

# ST HENRI

SHIRAZ 2020



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

Shiraz

## VINEYARD REGION

McLaren Vale, Barossa Valley, Clare Valley

## WINE ANALYSIS

Alc/Vol: 14.5%, Acidity: 6.6 g/L, pH: 3.62

## MATURATION

12 months in large seasoned oak vats

## VINTAGE CONDITIONS

South Australia experienced the second consecutive year of winter drought. Spring was cool and dry, conditions that continued well into November delaying flowering and fruit-set. With root-zone moisture levels well below average, irrigation was vital. The 2019 calendar year was the driest on record in the Barossa Valley, while the Clare Valley had the driest winter in 120 years. Clare Valley and Barossa Valley experienced frosts in September that also reduced yields. October was windy in Clare Valley which challenged fruit-set. The beginning of summer was marked by a state-wide heatwave. In all, the Barossa Valley had 26 summer days recorded over 35°C. Cooler conditions in January and February provided some much welcome relief. McLaren Vale had above average rainfall in February, which ensured the vines were able to finish the remainder of the season in good shape. Bunch weights and berry numbers were low across the three regions with yields significantly below average. As is often the case, adversity and low yields can produce outstanding quality, and 2020 was no exception. The harvest produced some outstanding parcels of shiraz well suited to the St Henri style.

## COLOUR

Garnet red with a dark purple core

## NOSE

The fruit profile is a delight, oak playing no role in the aromatics. Shiraz, unadulterated! The descriptors need to be coaxed from the glass with a gentle swirl.

Fruits of the forest are first to emerge, berry conserve, strawberry flan and rhubarb tart. There is a hit of confectionary, reminiscent of red glace cherries.

Savoury notes include German *Blutwurst* spiced sausage, pan scrapings from roast lamb and salt cured beef with black peppercorns. Ferric notes of iron filings and whetstone swarf round out an impressive showing.

## PALATE

True to form, the palate is quite savoury. Japanese nori paper and olive brine offer a very morish umami nuance.

Fresh blueberry and mulberry leaf anchor the core of the mid-palate. Exotic spices adding intrigue, Alleppey turmeric, toasted cumin, pimento.

The tannins are very tactile, comparable to Dutch cocoa. A classic St Henri that will reward extended time in the cellar.

## PEAK DRINKING

Now – 2050

## LAST TASTED

April 2023