

Australia's favourite wines to keep



Keeping a watchful eye over his member's prized bottles, Wine Ark chief executive Dean Taylor.

Sarah McInerney

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Penfolds Grange has topped the list of most collected wines in the country.

One of Australia's largest wine cellaring companies Wine Ark has reviewed more than 3 million bottles stored by its members and come up with a list of the top 50 wines Australians love to keep. Awards were given for the most popular wine of each varietal.

Claiming wine tastes like pepper or butter may not be snobbery but science.

While the No.1 placeholder may not come as a surprise for some, the list did yield some unexpected results with smaller wineries such as Torbreck, in the Barossa Valley and Cullen, from the Margaret River region, giving the more established brands a run for their money.

Wine critic Jeremy Oliver, who produces a popular annual wine guide, said this was a sign of the sophistication of the Australian consumer. Of particular interest to him was Lake's Folly, a "tiny, tiny" Hunter Valley producer which scored the gong for the most popular cabernet. This is one of the biggest wine varieties produced in Australia.

The other category winners were: Mount Mary Pinot Noir, Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay, Grosset Polish Hill reisling and Tyrell's Vat 1 semillon.

"There was a good mix of winners between the big companies like Foster's, to small to medium sized and tiny," Oliver said. "I think that's a surprise, I thought that all the category winners would be from the bigger ones. It shows how mature the market is."

Oliver was also surprised by the range of price points in the top 50. These spanned \$15-\$25 for the Seppelt Chalambar Shiraz (32nd place) to the \$500+ of Grange.

"Wynns Black Label Coonawarra [cabernet sauvignon] you would expect to see quite high in that list, and it was [in sixth place], and it is quite an inexpensive wine and you could argue quite underpriced," he said.

"This list flies in the face of what a number of marketers think and price has been a big surprise. It is not a factor in what people are choosing to cellar."

Wine Ark chief executive Dean Taylor said his 8000 members ranged from mums and dads cellaring the bottle of Grange they bought when their first child was born, to serious collectors with upwards of \$1 million worth of wine stored with the company.

He said cellaring of Grange had grown in popularity since its last survey in 2006, which recorded this year's second place getter, the Penfolds Bin 389 Cabernet Shiraz blend, in the No.1 slot.

"Because the Grange is so expensive a lot of people buy it and don't drink it," he said.

"I think that's one of the reasons why it is the most popular because people have it in their cellar but haven't found the opportunity to drink it."

Oliver said he was surprised by this result as there were many other excellent shirazes available at a lower cost.

"Grange costs a lot of money to put away," he said. "Consumers are saying yes, we are confident to put large amounts of money into this wine because it is the right wine we want to collect. I thought maybe a Penfolds Bin 28, which you can get for a fraction of the price, would be more popular than Grange."

Eight white wines also featured in the top 50: Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay, Grosset Polish Hill, Petaluma Hanlin Hill Riesling, Tyrell's Wines Vat 1 Hunter Semillon, Grosset Springvale Watervale Riesling, De Bortoli Noble One Botrytis Semillon and the Giaconda Chardonnay.

Other facts

- Most of the top 50 wines came from South Australia (60 per cent).
- Shiraz was the most collected variety making up 46 per cent of the top 50.
- Penfolds was the most popular producer with eight of the top 50 wines.
- Yarra Yering's Dry Red No 1 was the most improved, jumping 64 places.