

# Winter reds

Nick Ryan gathers a very diverse dozen as part of his celebration of red wine.

It just seems natural, doesn't it? The weather gets a bit cooler, the food gets a little heartier and a man's desire for rich, robust reds grows as the mercury drops. Here's a cosy collection that will help you stay warm at night.

PINOT NOIR



## Dog Point 2005, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$35)

Easily achieves flavour intensity without sacrificing finesse. Lithe and finely structured, it skilfully pairs upfront fragrance with precise palate weight and perfectly knit tannins.

## De Bortoli 2004, Yarra Valley (\$36)

William Downie, De Bortoli's pinot specialist, has an affinity with this notoriously capricious variety that is spookily savant-like. He coaxes uncommon degrees of intrigue from Yarra fruit and guides it into every well-priced bottle with varietal integrity intact and a seductive sense of mystery set to pounce.



## Jean-Claude Boisset 2005, Burgundy, France (\$40)

The screw cap represents a rather radical leap forward among the traditionalists of Burgundy. Village-level Burgundy at this price normally drinks like bilge water, but this riot of red cherry fruit and supple tannin is smashing.



### THE BRUSH OFF

Your teeth might look stained after a few reds but resist the urge to brush too hard. The acid in wine softens your enamel, so a hard scrub could do more harm than good.

SHIRAZ



## Henschke Hill of Grace 2002, Eden Valley (\$550)

This is the all-too-finite essence of one of this country's more precious patches of dirt, the priceless Hill of Grace vineyard. It's all class from the word go, ethereal aromas of crushed violets and fragrantly ripe plums underpinned by baking spice and Dutch licorice. Sure it's not cheap, but great art never is.

## Thomas "Kiss" Shiraz 2005, Hunter Valley (\$50)

This may be tough to find as there were fewer than 500 cases made, but it's well worth seeking out. Andrew Thomas took the distinctive elements that have always defined Hunter shiraz – supple red fruit flavours with a savoury, earthy edge – and has packed it all into a slick chassis of very classy oak. The result is like a beautifully restored sports car that looks as good as it always did but is now even more fun to drive.



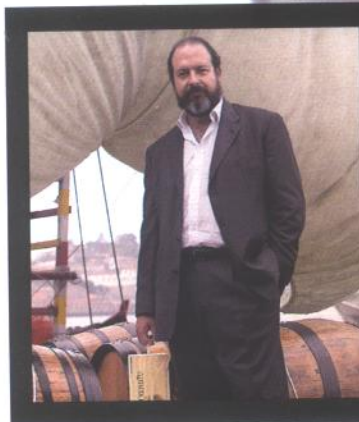
## Hesketh Shiraz Viognier 2005, McLaren Vale (\$25)

Jonathon Hesketh has taken a lateral approach and searched for the definitive styles from the best regions, wherever and whatever they may be. This opulently curvy, sensually perfumed McLaren Vale is a very good start.



### BIG BOWLS

Invest in glassware with large bowls to really enjoy your reds. The bigger bowls give you the full impact of the wine's aromas – but remember, airspace is crucial.



# A storm in every port

Nick Ryan wakes from his siesta to enjoy a few vintage ports... before bedtime.

It is one of the world's undeniably great wine styles. It drinks well for decades and packs more flavour under a cork than just about any wine on the planet. It's also widely misunderstood, hugely under-appreciated and, in this country at

least, barely touched. If you have even a passing interest in wine you owe it to yourself to grapple with the muscular monster that is vintage port.

Although Australia has a long and successful history in producing wines of this style, the best vintage port comes from Portugal, where closely planted vineyards full of varieties like touriga nacional and tinta roriz cling to the steeply terraced slopes of the beautiful Douro Valley. You're talking shallow stone vats full of vibrant purple fruit traditionally foot-trodden, fermented for a couple of days and then fortified

CABERNET  
SHIRAZ
**Katnook Estate  
Cabernet  
Sauvignon 2004,  
Coonawarra (\$50)**

From a great vintage for Coonawarra cabernet and one of the region's most revered names, this plush wine proves rumours of cabernet's demise are greatly exaggerated. Rich and intense aromas of cassis and fine cedar, coffee grounds and camphor lead to a muscular palate proudly adorned with ripe, rippling tannin.


**Digger's Bluff  
"The Watchdog"  
2001, Barossa  
(\$35)**

This blend of cabernet and shiraz is so old-fashioned it might have slipped through a tear in time. Tim O'Callaghan has an almost religious devotion to old winemaking methods, doing everything by hand. Released after a period of cellaring that benefits the wine, not the accountant, it is full of gently earthy fruit flavours you just don't see in current releases. A real joy.


**Tapanappa  
"Whalebone  
Vineyard"  
Cabernet  
Shiraz 2004,  
Wrattenbully (\$80)**

Beautifully defined fruit, perfect poise and serious structure. Wrattenbully's potential as a red wine region has attracted some heavy hitters and this wine is the strongest affirmation of that faith.



## KOOKY


**Freeman  
Rondinella  
Corvina 2003,  
Hilltops (\$35)**

A brilliantly unique wine from the only rondinella and corvina vines in Australia. Inspired by the famous "amarone" wines of Italy's Veneto region, which use a percentage of partially dried fruit to create rich, intensely flavoured reds. A robust, black cherry scented wine with chewily firm tannin.

**Longview "The  
Mob" Zinfandel  
2005, Adelaide  
Hills (\$32)**

Zinfandel is a bastard of a variety and this is a valiant attempt to tackle it, but nobody escapes without a few bruises. High in alcohol (it's over 17 per cent) with a wild menagerie of flavours such as Christmas cake and cordite, to say this wine is not for everyone is an understatement, but give me this over boring any day.


**Coriole Nebbiolo  
2005, Adelaide  
Hills (\$28)**

Nebbiolo is one of the world's great grapes and is behind the wines of Barolo and Barbaresco in Italy. While not in that league, this local effort shows promise. Black cherries and bay leaves, bitumen and lavender through the nose and palate, with compact tannins and fine acid.



with brandy spirit to preserve luscious amounts of residual sugar in the final wine. You're talking slow boats laden with barrels heading for the coastal town of Oporto.

The great port houses, or quintas, only declare a vintage port in exceptional years, on average three or four times a decade, and the wine must be completely from the named vintage.

Great vintage port is like rich, robust red wine turned up to 11, its fruit decadently rich, its alcohol warmth boosted by the addition of brandy spirit and its tannic grip so tight it takes a

decade or more to loosen even slightly.

It is a wine built uncompromisingly for the cellar and really shouldn't be approached before it's a teenager. Unlike other fortified styles it needs to be decanted and drunk within a couple of days of opening. Nothing in the world is better matched with blue cheese.

**Quinta Do Vale Donna Maria  
Vintage Port 2003 (\$100)**

Broodingly intense, decadently spiced and staggeringly rich. Full of dark fruitcake and spice with a flinty, ironstone tinged minerality. +



Barrels: (far left) Cristiano van Zeller of Quinta Do Vale stands by his port.