



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

# COONAWARRA WINE

**AUSTRALIAN WINE  
MADE OUR WAY**

Learn about this renowned wine region's history, discover what makes its terra rossa soil so unique, and marvel at the range of varieties and styles on offer.

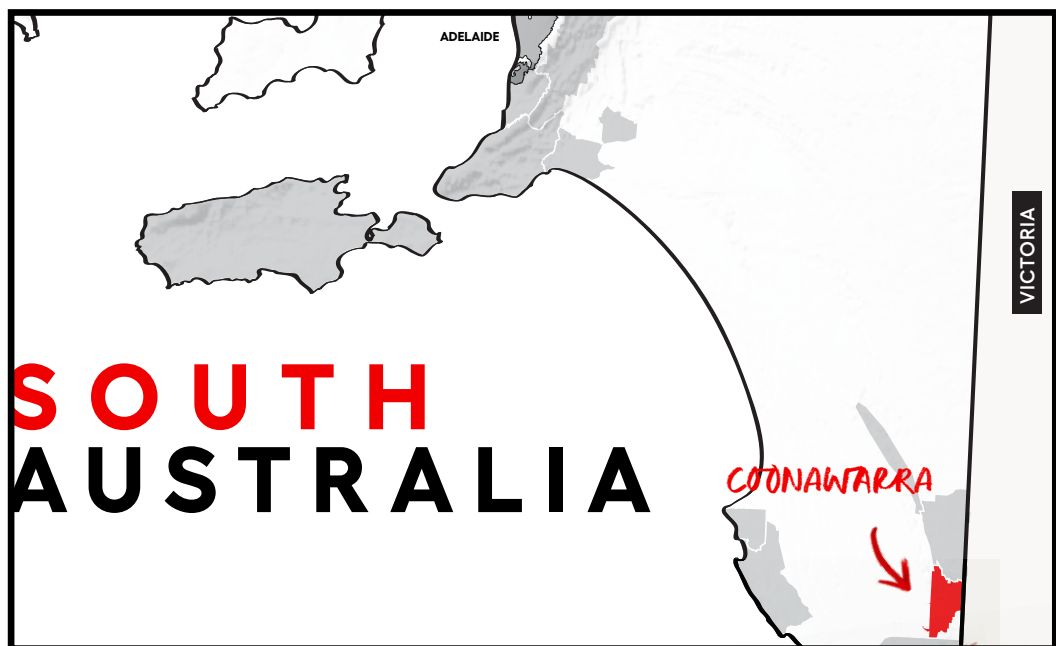


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  - Geography, climate and soil
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Cover: **Sue Hodder**, Wynns Coonawarra Estate, Coonawarra

# A U S T R A L I A







# COONAWARRA: TAKE THE TIME

Coonawarra is one of Australia's most internationally celebrated wine regions, famous for its vivid red soil and world-class red wines.

- Cooler, maritime-influenced climate and unique terra rossa soil
- Long wine history
- World-class Cabernet Sauvignon and collectible, age-worthy fine wines
- Evolution in the vineyard and winery have led to more elegant, vibrant wine styles

## COONAWARRA: TAKE THE TIME

Coonawarra is one of Australia's most internationally celebrated wine regions, famous for its vivid red soil and world-class red wines. It's a narrow strip of coveted land on the Limestone Coast, between Adelaide and Melbourne, and although it is 80 kilometres (50 miles) from the coast, it benefits from maritime influences thanks to its flat terrain.

Coonawarra has a long wine history, but its revival in the 1950s really put its name on the world stage. Today it's home to a collaborative community of multigenerational wine families, national and international companies, and some fresh voices that are helping to enliven the region.

### - Grape-growing haven

With its limestone-based soils, including the famous terra rossa, and a cooler climate than many other South Australian wine regions, Coonawarra provides ideal conditions for producing elegant, award-winning wines.

### - Patience and passion

Coonawarra is renowned for its outstanding wines developed over time. Vineyards are tended for generations, world-class Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz age for decades, and winemakers hone their craft over many years. It's the kind of place where people settle for life.

- **Evolution and innovation**

The past decade or so has seen a wave of innovation in the vineyard and evolution in the winery. Growers are focused on precision vineyard management and sustainable practices, while a technically precise and analytical approach to winemaking results in elegant, balanced wines that are ready to drink now yet are as age-worthy as ever.

- **The Cabernet Sauvignon crown**

Coonawarra is Australia's leading Cabernet Sauvignon region. It's one of the few regions where free-draining soils and maritime ripening conditions create the ultimate varietal expression of this noble grape, producing some of Australia's most collectible wines.

- **Off the beaten path**

Coonawarra's remote location and agricultural heart makes it a tranquil, down-to-earth tourist destination where you'll often chat directly with the winemaker in cellar doors while tasting world-class wines that range from crisp, aromatic whites to rich, vibrant reds.

## **FUN FACT**

THE NAME COONAWARRA COMES FROM A LOCAL ABORIGINAL WORD THAT MEANS 'HONEYSUCKLE', WHICH GROWS WILD IN THE AREA.







# HISTORY OF COONAWARRA: WINE HERITAGE, REVIVAL AND SOME CONTROVERSY

## LATE 1800s

John Riddoch plants the region's first grapevines: Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz, plus some small plots of Pinot Noir, Malbec and Pedro Ximenez.

## MID 1800s

European settlers establish sheep farms and fruit orchards. Scottish-born gardener William Wilson chooses the red terra rossa soil and advises fellow Scotsman John Riddoch to do the same.

## 1901

Due to recent economic depression, the industry struggles for the next 50 years.

## 1951

The region's revival begins when David Wynn and his wine merchant father, Samuel, buy Riddoch's rundown property, establishing the now-famous Wynns Coonawarra Estate.

## 1990s –2000s

Coonawarra flourishes, becoming one of Australia's leading Cabernet Sauvignon regions. Big producers invest and local wineries grow.

## TODAY

Coonawarra has retained its crown as a top Cabernet Sauvignon region. But there's more here than meets the eye, with respected makers crafting various modern styles and a new generation enlivening the region.

## 1960s –1980s

Australia experiences a global wine boom and Coonawarra locals and farmers diversify into grape growing. The region's boundaries are extended despite protests by some growers on the existing area of terra rossa.



## **HISTORY OF COONAWARRA**

### **Mid-1800s**

Coonawarra's agricultural history began when European settlers recognised the potential of the flat, fertile plains for sheep farming and fruit growing. Scottish-born gardener William Wilson came from the Victorian Goldfields with £300 in his pocket and chose the red terra rossa soil for his small block. This decision paid off in thriving fruit trees and vines, and he advised John Riddoch, a fellow Scotsman who arrived in 1861, to do the same.

### **Late 1800s**

John Riddoch planted the first grapevines in 1891, 30 years after establishing a lucrative sheep farm, and named the company Coonawarra Fruit Colony. He planted Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz along with some small plots of Pinot Noir, Malbec and Pedro Ximenez – varieties he found grew best in the region.

At a time when Australia was best known for its fortified wines, Coonawarra made its name as a reliable source of quality red table wines. In the May 1899 edition of 'Garden and Field', editor William Catton-Grasby commented on vines in Coonawarra: "One cannot doubt the suitability of land and climate for vine growing... Everything seems favourable for a great development at Coonawarra."

### **1901**

Due to recent economic depression, the region's fortunes flagged and the industry struggled for the next 50 years.

For many years, Bill Redman was the region's torchbearer and sole red wine producer. At the age of 14 he'd walked into Riddoch's winery asking for a job, and in 1908 he established his own vineyards and winery. He, and later his son Owen (the grandson of Coonawarra's founder William Wilson), ran the winery, which sold its wine in bulk to other Australian wineries and merchants.

However, Coonawarra's distance from the capital cities, and state government support for soldier settlers to convert vineyards to dairy farms, saw the area under vine dwindle to less than 300 acres by 1939.

### **1951**

The region's revival began when David Wynn and his father Samuel, a Melbourne wine merchant, bought Riddoch's rundown property, establishing the now-famous Wynns Coonawarra Estate and reinvigorating the iconic stone triple-gabled winery.

### **1960s to 1980s**

Coonawarra grew and flourished, claiming the title of one of Australia's leading Cabernet Sauvignon regions and becoming one of the most sought-after wine-producing areas in the country.

Big producers began buying into the region and local wineries grew. In the late 1980s, three major wine names purchased land: Hunter Valley icon Rosemount, the Clare Valley's Barry family and Australia's oldest family-owned winery, Yalumba.

### **1990s to 2000s**

This was the time of Australia's global wine boom, and some Coonawarra locals and farmers had patches of terra rossa soil diversified into grape growing, with several later opening cellar doors.

The region's coveted strip of terra rossa caused controversy when Australia's Geographical Indications Committee set out to define Coonawarra's legal boundaries. Some producers outside of the terra rossa zone wanted to widen the boundary because the Coonawarra name held so much prestige and commercial value. But producers inside the zone were protective of their territory. In 2003, after nearly 10 years of debate, a mutual agreement was made and Coonawarra's boundaries were increased slightly to the north, south and east of the original area.





# DID YOU KNOW?

Coonawarra's strip of terra rossa soil caused controversy during the defining of the region's legal boundaries in the '90s. Some growers wanted to widen the boundary while those inside the terra rossa zone did not. After nearly 10 years of debate, the boundaries were expanded.

## Today

Since John Riddoch decreed in the 1890s that his blockers (landholders who sold their grapes to larger wineries) plant Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra has remained true to these classic varieties. The region has retained its crown as Australia's top Cabernet Sauvignon region, along with Margaret River. But there's more to the region than meets the eye, with highly respected makers crafting a range of modern wine styles.

Today, Coonawarra is home to a collaborative wine community that's evolving through generational change. Producers have introduced new technologies in the vineyard and innovation in the winery to create vibrant, approachable wines that still have excellent ageing potential. And while there are new names and new owners bringing a fresh voice, multigenerational family ownership is still the backbone of this close-knit community.

Global demand for Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon continues to grow, particularly from serious wine collectors, and a new generation of Australian wine lovers are discovering the treasures of this unique region.



## DID YOU KNOW

The two most significant periods of growth in Coonawarra were the 1970s and 1990s, when most vines were planted.





# GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL: AUSTRALIA'S RED-CARPET REGION

- On the Limestone Coast, around four hours' drive from Adelaide and five from Melbourne
- A picturesque region of immaculate vine rows, ancient river red gum trees and red soil
- More moderate climate than many South Australian wine regions
- Maritime-influenced climate and limestone-based soils provide ideal grape-growing conditions

## GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL

Around 375 kilometres from Adelaide and 450 kilometres from Melbourne, Coonawarra is a picturesque place of immaculate vine rows, majestic gum trees, vast clear skies and vibrant red soil. Its low, flat plains are part of South Australia's Limestone Coast and despite being a relatively small area, globally it's one of Australia's best-known wine regions.

Unlike many other wine regions in South Australia, Coonawarra has a more moderate climate, partly due to a cooling maritime influence from the ocean off Australia's south coast, around 80 kilometres (50 miles) away. It's also one of the most southerly wine regions in the state. The combination of a cool climate and limestone-based soils provides ideal conditions for growing world-class fruit and producing award-winning wines.

Coonawarra is cooler than its latitude may suggest, due to its flat terrain, proximity to the Southern Ocean and the cold water

from the Bonney Upwelling throughout the growing season.

The Limestone Coast is particularly influenced by maritime conditions because of its west-facing coast. The modifying effects of maritime conditions on weather and climate across the Limestone Coast are thought to be enhanced during the latter growing season (November–March) by upwelling of the Southern Ocean between Cape Jaffa and Portland. Upwelling describes the rise to the surface of cold, deep ocean waters. The strong high-pressure systems that are common along the southeast coast of South Australia in summer are associated with an increase in frequency of southeasterly winds. These winds run parallel to the coast and influence upwelling. The upwelling has a moderating influence on temperatures as a result of strengthened sea breezes.

**Source:** The Unearthing Viticulture in the Limestone Coast

# CLIMATE



## MARITIME

INFLUENCED WITH COOLING  
EFFECTS OF SOUTHERN OCEAN

## ALTITUDE

**COONAWARRA**  
50–110M (164–361FT)



## VERY HIGH

>1000M  
>3280FT

.....

## HIGH

750–999M  
2460–3279FT

.....

## MEDIUM

500–749M  
1640–2459FT

.....

## LOW

0–499M  
0–1639FT

### COONAWARRA

#### Altitude

Coonawarra is a flat, low-altitude region. Lower altitudes generally have little effect on vines. However, even a small slope's aspect can affect the amount of sunlight the vines receive and mitigate some weather conditions like hail.

#### Climate

- Maritime-influence
- Moderate (cool to warm)
- Dry, cool summers
- Coonawarra experiences a maritime influence due to upwelling of cold ocean currents at certain times of the year. Cold winters and cool summer night temperatures are the norm. Consistent cloud cover in Coonawarra also contributes to temperature reduction.

#### Latitude

- 37° 32'S

#### Mean January temperature (MJT)

- 20.1°C (68°F)

MJT refers to the mean temperature of the warmest month.



## Growing season rainfall (GSR)

– 260mm (10.2in)

Calculated from October to April in Australia, growing season rainfall 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

Coonawarra is famous for its strip of terra rossa (Italian for 'red soil'). It sits on top of a ridge of limestone above an ancient reservoir of pure water – ideal for growing world-class grapes. Other soils include black and brown rendzina clays and sandy loams.



## SOIL

Coonawarra is famous for its red cigar-shaped strip of terra rossa (Italian for 'red soil').

Stretching from north to south, this tiny stretch of land is among the most valuable patches of earth in the Australian wine community.

The terra rossa was produced by the weathering of limestone over many thousands of years and coloured by iron oxide. It's made up of around one-third clay and sits on top of a ridge of limestone above an ancient reservoir of pure water – ideal for growing and ripening grapes that produce wines with intense yet elegant flavours. Coonawarra terra rossa is unique for its geological properties including its form, continuous shape and intense colour.

Other soils include black and brown rendzina clays and sandy loams, both well suited to vines.



## **UNEARTHING COONAWARRA'S ANCIENT LANDSCAPE**

**How do Coonawarra's unique soils, formed over millions of years, influence the wines produced here?**

Australia has some of the world's most ancient soils, which play an important role in the diversity of the country's wine regions and wine styles. Of all the fascinating soils, Coonawarra's vivid red terra rossa is among the most coveted and expensive, renowned for producing world-class grapes. The entire region was once under the ocean until the ice age froze the water into polar ice caps, causing the shoreline to recede. After the ice age, the land that rose above sea level was limestone. All the region's soils sit on top of this limestone base.

After the melting of the ice caps exposed the limestone, winds coming off the ocean blew silt from nearby plains, creating light clay rich in nutrients. This clay oxidised into the renowned red-coloured soil. The strip of terra rossa runs north to south through the region and is a small stretch of land – 27 kilometres long and around 1.8 kilometres wide (16.8 x 1.1 miles), and about 50 centimetres (19.7 inches) deep.

It has good drainage, which is important for vines, and its neutral to slightly alkaline pH restricts the availability of nutrients to the vines, limiting vine vigour. Below the terra rossa there's a hard layer of calcium carbonate on top of the less-dense limestone further down. This curbs deep root growth and further controls the vines' vigour, resulting in even, well-balanced vines and optimal fruit quality.

To the west of the terra rossa ridge, you'll find black rendzina soils, which are heavy clays that retain more water. These soils can be more challenging to manage in wet, cool seasons as vine vigour isn't as restricted, but many growers still produce excellent grapes here. There's also a 'transitional' or brown rendzina soil, which also grows vines successfully. To the east of the terra rossa ridge are sandy loams, where the region's easternmost vines are grown. East of those lie forests growing in weathered coastal sand dunes.

The unique soil structures of Coonawarra result in fruit that has reached phenological ripeness with great concentration and complexity of flavour while retaining high natural acidity. For the region's famous Cabernet Sauvignons, this translates into wines with medium body, velvety tannins and highly intense aromas with flavours of black fruits and dark chocolate. These are usually accented with notes of toasted oak in the winery. It also means these wines age exceptionally well. Over time, tannins soften and flavours move into the tertiary spectrum of leather, savoury and Christmas cake.



# VITICULTURE AND WINEMAKING IN COONAWARRA

## GRAPE GROWING

Coonawarra's viticulturists have a history of adapting their methods to varying climatic conditions to produce the best grapes. Today, the region benefits from a dynamic mix of experience and youth, with some families having been in the region for decades, and others newer to the region. There's a deep understanding of how to coax the best grapes from Coonawarra's unique soils, and the region is home to some of Australia's oldest vines growing on their own roots.

This heritage is overlaid with fresh voices that are changing the conversation within and about Coonawarra, and helping to drive evolution in viticulture. Over the past decade or so, vineyard owners have refined their practices and introduced new technologies to improve fruit quality and to exhibit a true expression of the region and its environment. Ongoing viticultural research is also a major focus and has led to improvements in vineyard management.

## Vineyard management

Recent years have seen significant investment across Coonawarra in the redevelopment of vineyards, with an increased focus on precision management to achieve the right balance between canopy and berry size.

The region's conditions are so well suited to grape growing that vine growth generally needs to be controlled through pruning, including shoot and fruit thinning, trimming and leaf removal. Pruning is generally a mechanical pre-prune followed by a detailed hand-prune, typically during the winter and early spring.

Cabernet Sauvignon has the potential to be very vigorous on the deeper soils. Growers use a number of different trellising and canopy-management techniques, depending on the grape quality and vigour of their vines. A range of canopy management techniques can also be used to ensure the canopy is balanced and the fruit zone is appropriately



# GRAPE GROWING: EVOLUTION AND INNOVATION



- Region benefits from a mix of experienced viticulturists and winemakers, and relative newcomers
- Past decade has seen numerous innovations in the vineyard
- New trellis practices, improved water management and greater focus on sustainability
- Harvest: Early February to April

shaded, avoiding sunburn, excessive ripeness and diminishing humidity.

## **Irrigation and water management**

This is another area that's evolving significantly. Many vineyard owners are taking advantage of technologies such as remote sensing and irrigation scheduling to improve water conservation and vine vigour control. Some vineyards use computer-controlled drip-irrigation systems and vines are typically watered judiciously to help produce premium fruit.

## **Harvest**

Harvest typically occurs from early February to April, but this varies depending on climatic conditions. Cabernet Sauvignon is generally among the last to be picked, requiring long, slow ripening to develop its flavours. Picking time is also determined by the intended style of wine. Winemakers creating wines with more body and richness will usually pick later, when the grapes are riper, whereas those looking for a

lighter style will pick earlier. Most grapes are harvested mechanically, with select vineyards and parcels of fruit handpicked.

## **Sustainability**

Against the backdrop of a changing climate, many vineyard owners are adopting sustainable viticulture methods, including improving water management and minimising or eliminating chemical sprays in favour of organic ones. Some vineyards have introduced hardy native grasses between vine rows to help control weeds, reduce soil erosion and support soil fertility. Alongside the individual efforts of growers, Coonawarra Vignerons supports and manages environmental projects and trials.

## FUN FACTS

MANY VINEYARDS ARE NOW FENCED, ALLOWING THE USE OF SHEEP FOR WINTER WEED CONTROL. LARGE AREAS ARE GRAZED THROUGHOUT WINTER.

AND AT FAMILY-OWNED RAIBIS ESTATE, GOATS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN SUSTAINABLE VINEYARD MANAGEMENT.

AFTER HARVEST, THEY'RE LET LOOSE TO EAT THE REMAINING GRAPES AND RETURN ORGANIC MATTER TO THE SOIL.



## ADVANCED NOTES

### INNOVATION IN THE VINEYARD

Coonawarra is known for its classic wines and winemaking techniques, and in the vineyard they are constantly striving to improve sustainability and fruit quality. Some examples of projects that reflect this include:

- **Irrigation Optimisation:** A project investigating the use of aerial imaging to improve irrigation strategies based on real-time vine needs. The long-term goal is to improve water-use efficiency and grape quality, as well as to develop an app that schedules and controls irrigation using information from plant-based sensors. (Run by Coonawarra Vignerons with support from Adelaide University and Treasury Wine Estates.)
- **Coonawarra Rootstock Trial:** A long-term project to compare the performance of own-rooted Cabernet Sauvignon (CW44 clone) vines against that of eight rootstocks of varying vigour. This is part of broader ongoing research to help ensure South Australia remains free from phylloxera. Rootstocks are less susceptible than own-rooted vines to the pest. (Run by Vinehealth Australia, Treasury Wine Estates and Coonawarra Vignerons.)
- **Coonawarra Cabernet Project:** A four-year study to identify distinctive Cabernet Sauvignon characteristics and explore how they can be adapted and enhanced in the vineyard and winery. (Run by the Australian Research Council and Adelaide University.)



## DID YOU KNOW

Coonawarra vineyards get their water from an underground aquifer that lies at an average depth of 5–6 metres (16.4–19.7 feet).





- Closer collaboration between viticulturists and winemakers
- More refined use of oak for ageing red wines
- Blending for balance, complexity, intensity and length

# WINEMAKING: WHERE QUALITY TAKES TIME



## WINEMAKING

Coonawarra has long been known for its dark-fruited, complex and age-worthy red wines, and passionate winemakers using classic techniques to craft world-class wines. Coonawarra's style continues to evolve. The region produces standout white wines known for their fine palates, intensity of flavours and aromas. Coonawarra's red wines are elegant, vibrant and more approachable in their youth yet still have the ability to age.

## Starting in the vineyard

There are several winemaking trends contributing to Coonawarra's contemporary wine styles, including closer collaboration between viticulturists and winemakers in recent years. This has led to experimentation to find the most suitable grapevine clones, better consistency in fruit quality and a purer expression of that fruit. The region's excellent grape-growing conditions allow minimal intervention in the winery, letting the quality of the grapes shine.

## More skilful use of oak

Increasingly refined use of oak is another winemaking trend contributing to the evolution of wine styles. Winemakers frequently use oak to age premium Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz.

This adds additional tannins and flavours depending on the type, toasting and size of the oak, including smoke, vanilla, coffee and cedar. Wines are matured in oak from six months to three years.

Wineries may use a mix of new and old French and American oak, depending on the style of wine to be produced. However, in maturing Cabernet Sauvignon, a number of wineries use predominantly French oak, with which the grape is believed to have an affinity. French oak is tighter grained than American oak and typically imparts more subtle flavours and firmer but silkier tannins. Some winemakers believe that French oak is better able to enhance and showcase the intensity of fruit in Cabernet Sauvignon wines.

While most red wines see oak, winemakers are practising restraint when new oak barrels are used, using them in combination with older oak to give complexity and depth while preserving varietal character. Generally the newer the oak, the more aromas and flavours are imparted.

### **Seamless blends**

Blending is a common technique, particularly with red varieties. It allows winemakers to create a wine that has greater balance, complexity, intensity and length. Cabernet Sauvignon is often the common denominator. It can benefit from blending with other varieties because it's sometimes said to have a hole in its mid-palate, referred to as the Cabernet 'doughnut'. Some winemakers choose to blend it with other grapes to provide more mid-palate plushness and make a more complete wine. In Coonawarra, Cabernet Sauvignon tends to be finer and more subtle, so winemakers sometimes blend it with other varieties to add additional flavours and palate weight.

Some winemakers choose to make blends because it allows them to 'design' their wine and define a particular style. However, creating a seamless and successful blend requires great skill.

Coonawarra winemakers have been blending Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon for decades. Cabernet Sauvignon is often blended with Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

### **Noteworthy Coonawarra blends include:**

- Wynns Coonawarra Cabernet Shiraz Merlot
- Wynns 'V&A Lane' Coonawarra Cabernet Shiraz
- Leconfield Coonawarra Cabernet Merlot
- Majella The Malleea Coonawarra Cabernet Shiraz
- Lindeman's 'Limestone Ridge' Coonawarra Shiraz Cabernet





### **SUE HODDER AT WYNNS: REWRITING THE FUTURE OF CABERNET SAUVIGNON**

Wynns Coonawarra Estate has been at the forefront of winemaking in the region since it was established by David and Samuel Wynn in 1951, in the triple-gabled winery built by Scottish pioneer John Riddoch. Within this distinguished winery you will find a winemaker who has become an icon in her own right. Chief winemaker Sue Hodder has been with Wynns for more than 25 years. The winery has seen a number of outstanding winemakers come through, but Sue stands apart for her work in elevating the wines to a new level.

When she took on the senior role in the late 1990s, some of the vineyards she inherited needed work. Over the years, she has worked closely with viticulturist Allen Jenkins, Wynns Coonawarra Estate's regional vineyard manager, to rejuvenate the old vines and reconstruct the vineyards, heralding a new era. Collaboration is crucial for Sue, who believes that success starts in the vineyard but relies on a great team. Grape growing and winemaking go hand in hand to ensure the wines reflect the regional character and vintage nuance as closely as possible.

Sue has worked alongside winemaker Sarah Pidgeon for two decades in one of Australia's greatest winemaking partnerships. In 2016, Sue and Sarah jointly received the Australian Society of Viticulture and Oenology Winemaker of the Year award, recognising their efforts in developing Cabernet Sauvignon for the future. Cabernet Sauvignon is Wynns Coonawarra Estate's signature variety – and Sue's favourite wine. Thanks to ongoing improvements in the vineyard and winery, and an ever-improving understanding of the grape, Wynns Cabernet Sauvignon is better than ever.

One of Sue's biggest challenges is the changing climate. Droughts have prompted Sue and her team to adopt more sustainable viticulture methods, including better soil-moisture management and a bigger focus on vine health. As she builds on the work of previous generations while innovating in the vineyard and the winery, Sue is helping to ensure Wynns and Coonawarra can thrive for decades to come.

# COONAWARRA TOP 5 VARIETIES



CABERNET  
SAUVIGNON

55%



SHIRAZ

24%



MERLOT

7%



CHARDONNAY

6%



SAUVIGNON  
BLANC

3%

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

## TASTE OF COONAWARRA: NOTEWORTHY VARIETIES

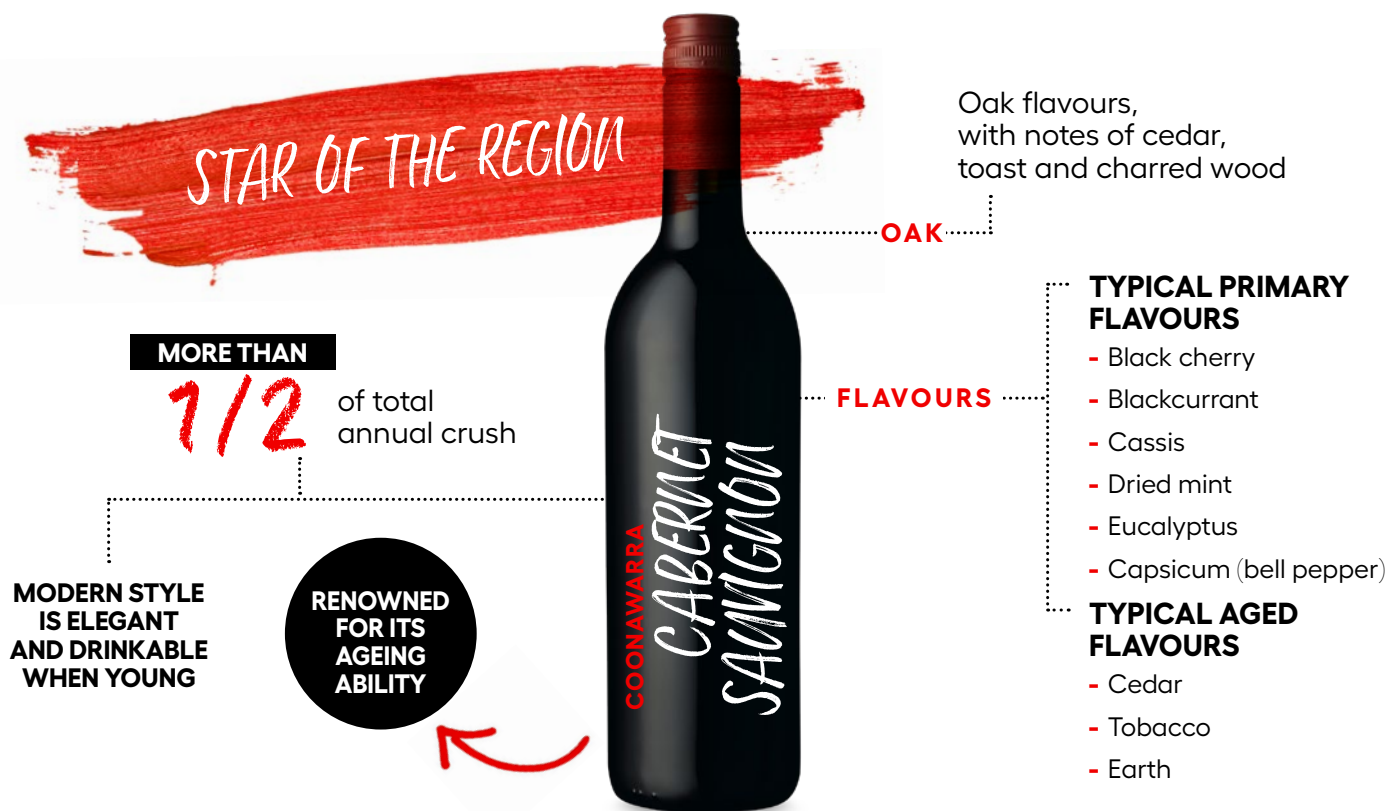
Red varieties reign supreme in Coonawarra, where the soils, climate and winemaking techniques combine to produce medium-bodied to full-bodied wines that are approachable when young and have exceptional ageing qualities. The region also produces a smaller number of excellent white wines, including Chardonnay and Riesling.

### In Coonawarra, the main varieties crushed are:

- Cabernet Sauvignon.
- Shiraz.
- Merlot.
- Chardonnay.
- Sauvignon Blanc.



# CABERNET SAUVIGNON



## CABERNET SAUVIGNON

This late-ripening variety is Coonawarra's undisputed star, with the region's best Cabernet Sauvignon wines considered some of the world's purest and finest expressions of the grape. The region's unique terra rossa is a vital component in influencing these wines, with its nutrients and acidity a significant factor in bolstering the grape's longevity – it's one reason why Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon ages so well.

With the benefit of mature vines, innovative viticultural practices and winemaking practices, winemakers are creating balanced styles that are drinkable in their early years yet are still among the world's most rewarding aged wines.

Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon can be medium-bodied or full-bodied, with many of the modern styles taking a lighter approach. These complex wines are known for their intensity, integrated acid and lingering palate, and are characterised by their fine tannins, which rarely dominate.

On the palate, they showcase bold, dark and red fruits, with concentrated flavours of blackcurrant, mulberry, plum, blackberry and dark cherry. Flavours of cassis and mint or eucalyptus are also present. They often feature oak flavours, with notes of vanilla or toast. The best examples of Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon have the structure and complexity to age for decades, developing savoury cedar, tobacco and earthy notes, underpinned by balanced acidity and tannins.

## Noteworthy Cabernet Sauvignon producers include:

- Wynns Coonawarra Estate.
- Redman Wines.
- Balnaves of Coonawarra.
- Bowen Estate.
- Majella Wines.
- Katnook Estate.
- Penley Estate.





# SHIRAZ

LONG HISTORY  
IN COONAWARRA

AROUND

7/4 of total  
annual crush

ELEGANT  
COOLER-  
CLIMATE  
STYLE

SOMETIMES BLENDED  
WITH CABERNET  
SAUVIGNON OR MERLOT



Oak flavours with  
notes of vanilla, cedar,  
smoke and coconut

OAK

FLAVOURS

## TYPICAL PRIMARY FLAVOURS

- Pepper
- Raspberry
- Blackberry
- Plum
- Spice
- Mint

## TYPICAL AGED FLAVOURS

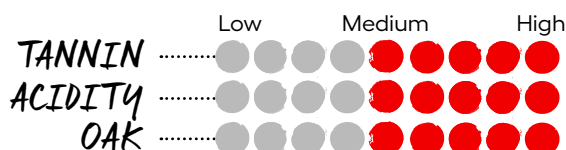
- Cedar
- Tobacco
- Leather

## SHIRAZ

Shiraz has a long history in Coonawarra. In fact it was the main variety grown until the 1950s. It produces cooler-climate styles that are typically more elegant and fine-boned than those of warmer-climate Shiraz regions like the Barossa, Hunter Valley and Margaret River.

Like Cabernet Sauvignon, the trend for Shiraz has moved towards more balanced and refined styles that pair well with lighter food styles. The hallmark Coonawarra tannin structure contributes to their longevity.

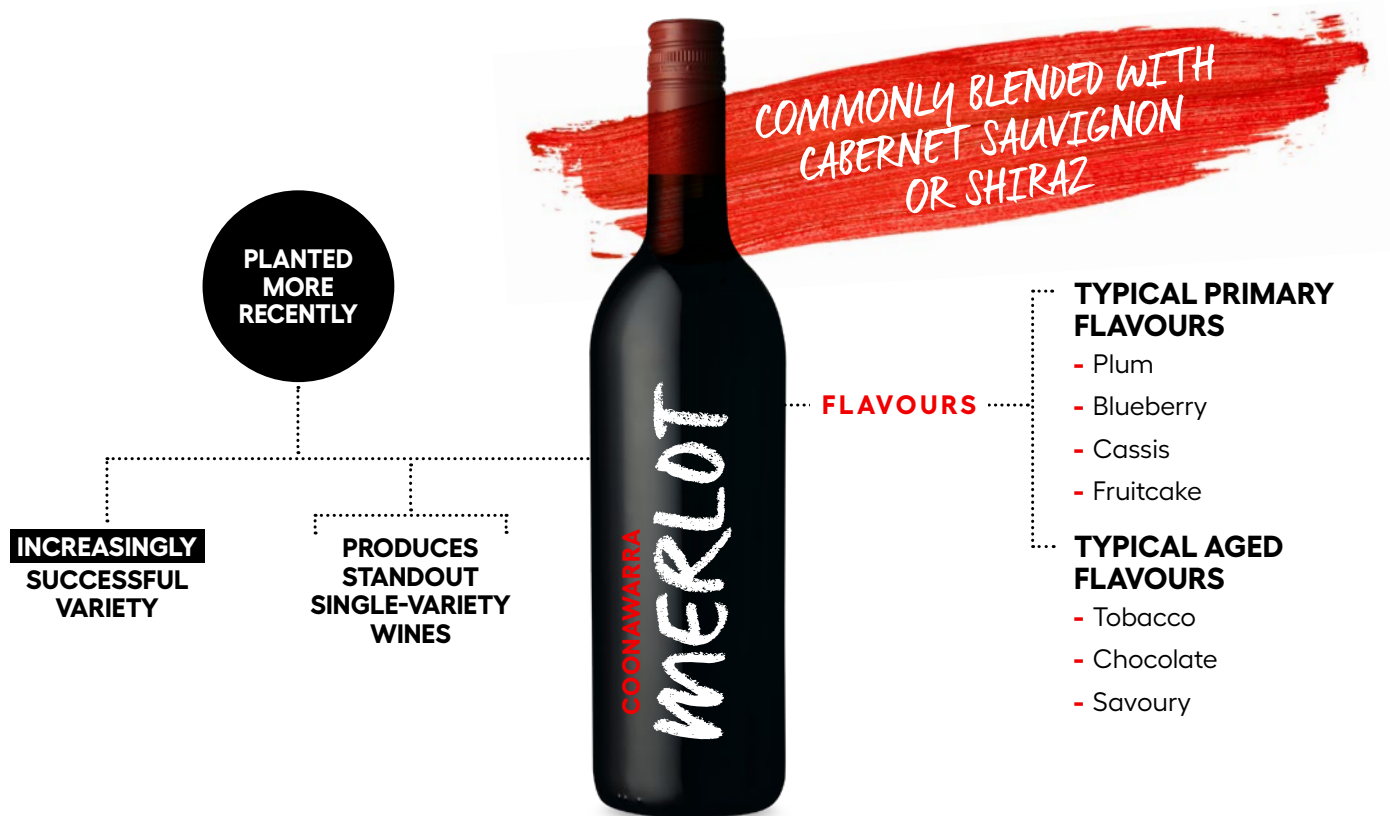
Coonawarra Shiraz is typically medium-bodied, balanced with spice and berry fruits. It often shows mint characteristics that add a savoury, herbal edge to the varietal dark blackberry, plum and pepper characters. Shiraz is also blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot to produce standout reds.



## Noteworthy Shiraz producers include:

- Wynns Coonawarra Estate.
- Katnook Estate.
- Majella Wines.
- Penfolds (Bin 128 Coonawarra Shiraz).

# MERLOT

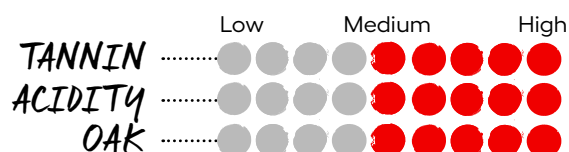


## MERLOT

Merlot has not been in Coonawarra as long as Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz, but it is a variety on the rise, thriving in the free-draining soils. It produces some of Australia's best single-varietal wines and is also commonly blended with Cabernet Sauvignon or Shiraz. Merlot reflects the region's cooler climate and sunny ripening season, producing full-bodied and often opulent wines laden with silky characters of ripe plum, red berry, spice, menthol and cedar.

### Noteworthy Merlot producers include:

- Leconfield.
- Parker Coonawarra Estate.
- Katnook Estate.
- Petaluma.





# COONAWARRA



With its famous red soil, world-class wines and forward-looking community of growers and makers, the red heart of Australian wine is beating stronger than ever.

Coonawarra is one of Australia's most important wine regions. Crafting world-class wine is a lifelong passion for its growers and winemakers, some of whom have worked in the same vineyard or winery for decades. At the same time, a younger generation is bringing fresh energy and helping to advance technology in vineyards and wineries to showcase the region's pristine fruit.

This dynamic mix of experience and youth is driving evolution. This is balanced by an inherent respect for the region's history, and it's what makes it so unique. With global demand for its wines continuing to grow, Coonawarra is an exciting region at the forefront of the Australian wine industry and remains ripe with potential.



## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Set on South Australia's Limestone Coast, Coonawarra is a small strip of land with a big reputation. Its unique terra rossa soil is famous for growing world-class grapes, and together with its cooler maritime-influenced climate it provides an ideal environment for producing premium wines.
- Coonawarra's first vines were planted in 1891 but it wasn't until the 1950s, after Samuel and David Wynn bought John Riddoch's property and established Wynns Coonawarra Estate, that the region started making its name on the world stage.
- Cabernet Sauvignon is the star variety, producing collectible fine wines renowned for their age-worthiness. You will also find a range of other standout wines, including Shiraz, Merlot, Chardonnay and Riesling.
- The past decade or so has seen a wave of innovation in the vineyard, with growers introducing new techniques and technologies to improve sustainability and enhance fruit quality.
- Winemakers are working closely with viticulturists, and this has influenced Coonawarra's wine styles, as has advancing technology and chemistry within wineries. Coonawarra wines are elegant, vibrant and drinkable in their youth, yet will age wonderfully for many years.





# 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](http://www.australianwine.com)

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