

SusaMon

W I N E S

The 3 Premium Shiraz from Chris Ringland (Ringland's First Growth Shiraz)

Robert Parker once spoke of the smell of a 1947 Cheval Blancs while tasting a „Three Rivers“ from Ringland. After the FINE tasting of several vintages in Barossa Valley one can add: „Indeed, but with twice the viscosity“. The specifics and complexity of any given vintage are always at the forefront of Ringland’s thinking and are carved out with razor-sharp precision. He stays true to his principle – both for his single-vineyard wine (Chris Ringland Shiraz) as well as the wines, that he creates in cooperation with the highly gifted winegrower Adrian Hoffmann from the selection of his absolutely best vines (Dimchurch Shiraz and Hoffmann Vineyard Shiraz). In all his wines Ringland lays out a carpet of caramel, on which the fruit forcefully and silkily glides down the palate, garnished with a variety of intensive spices, depending on the characteristics of the vintage. Nothing is excessively extracted or ripened. Reverse osmosis does not exist for Ringland. Much rather he seems to hit the absolute peak of the maturity every single year, which is at the same time the most important as well as the most difficult decision of a winemaker. His Shiraz have utmost viscosity while also being fine, silky and elegant. Their creminess does not dominate the fruit but serves it, so that it is always in the center. The selected use of wood and the long storage support the soft and silky flow of the wines. Chris Ringland leaves some vintages up to six years in the barrel. Everything is balanced and seems easy, the high alcohol values are practically not felt. Ringland thereby creates a new and fascinating dimension of Shiraz, that one needs to have tasted to believe it.

What is the secret to his craft? The wine is like his creator, full of passion with simultaneous scientific and meticulous care. The grapes are hand-picked, and carefully processed with a curb press, that Chris Ringland has developed in cooperation with a ship hydraulics expert, followed by warm fermentation with extremely gentle extraction of the skins. Ringland takes his time for every single step. The curb press helps him to expose the wine to oxygen at a very young and crucial stadium and its careful handling makes sure that the remaining tannins of the skins are not overextracted. Everything is balanced which is later reflected in the wine.



Chris Ringland always fills tanks and barrels all the way. He is convinced that otherwise the wine loses aroma. Filling with finished sulfur dioxide injected wine is not even up for discussion for him. Much rather he sees the defining catalyst for quality in carefully selected wood. Its air permeability slowly let the water evaporate, which increases the concentration of alcohol and aromas in a natural way. The specific microclimate in Barossa Valley with humidity of only 15 percent throughout the whole year creates ideal conditions. Ringland moreover propagates that the storage duration of a rich wine

(he only uses new French Oak) has sustained positive influence on the harmony of its flavors and its structure. The wine might appear to have excessive wooden notes after a year in the barrel, however, as long as the cellar conditions are stable and the sulfur dioxid values are handled sensitively, forty to sixty more months of storage will lead to greater and exceptional complexity as well as longevity. As the FINE tasting of older vintages of Ringland’s Shiraz including a secondary tasting after 48 hours of decantation has impressively proved, the long barrel storage of the Barossa wines does them quite well. Ringland’s wines are made for a little eternity and will bring joy to connoisseurs for many decades.

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In his very own humbleness when Chris Ringland speaks of „Projects“ he is talking about work he is doing outside of his own vineyard in the Eden Valley. In contrast to most of his colleagues in the Barossa region he does this very often and regularly. Ringland is convinced that the quality of his wines sustainably profits specifically from the inspiration that comes from projects in Europe. There, he primarily works in Spain with the Bodegas Alto Moncayo and El Nido of the Gil-Family. For projects in his own „front yard“ he always works with the uniquely talented and passionate grower Adrian Hoffmann with the result of adding two more world class Shiraz wines to his collection, the so called Hoffman Ringland Shiraz and the Dimchurch Ringland Shiraz.

As a native Australian with deep German roots Adrian Hoffmann, a vintner with a strong physical appearance, works exclusively for third parties. From his one-hundred-twenty hectares located in the northern part of the valley next to the Ebenezer municipality, he supplies the „Who-is-Who“ of the Barossa wine elite. His plots are primarily planted with Syrah and other Rhône varieties as well as Cabernet. With respect to quality, Hoffmann is amongst the small elite of his guild, such that for instance Ben Glaetzer, who with his Shiraz Amon Ra has many friends in Germany, would not be able to ensure the annual production of his exceptional product without Hoffmanns fruit. For the quality of his grapes that partly come from vines that have existed for over a century he spares neither efforts nor costs. For example he has installed large fans made of steel that can blow doused warm air into the vines if needed. This measure became necessary as in recent winters ground frosts, that endanger the existence of the age-old vines, have appeared in northern Barossa valley. Optically, this reminds of the aesthetics of on-shore wind farm, but it suits the purpose.

Hoffmann's vineyards are dominated by clay, lime, sand and red potter's earth. Importantly, it is this rich variety of soils that next to alignment and nurturing of the vines creates the unique quality of the fruit. The complex foundation is brought about by multiple distinct micro-terroirs from which Adrian Hoffmann, depending on the needs of his customers, creates the right parcel-mix for a given delivery. In this manner, in cooperation with Chris Ringland since 2006 the first pure „Project“-Shiraz Hoffmann Vineyard Shiraz and since 2009 the second pure „Project“-Dimchurch Shiraz of extraordinary quality is being created.



Approximately half a hectare of the best micro parcels, which vary every year depending on maturity and quality of the grapes, are compiled for these two wines. For this, solely Hoffmann is responsible, while Ringland, who trusts his friend, takes over responsibility for the further process once the fruit is delivered. In both cases the result is exceptional and distinguishes itself primarily through quantity and style of the wines. With respect to Dimchurch, which is developed with more substance and body and a focus on fruit, depending on the vintage, only ten to twelve

barrels (300l Australian Hogshead) are produced. Concerning the Hoffmann Vineyard Shiraz which is more directed towards finesse and elegance and crafted for „a little eternity“ as Adrian Hoffmann says, only five barrels are produced each year. Both wines are only produced in very good years and clearly there are many such in the Barossa region. In the super hot and dry year of 2008, a year with the potential for a „Monster-Wine“ as Ringland puts it, the two have left a very extraordinary barrel within the Hogshead for an additional year beyond the usual five years of storage. They will fill it exclusively into Magnum bottles with a special red label which reminds of Jean-Louis Chaves „Cuvée Cathelin“ or the „Red Label“-Barolos of Bruno Giacosa. The wine is currently finding its way from barrel to bottle and we can assume that whenever Ringland and Hoffmann decide to bring it to market, a global run amongst connoisseurs and collectors will take off.