

merrily ream

imports of sparkling wine from all countries averaged \$16 a litre. Presumably much of this is France's great regional specialty Champagne. The value of French imports is undoubtedly boosted, too, by other high-priced regional classics from Burgundy, Bordeaux and the Rhône Valley.

By far our largest volume of imports in the year, though, were from New Zealand – 23.9 million litres worth \$209.4 million. The average price of \$8.77 a litre is more than double the \$4.18 a litre value of our exports to them. With that sort of advantage, they don't need to win the rugby. Give or take a little high-priced

Australians drink about 480 million litres of wine annually, averaging well over 20 litres a person.

pinot noir, the Kiwi charge was led by sauvignon blanc from Marlborough. This has gone from zero a generation ago (the first vines were planted there in 1973) to being one of the world's great wine specialties.

Indeed, our average price of \$3.75 per exported table wine litre compares poorly with Italian and Spanish imports, averaging \$5.69 and \$6.23 a litre respectively. South Africa, though, seems to be our new source of cheap wine with an average price of just \$2.19 a litre.

As a nation we prefer local white wine (203.9 million litres) to local reds and roses (150.2 million litres). But red and rose drinkers appear to be somewhat fussier than white drinkers. In 2007-08 Chateau Cardboard accounted for 37 per cent of red and rose sales compared with 54 per cent for whites.

If that's all a little too dry, I'll leave you with one more thought, attributed to Robert A. Taft, "I always find that statistics are hard to swallow and impossible to digest. The only one I can remember is that if all the people who go to sleep in church were laid end to end they would be a lot more comfortable."

handpicked
Fergus McGhie



Australian rose makers could learn a lot from the Gabbiano Rose. It takes full advantage of the skin contact in the winemaking for tannin and structure. It's also a reasonable 12.5 per cent alcohol. There's nothing we need to learn when it comes to big reds and Mildara's Cabernet Shiraz is a classic.

drink now

Scarborough White Label
2008 Semillon
Hunter Valley, \$25 (cellar door only)

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$\$

Low-alcohol wines seem to be becoming trendy but classic Hunter Semillon has always been low in alcohol. Scarborough's white label semillon is a delightfully quaffable 10 per cent. Packed with layers of citrus fruit and finishing clean and crisp, with no need to rely on residual sugar for flavour, this is what easy summer drinking is all about.



Mount Langi Ghiran, Cliff
Edge NV Sparkling Shiraz
Grampians, \$35

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$\$

It's a shame this wine is quite pricey because I would drink a lot if it were a bit cheaper. Still I guess that's what you need to pay for quality, and quality it is. Loads of ripe, juicy dark fruits explode in the mouth carried on a wave of soft tingling bubbles. There's some yeasty complexity too and a fairly dry finish. Try it with gourmet sausages and mash.



something special

Michelini 2008 Pinot Grigio
Buckland Valley Vic, \$18

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$\$

This small producer in Victoria's Alpine Valleys impressed with its '08 pinot grigio. It's the first time I've tried Michelini wines but regular readers will know I have a soft spot for this region and its Italian varieties in particular. Crunchy pear flavours and some good weight and power on the palate finish with crisp precision.



Gabbiano 2007 Rose
Tuscany IGT, \$19

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$\$

With each mouthful I became more entranced by this wine. I began to wonder why there's no Australian equivalent. Light and savoury with a mid-palate of soft cherry, it's the texture of this wine that appeals most. On the finish there is the perfect amount of grip, a tension between wine and palate which had me craving more.



for the cellar

Printhe Swift Family Heritage
2004 Cabernet Sauvignon
Orange, \$32

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$\$

The Printhe Cabernet is the Swift Family's reserve wine, premium fruit given the best of everything and plenty of care and attention. Dense soft cabernet fruit is layered over mocha oak and persistent fine grained tannins. It's a wine beautifully in balance now but it has a long future ahead if you let it lie down a little longer.



Mildara 2005
Cabernet Shiraz
Coonawarra, \$29

★★★★★ \$\$\$\$\$

Here's a wine with plenty of cellaring potential. Firm slightly unyielding tannins, big rich primary fruit flavours and it's from a region with more than a little pedigree. Blackcurrant, mulberry and plums combine with a touch of spice from the shiraz and beautifully integrated oak. I hope I'm able to try this wine again in a decade.



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