

# 50 GREAT REDS

Editor in chief **Campbell Mattinson** asked our Tasting Team to nominate their favourite ‘buy now or miss out’ red wines. The result? Fifty highly collectable, exceedingly drinkable and often great value examples.



TOMORROW we’ll drink better, brighter, wiser. That was the feeling I had as – shopping list in hand – I read through our 50 GREAT REDS selection this year. The truth is that everyone on the Halliday Tasting Team is a wine lover first and a wine reviewer second, and so we too are always on the lookout for the best, the brightest and the bargain-est. Value therefore is always at the top of our mind but then, of course, ultimate quality is the main goal. The great perk of genuine, well-researched wine enthusiasm is that regardless of budget, or setting, or crowd, or objective, you can expect to have every occasion covered, and to always drink brilliantly.

For lovers of Australian red wine then – outside of the annual *Halliday Wine Companion* book of course – this list is the best research you can get. Keep it close at hand. It’s chocked with great wine after great wine, as it always is, but on top of this the 2021 vintage was a ripper in many regions, and so the general standard at both the top and value end is higher than usual. Given what we’ve all been through over the past few years, 2021 is the vintage we had to have. It’s ably complemented by the vintages around it, but our general advice is, see 2021, buy 2021.

Now let’s get started 🍷

## Blends



### 2021 Chapel Hill The Parson Grenache Shiraz Mourvèdre, McLaren Vale

The Parson GSM is almost always good but this 2021 takes the cake. In the words of James Halliday, “Wow. Isn’t this a bargain? It’s juicy, it’s silky, it’s beautifully balanced and it’s so fresh on the finish. All three varieties have their say. You don’t have to wait for it, but it will wait for you.” CM

94 points, \$18



### 2022 The Story Wines Super G Grenache Syrah Mourvèdre, Grampians

It’s not heavy but it’s so wild with spice and so generally captivating that it’s hard to put it down. This is a cracker of a wine. Red and blue berried fruit flavours, black pepper notes, a mezcal aspect and flings of roasted nuts. It’s ripe and robust in a mid-weight way, but the real key here is that it’s aflame with roasted spice/pepper notes. CM

95 points, \$34



### 2022 De Bortoli La Boheme Act Four Syrah Gamay, Yarra Valley

I gotta say that year in, year out, De Bortoli nails these well-priced, great-drinking red blends. A gorgeous, bright crimson purple, the ‘22 La Boheme is bursting with red cherries, blackberries and spice. Juicy and loaded with flavour, it’s also got soft tannins and bright acidity to balance. At this price, it might just be the pizza/pasta wine bargain of the year. PR

95 points, \$22



### 2020 Grosset Gaia, Clare Valley

This biodynamically-farmed blend of cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc was entered into our annual awards judging, where all wines are tasted ‘blind’, and it set tongues wagging for all the right reasons. It has both density and elegance in spades; always a wonderful combination. According to Mike Bennie, it’s “elegant, refined, tightly packed and sleek. It’s a wine of great density and energy that extends beautifully and long, rippling with fine tannin and tightening in a satisfying way.” CM

95 points, \$100



### 2021 Yeringberg Yeringberg, Yarra Valley

From a great year, this is a beautifully fragrant and seductive Yeringberg (cabernet sauvignon/cabernet franc/merlot/petit verdot/malbec) with aromas of blackcurrants, blueberries, cherry blossom, violets and just the right amount of oak-derived cedar and pencil-shaving scents. The epitome of medium bodied, it’s elegant, discreet and persistent on the palate, even at this early juncture. Equally important, the fruit is perfectly framed by the wine’s fine-grained and silky tannins and, as has been demonstrated on many occasions, this will mature both slowly and gracefully. PR

98 points, \$98



### 2021 Torbreck Vintners Cuvée Juveniles, Barossa Valley

A famous Barossan blend named after the epic Juveniles wine bar in Paris. This year it’s a blend of grenache/mataro/carignan/counoise/shiraz from vines up to 150 years of age across five Barossa parishes. It’s always a wildly aromatic wine, here with ripe raspberry, wild strawberry, red plum and red apple skin notes – with hints of dried meats, five-spice, Chinese barbecue shop and earth. It’s medium bodied and savoury with the gentle tug of chalky tannin and a fine acid line. It makes for great drinking, preferably young and with great gusto. DB

93 points, \$29



### 2022 Bleasdale Vineyards The Wild Fig Shiraz Grenache Mourvèdre, Langhorne Creek

A part estate, part grower blend of shiraz/grenache/mourvèdre. It was left on skins for 12 to 14 days, and matured for six months in used puncheons or tank (to retain freshness). As James Halliday writes, “Blending at different times for different purposes is part of ‘the knowledge.’ The wine is ridiculously good, likely to cause dribbling when tasting.” CM

95 points, \$22



### 2021 Yarra Yering Dry Red Wine No. 1, Yarra Valley

A blend of 60/24/11/5% cabernet sauvignon/merlot/malbec/petit verdot, the cabernet coming from the original 1969-planted vineyard. A deep, bright crimson purple. Bordeaux-like with its aromas of cassis, iodine, bay leaf and some olive tapenade. The oak is already well integrated. Powerful and balanced with lots of layers. Ripe, chewy tannins course through the wine’s concentrated fruit, yet the overall impression is one of balance and harmony. This is a serious and complete cabernet. PR

98 points, \$150



### 2019 Vasse Felix Tom Cullity Cabernet Sauvignon Malbec, Margaret River

It’s often a shame to taste a flagship wine so young when it has decades ahead of it, but that feeling lasted a nanosecond before turning to respect, then to “oh my, this is awesome”. Sometimes I get very excited. In this seductive youthful stage, it’s fragrant with florals from violets to lavender, plenty of blueberries and bramble all wonderfully savoury with lots of warming spices. The palate offers charm, detail and excellent structure with velveteen tannins and a fine acid line teasing it to a long, long finish. JF

98 points, \$190



# Shiraz



**2021 Cofield Wines Provincial Netherby Shiraz, Rutherglen**  
As robust and ripe as this wine is, there's also a degree of genuine sophistication here. Fine, fragrant aromas of blueberry, plum, black fruits, earth and woody spices come with a lively amaro edge. There's an inherent energy across the palate, buoyed by bright red fruits, lively spices, discreet oak and ripe, cherry pip tannins. Everything is in its place. Bring out some protein-rich food and see it shine. JP **95 points, \$48**



**2020 Xanadu Wines Circa 77 Shiraz, Margaret River**  
A stunningly deep and bright purple-red hue, matching the fruit within, all plums and spiced cherries. There's the inherent brashness of youth to this wine, yet there's also a vibrancy as sandy tannins and crunchy acidity kick in across a palate that's (in the end) reined in and tight. This deserves its place as arguably the best value shiraz in the Margaret River region, not to mention beyond. JF **95 points, \$20**



**2021 Mike Press Wines Single Vineyard Shiraz, Adelaide Hills**  
Mike Press does it again, and the price remains incredible. James Halliday says, "This wine is at odds with its generous alcohol. It's medium- to full-bodied with a freshness contributed by its relatively open weave. The bouquet, too, is part of that freshness. Above all else, it is the variety speaking loud and clear in a vintage to be remembered for years to come." CM **94 points, \$15**



**2019 Craiglee JADV Shiraz, Sunbury**  
Craiglee is an Australian treasure and its form is as good now as it's ever been. Jane Faulkner writes, "There's such beautiful texture and feel to Craiglee shiraz, even when there's just a dash of viognier (aka JADV). It remains savoury yet plush with juicy fruit, succulence and such plump tannins. The finish lingers as does the desire to pour another glass, quickly." CM **95 points, \$45**



**2021 Epsilon Shiraz, Barossa Valley**  
Western Barossa shiraz from the Greenock subregion; matured in both French and American oak. It's jam-packed with juicy blood plum and macerated summer berry fruits, though there are also hints of licorice, dark chocolate, fruitcake spices, earth, purple florals, iodine and vanillin oak. There's plenty of depth to the fruit; the tannins are fine and sandy; and the finish is awash with spicy, plummy vitality. It's super value, too. DB **93 points, \$22**



**2021 PLAN B! WINES Frespañol Shiraz, Frankland River**  
The back label says, "an orgy of bright red berries and warm spice" ... did it just get a little warmer in here? Strong regional scents and flavours. Black pepper, sea spray, raspberry and sweet earthiness. Nice. Lots of perfume, fine, glossy tannins and a crisp, refreshing finish. It's very well balanced and somewhat understated, despite the 14.5% alcohol. Elegant is another word. Good drinking here. A bargain, it feels. MB **93 points, \$25**



**2020 Shaw + Smith Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz, Adelaide Hills**  
This for me is one of the red wines of the year. It's so savoury, so firm, so deeply fruited and so compelling at every turn. It's heady with fragrant dry-and-green herbs, comes laced

with pretty floral notes, pours rich red cherry, plum and graphite flavours straight at you and coats everything in the lightest, most deft application of smoky, chocolate-like oak. It's brilliant to drink now but it will mature for absolute yonks. It's magnificent. CM **97 points, \$95**



**2021 Wirra Wirra Vineyards Catapult Shiraz, McLaren Vale**  
The vigneron of McLaren Vale were wildly ecstatic about the 2021 vintage, and finding this wine at this price explains their joy. It's the essence of McLaren Vale shiraz: medium- to full-bodied, laden with black fruits of all kinds, dark chocolate, licorice and savoury, ripe tannins. JH **95 points, \$26**



**2021 Sons Of Eden Marschall Shiraz, Barossa Valley**  
From six vineyards in six districts, picked between 19 February and 16 March, with a wide range of fermentation techniques, though all with skin contact for 15 to 20 days, including a five-day cold soak. A smooth and supple medium-bodied wine is the result, with plum and blackberry fruits, integrated oak and tannins. Value-plus. JH **95 points, \$29**



**2021 Singlefile Wines Single Vineyard Shiraz, Frankland River**  
This is a seriously good, cool-grown shiraz. Its deep, bright colour hops in early, as it were, to claim the crown, but there's more to come for what is a complex, medium-bodied wine. The bouquet has spicy, woody, earthy notes followed by a fruit-dominant palate, with tangy red and black berries to the fore. JH **96 points, \$39**



**2022 Gentle Folk Village Syrah, Adelaide Hills**  
Fermented as (100%) whole clusters before being matured in French oak (10% new). It's grown on two prime Adelaide Hills vineyards, with only 233 dozen made. It's a pity that there isn't more of it, because the quality is glorious. This is the savoury style of shiraz/syrah, done to perfection. It's so perfumed, so nutty, so fresh with cherry-berried fruit and also so lengthy. It's an intensely peppery wine with gentle chocolate notes drifting through. In short, it's a pearler. CM **97 points, \$45**



**2021 Mistletoe Wines Home Vineyard Shiraz, Hunter Valley**  
The vines were 29 years old when used to fashion this wine. There was some whole bunch inclusion, and the French oak was part new, part used for the 11-month maturation. The flavours are complex, with plum, spice, leather and Hunter earth, the balance flawless, the length prodigious. I have tasted many Hunter shiraz wines aged between 30 and 50 years, and have no doubt whatsoever this will cruise through the 50 year barrier. JH **97 points, \$25**



**2022 Yabby Lake Vineyard Single Vineyard Syrah, Mornington Peninsula**  
Concentrated, rich, deep and simply magnificent. Excellent fruit, heady aromas all spiced up, some charcuterie and florals. It works along a more savoury line and the fuller-bodied palate feels glossy and smooth, with precision tannins lightly silty and the invigorating acidity dutifully falling in place: add all that together and it makes for an outstanding wine. JF **96 points, \$40**



**2022 Serrat Shiraz Viognier, Yarra Valley**  
Australian shiraz viognier (or shiraz, for that matter) doesn't get much better than this. It's a saturated purple in colour, and is saturated and intense on the nose, too. Concentrated yet balanced, you'll find aromas of blue and dark fruits, violets, incense and sweet spices such as clove and cinnamon. A gorgeous mouthful, this is powerful and structured but without any sense of heaviness. It's pretty much a steal at this price. PR **98 points, \$50**



**2022 Nick O'Leary Wines Heywood Shiraz, Canberra**  
If I had to pick one region for its shiraz, the Canberra District has my heart. The aromatics, the quality fruit, the plush palate, everything just comes together to produce a fine-boned red. Heywood is no exception. Dark fruit, spicy, cedary oak just a bit player, the shapely detailed tannins, the fine acidity and the overall feel of this wine are all remarkable. JF **96 points, \$37**



**2021 Thomas Wines Two Of A Kind Shiraz, Hunter Valley/McLaren Vale**  
A 52/48% blend of Hunter Valley and McLaren Vale (Blewitt Springs) fruit. The two components are separately fermented but blended soon after the end of fermentation; matured for 16 months in French hogsheads. It's a fascinating blend, with major synergy, as each component takes centre stage, but the dusty/chocolate/fine/savoury notes prevail. This is a mighty \$25 wine. JH **96 points, \$25**



**2019 Juniper Heritage Shiraz, Margaret River**  
Fruit off the estate's unirrigated 1973 plantings takes centre stage – it's aged in used hogsheads for 16 months, so no obvious oak

impact. A lot of depth here, fuller bodied, rich and savoury with plenty of spice (including sumac and pepper), shapely, ripe tannins and an expansive palate. This is an excellent Margaret River shiraz, and it's here to stay. JF **96 points, \$40**



**2021 Provenance Wines Shiraz, Geelong**  
An exquisitely beautiful wine. Complex by nature, svelte by design, seductive in its own way. Musk, black pepper, blueberry and ripe plum flavours roll across the palate in an even wave, pulling tannin with it for sure but mostly, at every step, inspiring pleasure. You have to admire the application of oak here – it's so perfectly judged, it's the perfect seasoning. But then everything about this wine is deft, in the best of ways. CM **96 points, \$36**



**2021 Bondar Wines Violet Hour Shiraz, McLaren Vale**  
Sourced from Rayner vineyard estate plantings dating back to 1947. Uncoils itself like a snake after a nap on a sunny afternoon, the colour rich and deep, as is every aspect of the wine on the lustrous bouquet and palate. Yet it's also a tapestry of silk and velvet, a little more than medium bodied. Bargain bonanza. JH **97 points, \$32**



**2021 Pyren Vineyard Reserve Syrah, Pyrenees**  
Aged in 500L French oak, 20% new. It's a superior wine. It takes woody spice notes and delivers them on a plate overflowing with fresh, ripe, juicy berries, blue and black and red. It throws pepper into flowers, mezcal into cedar, and pops licorice sticks into the berried flow of it all. This is both a fastidious wine and a joyous one. It's worth celebrating. CM **97 points, \$60**



## Cabernet sauvignon



**2021 Best's Wines Cabernet Sauvignon, Great Western**

If this wine auditioned for a role in the film adaptation of *Remains of the Day* it would get the part in a heartbeat. It's just so exquisitely well mannered. Ultrafine tannin, perfectly ripened fruit, the line of acidity placed just so. Even the oak wraps smokily around the herb notes, as if to ensure that they don't appear too loud. This mid-weight cabernet would make the perfect butler to the finest of meals. CM  
**95 points, \$25**



**2020 Cherubino Cherubino Cabernet Sauvignon, Margaret River**

It's not common to describe a two-year-old cabernet as charming, but this is what you get here. There's juicy cassis fruit, quality cedary French oak, and perfectly pitched tannins. I agree with the back label that the wine will gain in richness and complexity over the next 10 to 15 years, but I also argue the cause of the wine (right) now. JH  
**97 points, \$75**



**2020 Reschke Wines Bull Trader Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra**

Coonawarra cabernet, on a platter. Blackcurrant and bay leaf flavours gradually merge into chocolate, tobacco, dust and plum. There's a classic aspect to this, both in its flavour profile and in its structure. It's mid-weight in the best of ways. Drink this now or later; it has both angles covered. Add price into the equation and you have an irresistible offering. CM  
**93 points, \$20**



**2018 Tim Gramp Wines Basket Pressed Watervale Cabernet Sauvignon, Clare Valley**

Slick with satiny tannins, imbued with blueberry and mulberry fruit characters, seasoned with clove and cigar box savoury elements – and generally looking/tasting a

bit claret-like. This is ready for drinking now and doing cabernet in the Clare Valley proud. This was tasted on a cool day in a cool cellar, and it worked like that – don't drink it without 10 minutes in the fridge, is the message. It's pitched perfectly, and is a gem. MB  
**93 points, \$24**



**2021 Wynns Coonawarra Estate Black Label Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra**

Such fine-grained tannin, such even-handed fruit, such a lengthy finish. This is a beautiful Black Label cabernet, elegantly medium-bodied, blessed with blackcurrant, forest berry, cool mint and cedar characters, and tempered by tobacco-like leaf notes. This will be a gorgeous drink with a few extra years on it. CM  
**96 points, \$45**



**2019 Bloodwood Cabernet Sauvignon, Orange**

The joys of perfectly ripe, cool-climate cabernet sauvignon berries can be found right here. Blackberries, juniper, Kalamata olive and wild thyme are quickly chased by charcoal, pepperberry and clove. The patience shown by Stephen and Rhonda Doyle can always be banked upon, with years in bottle before release, in this case, two years in their cellar. That time has softened out grainy tannins to a silty, powdery texture with perky acidity that has staying power. This is drinking exceptionally well now and will continue to cellar for a decade. It's a stunner of a wine at an unbeatable price. SW  
**95 points, \$36**



**2020 Balnaves Of Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra**

This wine is perfectly structured and flavoured. Blackcurrant, dark chocolate, bay leaf and violet flavours come threaded with tobacco and assorted fragrant herbs. It's all built on tannin, in a way, and yet regardless the fruit flavours flood straight through, like a wave. Stand atop the bow of this wine, peer out towards the horizon, and that's where this wine's future lies. CM  
**96 points, \$40**

## Pinot noir



**2021 Castle Rock Estate Diletti Pinot Noir, Porongurup**

Castle Rock Estate has been wooing us for years with its Diletti Chardonnay and Diletti Riesling, and now we have a pinot noir to swoon over. As James Halliday writes, "It's an amazing wine, with a palate of extreme intensity and silky length. Cherries, rose petals, mouth-watering savoury tannins, all in balance and harmony." CM  
**97 points, \$46.**



**2022 Mayer Bloody Hill Villages Coldstream Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley**

Gorgeous from the outset with aromas of violets, red cherries and lavender. Some strawberry sherbet even. Pure fruited and fine boned, this elegant and gently sinewy wine is a pleasure to drink now but has the structure to improve over the next few years. PR  
**96 points, \$38**



**2021 Oakridge Wines Vineyard Series Willowlake Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley**

The Willowlake vineyard was one of the first to venture to the Upper Yarra. Balance is the key word for this beautiful pinot, the red cherry/ berry fragrance is mirrored by the palate, where delicate but clear savoury notes of spice are woven through the red fruit palate and aftertaste. JH  
**97 points, \$45**



**2022 Giant Steps Primavera Vineyard Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley**

Wonderfully perfumed and vibrant with its aromas of cranberries, wild strawberries, a little Sichuan pepper, fresh citrus oil and musk roses at dusk. A wine of exquisite finesse and excellent depth, the tannins are very fine and long, as is the finish. This will provide much enjoyment over the next decade or so. PR  
**97 points, \$90**

## Grenache



**2021 Old Plains Terreno Old Vine Grenache, Adelaide Plains**

This is from one of the last remaining old vine sites in the Adelaide Plains. Harking to the 1950s, these vines are treated right: hand picked and basket pressed. The barrique ageing works surprisingly well, too, imparting tannic fibre as much as cocoa and coffee grind to a fleshy palate with a core of molten raspberry bonbon. Anise and dried herb stain the finish. This is sumptuous, weighty and immensely characterful. NG  
**93 points, \$25**



**2022 Tellurian Grenache, Heathcote**

This is a beautiful grenache. It's gutsy in varietal terms but it's complex, measured and moreish. Smoked meats, plums, raspberries, nuts and assorted exotic spice notes come drifted with florals. One sip and you know that you're onto something special. There's a good deal of dry, velvety tannin here too but the flow of fruit remains uninterrupted; always a good sign. CM  
**95 points, \$40**



**2021 Yangarra Estate Vineyard Ovitelli Grenache, McLaren Vale**

Among the finest wines in Australia. Destemmed fruit, crushed and extracted across a whopping 133-day window in eggs. Blood plum, sappy raspberry, licorice root, bergamot and pepper grind. Clove, tamarind and mint. Gorgeous. Pinosité aplenty, yet beautifully extracted with skittish, long-limbed and gritty tannins corralling the fray. Tear-inducing stuff. Levity, transparency and intensity, all in one. NG  
**96 points, \$80**

## Alternative styles



**2021 Bleasdale Vineyards Second Innings Malbec, Langhorne Creek**

Open fermented, 10 days on skins, matured for nine months in French puncheons (10% new). It is a seriously good malbec by normal standards, but Bleasdale is Australia's foremost maker of the variety, investing it with rich, velvety plum and blackberry fruits, supported with amiable tannins. This is exceptional value. JH  
**95 points, \$22**



**2022 Rymill Pioneers Petit Verdot, Coonawarra**

Australian petit verdot is such an underrated beast, or at least good examples of it are. Berried fruit flavours here, ripe and sound, come adorned with just-enough roasted spice, florals and smoked cedar additions. This is a red wine in a very good place. It feels even-handed, ripe, generous and yet well contained. No hesitation. CM  
**94 points, \$25**



**2021 Ross Hill Wines Pinnacle Series Griffin Road Vineyard Cabernet Franc, Orange**

From the famed old block on Griffin Road comes a show-stopping cabernet franc setting new style trends for the variety. The wine screams class, like a perfectly tailored suit. Exotic purple flowers, Madagascan vanilla bean and patchouli. Sweet elderberry, acai and tonka bean. The palate is lithe with a silken texture and a long cola-spiced finish. The wine sits confidently in its framework with superb acidity and finely woven, silty tannins. This will make you rethink everything you've ever known about cab franc. SW  
**96 points, \$50**



**2021 Anderson & Marsh Parell Tempranillo, Alpine Valleys**

Spain meets Alpine Valleys and it's fireworks all around. The result is an impressive wine combining both power and elegance.

Intense scents of wet earth, dark berries, alpine herbs and licorice spice with gentle savoury overtones. It looks and smells dark and brooding, but then the palate lifts, the aromatics rise and elegance and poise rule with tannins fine and nimble. A top year brings tempranillo into its own in this part of the world. Bravo! JP  
**96 points, \$45**



**2021 Mordrelle Wines The Gaucho Malbec, Langhorne Creek**

Deep, verging on impenetrable purple announces a malbec of outstanding depth, texture and structure. The magic of the wine stems from the rivulet of acidity that flows throughout the long palate. It results in black fruits that draw you back to the spices, dark chocolate (as much regional as varietal) and impeccable management of tannins. JH  
**96 points, \$35**



**2021 The Happy Winemaker Carménère By Jean-Paul, Heathcote**

Some wines mark out their territory and then throw their lives at defending it. This wine defends a wine world of its own design: it's all twigs and spices, boulders and earth, with forest and winter berry characters coming at pace. It charges through then swirls all about, the energy high, like a fury of nutshells, undergrowth and moss. It's not for everyone – rage of this kind never is. But geez, as a drink, it offers a ride to remember. CM  
**95 points, \$32**



**2021 Brand & Sons Last Sunday Drive Cabernet Franc, Coonawarra**

Firm, powerful and impressive. There's been a resurgence in varietal cabernet franc wines of late, and this is an excellent example of why. Blackcurrant, cocoa and eucalyptus flavours feel both rock solid and bold in the mouth (in a positive way), leading to a dry, resounding finish. You have to enjoy tannin to go for this because there's plenty of it here, but in that context, it's very good, and especially so when you factor in price. CM  
**94 points, \$26**