

decant

a few chosen wines

NO TWO BOTTLES OF WINE ARE THE SAME AND THEIR ENJOYMENT ISN'T ALWAYS DEPENDENT UPON THE PRICE TAG. DAVID BOWDEN REVISITS FIVE OF HIS FAVOURITE WINES



CHAMBERS ROSEWOOD, RARE MUSCAT, RUTHERGLEN, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Its tin shed cellar door is far from slick but Chambers is proof that visitors should never judge wines by the appearance of the winery. Described as having a 'blitzkrieg bouquet' and almost unclassifiable with a five-star plus rating, the Chambers Rare Muscat is not available for tastings and sampling this fortified wine is a privilege reserved for those prepared to shell out a bomb for a half bottle. It's a big wine with a long, lingering, sweet raisin palate and delicious with Parmigiano cheese. The Grand Muscat, at a quarter of the price, is a credible alternative.

DOUBLE VISION, ANDREW HARRIS 2001, MUDGE, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA

Sparkling red wines aren't uniquely Australian but those made locally using Shiraz grapes are full-bodied red sparklers that have become an Australian icon. While such big reds lack the subtlety and finesse of Champagne, I enjoy the taste sensation of bubbles dancing across my tongue.

My favourite is Double Vision produced by Andrew Harris in Mudgee. This is a big wine, with lots of berry fruit on the palate and solid tannins. Many consider this a drink for blokes but it's worth trying in mixed company with

chocolate desserts or barbecued red meat.

FALLEGRO, GIANNI GAGLIARDO 2003, PIEDMONT, ITALY

Piedmont is famous for its Barolos, and while I love these big reds, my favourite wine from this area is a white.

Made from an obscure grape called Favorita — that is related to Vermentino, Fallegro is best consumed when young, within two years of bottling. It is light straw in colour, with a delicate bouquet and a crisp, tart fruit palate. A light spritzig makes it even more palatable and perfect as a pre-dinner drink, enjoyable on its own or with salads and lightly sauced chicken dishes.

HÖPLER EISWEIN 2001, BUGENLAND, AUSTRIA

Austrian wines, bearing Old World status but almost New World in the way it's reinventing its wine industry, caught my interest lately. There are many exciting wines being produced from varieties that are rarely seen out of the country.

A lover of dessert wines, I enjoy those made by Jost Höppler. Making Eiswein is challenging — the fruit must be picked when the temperature reaches -8°C, and processing this is like crushing marbles —

but the concentrated sweetness produces a magical honey-like elixir with hints of maple syrup. Austrian Eisweins offer better value and taste than other ice wines and are perfect accompaniments to most rich desserts. Besides Eiswein, Noble Reserve and Trockenbeerenauslese, Höppler also produces a crisp Pinot Blanc.

LEONETTI CABERNET SAUVIGNON, 1999, WALLA WALLA, WASHINGTON, USA

Leonetti wines have attained cult status since their first vintage in 1978. When I first heard about Walla Walla, I thought it was a typo for Wagga Wagga, where one of Australia's famous wine schools is located. Instead, it is tucked away in Washington State, in the Columbia River Valley, near the border with Oregon and Idaho. Now with over 100 wineries, Walla Walla is well marked on the U.S.A. wine map but it is still a farming district that channels 'retro America'.

Chris Figgins at Leonetti has taken over from his father and constantly pushes the envelope to produce a Cabernet Sauvignon that is eagerly sought by those prepared to pay the hefty price tag. This is a classic Cab Sav with dominant cassis and red and black berry flavours, and good acidic balance with evident but not dominant tannins. **a**

DAVID BOWDEN A wine writer and educator based in Kuala Lumpur, David Bowden's love of wines commenced in earnest while studying at Newcastle University located near the wine producing region of the Hunter Valley in N.S.W, Australia. Growing up, he enjoyed tasting the variety of wines on the dinner table when his parents' backs were turned. His keen interest has taken him to many of the world's leading wine regions to sample innumerable wines — mostly for research purposes, or so he claims. David contributes wine, food and travel articles to various regional publications.

