

Your Australian & New Zealand Collection

from the Bonner
Private Wine Partnership



BONNER
PRIVATE WINE
PARTNERSHIP



America's Most Unique Wine Club

Dedicated to searching the world for astounding
wines from little-known winemakers

Dear Member,

“I’ve been sick as a dog... and I’ve had a wretched time trying to find a pinot noir...but I’m leaving Adelaide tomorrow. I’ll let you know what I find.” It was a month before the massive coronavirus outbreak and Barry was facing some challenges of his own in Australia.

Searching for wine in Australia and New Zealand, one begins to wonder if the counterclockwise spin that water takes on south of the equator as it disappears down your sink drain doesn’t apply to just about everything else down under, too.

Syrah is shiraz. The green rolling hills and steep slopes so prized in other regions are here eschewed for flat, red plains. Even the geography seems confused – this is the ‘new world’ after all, and yet Australia is one of the oldest land masses on Earth (along with Africa and India). You might then think that the ancient soil, worn down and sunbaked, is heaven for stressing grape vines. And it is... except that many of Australia’s best wines actually come from alluvial flood plains where you find soil as rich as in the Mississippi Delta!

Eventually, you stop trying to understand it and just give in... to spiced shirazes grown on blood-red clay soils... to plum and eucalyptus cabernets... to eccentric winemakers who work like mad scientists to match parcel and grape for the perfect wine. Australian winemaking legend Brian Walsh is fond of saying – in a twist on the French saying with a similar beginning but different ending – “a great wine is not born in the vineyard but in the brain.”

If there’s a criticism one can justifiably make of Australian winemakers it is that they can stray into overly technical winemaking, relying too heavily on machines instead of instinct. For our collection, we sought out winemakers who pack an earthbound, traditional sensibility – handpicked grapes, indigenous yeast, minimal chemicals etc. – along with their wine obsession.

And then, of course, there’s the matter of New Zealand. You’ve probably had an NZ sauvignon blanc at some point. You probably enjoyed it. To quote Karen MacNeil, “New Zealand sauvignon

blancs have no parallel anywhere in the world.” Their widespread acclaim led to some debate within the Partnership about whether to bother with them. What was there left to discover? Plenty, as it turned out.



Our search led us to Brian Brickwell's obsessively constructed Mahi sauvignon blanc. He doesn't take the popularity of the varietal for granted, and combines natural fermentation, wild fermentation, whole pressing, and a constantly shifting multi-parcel recipe to produce a stunning wine. Each year, upwards of four hundred European winemakers petition to make a vintage from his grapes. You'll see why when you open your bottle of Mahi enclosed here.

In this box, you will find six bottles:

- ① Balnaves 'The Blend' 2016
- ② Bremerton Selkirk Shiraz 2017
- ③ Langmeil Legendary Cabernet Shiraz 2017
- ④ Helen & Joey Estate Layla Pinot Noir 2018
- ⑤ Beelgara Shiraz 2017
- ⑥ Mahi Sauvignon Blanc 2018

We believe these six wines, some of which are not available anywhere else in the US, fully represent the earthy, old-meets-new character of Australia and New Zealand. Our advice is to let each bottle speak to you on its own terms. Each has a story to tell.

To your health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Will Bonner'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Will Bonner

A Quick Note on Wine Tasting

On the next few pages, we've included tasting notes. Here's a quick tip on how to approach them.

What makes a wine expert is not just depth of knowledge – which anyone can achieve – but a sensitivity to taste and smell. A great wine expert will find a hundred little aromas that most will never be able to detect.

Now, if you don't get the same flavors, does that mean you're wrong?

No. Tasting is subjective. Besides which, wines are always evolving in the bottle. That hint of cherry from a few months ago might present itself differently now. So, if you detect a flavor or aroma you don't see on the tasting sheet, add it. See what your friends say. Better yet, if you have a tasting that differs markedly from what's written here, send us your notes. We'd love to compare them!

2016 Balnaves 'The Blend' (Coonawarra)



Terroir: Terra Rossa strip
95 pts (James Halliday)
Sustainable, vegan
Merlot (60%), Cab Sauv
(34%), Cab Franc (5%),
Petit Verdot (1%)

When writing this description, we could not decide whether to lead with the blood-red clay soil (the famous Terra Rossa), or the fact that founder Doug Balnaves races guinea pigs.

We'll let you decide.

In the meantime, pop open a bottle of 'The Blend,' and experience the wonder that is 2016's merlot vintage, which comprise 60% of this Bordeaux style wine. The weather that year at the Balnaves' 130-acre vineyard was mild, with warm days and cool nights. The rain quickly washed down through the red clay into a retaining layer of limestone beneath.

You'll find a hint of that minerality in this bottle if you pay close enough attention. But the main event here is the intense nose of berry, smoke, and coffee. Yet this wine knows when to pull back, remaining balanced on the palate with hints of bay leaf, black current, and what you might describe as spearmint... but is actually eucalyptus, for which Australian wines are famous (eucalyptus trees are native and often grow around vineyards).

'The Blend' has just entered its prime drinking window. But it will keep. Balnaves' 'The Tally' is one of Australia's most collectible wines. Will 'The Blend' follow in its footsteps? Drink 2020-2028



2017 Bremerton Selkirk Shiraz (Langhorne Creek)



Owners: Willson Family
90 pts (Halliday)
Low sulphur
Shiraz

When Langhorne Creek isn't underwater, the flat floodplain quietly produces some of Australia's best shirazes. (Shiraz is the Australian name for syrah.)

At the heart of Langhorne Creek, the Willson sisters eschew excess chemicals to make a shiraz called Selkirk, named after their grandfather's ancestral home in Scotland.

Their winery, Bremerton, has been in the family for over three decades now. Since 1997 Rebecca has made the wines, while Lucy keeps the business humming along.

The richness and dark plum of Selkirk reflect the incredibly rich soil. But don't fear. In the nose, this wine is all pepper. In the mouth, it's balanced with supple tannins (18 months in fine grain American oak), rich fruit and smoke.

Do yourself a favor and cellar this if you can. If not, be sure to decant. Drink 2020-2025



2017 Langmeil Legendary Cabernet Shiraz (Barossa Valley)



Est. 1842

Owners: Lindner Family

**Low intervention, unfined,
handpicked grapes**

Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz

Driving through the orchards and barley fields of the Barossa Valley, you occasionally hear German spoken, a vestige of the Silesian immigrants who settled these reddish-brown hills of ironstone and clay over a century ago.

Paul Lindner, of the Langmeil winery, can trace his lineage back to Germany too. Yet, this elite winemaker owes his sensibility for traditional methods and juicy reds more to his Italian side of his family – specifically his great-grandmother, for whom he began picking grapes as a youngster at 20 cents a bucket.

Today, Paul still insists on handpicked grapes. He then extracts the juice over the course of two pressings lasting more than 20 hours. A traditional “open” fermentation follows. With zero filtration.

For the 2017 vintage of Legendary, not available in the US, high moisture kept temperatures cool before strong winds and higher temperatures arrived to dry out the vines for a harvest four weeks late.

By harvest, the grapes were positively bursting with flavor, producing deep purple and crimson hues. Aromas of blueberry, plum, and that signature Aussie eucalyptus. On the palate, Legendary is big and juicy but doesn't overwhelm. Let it sit a moment for black currents and a touch of spice. Drink 2020-2024



2018 Helen & Joey Estate Layla Pinot Noir (Yarra Valley)



Natural fermentation
Low intervention
92 pts (Suckling)
Pinot Noir

At the foot of the Warramate Range in the Yarra Valley, a small team of locals made less than seven hundred cases of this cool pinot noir.

After a great 2018 growing season, with plenty of wind coming off the Great Southern Ocean, the grapes were cold soaked for four days before allowing the must to naturally ferment.

Owner Helen insists on a low intervention approach to winemaking. Low intervention wines are mostly “made in the vineyard” with very little manipulation (e.g. filtration) done in the winery itself.

The idea is to allow for the purest expression of terroir. Judging by the ruby coloring, fresh cherry nose, and long finish... we’d say Helen has succeeded. You’ll also find a bit of charred earth, a minty spice (eucalyptus strikes again?) and subtle oak.

Safe to say, the Layla Pinot Noir is a complex wine. We tried to find it elsewhere in the US but could not. Given the small supply, enjoy it while you can. Drink 2020-2027.



2017 Beelgara Shiraz (Riverina)



Est. 1930

5 Star Winery (Halliday)

**Organic fertilizer,
No herbicides**

Shiraz

'Beelgara' is an aboriginal word for 'native companion.' Fittingly, their shiraz may just be the most Aussie wine in this Aussie collection. Founded in 1930, 5-Star Winery Beelgara grows grapes on the flat, red-brown plains of Riverina, where humidity stays low then rises in late summer for stable ripening. Winemaker Rod Hooper is a legend in the business, with at least 300 medal wins to his name (his credits also include Penfolds, Australia's most acclaimed winery).

Rather than industrial chemicals, Hooper opts for organic fertilizer made from compost. Instead of herbicides, Beelgara uses grazing sheep for weed control. Their perfect food pairing recommendation? It's not filet mignon. It's barbequed kangaroo steak.

In glass, aromas of paprika, leather, and cherry weave around the nose. Spice takes over once on the palate, with fresh peppercorn complementing a deep plum. Drink 2020-2024



2018 Mahi Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough, New Zealand)



**Owner/Winemaker:
Brian Bricknell**

**Indigenous yeast, 10%
fermented wild in barrel
92 pts (Suckling), 90 pts
(Parker)**

Sauvignon Blanc

New Zealand's vines are the first in the world to see the sun each day. Among them Brian Bricknell's nine carefully managed sauvignon blanc parcels in the Wairau Valley at the northern tip of the South Island.

His terroirs (we use the plural because Brian treats each parcel as a separate terroir), are so acclaimed that four hundred European winemakers petition Brian to make a vintage there every year. He allows just a few (less than seven).

From these parcels, Brian creates the precise mixture for each Mahi vintage. The exact composition changes with every year. The one constant is Brian's hands-off approach: using indigenous yeast (i.e. yeast already present on the grape skins), wild in-barrel fermentation, and extreme attention to limiting the juice's exposure to its skins.

A lot of white wines fall on a spectrum between cloying and unsatisfying. Mahi avoids both – it's long enough for real substance without that awful syrupy quality so common in other whites. There's a note in there that some describe as funk, but we'd call grassy. According to Karen MacNeil "New Zealand sauvignon blancs have no parallel anywhere in the world." This bottle will make you a believer. Drink it this spring.





Our Mission

At the Bonner Private Wine Partnership, our mission is to bring you unique bottles from all over the world. We seek wines that are bursting with life and character – wines with an adventure in every bottle.

Your Next Quarterly Shipment

As you read this, we are already selecting and arranging to import wines for next quarter's shipment. We will be in touch to share what we've found with you when we get closer to the shipping date. Until then, enjoy your wine! (And let us know what you think!)

Problem with Your Shipment?

Please call our customer service, 9-5 Monday through Friday. We want everyone to get the most out of this club and these wines. So if there's a problem, we'll do our best to make it right.

...Can We Ask A Small Favor?

Can we “compare notes” with you on these wines?

Maybe you picked up on aromas that we didn't. Maybe you just fell in love with a particular bottle. Or maybe the exact opposite. Whatever the case, we want to hear from you. Because you're part of this. And we can only keep this mission going if you're onboard.

Shoot us an email at feedback@bonnerprivatewines.com