

WORDS WINE EDITOR DAVID SLY

The isle of wine

The wines of Kangaroo Island have taken giant strides forward. Ambitious plantings in the 1990s have reached full maturity and winemakers are working with the restraint that this cool, windswept region demands. Rather than mimic other districts, KI wineries recognise their land is distinct and unique, and have crafted superb quality wines across many grape styles – from supple cabernet to sauvignon blanc, and lots more in between.

Bay of Shoals 2009 Riesling

From the time John Willoughby planted vines at his Bay of Shoals property near Kingscote in 1993 his fruit has attracted the interest of winemakers – initially produced by the Schrapels of Bethany Winery in the Barossa. However, since John built his own winery in 2007, in-house winemaking has seen the Bay of Shoals range expand to include sparkling wines, fortifieds, moscato and rosé. The jewel in the crown is his riesling, which shows a crisp austerity akin to notable cool climate wines. It carries delicate citrus aromas and floral notes, followed by soft citrus flavours and a touch of flinty minerality, with its crisp natural acid balanced by a touch of residual sweetness. **Screw cap. \$18.** www.bayofshoalswines.com.au



Cape D'Estaing 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon

Eight friends came together in 1993 to plant a remote vineyard in the north pastoral area of Kangaroo Island, and have diligently persevered with netting vines to protect ripening fruit from hungry birds, possums, kangaroos and wallabies. Why continue such toil? Because the resulting small berries produce magnificent flavour, and while the harsh environment means a vintage isn't released every year, the quality in good years more than compensates. This wine won the 2009 George Mackey Memorial Trophy (from the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation for best exported wine) and shows strongly why cabernet fans should regard Kangaroo Island with respect. The wine's deep colour accurately reflects its intensity, with leafy cabernet aromas and rich, savoury flavour amplified by toasty French oak and ripe tannins. Already proud and handsome after six years, it will cellar beautifully over the next decade. **Cork. \$20.** www.capedestaingwines.com.au



The Islander Estate, by Jacques Lurton Majestic Plough 2006 Malbec

Famed Bordeaux winemaker Jacques Lurton saw great vinous potential in Kangaroo Island when he visited on his honeymoon in 1997, and three years later decided to plant a diverse 11-hectare vineyard and ship equipment from France for a modern 70-tonne winery. Now, The Islander Estate shows off the island's potential for excellence in unexpected places, such as this big, rugged malbec that reminds of Clare's best old-vine fruit. Big and meaty in texture, it has spicy dark plum and mulberry flavours – and very bold tannins, even though the winery has patiently waited four years before release. While it's balanced in a brawny fashion, it wants to be served in the company of big, meaty dishes. Osso bucco or beef casserole would be perfect. **Screw cap. \$37.** www.iev.com.au



Rookery Wines 2010 Chardonnay

Gael and Garry Lovering have planted more than eight hectares of vines and are chasing quality with their strong cabernet and shiraz grapes, though there are many more surprises among their very diverse 16-wine portfolio, including this chardonnay. This unwooded style shows off the fruit to great effect, with mild notes of fresh rockmelon, nectarine and citrus in a harmonious palate that has great length (thanks to a long, slow ripening period through the 2010 vintage), and prevalent citric acid to keep it tasting bright and fresh. It sits comfortably within the league of smart modern Australian chardonnay, with crispness and freshness being the key to its appeal. **Screw cap. \$19.50.** www.rookerywines.com.au



Sunset Winery 2008 Sparkling Shiraz

Winery owner Colin Hopkins makes this sweeter, lighter style of sparkling shiraz to appease the tourists who venture into the cellar door, perched on a rise facing the water outside Penneshaw. His shiraz fruit, sourced from rich red soils on the Dudley Peninsula, boasts bright cherry and plum flavours and savoury tannins that draw out spicy notes in the palate. This is kept in balance by the addition of a sweet liqueur dosage, making these pleasant bubbles very sociable – avoiding the massive density of much sparkling shiraz without sacrificing rich flavour, and kept in check at a sensible 13.8 per cent alcohol. **Cork under cage. \$18.** www.sunset-wines.com.au



Two Wheeler Creek 2009 Sauvignon Blanc

In the centre of the island, in addition to his marron farm and bush tucker enterprises, John Melbourne grows grapes that get plenty of sun but also strong, cool winds that rip across the flat farmland and keep the ripening grapes in balance. Planted in 2003, these vines produce a peachy but lean and austere style of sauvignon blanc. It isn't trying to copy the signature styles of grassy, tropical Marlborough or herbaceous Adelaide Hills; this is more slender, with hints of green beans and a light body that finishes crisp and clean. Because it never tries to be too overt, its mild tropical accents and dry grassy tinges are held in check, and while the label suggests drinking it in its youth, a touch of age does it no harm. **Screw cap. \$19.50.** www.andermel.com.au

