



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

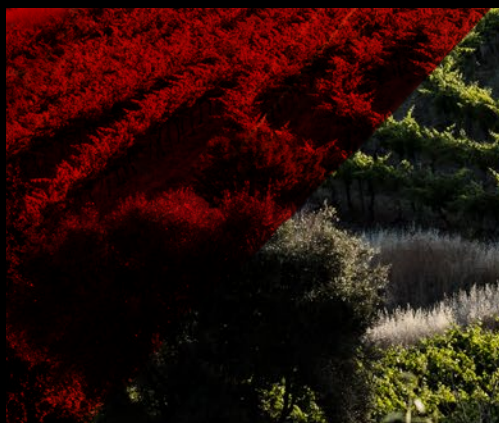
MCLAREN VALE WINE

**AUSTRALIAN WINE
MADE OUR WAY**

Learn all about this world-famous wine region, including its history, viticulture and winemaking trends, plus notable varieties and flavour profiles.



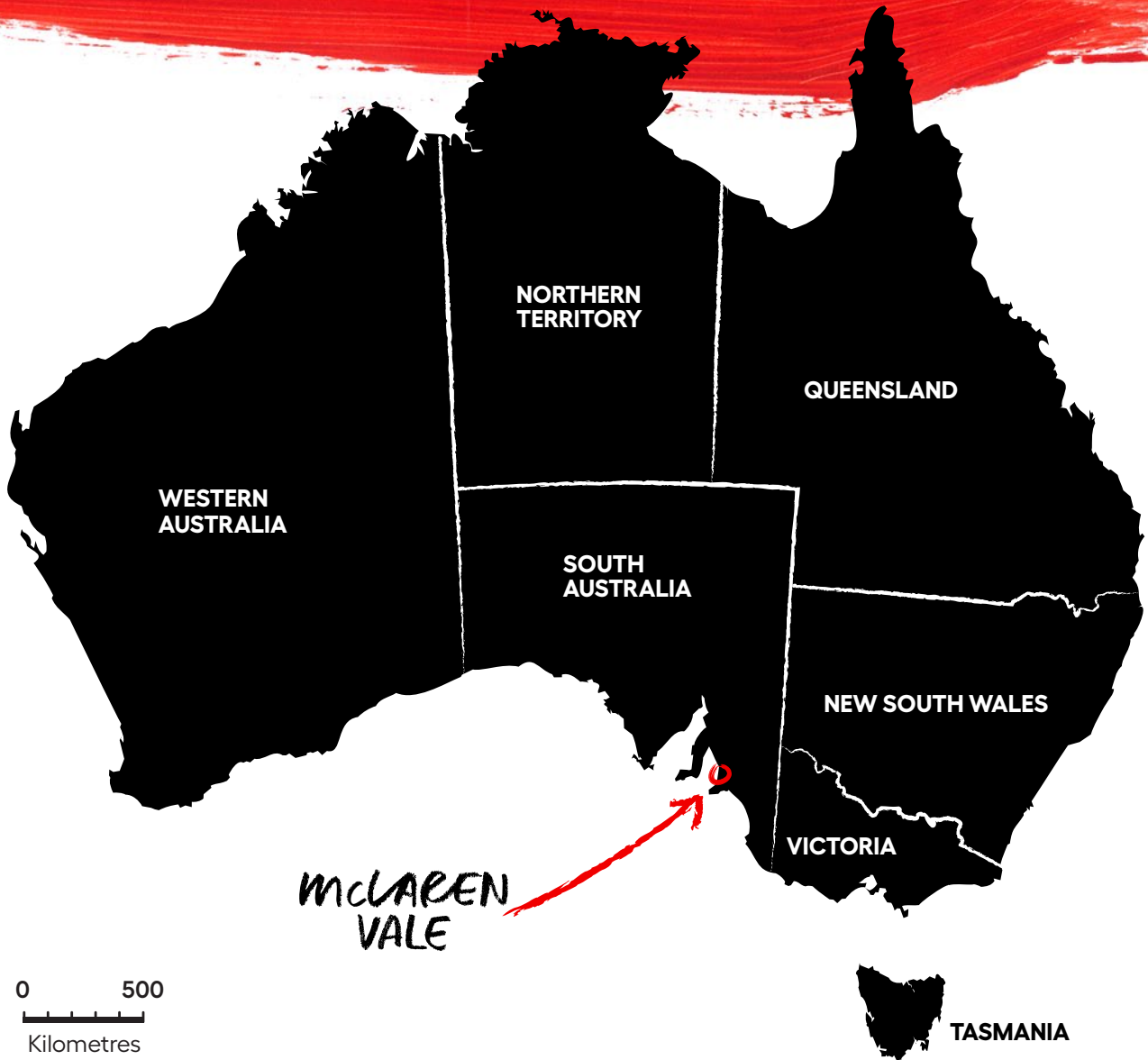
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- The history of McLaren Vale
- Climate and soil
- Viticulture
- Winemaking
- Notable varieties
- Characteristics and flavour profiles



A U S T R A L I A





McLaren Vale is one of the oldest and most historically significant wine regions in Australia. It's also one of the most innovative and exciting.

- Diversity
- Innovation
- Sustainability
- Natural beauty

McLAREN VALE:

AN ANCIENT REGION WITH A PROGRESSIVE OUTLOOK



McLAREN VALE: AN ANCIENT REGION WITH A PROGRESSIVE OUTLOOK

The birthplace of wine in South Australia, McLaren Vale lies just south of the capital city of Adelaide and offers a variety of soils that bask in a Mediterranean climate.

Layered over this history is a commitment to innovation and change. The McLaren Vale wine community is known for being one of the most progressive and environmentally sustainable in the country, producing quality, contemporary styles crafted out of traditional and emerging grape varieties.

- **Diversity:** For decades McLaren Vale has been lauded for its ability to produce brilliance from an array of noble varieties – from restrained yet generous Cabernet Sauvignon and rich and refined Shiraz, to an exciting range of emerging varieties like Fiano and Tempranillo. Its current star performer, however, is Grenache.

- **Innovation:** The region boasts many creative, boutique wineries that are willing to push the boundaries and experiment in continual pursuit of perfection.
- **Sustainability:** McLaren Vale is also one of the more environmentally conscious regions in Australia, with a number of producers farming organically and biodynamically or employing sustainable farming methods.
- **Natural beauty:** McLaren Vale is an incredibly picturesque region, nestled between the Mount Lofty Ranges and the white, sandy beaches of Gulf St Vincent. It offers exceptional wines and regional produce all set among rolling hills, vineyard vistas, charming villages and a rugged coastline.

THE HISTORY OF McLAREN VALE

EARLY 1840s

John Reynell establishes South Australia's first commercial vineyard.



1838

McLaren Vale is founded, two years after the state of South Australia is established.

1850s

The now-legendary winemaker Thomas Hardy establishes his own property and delivers the largest bulk wine export to England.

MID-1920s – LATE 1960s

Production is focused on fortified wine and business booms. Immigrants from post-war Italy bring fresh vitality and add to the region's reputation as a centre of gastronomy.

2010s

Legislation passed to protect the character of McLaren Vale from urban sprawl.



1970s & 1980s

McLaren Vale's table wines take their place on the world stage. The number of wineries grows along with the region's reputation for fine wine.

1999

Australia's first reclaimed water network is built in McLaren Vale.

TODAY

With so much to offer winemakers, and a propensity for experimentation, McLaren Vale is increasingly known as one of Australia's most exciting wine regions.

THE HISTORY OF McLAREN VALE: 180 YEARS OF WINE EXCELLENCE

In the beginning

McLaren Vale's heritage spans thousands of years of traditional ownership by the Indigenous Kurna people. More recently, it has been shaped by European colonisation.

1838

The region came into being two years after the state of South Australia was established. It takes its name from either – depending on who you believe – John McLaren or David McLaren (not related) of the South Australia Company, which was founded to build a new Australian colony.

As with so much of Australian wine history, the region's founders were recent immigrants: two English farmers from Devon, William Colton and Charles Thomas Hewett. Drawn to the area by its fertile soils and fresh water, the two men established adjoining farms – then for cereals and cattle – that would become the Oxenberry Farm, which today produces award-winning wines.

Early 1840s

Another young Devon farmer, John Reynell, established South Australia's first commercial vineyard. While records differ, it's believed he planted vines as early as 1838 or 1839 with the first vintage occurring in the early 1840s.

1850s

Reynell was joined in this endeavour in 1850 by a young man whose name has become legendary in Australian wine circles, Thomas Hardy. Hardy learnt a huge amount from his time working for Reynell, and used this knowledge when establishing his own property, Bankside, in 1853. Shiraz and Grenache produced around 600 litres of wine in 1857, which was exported to England accompanied by Hardy. At the time, it was the largest bulk-wine export to England, and its successful sale inspired Hardy to plant more vines, the humble beginnings of one of the world's great wine names.

Like any emerging region, McLaren Vale had to produce what the market wanted, so most of the early production was given over to copies of European classics.

Mid-1920s to late 1960s

By the turn of the century, in keeping with the Victorian age's yearning for all things sweet, production turned to fortified wine. Business boomed and with money in the bank some wineries began investing in bottling lines.

This marked a quality watershed for McLaren Vale, coinciding with newly arrived immigrants, this time from post-war Italy. With them came olives and a food culture that has added so much to the region's reputation as a centre of gastronomy. These have subsequently become woven into the fabric of the area and are now adding fresh vitality into this classic region.

1970s and 1980s

Along with so many other Australian regions, it was the 1970s and '80s that saw McLaren Vale's wines hit the world stage. On the back of traditional classics such as Shiraz, Cabernet and Grenache, the region saw the number of wineries rise and its reputation for fine wine start to take root.

1999

McLaren Vale built the first and largest reclaimed-water network in Australia, allowing irrigation to come from sustainable resources other than river water.

*See Advanced Notes

2010s

Legislation to protect McLaren Vale from urban sprawl – a risk given its close proximity to Adelaide – was passed by the South Australian Parliament in 2012, and came into force in January 2013.

Today

While McLaren Vale accounts for only a small percentage of Australia's total wine production and exports, it is known domestically – and increasingly overseas – as one of the country's most exciting wine regions. McLaren Vale continues to draw forward-thinking winemakers committed to producing creative wines that are an authentic expression of the region.

ANCIENT LANDS

AND DIVERSE SOILS

- Just 40km south of Adelaide
- One of the most ancient and geologically diverse regions in the world
- 19 distinct areas based on climate and geology



ANCIENT LANDS AND DIVERSE SOILS

Located on the Fleurieu Peninsula, 40 kilometres south of the state capital of Adelaide, McLaren Vale lies between two fault lines in rocks older than 500 million years and has 19 distinct areas.



DID YOU KNOW

The McLaren Vale Geographical Indication (GI) declaration was officially recognised in 1997. The GI covers an area from Hallett Cove to Clarendon and then roughly south-west along the Willunga foothills, meeting at the coastline of Sellicks Beach.



DID YOU KNOW

McLaren Vale is a foodie hotspot, with an abundance of good restaurants and locally grown produce. It's known for its premium olive oil and related products, thanks to the Mediterranean climate and Italian immigrants who arrived in the 1950s and '60s. Some wineries grow olives and produce oil as a side business.

CLIMATE



MEDITERRANEAN

WITH A RANGE OF MESOCLIMATES AND MICROCLIMATES

ALTITUDE

McLAREN VALE

10–350M (33–1148FT)



MEDIUM

500–749M
1640–2459FT

LOW

0–499M
0–1639FT

VERY HIGH

>1000M
>3280FT

HIGH

750–999M
2460–3279FT

McLAREN VALE

Climate

McLaren Vale has a Mediterranean climate, characterised by warm summers, mild winters, winter-dominated rainfall, low relative humidity and relatively high evaporation.

However, the proximity of Mount Lofty and Gulf St Vincent play an important role in moderating the climate and are largely responsible for many meso- and micro-climatic differences. Local winds blow down from both the slopes and in from the Gulf to cool and dry the vines. This climatic variation throughout the region means there are small parcels of land each making distinct wines.

Latitude

– 35° 19'S

Mean January temperature (MJT)

– 21.3°C

MJT refers to the mean temperature of the warmest month.

Growing season rainfall (GSR)

– 226mm (8.9in)

Calculated from October to April in Australia, GSR is a good indication of how much water is available to the vine.

Please check the Wine Australia website for up-to-date information. Altitude refers to the highest and lowest vineyard in the GI region, not necessarily the highest or lowest point within the region and is calculated using the National Vineyard Scan and state contour datasets. Latitude is taken at the central point of the GI region. Meteorological data is taken from the national climate data bank of the Bureau of Meteorology: the Australian Data Archive for Meteorology (ADAM). Climate indices have been calculated across the whole GI region by the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystem CRC as part of a research project co-funded by Wine Australia. Growing season rainfall (GSR) and mean January temperature (MJT) based on 1991–2017 averages from the Bureau of Meteorology (2018). GSR is calculated from October to April.



SOIL



McLaren Vale has over 40 unique geologies that vary in age from 15,000 years to more than 550 million years. Its wide variety of soil types reflect its varied terrain:

- Red-brown sandy loams
- Grey-brown loamy sands
- Distinctly sandy soils
- Patches of red or black friable loams
- Yellow clay subsoils interspersed with lime

SOIL

McLaren Vale is one of the most geologically diverse regions in the world, with its wide variety of soil types reflecting its varied terrain.

The one thing these soils have in common is that they are fairly free draining, which makes them perfectly suited to the production of top-quality grapes. While the direct impact on wine of the region's varied soils is still being explored, together with climate, old vines and innovative winemaking, they lay the foundations for outstanding viticulture.



THE REGION'S BIG THREE

Shiraz
Cabernet Sauvignon
Grenache

VITICULTURE:

GRAPE GROWING IN MCLAREN VALE



VITICULTURE: GRAPE GROWING IN MCLAREN VALE

McLaren Vale has a proud history of viticulture and today has over 7,300 hectares of land under vine. Around 90% of grapes grown here are red varieties, with a focus on Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache.

However, all manner of vines thrive in the region's soils, and experimentation with different varieties is a major focus. Vines suited to a Mediterranean climate – such as Barbera, Fiano, Sangiovese, Zinfandel and Vermentino – flourish on many sites.

Many of McLaren Vale's wineries employ innovative viticulture practices, and it is this contemporary approach combined with many old vines – and the careful viticulture practices required to manage them – that helps to define the region.

McLAREN VALE TOP 5 VARIETIES



SHIRAZ

58%



CABERNET
SAUVIGNON

19%



GRENACHE

5%



CHARDONNAY

5%



MERLOT

3%

Source: Wine Australia National Vintage Survey. Variety share based on average tonnage from 2015–2019.



PROUD HISTORY

AND PROGRESSIVE THINKING

- Mediterranean varieties
- Many old vines
- Innovative viticulture practices
- Phylloxera-free
- Commitment to experimentation



Phylloxera

Phylloxera is a small aphid-like insect that feeds on grapevine roots and can devastate whole vineyards. Unlike many international wine regions, McLaren Vale – along with South Australia’s other wine regions – avoids phylloxera thanks to strict quarantine regulations.

HARVEST

Harvest starts in February for varieties like Chardonnay and ends in April, in line with harvest times in most Australian wine regions.

The warm Mediterranean climate reliably ripens all varieties in almost all areas of the region. Generally, grapes grown in the southernmost point of the region ripen first, with harvest dates occurring later as you travel north-east. The two main climatic factors that can impact harvest in McLaren Vale are rainfall and heat.



SUSTAINABILITY

- One of Australia's 'greenest' wine regions
- Organic products and biodynamic practices
- Minimal chemical intervention
- Climate-appropriate varieties
- World-leading water management

DID YOU KNOW?

McLaren Vale has the highest number of certified organic and biodynamic vineyards in Australia, and one of the lowest usage rates of sprays and agro-chemicals.

SUSTAINABILITY

McLaren Vale is known for being one of the 'greenest' wine regions, with many growers using eco-friendly, organic products and biodynamic practices. Minimal chemical pest and disease management is increasing, and the region's water-management strategies are world-leading.

McLaren Vale's varietal diversity also reflects its focus on sustainability. Some grapegrowers take an adaptable approach, adjusting what they plant according to environmental factors such as climate change and the specific requirements of McLaren Vale's climate.



ADVANCED NOTES

WORLD-LEADING WATER MANAGEMENT

When it comes to water conservation and re-use, McLaren Vale is ahead of the curve.

- In 1991, McLaren Vale was the first region in Australia to declare and manage its underground water resource so that it is self-replenishing.
- McLaren Vale built the first and largest reclaimed-water network in Australia in 1999, including a percentage of recycled “grey water” from Adelaide. All of the region’s irrigation now comes from a sustainable resource, other than river water.
- Some grapegrowers use cutting-edge moisture-monitoring technology to make informed irrigation-management decisions.

Since summer rainfall is low, supplementary irrigation is considered essential for many vineyards, and today there are two main sources of water in McLaren Vale important to irrigated grape production:

- Groundwater aquifers, where water is collected and stored from natural run-off. Aquifer levels are carefully monitored to ensure they don’t get too low. This helps mitigate salinity issues.
- Treated reclaimed water that is piped into the region from nearby water-treatment plants.

Sprinkler and flood irrigation hasn’t been used in McLaren Vale for decades. The use of recycled water takes significant pressure off the natural groundwater and is vital to the sustainability of the region’s natural water resources.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

A LOCAL PROGRAM IMPROVES SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS AUSTRALIA

In 2009, McLaren Vale Grape Wine & Tourism Association launched the Sustainable Winegrowing Australia (SWA) program (initially called Generational Farming). This online program assesses the environmental, economic and social sustainability of vineyards and drives continuous improvement of growers and the region overall.

Growers are assessed in seven areas:

- Soil health, nutrition and fertiliser management.
- Pest and disease management.
- Biodiversity management.
- Water management.
- Waste management.
- Social relations (workers, community and wineries).
- Economic sustainability.

The program accounts for more than 40% of McLaren Vale’s total vineyard area and more than 65% of the annual crush. SWA has proven very successful and is now open to growers nationally, helping to drive more sustainable practices across Australia’s wine community.

WINEMAKING IN MCLAREN VALE



- Collaboration
- Experimentation
- Adaptability

KEY TRENDS

- Minimal intervention
- Reviving ancient techniques
- Showcasing varietal characters and influences of terroir
- Picking grapes earlier and using less new oak to produce fresher, lighter wines

WINEMAKING IN MCLAREN VALE

McLaren Vale is home to more than 110 wineries, many of which are known for their innovative winemaking techniques. The three key factors that define the region's approach to winemaking are collaboration, experimentation and adaptability.

Collaboration

Names that built the region's reputation, such as Hardys, d'Arenberg, Chapel Hill and Wirra Wirra, have been joined in more recent times by winemakers challenging the status quo. From the outside it would be easy to see tension between the old and the new, the classic and the innovative. But McLaren Vale has risen above this and is a tight-knit, collaborative community of winemakers sharing knowledge and collectively lifting the region's capabilities – and its wines, as a result.

Experimentation

Innovation and experimentation have long been at the heart of the region, and

it's a philosophy that has led to many successes. New winemaking techniques are frequently introduced while ancient ones, such as amphora fermentation, are revived. Many winemakers are exploring minimal-intervention approaches and other practices that allow wines to express McLaren Vale's distinctive terroir.

Adaptability

An agile approach allows the region's vintners to adjust their wines as consumer tastes change. As a warm-climate region, McLaren Vale inherently produces wines of ample concentration and flavour. In recent years, however, the focus has shifted from big, powerful styles to showcasing varietal characters and influences of terroir.

As a result, current winemaking practices tend towards greater restraint. Winemakers are generally picking grapes earlier and using less new oak to produce fresher, lighter wines that have traditionally only come from cooler climates.



ADVANCED NOTES

AMPHORA FERMENTATION

An ancient method of making and storing wine – practised by winemakers millennia ago – amphora is gaining popularity as a unique fermentation method. Made of clay and coming in a range of sizes, the ‘amphora’ earthenware pots are used for fermentation and ageing purposes, for both red and white wines. Interestingly, there is no set rule around their storage, with some winemakers burying – or half-burying – the pots, while others leave them unburied.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

GROWING GRAPES FOR AUSTRALIA’S MOST FAMOUS WINE

For an Australian grapegrower, farming the grapes used to make Penfolds Grange – arguably Australia’s most famous wine – is one of the highest honours. Some growers will cherish making the grade and having their Shiraz grapes included in the iconic wine just once in their lives. But in McLaren Vale, the growers at Oliver’s Taranga have had grapes from their vineyards included in Penfolds Grange 14 times since 1996!

In 2015, the winery received the Penfolds Triple Crown Grange Growers perpetual trophy, awarded to wineries that have had their grapes used in Grange for three years in a row. Oliver’s Taranga was the first McLaren Vale winery to receive the award.

Strict standards are set for the grapes and wine used in Grange, and the grapes are sampled and rated in the lead-up to harvest. Every year, the vineyards selected are invited to a celebratory lunch and receive a magnum (1.5L) bottle of the wine.



TASTE OF MCLAREN VALE: NOTEWORTHY VARIETIES



SHIRAZ

McLAREN VALE'S
SIGNATURE VARIETY



NO TYPICAL
STYLE DUE
TO VARYING
GEOLOGY
AND SOIL
TYPES

SMALLER GRAPES

= more complex
and intense wines

GREATER LONGEVITY

for Shiraz with
ageing potential

FLAVOURS

- Blackcurrant
- Blueberry
- Liquorice
- Black olive
- Dark chocolate
- Spice

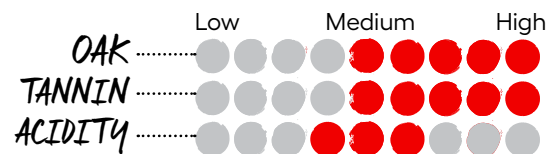
SHIRAZ

Shiraz is the region's signature variety. It's renowned for its velvety texture and complex palate, but there's really no such thing as a 'typical' McLaren Vale Shiraz due to the wildly varying geology and soil types. It can range from medium-bodied and nuanced with raspberries to dark fruit, spicy and full-bodied.

Some winemakers blend their final Shiraz from a variety of sub-regions to add complexity.

Notable producers include:

- Wirra Wirra
- Kay Brothers
- Hardys Tintara
- d'Arenberg



CABERNET SAUVIGNON

BEST EXAMPLES TEND TO BE FROM COOLER VINEYARD SITES AND Milder VINTAGES

OPULENT WINES WITH LAYERS OF FLAVOUR



FLAVOURS

- Blackcurrant
- Black cherry
- Blackberry
- Chocolate
- Liquorice
- Green capsicum

FULL-BODIED

and rich, with structure for ageing

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon is known for its varietal character and layers of flavour. The wines are often full-bodied and rich, with structure that makes them suitable for ageing. These characteristics ensure its continued popularity both domestically and internationally. Cabernet Sauvignon shines in the region's cooler sites and vintages.

Notable producers include:

- Chapel Hill
- Battle of Bosworth
- Leconfield Wines
- Brash Higgins
- Wirra Wirra
- Hickinbotham
- d'Arenberg

COLOUR



Cabernet Sauvignon

BODY



SWEETNESS



OAK



TANNIN



ACIDITY



ALCOHOL



GRENACHE



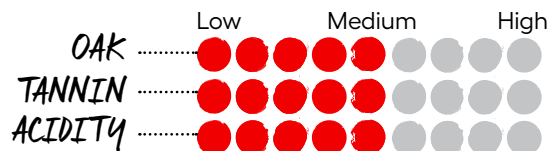
GRENACHE

McLaren Vale has many old Grenache vines dating back as far as the late 1800s. The variety is still used in classic GSM (Grenache Shiraz Mataro/Mourvèdre) blends, but single-varietal wines – for a long time overlooked – have experienced a spirited renaissance during the last decade. Grenache is now a star performer.

McLaren Vale winemakers produce varying styles of Grenache, with the older plantings producing richly flavoured wines with juiciness and spice. Regardless of style, the variety is perfectly suited to the region.

Notable producers include:

- Samuel's Gorge
- Bekkers
- S.C. Pannell
- Yangarra Estate Vineyards



CHARDONNAY



MAJOR
WHITE GRAPE
PLANTED

WIDELY GROWN

for affordable,
easy-drinking styles



CHARDONNAY

Chardonnay is the major white grape planted in the region, delivering affordable, easy-drinking styles. However, in recent years winemakers have shifted their focus to Spanish and Italian varieties better suited to the Mediterranean climate.

EMERGING AND RE-EMERGING VARIETIES



VERMENTINO
medium-bodied
white



FIANO
medium-bodied
white



SANGIOVESE
medium-bodied red



TEMPRANILLO
medium-bodied red



ZINFANDEL
full-bodied red



MONTEPULCIANO
medium to
full-bodied red



BARBERA
medium to
full-bodied red



NERO D'AVOLA
full-bodied red



MATARO
(**MOURVÈDRE**)
full-bodied red

EMERGING AND RE-EMERGING VARIETIES

The climatic and soil diversity has helped McLaren Vale producers successfully embrace emerging and re-emerging varieties. This exploration of international styles, using viticulture and winemaking techniques that make them well-suited to the region, is one of the most exciting parts of McLaren Vale today.

Notable producers include:

- Oliver's Taranga: Fiano
- Coriole: Sangiovese
- Primo Estate: Vermentino



McLAREN VALE:

A FUTURE OF INNOVATION BUILT ON STRONG FOUNDATIONS

A FUTURE OF INNOVATION BUILT ON STRONG FOUNDATIONS

McLaren Vale is a picturesque region known in Australia – and increasingly internationally – as a progressive community of winemakers producing high-quality, exciting and environmentally sustainable wines. Shiraz remains the firm favourite, but in recent years lesser-known Italian and Spanish varieties have taken centre stage. As such, McLaren Vale is set for a very bright future as a unique region that's always looking forward while staying true to its ancient soils.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- McLaren Vale is the birthplace of wine in South Australia, and one of Australia's oldest and most historically significant wine regions.
- It's best known for its trio of reds: Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache.
- McLaren Vale is a warm-climate region classified as Mediterranean.
- It's one of the most geologically diverse regions in the world.
- As one of Australia's most environmentally sustainable wine regions, it's leading the way in organic practices, water management and climate-appropriate plantings.
- Winemaking in McLaren Vale is defined by three key factors: collaboration, experimentation and adaptability.
- In recent years, the focus has shifted from big, powerful styles to showcasing varietal characters and influences of terroir.
- The most widely planted grape is still Shiraz, but the varieties generating the most buzz right now include Grenache and a line-up of Italian and Spanish styles such as Fiano, Vermentino, Tempranillo and Barbera.



AUSTRALIAN WINE MADE OUR WAY

Australia's unique climate and landscape have fostered a fiercely independent wine scene, home to a vibrant community of growers, winemakers, viticulturists, and vignerons. With more than 100 grape varieties grown across 65 distinct wine regions, we have the freedom to make exceptional wine, and to do it our way. We're not beholden to tradition, but continue to push the boundaries in the pursuit of the most diverse, thrilling wines in the world. That's just our way.

Discover more about Australian wine
at www.australianwine.com

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