Barossa Chapters
Shiraz
Barossa owes much to Europe. Its name, cultural instincts, languages, food, viticultural and winemaking heritage, are all transportations that have been moulded and honed by 175 years of Australian innovation.
Barossa

One could be forgiven for thinking Barossa was settled by the Spanish. Its name can certainly be traced back to the windswept Barrosa Ridge in the Spanish region of Andalusia where in March 1811 Lieutenant General Thomas Graham of the British Army defeated the French Marshal Victor, during the Napoleonic Peninsular Wars.

Graham received a peerage and was named Lord Lynedoch but it was his young aide-de-camp Lieutenant William Light who was to remember the name. When he was appointed Surveyor General of the new colony of South Australia in 1836 and discovered a verdant valley he named it Barrosa – and a slip of the pen by a public administrator gave the region its unique name, Barossa.

However it was not Spanish but English and Silesian settlers who pioneered the region. The English, including the colony’s founder George Fife Angas, took over pastoral sheep and cattle runs in Eden Valley, east of Angaston; and the Silesian settlers – mainly peasant farmers and artisans fleeing Prussian religious persecution – settled the Valley floor at Bethany, Langmeil, Tanunda and Nuriootpa.

After experimenting with a range of crops, from flax to tobacco, the Silesians found the Mediterranean climate suited wine grapes. Entrepreneurs with big visions built stone wineries and started making fortified “ports” and “sherries” as well as fine table wines called “claret” and “hermitage” and “burgundy”, paying homage to European tradition. Barossa became the largest wine-producing region in Australia by the turn of the century, sustaining a community of grapegrowers, winemakers, cellar hands and coopers and earning significant export income for the state of South Australia.

Through the 20th century Barossa had its booms and busts – Imperial demand crashed during both wars and in the post-war 1960s and 1970s customers wanted sweet sparkling wines such as Barossa Pearl and Cold Duck.

Finally Barossa settled on what its soils and climate do best – ripening red wine grapes – and from the 1980s onwards its fame grew for its full bodied Shiraz and Cabernet, Grenache and Mataro. In the late 1990s during an international boom in demand for Australian wine, the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation decided to define Australia’s regions along similar (but less restrictive) lines to Europe’s appellation system.

The Barossa’s winemaking geographic indication zone was formalised in 1997, comprising two regions: the warmer Barossa Valley “floor” specialising in red wine and the cooler, higher altitude Eden Valley, which focussed on fine white wines such as Riesling and Chardonnay as well as medium body reds such as Shiraz and Cabernet.

Now Barossa is the most recognised name in Australian winemaking, due to its forgiving viticultural environment, its treasure-trove of century old pre-phylloxera vines and its six generations of grapegrowing and winemaking heritage.

But it has also evolved over 175 years into much more than a wine region. Old Silesian cultural food traditions continue to be celebrated, such as the fermentation of meats into sausage and wursts; salting and smoking hams and bacon; the preservation of fruits and vegetables such as pickled onions and dill cucumbers and the maintenance of age old baking traditions: sour dough breads, pretzels and streuselkuchen.

There are also European music traditions still maintained such as brass bands and men’s and women’s choirs and Barossa continues to be the epicentre Lutheran faith in Australia with more than a dozen steepled churches dotted across the valleys.

This colourful culture has attracted thousands of new settlers over subsequent generations, continuing the immigration that started in the 1840s, making Barossa a vibrant, diverse and exciting contemporary Australian community.
Barossa Shiraz. The name summons up a sensory adventure of colors – violet to inky black, flavors that are a little licorice-tinged with some dark chocolate and plums, and textures that are always generous, full bodied, warm and earthy, with fine silky tannins and an acid structure to ensure longevity.

Shiraz is the most widely planted grape variety in Australia and Barossa can rightfully claim to be its spiritual home. Australia’s rarest and most collectable wines are all Shiraz and they all come from here – Penfolds Grange, Henschke Hill of Grace and Torbreck The Laird to name a few. Barossa Shiraz also dominates the Langton’s Wine Classification, Australia’s objective endorsement of quality, with cult wines such as Rockford Basket Press and Chris Ringland Shiraz.

Before it reached thoroughbred status Barossa Shiraz was a workhorse, used to provide the richness and colour and flavor in vintage and tawny “ports”.

Then came a modern evolution – Penfolds Chief Winemaker Max Schubert returned from a fact finding trip to Bordeaux where he learnt about ageing Cabernet in French oak. There was very little of either in Australia so he made his first Grange using Shiraz aged in American oak... and invented a style that would continue for the next 70 years.

That type of necessity has always been the mother of invention in Barossa. Shiraz-Cabernet blends, often referred to as ‘claret’, were a dominant part of the wine landscape from the late 1800s and can claim to be one of Australia’s only unique wine styles – given that France’s appellation d’origine controlee system outlawed such multi-varietal blending in 1919. In Australia, filling the trademark hole in Cabernet’s mid-palate with a little Shiraz richness, seemed eminently sensible!

In the 1990s a few far-sighted visionaries realised the treasure trove of the region’s old pre-phylloxera Shiraz vines and started paying growers handsomely for this previously worthless fruit. So a new Barossa Shiraz emerged: basket pressed out of these old, low yielding vines it was dark, concentrated, rich and – most importantly – rare.

World-wide demand made some winemakers chase higher and higher levels of concentration, oak and alcohol but that was a short term aberration – by the early 2000s Barossa Shiraz had settled into a more balanced expression of place, its robustness offset more by French oak than American and its alcohol levels hovering around 14°Baumé.

Now Barossa Shiraz ranges from the famous and collectable to the friendly and approachable... and everything in between.
between. It is in blends that showcase its workhorse brothers Grenache and Mataro; it finds its way into an aromatic partnership with Viognier and adds body and texture to Tempranillo and Touriga to Malbec, Sangiovese… and occasionally even benefits from a splash of Riesling.

The energy amongst winemakers and grape-growers to stretch the boundaries of Shiraz remains as driven as it was a century ago, with an extraordinary diversity of new flavours and textures from sub-regional single vineyards. Even after 175 years the best Barossa Shiraz remains to be imagined and created.

Learn more and watch videos at barossa.com/wine/barossa-chapters.

"Paul Jaboulet came out from the Rhone Valley in France. I put on my 1962 Hill of Grace and he put on his 1962 La Chapelle. What was amazing was how similar the wines looked and what they matured into. Our wine was from vines that were over 100 years old, and his wine was from vines that were probably only about 40 years old. So the Old World was new and the New World was old!"

- Stephen Henschke

There is a stereotypical view of Barossa Shiraz that it is big and high in alcohol but that’s not the case at all, there are so many different expressions from elegant to full bodied that all come down to having a well-managed vineyard.”

- John Duval

**Langton’s**

Langton’s Classification of Australian Wine started in 1990 as an independent “form guide” to Australia’s finest wines and has become the most widely recognised classification outside of Europe. Wines that enter the Classification must have a minimum of ten vintages and have established a consistent following by collectors and investors at wine auctions (the secondary wine market).

From the inaugural Classification of 34 wines in 1990, the sixth edition – Langton’s Classification of Australian Wine VI released in May 2014 – now records 139 wines. Barossa has the largest percentage of Shiraz based wines in the Classification.

---

**Exceptional**
The most highly sought after and highly prized first-growth type Australian wines.

- Penfolds Grange
- Chris Ringland Shiraz
- Henschke Hill of Grace Shiraz
- Henschke M1 Edelstone Shiraz
- Rockford Basket Press Shiraz
- Seppeltfield 100 Year Old Para Vintage Tawny
- Torbreck RunRig Shiraz

**Outstanding**
Benchmark quality wines with a very strong market following.

- BVE Black Pepper Shiraz
- Glaetzer AMON-Ra Shiraz
- Grant Burge Messnach Shiraz
- Greenock Creek Raenfeldt Road Cabernet Sauvignon
- Greenock Creek Raenfeldt Road Shiraz
- Henschke Cyril Henschke Cabernet Sauvignon
- Kaesler Wines Old Bastard Shiraz
- Penfolds Bin 389 Shiraz Cabernet
- Penfolds St Henri Shiraz
- Penfolds RWT Shiraz
- Peter Lehmann Stonewell Shiraz
- Rockford Black Sparkling Shiraz
- Wolf Blass Platinum Shiraz
- Yalumba The Octavius Old Vine Shiraz

**Excellent**
High performing wines of exquisite quality.

- Charles Melton Nine Popes Grenache Shiraz Mourvèdre
- Elderton Command Single Vineyard Shiraz
- Henschke Keyneton Euphonium Shiraz Cabernet
- John Duval Plexus Shiraz Grenache Mourvèdre
- Kalleske Johann Georg Old Vine Shiraz
- Langmeil The Freedom 1843 Shiraz
- Penfolds Bin 28 Kalimna Shiraz
- Pewsey Vale The Contours Riesling
- Rolf Binder Veritas Hensch Shiraz
- Seppeltfield Para Liqueur Tawny
- St Hallett Old Black Shiraz
- Torbreck Descendant Shiraz Viognier
- Turkey Flat Shiraz
- Yalumba The Signature Cabernet Shiraz

*Denotes wines that are made with a significant proportion of Barossa grapes.
Matching Barossa Shiraz

Despite it’s many incarnations – from medium bodied elegance to full bodied opulence – Barossa Shiraz is a red wine with good structure and texture... and that means its preferred partner is meat.

The first stop on the Barossa wine and food-matching trail is the butcher – ideally Schulz in Angaston, Linke’s in Nuriootpa or Thornby’s in Tanunda – where you can find several generations of locals who know their regional beef and lamb as well as game and smallgoods like the back of their hand.

Barossa Shiraz from the Northern Grounds works particularly well with beef that has some integrated fat for flavour – a well-marbled scotch fillet or sirloin or a standing rib roast. The robust acid structure “cuts the fat” and cleanses the palate while the silky tannins and plum fruit flavours marry well with the savouriness and texture of beef.

Medium to full-bodied Barossa Shiraz from the Southern or Central Grounds works better with leaner cuts of beef – fillet or undercut – as well as lamb roasts and cutlets or a loin of Berkshire pork. The savoury nuances of the wine – raspberries and red cherries, violets and milk chocolate – marry with the finer flavours of the meat rather than dominate.

Slow cooked meat dishes also bring out the best in Barossa Shiraz, particularly when a generous glass or two is added to the pot with dishes such as coq au vin, beef bourguignon, osso bucco or a slow cooked lamb shoulder. The earthy flavours and textures of mushrooms, tomatoes, onions and smoked bacon (from Barossa of course) accentuate the generosity of flavour in Barossa Shiraz...and if you’re enjoying it by an open fire overlooking a winter vineyard, then your palate will really sing.

In a rural environment like Barossa foraged game is also a popular marriage with Shiraz. Quail, hare, kangaroo and rabbit are readily found in the vineyard and are often cooked in a Shiraz sauce to impart flavour and tenderness while venison, pheasant and guinea fowl are farmed locally and provide additional layers of flavour matching.

These are of course the most obvious food and wine matches, but in Barossa everyday is the right day to open a Shiraz so one learns to be flexible.

Maggie Beer paté, some fresh local Apex Bakery bread, a slice or two of Steiny’s mettwurst and a dill cucumber or two makes a nice pruner’s lunch accompanied by a glass of vibrant Shiraz and the local cheese industry always keeps Barossa Shiraz in mind when it develops new products – winemaker favourites include the Barossa Valley Cheese Company’s luscious, creamy cow’s milk Wanera or the sharp and bitey La Dame Goat’s Milk cheese.
The taste of Barossa Valley & Eden Valley Shiraz

**Barossa Valley**

- **Altitude**
  112-597m (53%<280m)

- **Climate**
  Warm and dry during the growing season. The warm conditions help build weight and fruit richness to the wines.

- **Soils**
  Soils are very diverse ranging from the deep sandy loams to clay loams and red brown earths.

**The taste of the wines**

- **Style**
  Full-bodied, opulent, rich, robust.

- **Colour**
  Deep purple-red

- **Aroma**
  Blue and black fruits (dark cherry, fruitcake, plum, blackberry, mulberry, black olives) spice, chocolate, licorice.

- **Shape and texture**
  Round and velvety. Firm tannins (chalky, grainy) moderate to strongly puckering and drying.

**Eden Valley**

- **Altitude**
  217-630m (99%<280m)

- **Climate**
  The higher the altitude results in wetter and cooler weather. Day time temperatures can be 2-3°C cooler (night time temperatures 5-7°C cooler) than the Barossa Valley. The cooler conditions result in a more elegant perfumed, linear-shaped wine.

- **Soils**
  Mainly shallow, rocky soils.

**The taste of the wines**

- **Style**
  Medium to full-bodied, vibrant, elegant.

- **Colour**
  Vibrant red.

- **Aroma**
  Mainly red and blue fruits (red and black cherry, raspberry, plum), violets, sage and pepper.

- **Shape and texture**
  Linear to oval, silky, savoury. Fine tannins (dusty, powdery) moderately to strongly drying.

Diversity in the taste of Barossa Valley Shiraz

**Southern Grounds**

- **Fragrant, elegant and smooth**
  Wines from vineyards in the parish of Lyndoch

- **Altitude**
  112-310m

- **Climate**
  Warm. Rainfall is higher than in other parts of the Valley.

- **Soils**
  Sandy loams to clay loams.

**The taste of the wines**

- **Style**
  Medium-to full-bodied, generous, lush, elegant, refreshing.

- **Colour**
  Deep red to purple-red

- **Aroma**
  Mild red and blue fruit with some black fruit nuances (red cherry, raspberry, blueberry, plum) fragrant, violets, mint and chocolate.

- **Shape and texture**
  Linear to oval, smooth, savoury. Fine, gentle tannins (satiny and powdery), moderately puckering and drying.

**Central Grounds**

- **Softness and generosity**
  Wines from the Eastern edge of the Barossa Valley, in the parishes of Bethany and Krondorf.

- **Altitude**
  180-280m

- **Climate**
  Warm. In summer, cool afternoon and evening gully breezes moderate the temperature, providing relief for vines on hot days.

- **Soils**
  Sandy brown loams and black cracking clays.

**The taste of the wines**

- **Style**
  Medium- to full-bodied, generous, vibrant.

- **Colour**
  Deep purple-red

- **Aroma**
  Mainly red and blue fruits with a touch of black fruit (red cherry, fruitcake, blueberry, plum), perfumed, mint and chocolate.

- **Shape and texture**
  Oval to round. Fine, supple tannins (silky and dusty), moderately puckering and drying.

**Northern Grounds**

- **Concentration and richness**
  The Western Ridge around the parishes of Greenock and Seppeltsfield is where, typically, you find the most powerful expressions of Barossa Valley Shiraz, structured for ageing with black fruits wrapped in firm muscular tannins.

- **Altitude**
  Altitude of the flat land north of the parish of Nuriootpa is around 280m. Altitude of the Western Ridge varies from 280-450m.

- **Climate**
  Warm. Sites on the Western Ridge with east facing slopes provide relief from hot afternoon sun.

- **Soils**
  Soils vary but are predominantly red-yellow brown loams over red clay. Shattered ironstones are found in the soils that are shallower here than elsewhere. A small section of yellow and white sands is found in the area of Kalimna.

**The taste of the wines**

- **Style**
  Full-bodied, opulent, concentrated, rich.

- **Colour**
  Deep purple-red

- **Aroma**
  Blue and black fruits (dark cherry, blackberry, plum, black olives), dark chocolate, cocoa powder, inky, iodine.

- **Shape and texture**
  Round, velvety. Firm, strong, expressive tannins (chalky and grainy), strongly puckering and moderately drying.