

Under \$18

Jacob's Creek Riesling 2009 \$9-\$12

ORLANDO Jacob's Creek's heritage includes more than 160 years of growing riesling in South Australia. No wonder then that even their inexpensive rieslings are impressive. This example, blended across various South Australian regions, offers intense lime, floral and cinnamon aromas through a clean, zesty palate and good varietal flavour. A bargain. (12 per cent alcohol; screw cap.)

Ageing? No.

Food ideas Fish and chips; steamed Chinese dumplings.

Stockists include Liquorland stores; Woolworths Liquor outlets.

★★★★ \$\$\$



Cookoothama Cabernet Merlot 2007 \$13-\$15

A MINTY young cabernet designed for consumption over the next couple of years, this Riverina cab-merlot has plenty of uncomplicated appeal. That mint on the nose is accompanied by earthy black-currant aromas that track through the medium-bodied palate with freshness and balance. Drying tannins are nicely in sync. (14 per cent alcohol; screw cap.)

Ageing? Drink over two years.

Food ideas Lamb cutlets; stir-fried beef with mint and Thai basil.

Stockists include Boccaccio Cellars, Balwyn; Dan Murphy's, Malvern and Prahran.

★★★★ \$\$\$



\$18-\$30

Chalmers Vermentino 2009 \$24-\$26

VERMENTINO is an Italian-origin grape variety first planted in Australia in recent years. Many Italian vermentinos are lacklustre to say the least but this Murray Valley version is well-made, light and savoury, with some Italianate earthiness, stone-fruit and citrus-blossom aromas. It tastes dry and uncomplicated, with an appetising finish. (11.5 per cent alcohol; screw cap.)

Ageing? No.

Food ideas Shellfish; linguini with crab.

Stockists include City Wine Shop; Blackhearts & Sparrows, Windsor, East Brunswick and North Fitzroy.

★★★★ \$\$\$



Brand's Laira Cabernet Merlot 2008 \$20-\$22

THIS robust Coonawarra cabernet blend is not a wine of great finesse but it has tonnes of character. The blackcurrant, berry and plum aromas have slightly roasted, prune-like characteristics and oak is handled well. The palate is densely flavoured and dry, with a grainy texture and a grippy foundation of tannins. Coonawarra on steroids. (15 per cent alcohol; screw cap.)

Ageing? Yes, two to eight years.

Food ideas Braised shin of beef; rump steak.

Stockists include Nillumbik Cellars, Diamond Creek; Dan Murphy's stores.

★★★★ \$\$\$



Ratings

★★★★★

A superb example, a near perfect wine of great character, worthy of the big occasion and the best company.

★★★★☆

First class, a wine of distinction not far below the top rating.

★★★★

A very good wine of real style and personality.

★★★☆☆

Good quality, a cut above average.

★★★

A sound, agreeable wine without faults or nasty bits.

Value

\$\$\$

A wine with a price tag that makes it a steal.

\$\$

Reasonably priced relative to quality.

\$

A price tag that stretches things.

Indulge yourself

BlackJack Shiraz 2007 \$38-\$40

BLACKJACK'S Bendigo shiraz is among the region's best red wines, offering generous, smooth personality without too much overt regional character. The '07 has a well-concentrated nose of berries, spice, aniseed and mocha that leads through a seamless, generously proportioned, palate of lush texture. The finish is long, with soft, ripe tannins in excellent balance. (14.5 per cent alcohol; screw cap.)

Ageing? Drink over six years.

Food ideas Grilled lamb kebabs; lamb and root vegetable pies.

Stockists Carlton Cellars, Carlton North; Malvern Vale Club Hotel, Malvern.

★★★★☆ \$\$



Brokenwood Maxwell Vineyard Semillon 2005 \$36

RELEASED alongside Brokenwood's outstanding 2004 ILR Semillon, this is another classic but in a more mineral style. Straw, citrus, grass and steel notes meet the nose; complex and complete. The palate is round, savoury and lightly toasty in flavour, with plumpness and length that belie its low alcohol. (11 per cent alcohol; screw cap.)

Ageing? Drink over five years.

Food ideas Grilled fish; Japanese seafood custard.

Stockists include Just released. Available from Brokenwood cellar door at brokenwood.com.au, (02) 4998 7559.

★★★★★ \$\$\$

