

ST HENRI

Shiraz 2017

St Henri is a time-honoured and alternative expression of shiraz, and an intriguing counterpoint to Grange. It is unusual amongst high quality Australian red wines as it does not rely on any new oak. Released for the first time by Penfolds in the early 1950s (first commercial vintage 1957), it gained a new lease of life in the 1990s as its quality and distinctive style became better understood. Proudly, a wine style that hasn't succumbed to the dictates of fashion or commerce. St Henri is rich and plush when young, gaining soft, earthy, mocha-like characters with age. It is matured in an assortment of old large vats that allow the wine to develop, imparting minimal, if any oak character. Although a small proportion of cabernet may sneak into the blend, the focal point for St Henri remains shiraz.

GRAPE VARIETY

97% Shiraz, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon

VINEYARD REGION

Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, Eden Valley, Port Lincoln

WINE ANALYSIS

Alc/Vol: 14.5%, Acidity: 6.6 g/L, pH: 3.63

MATURATION

12 months in 50+ y.o. vats

VINTAGE CONDITIONS

South Australia's wine regions experienced a cool and mostly wet winter and spring, which provided the vines with plentiful soil moisture profiles. Longstanding rainfall records were broken across South Australia, with some regions experiencing minor flooding. The dams in Eden Valley were full by the end of winter. October was windy, which challenged fruit-set, however winds warded off any potential frost events in the Barossa Valley vineyards. Cool conditions extended the growing season, with flowering and veraison both later than expected. No heatwaves were recorded during summer and only a handful of days surpassed 40°C. Warmer weather in March was welcomed, allowing grapes to finish ripening, develop deep colour and varietal character. Harvest for shiraz grapes commence mid-March, a month later than the previous year.

COLOUR

Deep plum red

NOSE

Savoury notes first detected, yet quickly courted by generous cherry liqueur/chocolate aromas. Scents of dried beef sit alongside a textbook garrigue deconstruction – dried herb/oregano/thyme/lavender. Perplexingly, an exotic emission continues – best guess – cophia, cranberry and activated walnut! Shiraz unplugged... oak or artefact not part of this wine's demeanour. Smells like? St Henri.

PALATE

A masterclass of texture: plush, glossy, seamless – abetted by silky, polished tannins. One taster quipped: "millennial tannins"!

Black olive; coffee and mocha flavours abound, as do the generous shiraz fruits sourced from the northern viticultural reaches of South Australia.

Medium-bodied, with a great core and lovely framework – yet what is sipped fills the mouth so effortlessly.

A succulence is immediately noted – a fruited pomegranate/cranberry/quince paste-induced acidity, balanced with fruit sweetness.

Not trying too hard. St Henri rarely does.

PEAK DRINKING

2022 – 2052

LAST TASTED

March 2020