



2011 d'Arenberg The Hermit Crab

McLaren Vale

Viognier (74%) Marsanne (26%)

The red varieties of Grenache, Shiraz and Mourvèdre have thrived in McLaren Vale for over a century. Believing the white equivalents would have the same affinity with the region's climate and soil, d'Arenberg planted Viognier, Marsanne and Roussanne in the mid 1990s.

The Name

Many of McLaren Vale's vineyards are on free-draining soils underlain with limestone, formed by the calcareous remains of the local marine fauna. One such creature was the Hermit Crab, a reclusive little crustacean that inhabits the cast-off shells of others. The Osborn family thought the name appropriate for this, McLaren Vale's first ever blend of Viognier and Marsanne. "Hermit" is also an abbreviation for the French appellation of Hermitage, where the Marsanne grape variety dominates.

The Vintage

There was ample winter rain with good sub-soil moisture and substantial canopies. Summer conditions were very mild with a late start to vintage. The Marsanne and Roussanne were picked in very mild to cool conditions. Disease pressure was high due to multiple periods of rain. The minimal input viticulture techniques employed at d'Arenberg dealt with these conditions well. Diligence ensured that crop losses were minimised. The mild conditions promoted very steady ripening, high natural acidity and lovely delicate and complex flavours.

The Winemaking

During vintage, Chief Winemaker Chester Osborn chooses when to pick the fruit by walking the vineyard rows and tasting grapes. The grapes were passed through the gentle rubber toothed crusher before being basket pressed. Fermentation was long and moderately cool to retain fresh fruit characters. About 3% underwent wild fermentation for extra complexity. 14% of the Viognier was fermented in aged French and American Oak to add mouth feel and support the subtle Viognier tannins.

The Viognier and Marsanne components received similar treatment, but were not blended until the final stages of the winemaking process.



The Characteristics

Contrary to a lot of what was written about the 2011 vintage, sound fruit, particularly from white grapes benefited from the cooler conditions, producing wines of grace and finesse. The Hermit Crab is a great example of this. Stylistically it is sitting in the white peach and nectarine zone accompanied by a hedonistic ginger and spice character. Florals abound.

The palate is slightly more restrained than what we would normally associate with McLaren Vale Viognier and Marsanne and again those crunchy, white stone fruit characters are at the fore. An exotic pistachio, green almond character (thank you Marsanne), draws the wine back in, leading to a long savoury and mineral finish. Not a hint of fatness.



Artist: Eric Lobbecke

Technical Information

Harvest Dates:

7 March - 6 April

Oak Maturation:

13% in old French and American oak barriques

Glucose + Fructose: 4.2g/L

pH: 3.28

Titrateable Acid: 6.7 g/L

Alcohol: 13.4%

Chief Winemaker:

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