

91



96



Signature drops

Shiraz and cabernet have proved to be superior blending partners for Yalumba

"Shiraz - or syrah as the French used to call it before deciding, for once, to fall into line with Australia - has always been something of a magic elixir. Whenever the Bordeaux First Growths or the Burgundy Grand Crus endured a year that left them pale and sickly, barrels of muscular Rhône red would be quietly shipped in during the night to restore good health. There was even a time when red Hermitage - typically 100% shiraz - was the most expensive wine in France.

This sure-footed ability to mix has always seen shiraz enjoy a full dance card up and down the Rhône Valley. Yet it was those illicit liaisons with cabernet in the back streets of Bordeaux (forbidden by France's strict appellation contrôlée laws) that carried most significance for Australia's winemakers. Cabernet sauvignon is naturally tannic, which gives it great structure and ability to age, yet in a leaner year can see the fruit drop out in mid-palate. However, the richness of shiraz prevents any "Lifesaver effect", and its fleshiness and ability to develop complexity with age provide a natural complement to cabernet sauvignon.

In Australia, its abundance ensured shiraz was a natural blending partner for cabernet - and winemakers liked the results. Even Grange typically has about 10% of cabernet blended in, while stablemate Penfolds Bin 389 is perhaps the country's best-known example of the blend.

No company is making finer cabernet shiraz blends than Yalumba, however. The 2000 Yalumba The Signature (rated 91) achieves remarkable balance from what was a challenging vintage in Eden Valley. A powerful nose of plum and red berries leads to a very focused, well-structured palate and a long finish.

For a special occasion, consider the 1998 Yalumba The Reserve (rated 96), a 70-30 cabernet shiraz blend from an outstanding Barossa vintage. A dense nose of briar and dark chocolate ushers in a rich yet extremely well-delineated palate and a very long, profound finish. It will last 20-plus years; no wonder they only make it in outstanding vintages."

Colin Climo, *The Bulletin* (AUS), 27 July, 2004