2021 Hillside Vineyard Shiraz Roussanne has an abundance of red berries, pineapple, apricot kernel, raspberries and licorice, all framed by subtle oak. Really smart!

2020 HARRIS GRENACHE

RATING: 90

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache

The 2020 Harris Grenache is matured for 18 months in French oak foudres (2,400-liter). The 2020 vintage was the second in a row of drought conditions (off the back of the ripe 2018), and the concentration of sunshine shows in this wine. This is burly and ripe, with layers of licorice, deli meat, mulberry and blood plum. It is made with class and distinct style, as we expect from Torbreck, but a big wine nonetheless.

2020 THE KYLOE

RATING: 92

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Mataro

The Kyloe is the little sibling to the Pict—the big, earthy, muscular Mataro in the Torbreck lineup. I remember when it was first released, I chuckled, how could it be a patch on the Pict (which I loved)? Well, I'll tell you. This 2020 The Kyloe is the (marginally) lighter, brighter, softer iteration of the big Pict, and it throws a spool of earthy mulberries, chewing tobacco, plum skin and arnica... all of it cushioned by a padded cell of tannin. Really great, and if you wanted a hint of what you might be able to expect from the Pict, this is where you would start.

2021 CUVÉE JUVENILES

RATING: 90

FROM: Barossa Valley, South Australia

VARIETY: Grenache Mourvèdre Shiraz

A blend of Grenache, Mataro, Carignan, Counoise and Shiraz, the 2021 Cuvee Juveniles is unbaked, crunchy, juicy and of a light frame—it doesn't have any gravitas or floor, but the fruit that floats above it is buoyant and lively. This would be gorgeous by the glass in a bar in Paris... I do miss the original blue and red label. (It's been 10 years, Erin...)



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