

## WINES TO WATCH



TEXT CAMPBELL MATTINSON

# Taught and Terrific

Others could learn from this quartet of winemakers who don't always play by the book but produce potent wines with unique characteristics. Top marks.

### MUNARI

You can't help but admire the wines of Munari. They're mostly produced from grapes grown in a prize patch of Heathcote soil, in a mature vineyard, by hands that love them for what they are. And no, this is not an investment scheme, this is two people – Adrian and Deborah Munari – tilling the soil, tending the vines and making the best wines they can. The wines they make are universally good or excellent, and the only reason you may not have heard of them is because the wines are generally powerful and rich, yet dry and dusty – and not at all sweet. And mostly,

bought it, but when they first started on the property they spent three years making wine and selling it only to family and friends, before finally going public with the fruits of the 1996 vintage. It says a lot for the Munari approach: growing the grapes right, and then being doubly sure that the wines going into the bottle are the best they can be, was the priority from the start.

Over the past four years, a string of top wines has trailed out of the winery. Visit the cellar door and the quality across the range is excellent – malbec, merlot, cabernet and shiraz are all star performers.

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when folks go hunting for Heathcote shiraz, they go hunting for sweetness.

Finally, naturally, thankfully, Munari has come up with a wine that bridges those two styles. It's called the 2004 Munari Schoolhouse Red Shiraz/Viognier (A\$30), the first shiraz viognier they have released. That subtle sweetness of texture, that slipperiness, that ability of viognier to embolden the fruit has done crowd-pleasing wonders for this wine. You're going to love it. It's deep and gutsy, chewy and substantial, with flavours of smoked blackberries, soil, game and mint.

The Munari vineyard itself is about 10 kilometres north of the Heathcote township, near Jasper Hill. Adrian makes the wines – both he and Deborah are ex-school teachers – though his qualifications are in viticulture, part of the reason why the fruit characters in all the Munari wines are so pure and true. Adrian and Deborah have now been working the Munari vines for nearly 14 years. The vines were already established when the pair

### MAJELLA

Majella never makes a great fuss but always makes an impact. The Lynn family have been growing vines in Coonawarra for more than 30 years but have only made wine under their own label for 10. And as soon as they became eligible for listing in the prestigious *Langton's Classification of Australian Wine*, there they were. Keeping it simple, the philosophy is just to make great wine, sell it at a reasonable price and build up a lot of loyalty in the process.

Talking about value, they have two new wines out, both of which are so good you can't drink them without reaching for the phone to order more. The first is the 2004 Majella The Musician Cabernet Shiraz (A\$19), all bramble and blackcurrant and dust, and very low in oak. It's pure Coonawarra fruit, and it's lovely.

The second is the luxurious 2003 Majella Coonawarra Cabernet (A\$28). This is a serious wine: sweet, long and curranty, with excellent form and complete deliciousness tattooed on every glass. I love it.

