

UNCORKED



\$30

**De Iuliis 2007 Show Reserve Shiraz**

HERE'S a shiraz of beautiful structure, flavour and cellaring potential, which took 56.5-point top gold in the 2007 shiraz dry red class at this year's Hunter Valley Wine Show at Singleton. It is deep purple and has scents of cherries and gum leaves. Intense, sweet, ripe plum flavour shows on the front of the palate and peppermint, briar and black olive fruit characters meld with toasty oak on the middle palate. Firm ferric tannins feature at the finish. It would go well with grilled turkey medallions, lamb crown roast or Rocksalt Restaurant's slow-cooked cider beef on latke. It can be bought at the Broke Road cellar door or by mail order on 4993 8000 or [www.dewin.com.au](http://www.dewin.com.au).

**Ageing:** 12 years

**Rating:**



\$23

**Scarborough 2003 Shiraz**

THE white-coated technocrats of the judging ring probably wouldn't like the sweaty saddle nuances on the nose of this lovely older Hunter shiraz. Its bright ruby red hues and vibrant blackcurrant front palate flavour delight me. The middle palate shows dark chocolate, spice and maraschino cherry fruit elements married to subtle vanillin oak, while the finish has smooth earthy tannins. It would be great with veal and olive ragu, barbecued duck and balsamic vinegar dressing or a Moroccan-spiced roast leg of lamb. It is available in some wine stores, at the Scarborough Gillards Road, Pokolbin, cellar door and by mail order on 1300 888 545 or [www.scarboroughwine.com.au](http://www.scarboroughwine.com.au).

**Ageing:** 10 years

**Rating:**

BOTTLER



\$70

**Capercaillie 2006 The Ghillie Shiraz**

THIS was my favourite at the uber tasting, a wine that encapsulates the late Alasdair Sutherland's mastery of Hunter shiraz. It is dense dark purple in the glass and has aromas of red currants and lavender. Profound cassis flavour comes through on the front of the palate and dark chocolate, caramel and cloves fruit characters combine with lightly applied spicy oak on the middle palate. Persistent berry fruit and smooth dusty tannins combine at the finish. Try it with duck in red currant sauce, roast pork loin with prune stuffing or rosemary and walnut marinated lamb filets. It is available at the Capercaillie cellar door, in Londons Road, Lovedale, or on 4990 2904 or [www.capercailliewine.com.au](http://www.capercailliewine.com.au).

**Ageing:** 15 years

**Rating:**

# Shiraz packs a punch, even blind



WINE  
**JOHN LEWIS**

The future looks good for bolstering the Hunter's growing reputation for top-notch shiraz.

AMONG the wines sent to me for review each week, I probably get about four shiraz reds that are as hard to ignore as a Melbourne Storm grapple tackle.

Such wines weigh in at 15 to 16 per cent alcohol and have proliferated on the back of rave reviews from Robert Parker, the publisher of America's *Wine Advocate* newsletter and arguably the world's most influential wine critic.

I understand how Parker and others can be seduced by these power-packed reds, but I retain misgivings about their food friendliness and their ability to age gracefully.

It's a style that producers from the Barossa, McLaren Vale and Victoria's Heathcote Region do best and, although recent drought years have brought some higher-octane Hunter reds, it's not a characteristic style from our area.

So what does the future hold for Hunter shiraz?

Excellence, I believe, on the evidence of the "Uber Shiraz Tasting" I attended last month at Newcastle's harbourside Rocksalt restaurant.

And at this year's Hunter Valley Wine Show, 25 of the 64 gold medals went to shiraz.

The rain-drenched vintage may have ruined hopes of bumper 2008 shiraz reds, but the uber tasting brought forth some superb 2005, 2006 and 2007 wines.

The uber event was organised by the Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association, which invited Melbourne-based wine writer Campbell Mattinson to select 20 shiraz reds from the Hunter and other wine regions.

I was fortunate to be among participants, who also included other media folk and wine industry notables.

The wines were served "blind" and were only identified at the function's end. Campbell, the author of the wonderful biography *The Wine Hunter - Maurice O'Shea, the Man Who Changed Australian Wine*, made some fascinating choices.

As it later emerged, he had included the Vinea Marson 2005 Heathcote Syrah, the Castagna 2005 Beechworth Genesis Syrah, the Torbreck 2005 Barossa-Eden Valley Factor Shiraz, the Wirra Wirra 2005 RSW McLaren Vale Shiraz, the Lazy Ballerina 2007 McLaren Vale Reserve Shiraz, the Rolf Binder 2006 Hanish Barossa Shiraz, the Two Hands 2006 Lily's Garden McLaren Vale Shiraz and the St Hallett 2006



Blackwell Barossa Shiraz, which I reviewed last September 24 and awarded five stars.

The other 12 wines selected by Campbell were a lip-smacking array of Hunter reds - the Tulloch 2006 Shiraz, the Audrey Wilkinson 2005 Museum Reserve Lake Shiraz, the Tyrrell's 2007 Four-Acres Block Shiraz, the Scarborough 2005 Shiraz, the McWilliam's Mount Pleasant 2005 O P and O H Shiraz, the Margan 2007 White Label Shiraz, the David Hook 2006 Old Vine Shiraz, the De

Iuliis 2007 Limited-Release Shiraz, the Andrew Thomas 2007 Kiss Shiraz, the Capercaillie 2006 The Ghillie Shiraz, the Meerea Park 2006 Alexander Munro Shiraz and the Brokenwood 2007 Graveyard Shiraz.

Given my long addiction to Hunter shiraz, I wasn't surprised to find that only the St Hallett 2006 Blackwell and the Vinea Marson 2005 Heathcote were in my top 10 wines.

The other eight included the Audrey Wilkinson 2005 Museum Reserve, the Tyrrell's 2007 Four-



RED-HEADS: Winemakers and the media at their blind tasting, left, led by Campbell Mattinson, above.

Acres Block, the Mount Pleasant 2005 O P and O H, the Meerea Park 2006 Alexander Munro, the De Iuliis 2007 Limited-Release and Brokenwood 2007 Graveyard. Others were the Scarborough 2005 and the Capercaillie 2006 The Ghillie, both reviewed today in Uncorked.

I'm sure that all the tasters took note of Iain Riggs's reference to British wine writers' recent criticism of Australian wines for a sameness and lack of individuality.

Regionality, he declared, was a vital tool in combating such perceptions.

Hunter shiraz was a very different and distinctive wine.

"You don't get much more regional than Hunter shiraz," he said. "Medium-bodied is not a dirty word and Hunter shiraz has an important place in the world of wine."

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