

For further information, pricing and contact details, visit the following websites:

- www.vilyestate.com.au
- www.pilotini.com.au
- www.silvervineyard.com
- www.groniberrangeestate.com.au
- www.mtpilotestate.com.au
- www.ringerreef.com.au

MUST DRINK WINES



Mt Pilot Estate 2008 Viognier

If you think you've lost your passion for wine, then drink and get your mojo back with this one – it's a life changer!

I'm not quite sure how they've done it but it's a gift: Without question, this is what we at *Essentials* like to call 'a rockstar wine' – that is, a wine at the top of its pecking order, without any doubt.

Mt Pilot, a small family-owned boutique vineyard situated in the harsh/dry granitic hills of Eldorado, Victoria, is quietly known for producing precious low yield gems of amazing fruit.

Vineyards like these should never be taken for granted as they can be a nightmare to manage. This summer's extreme temperatures have proven this point. Unfortunately all but a handful of berries survived the disastrous, intense heatwave.

You can thank your lucky stars, however, that in 2008 the Gods were shining on Mt Pilot, and I, for one, feel blessed as I begin to sip this blockbuster of a wine.

Suddenly I have been forced to stop thinking about the wine, stop writing, stop tapping on the keyboard and simply enjoy. Everything about this experience is inviting. The honey-straw colour glistening as it swirls

in the glass with a thickness and viscosity that carries the complex nose of musk, peach and apricots to the rim of the glass – an explosion of fruit, presented in a way you'd never thought possible.

It gives me great pleasure to learn that Bruce and Annie Holm of Ringer Reef made this wine, and that with its release the talented and hardworking passions of vigneron Lachlan Campbell have eventuated into such a uniquely handcrafted wine.

Elegance, finesse, striking colour, movement, mouthfeel, flavour, boldness and cleanliness – this wine has it all. In an industry that demands constant attention to detail, it's great to know that perfection does actually exist. Am I talking it up? Not a bit – drink it and you will discover. Quietly known vineyard? Not for long!

Mt Pilot Estate 2006 Shiraz

If a vigneron loves his fruit, it only makes sense that he passes it on to a winemaker who will love it even more. In the case of the 2006 Mt Pilot Estate Shiraz, love came in the form of respect for the quality of fruit – that is to say, it was treated to two years of ageing in 80 percent new oak (60 percent American and 40 percent French). Cropped at two-point-seven tonnes to the acre, the milder 2005 growing season produced exceptionally small berries, smooth tannins and beautifully ripened fruit.

When Lachlan Campbell informed me that Mandy Jones of Jones Winery & Vineyard in Rutherglen made this wine I was overcome with excitement – I simply love her wines and her gracious, relaxed manner. Recalling a previous tour of Mandy's winery, I soon began to wonder to myself, 'Had this wine been fermented in her 100-year-old antique wooden open vats? Did she throw in a few handfuls of fruit from her 100-year-old vines just for good measure?' Whatever my romantic ideals might have conjured up, one thing is fact – this is a stunning shiraz.

Liquorice, pepper, plum and brighter lifted fruit aromas are also evident – a great nose, one that improves with time. The touches of American oak have created a dreamlike additional layer of vanilla and, although my mind could be playing tricks on me, I keep detecting more and more nuances of colour as I continue to smell the wine – in this case 40 minutes after pouring the glass. I seriously doubt that many could hold out this long, as one sip will confirm just how luscious and balanced this wine really is. Again, balance is the key here, and although this is a bolder red, its medium length does not overpower.

Ringer Reef 2006 Chardonnay

With one look at the gorgeous honey-capped bottle you instantly feel special, so this is a wine that's bursting with style and glamour – what could be better?

An elegant and detailed nose is filled with apricot, apricot and honeycomb plus depth, rounder tones that are warming, yet not too heavy, sweet and subtle notes to boot.

It shows that winemaker Bruce Holm has taken great care in producing this wine. Handcrafted but has specific care has been poured out and cared for, with a generous amount of time developing its complexity on the vine, to finish with hand-pouring and constant monitoring.

What makes this wine so great is its smart balance between new and older oak barrel blending, making this a more delicate wine that's not too overpowering or acidic. Thankfully the same goes for the blending of almost 50 to 60 percent oak, not too much!

This is a classic chardonnay without a doubt, however it does show a more modern edge with its beautiful light colour, climate that, containing a higher acid level and spunky freshness, certainly crisp and very skillfully created. Done.

Ringer Reef 2006 Sparkling Shiraz

It's amazing just how much impact one film (that being the 2006 USA release *Sideways*) can destroy the branding image and public acceptability of an entire grape variety. I've heard several North East vigneron's fondly say 'stuff that bloody film... and my merlot is great!'

Ironically I can understand the comments mentioned in the film, as merlot can be a little disappointing at times. The good news is that every now and again, a merlot jumps out of the bag that has much more colour and longer – there, my dear friends, are bloody reds, certainly with merlot leading from North East shores.

The fact wine that makes up the Ringer Reef sparkling is taken from a recent-rick, well-tended, vine-covered slopes beside the lower Alpine Road at Rutherglen. The fact the vines under climate has allowed the grapes to develop more slowly with cooler evenings slowing the ripening. The result is classic clarity and plian characteristics with less green flavors. Much like the merlot from other cool sea breezes) of the Bellarine Peninsula, the Alpine Valley has proven more than ideal for merlot.

Although Champagne, or méthode traditionnelle (Chick, yes, it's), was used to produce this sparkling wine. Naturally dry and sparkling, the Ringer Reef Shiraz – with a second year of barrel age in older oak prior to refermentation – is now showing wonderfully deep mocha tones.