



Syrah is growing in fashion and in quantity in New Zealand but there is more to this grape and the wine it makes, as our selection of top winter reds shows - they come from further afield than our own shores, including France and Australia writes *Editor Joelle Thomson*

SYRAH

BY ANY NAME

Syrah vs Shiraz – what’s in a name?

SYRAH AND Shiraz are the same grape by different names, a fact which taps into the mysterious origins of this deeply coloured French red grape from the Rhone Valley.

Syrah’s most famous home is in the Northern Rhone Valley in France, especially in the Côte Rotie and Hermitage appellations (an appellation is a defined geographic wine area).

“Shiraz or Chiraz was an important wine centre in ancient Persia (today’s Iran). It has often been speculated that Syrah was introduced from Persia to Marseille by the Phocaeans around 600 BC, or from Persia to the Vallee du Rhone by the Crusaders between 1095 and 1291,” writes Master of Wine Jancis Robinson in *Wine Grapes*.

There is no actual difference in the Syrah/Shiraz grape – other than the name – but there are stylistic differences, which are a feature of the different climates in which it is grown.

New Zealand winemakers have mostly opted for the French name, Syrah, for the wines they make from this grape. It better suits the style of wine they can make from grapes growing in New Zealand, where the climate has more in common with the Rhone Valley (northern, that is) than with Australia’s Barossa Valley, where the climate is significantly warmer, the sunshine hours significantly higher and the wines made there reflecting this greater heat.

Grenache and Syrah are marriage partners in nearly all of the wines made in the Southern Rhone; if it is not paired with Grenache, then Syrah from the Southern Rhone will be blended with other grapes, which can include Carignan, Mourvedre and Cinsault, among others.

Yalumba Galway Shiraz is an excellent glass pour wine for New Zealand wine lists this winter.



Top Syrahs and Shiraz to stock on your list

STUNNING VALUE GLASS POUR SHIRAZ

2012 Yalumba Galway Vintage Shiraz
RRP \$19.95

As under \$20 reds go, they don’t come much better than this both in value for money and rich flavour; there is a warm, oak-derived spice aroma profile here. Think: black pepper, cardamom and nutmeg accompanying the dark cherry fruit flavours, and team up a good food match for this flavour spectrum. Yalumba Galway Shiraz is an excellent glass pour wine for New Zealand wine lists this winter.

WORK OF TASTE 2012 Yalumba Barossa Patchwork Shiraz

RRP \$24.95

Juicy, dry and lingering; this Shiraz is a work of taste, thanks to the inclusion of grapes from a wide range of climates in different areas of the warm Barossa Valley. It is well priced to sit as either a glass pour or a good by the bottle offering. Good value and flavour.

SHIRAZ OF THE HILL 2012 Jim Barry Lodge Hill Shiraz

RRP \$27.00

Talk about tasty. This Shiraz comes from a very high altitude vineyard in the Clare Valley; 480 metres above sea level, to be exact; an area where the cool nights help temper the region’s hot days and produce a spicy, full bodied Shiraz with all its dark fruit, black pepper and warm cedar aromas present and counted. The finish is juicy, fruit driven and long. Stock it.

Syrah is the only black grape variety legally permitted to make wine from in France's Northern Rhone Valley.



CELLAR MASTER LEHMANN
2012 Peter Lehmann Portrait Shiraz
RRP \$28.95

This wine is even more of an icon now than when the late Aussie wine pioneer Peter Lehmann was alive. It's also extremely youthful with primary fruit and black pepper aromas driving the taste, the grippy mouth feel and the intense core of rich plum fruitiness. It is an outstanding wine to serve with a slow cooked rich meaty dish – and also one to cellar too, for those with the courage to put a few bottles aside for that special cellar list in another decade's time.

FROMM'S TOP SYRAH
2011 Fromm Vineyard Syrah **RRP \$62**

And here is the long term proof of Marlborough Syrah from winemaker Hatsch Kalberer at Fromm Vineyard. This is an impressively smooth, richly fruit-driven red with three years of age on it now, so it is beginning to come into its own. This would make an impressive glass pour, but it is such a special wine that it deserves to be decanted, served in large glasses and matched to a slow cooked spicy meat dish this winter. Team it up with something special on your seasonal winter menu and wow your customers.

Serve Saint Clair Syrah as a gate opener to this full bodied red – it's perfect for winter and showcases New Zealand's growing diversity in wine styles.

MARLBOROUGH MARVEL
2013 Saint Clair Syrah **RRP \$24.99**

Who would have thought? The region that is best known worldwide for Sauvignon Blanc is beginning to prove suitable for succulent, soft, full bodied reds made from Syrah; yes, this Marlborough Syrah

tastes like the real thing – spicy nuances, peppery aromas, ripe plum flavours, it's all there. The mid ripening Rhone Valley red grape might seem to require more heat than Marlborough can deliver but in the hands of Saint Clair's grape growers and winemakers, this is a stunning, true to type red, which over delivers for the taste. If you're in love with those seductive spicy southern Rhone Valley reds, here's a wine for you. Serve Saint Clair Syrah as a gate opener to this full bodied red – it's perfect for winter and showcases New Zealand's growing diversity in wine styles.

Trade enquiries: *Negociants NZ*,
 ph 0800 634 624, *negociantsnz.com*





Laurent Calmel



Jérôme Joseph

About Calmel & Joseph

Alastair Pope and Ryan Quinn of the Auckland import and retail wine business, Wine Direct (in Ponsonby and Parnell) began importing the southern French range, Calmel & Joseph, in 2011.

The first wines they brought into New Zealand were from the 2009 French vintage of this wine company, which is based in the vast Languedoc region in the south of France. The production of Calmel & Joseph averages about 200,000 bottles a year and Laurent Calmel is the winemaker (oenologist) who works with grape grower partners to select the grapes they produce their wines from. Jerome Joseph is a graduate in hospitality management and was born and bred in Languedoc Roussillon, where he returned in 1995. The wines are then made on site by Calmel, prior to raising, blending and then bottling them there. The reduced transport throughout the winemaking process allows for high quality products at relatively low retail and wholesale prices.

FRENCH CONNECTION

2011 Calmel & Joseph Saint Chinian AOP RRP \$13.99 to \$15.99

A trio of grapes make this youthful southern French red a fascinating, well priced star and they are: Syrah, Grenache and Carignan. The first two are really well known while Carignan is not as familiar to many New Zealanders, but it is a key ingredient in many areas of the vast Languedoc region in southern France. Syrah adds the rich deep colour and smoothness, while Grenache contributes a red fruity appeal and Carignan adds weight, texture and depth. This is a great wine at this price. It is still youthful and drinks well, but has another good half a decade – or more of time to improve and age well.

VILLAGE VALUE

2011 Calmel & Joseph Cotes du Roussillon Villages AOP RRP \$13.99 to \$15.99

This wine is made with the same trio of grapes but has a noticeably smoother, softer taste of fleshy red fruit flavours; it is a lively, youthful red for drinking on a cold night because its intense tannins seem to beg for cool weather and rich savoury food. I really like the dark style of this wine. It drinks well now and will evolve over the next five years but why wait? This is made for enjoyment soon.

Trade enquiries: *Wine Direct, ph 0800 660 777, winedirect.co.nz*

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SHIRAZ

2012 Jacob's Creek Shiraz RRP \$10.59

Jacob's Creek has become such a successful global brand that it's easy to forget just how successful its winemaking team are at creating fresh, plummy, fruit driven red wines for early, easy drinking pleasure.

This is a medium bodied, intensely flavoursome red with black pepper, coconut, spice and savoury, earthy aromas all marrying together in a fresh youthful red wine with a medium finish. Jacob's Creek Shiraz is one of the best value reds in the Southern Hemisphere.

GUTSY WINTER WINNER

2011 Jacob's Creek Reserve Barossa Shiraz RRP \$17.29

Now we're talking. This is big in every way; body, taste, richness and its complex integration of intense black fruit flavours married to subtle silky spicy aromas. Delicious, long and lovely.

CONSISTENT STAR

2012 Wyndham Estate Bin 555 Shiraz RRP \$13.29

With its medium ruby colour and its complex savoury nose, this South Australian wine could almost pass for a cheap and extremely cheerful Cotes-du-Rhone, and I often wonder if that's what George Wyndham had in mind when he founded this famous winery across the ditch. But it's so bright and rich in dark plum flavours that this gives away its origin immediately. This is an extraordinary bargain.

Jacob's Creek Shiraz is one of the best value reds in the Southern Hemisphere.





Winemaker Rod McDonald shows his passion for great Syrah in every drop of the 2011 Te Awanga Estate Syrah Hawke's Bay.



ELEGANT SYRAH

2011 Church Road McDonald Series Hawke's Bay Syrah RRP \$26.59

Talk about a dark red flavour bomb of a wine; Church Road winemaker Chris Scott has bottled a deep garnet, full bodied beauty which is led by black pepper aromas and dark fruit flavours which taste of ripe Damson plums, blackberries, raspberries and strawberries. It is still extremely youthful but so impressive with its savoury aromas that this is great drinking now. It will also age, rewarding those patient enough to wait for up to 10 years for this wine to soften and mellow into a more complex, savoury flavoured red.

Trade enquiries for Jacobs Creek, Wyndham Estate and Church Road: *Permod Ricard NZ*, ph 0800 50 3000, permod-ricard-nz.com

MUST STOCK SHIRAZ

2012 Mr Riggs The Truant McLaren Vale Shiraz RRP \$14.99 - \$26.99

From its deep garnet colour to its smooth soft mouth feel, this is one classy Shiraz and since the oak is very much in the background of this wine's taste, it is almost more in the Syrah mould than the big bold Shiraz style. It is an excellent wine match with savoury, slow cooked winter meat dishes. Serve it with your best steak too, preferably with sauce au poivre – or else just a good grind of the fresh black pepper. No wonder it won a gold medal at the China Wine and Spirits Awards. Stock it.

CHANNELLING THE RHONE VALLEY

2011 Te Awanga Estate Syrah Hawke's Bay RRP \$24.99 - \$36.99

The great French wines of the Northern Rhone inspire winemaker Rod McDonald when making Syrah, which comes through in the complex layers of smooth, fleshy tasting wine. It has an elusively intense range of flavours which taste of black plums and juicy black cherries, both of which are harnessed to firm but smooth, youthful tannins. There is a spicy black pepper aroma on the nose, just to hint at the grape's identity. It's incredibly youthful, even at three years old, and shows just how well suited one of New Zealand's most moderate climate zones is to this great French grape. The 2011 Te Awanga Estate Syrah is a great New Zealand red, forging a path towards a new style.

Trade enquiries for Mr Riggs & Te Awanga Estate: *Federal Merchants & Co, federalmerchants.co.nz*

GLOBAL SYRAH STAR

2012 Crossroads Winemaker's Collection Syrah RRP \$33 to \$34

Impressively deep garnet in colour, smooth in the mouth and full bodied, this Syrah is an outstanding red wine to stock this winter; and even better now it has a global accolade to add to its credentials – this wine won the Best New Zealand Red Wine and Best New Zealand Syrah at the IWC in London this year (see our story, page 20).

Trade enquiries: yealands.co.nz

SACRED HILL'S FINEST

2009 Sacred Hill Deerstalkers Syrah RRP \$55 to \$60

Deerstalkers is one of Hawke's Bay's most respected and admired Syrahs, and it's easy to taste why in this spicy, smooth but still youthful five year old red, which was made by winemaker Tony Bish and his team at Sacred Hill. Along with Syrah's hallmark aromas of black pepper, nutmeg and cardamon like spice, there are intense dark plum flavours; all of which combine in a wine with a lingering finish and a great life ahead. It drinks well now and would be a great match with roast venison dishes, but it will also cellar well for at least a decade.

Trade enquiries: sacredhill.com db

Cote-Rotie, Saint-Joseph, Crozes Hermitage, Cornas and Hermitage are all code for high quality Northern Rhone Syrah - these are the legally controlled Appellation Controlees (ACs) in this region.

YALUMBA

165 Years
of Family Winemaking

YALUMBA



*The
Signature*

CABERNET SAUVIGNON - SHIRAZ

Since 1862, the finest and some of the vintage has
been hand selected and processed in our state-of-the-art
cellar in Yalumba as "The Signature". This wine
is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz
from premium vineyard vineyards and the
great Yalumba tradition of family winemaking.
The wine is made in a small batch and bottled in
Yalumba and is available in Yalumba and
in other regions of Australia.

   
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