

Australian Cabernet Sauvignon

Australia is a blessed country for growing grapes with its abundant sunshine and variety of soil types and climate conditions.

When we think of Australian red wine, we automatically think of Shiraz, the work horse grape of Australia with noted producers like Penfolds with its Grange line, Wolf Blass with its Yellow Label series and even Lindemans with its Bin series. These three producers also produce very good if not world class Cabernet Sauvignon.

Where Shiraz shows a peppery attack with ripe plum and spice undertones, Cabernet Sauvignon is all about the fruit with very ripe red currant and black currant flavours, with notes of chocolate and mint on the finish. Cabernet Sauvignon has found a niche with Australian wine producers. Due to its relative ease in the culture and growing of the grape varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon is catching up to Shiraz as the main red grape variety being cultivated down under. Primarily being marketed as a single varietal, Cabernet Sauvignon is also being used in blends similar to those being produced in Bordeaux. Paired with Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon is showing a lot of promise and is being compared to wines from France, California and Chile.

The Australian wine growing map can be divided into five major regions; New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Each of these regions has different growing conditions, such as soil composition, geography, weather patterns and climates. So it is not surprising to note that all of these regions are not favorable to the culture of all the types of grapes. The Cabernet Sauvignon grape needs a long growing season with intense sunshine and long and warm days. The Cabernet Sauvignon grape buds late in the spring so it is least susceptible to frost, and also being thick-skinned the Cabernet Sauvignon grape is not prone to molds and fungi. Ripening later than most other grape varieties, the Cabernet Sauvignon grape develops a lot of tannins, a high acidity and phenolic compounds, permitting great aging potential. The regions in Australia that produce the best examples and the most sought-after Cabernet Sauvignon are New South Wales (Mudgee and Riverina), South Australia (Barossa Valley, Clare Valley, Coonawarra and McLaren Vale), and Western Australia (Margaret River and Great Southern). Of all these regions, it is in Coonawarra and Margaret River where the best Cabernet Sauvignon are cultivated and produced. Coonawarra wine region is known for its rich terra rossa soil covering precious layers of limestone. The wines produced in this environment are intense with classic fruit flavors, full-bodied and are able to be cellared for at least 10 years. Margaret River is quietly building a reputation for wines of outstanding quality, most notably blends with the Merlot grape.

The Australia section at your local NB Liquor store is well stocked with very good examples of Australian Cabernet Sauvignon. I recommend:

Wolf Blass Yellow Label 750 ml \$18.99
Wolf Blass Grey Label \$38.99
Angus the Bull 750 ml \$25.49
Katnook Estate 750 ml \$36.79
Lindemans Bin 45 750 ml \$13.99
Rymill Coonawarra Yearling 750 ml \$15.99
Sandalford 750 ml \$31.79
Wyndham Bin 444 750 ml \$16.99
McWilliams Hanwood Estate 750 ml \$15.99
Penfolds Bin 707 750 ml \$130.29

We also find blends where Cabernet Sauvignon is a major component and shows all of its qualities and flavour profile:

Lindemans Cawarra Shiraz/ Cabernet Sauvignon 750 ml \$11.29

Penfolds Koonunga Hill Shiraz/Cabernet 750 ml \$18.49

Peter Lehmann Clancy Red 750 ml \$20.29

Rosemount Estate Shiraz/Cabernet Sauvignon 750 ml \$15.99

If you are familiar with Australian Shiraz and want to try other examples of well made wine with bold flavors and full-bodied profiles, don't hesitate to sample Australian Cabernet Sauvignon. They are perfect matches with grilled meats or hardy meals and are sure to be welcomed additions to your wine cellar.

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