

Contrary to popular belief, Australia is not a country populated with kangaroos, sheep, crocodiles, and a few humans. It is a country filled with talented, hard-working, friendly, and industrious people. Fortunately for us wine lovers, these qualities carry over to the wine industry. Karen MacNeil is quick to point out in her book *The Wine Bible* that high tech is the name of the game in today's wine production methods in Australia. Yet, in spite of the sophistication in production, the wine remains like the people themselves – outgoing and unpretentious.

I guess if you use the word “outgoing,” you must add to it “aggressive marketing skills and talents.” An example of this is Yellow Tail Wines, a product from New South Wales. In ten short years, the Casella Family, owners of the Yellow Tail Brand, have made their wine Australia's number one export product. In addition to this, Yellow Tail was selected by The British Intangible Consultancy firm to be the most powerful export label in Australia. The final tabulation for the label was 37 out of 10,000 labels worldwide. And yet, for all these accolades, Yellow Tail products remain wallet-friendly. Yellow Tail is available at most retailers in the Lowcountry. Look for products made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Riesling, Semillon, Pinot Noir, Grenache, Shiraz, and Pinot Grigio.

In contrast to Yellow Tail, at the other end of the spectrum, is Penfolds. Penfolds is the largest winery in Australia and it produces some of their most expensive wines. Without the influence of Penfolds, with their production and marketing skills, the modern Australian wine industry would look very different.

Take for example Penfolds “Grange.” This is an Australian wine made from the Shiraz grape and maybe a small percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon. It is considered to be the “First Growth” of Australia and it is in the collectable category. Grange is available to any person who wants to purchase it and can afford it. You must be free of any debt, your mortgage must be paid, and your children must have completed their education. Then you will be able to buy one bottle. (Just kidding! However I think you get the idea.) The good news is that I am able to say fear not. Penfolds produces wines in the normal, competitive price range made from chardonnay, shiraz, and cabernet sauvignon. Ask any retailer in the Lowcountry.

What other wineries from Australia have product here in the Lowcountry. They are too numerous to mention in total. However if we look at just a few, the first would be the wines from Rosemount Estate. Rosemount is a very successful winery that produces a broad spectrum of wines ranging from Chardonnay to Gewürztraminer, Riesling, Shiraz, Semillon, Cabernet

Sauvignon, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc. The wines are produced in two ways. First, the “split Label” blends. These are wines that are made from grapes purchased from all over Australia. They are then blended into wines that are both food friendly and able to be consumed alone... perhaps with a few hands of bridge. The pricing is in the \$10 to \$15 range. The second offering is the premium “diamond label” varietal wines. These wines are produced from grapes grown in a more controlled environment in higher elevations and somewhat cooler climate. The result is an intense flavor for each wine product. These wines fall into the “Reserve” category and carry a price that is significantly higher – \$20 to \$40 and up. As the saying goes; it is worth the price.

The next winery to point out is Jacob’s Creek. There are many reasons to bring this wine to your attention. The two most important are availability in the Lowcountry and the very large selection. Jacob’s Creek offers a very complex selection of red and white wines that fall into the categories of Classic, Sparkling, Reserve, and Super Premium. With the exception of the Super Premium, these wines are very competitively priced. (Super Premium can be ordered.) The many offerings are Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Grenache, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Grigio, and Moscato. It would appear to be a production nightmare to produce all of these wines year-in and year-out and yet they do it. Seeing the variety makes one want to spend a few days at the winery.

A word about Port. During 2008-2010 I had the pleasure of having an Australian family live next door to me. I was surprised to find out that they enjoyed Port very much. I was curious because I stereotyped with Portugal. I was dead wrong. The port that they drank was from Australia, blended from Grenache, Shiraz, and Mourvedre grapes; all grown in Australia. It approximated a 10-year tawny. I was glad to know that they loved sharing. My neighbors returned to Australia and were replaced by a young, single pilot who enjoys chasing girls in a brand new Chevrolet. Imagine that!

How about a restaurant with an award winning wine list? The Rockpool Bar and Grill in Sydney. *Wine Spectator Magazine* gave this restaurant their top rating. The restaurant specializes in wines from Burgundy, Bordeaux, Australia, and California.

I could go on for days about the wines from Australia. What has been written probably is enough to fill the USC Library. Suffice it to say “these guys are good at what they do.” They not

only produce well; but they export well. It is nice to be on the receiving end.

Cheers!

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