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**Australia** Australia has been incredibly successful at taking international grape varieties and crafting them into unique and new styles. Among the most famous are full-bodied Shiraz, lime flavoured Rieslings, elegant Cabernets and subtle Semillons that evolve for decades. This diversity is set to grow as new regions, grape varieties and wine styles continue to be explored.

### CLIMATE AND GRAPE GROWING

Australia's land mass is similar in size to that of the United States and larger than that of Europe; it is therefore no surprise that a diverse range of climates can be found here. However, due to Australia's latitude, the main growing regions have warm or hot climates. Many of these regions are tempered by their proximity to either the Southern or Indian Ocean or the Murray River system. Others, such as Adelaide Hills and Eden Valley, are cooled by altitude. In many regions rainfall is low and irrigation in the growing season is essential. Drought can be a significant problem and in extreme years even the Murray River, which provides a vital source of water for the inland vineyard areas of Riverland and Murray-Darling, can run low.

The dry conditions combined with high summer temperatures mean bush fires are a very real risk in certain areas. Even if the vineyard is not damaged or destroyed, the smoke from such fires can come into contact with the grapes causing a pungent taint in the wines. Many producers are seeking sites with cool or moderate climates and plantings have increased in high-altitude locations on the mainland and in Tasmania, which has a more southerly latitude.

### GRAPE VARIETIES AND WINEMAKING

#### Black Varieties

Australia's principal grape variety of either colour is **Shiraz**, and it is grown widely in most regions. Hot regions such as Hunter Valley and warm regions such as Barossa Valley can produce full-bodied, intensely fruity Shiraz. These wines also often display earthy or spicy notes and develop leather aromas as they age. In these areas, a number of winemakers are now making more

restrained styles by controlling the level of extraction in the winemaking process. A leaner, more peppery style is generally made in cooler regions such as Geelong and Heathcote. These qualities may be combined in a multi-regional blended wine. Shiraz is also used to give softness and body to blends with Cabernet Sauvignon, performing a similar role to Merlot in Bordeaux.

Australian **Cabernet Sauvignon** is generally darker, with firmer tannins and higher acidity than Shiraz, displaying ripe black fruit characters (blackcurrant, black cherry), often underpinned by toasty oak notes. Classic regions include Coonawarra and Margaret River. In Australia, **Merlot** tends to be found in blended wines typically alongside Cabernet Sauvignon, to provide body and fleshy, plummy fruit.

**Pinot Noir** is grown in a number of Australian regions and the best examples tend to come from cool or moderate sites in regions such as Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula and Tasmania. In general, the style of Pinot Noir from these regions tends to be medium-bodied with medium alcohol, medium to high acidity and typical flavours of cherry and strawberry.

Australia's hot regions are perfect for late ripening varieties such as **Grenache**, Petit Verdot and Mataro (Mourvèdre). Varieties from Italy and Spain such as Sangiovese and Tempranillo have also gained in popularity in recent years because they are well adapted to high summer temperatures and a limited water supply.

#### White Varieties

**Chardonnay** is the most planted white wine grape in Australia. It is planted widely throughout the vineyard regions, and is made in a wide range of styles. Basic

### AUSTRALIAN WINE LAWS

In Australia, there is a hierarchy of GIs incorporating zones, regions and sub-regions.

**Zones** are large areas without any particular qualifying attributes. They can either be states (such as South Australia) or cover several states (such as South Eastern Australia). Zones can also make up part of a state, but with the possible exception of Barossa these zones are rarely seen on labels.

**Regions** (such as Coonawarra, Clare Valley and Margaret River) can vary in size and are smaller than zones. They must have consistent and distinct qualities from neighbouring regions.

Many regions are split into **sub-regions**, if there are notable areas that have distinct and unique qualities. Although a sub-region must fall within one region, some regions are covered by several zones. For example, Eden Valley is a region within the Barossa zone, which is within the zone of South Australia, which, in turn, is within South Eastern Australia zone. This gives producers a variety of options when it comes to making up their blends.

Australian Chardonnay is often a blend of fruit from different regions, produced unoaked to give peachy flavours, or with the aid of oak chips or staves to add hints of toast and vanilla. At the other end of the spectrum, high-quality Chardonnays from cool to moderate regions such as Adelaide Hills, Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Valley and even warm regions such as Margaret River are often beautifully balanced with fresh, vibrant fruit complemented by subtle flavours from careful use of lees, MLF and/or oak maturation.

The popularity of **Sauvignon Blanc** in both the domestic and export markets means it is now widely planted. The moderate climate area of Adelaide Hills has developed a reputation as the benchmark for the variety. The wines tend to show concentrated passion fruit flavours alongside refreshing high acidity.

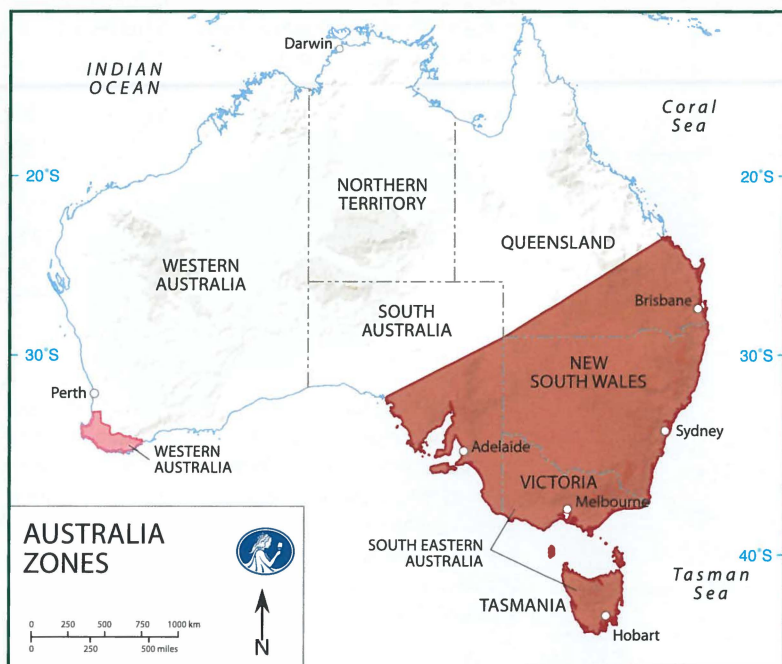
**Semillon** is used to make distinctive wines in a style that is unique to Australia. It is planted widely, but the classic region is Hunter Valley. Here, it is harvested early, with low sugar levels and a high acidity. In the winery, contact with oxygen is kept to a minimum and inert vessels are used for fermentation and storage. The resultant wines are light in alcohol and almost neutral in flavour when first bottled, yet they develop extraordinary flavours of honey and toast with bottle age. The best of these wines can age for 20 years or more. In Western Australia a much more herbaceous style is made, which could be mistaken for Sauvignon Blanc. Barossa Valley traditionally made Semillon in a fuller-bodied, softer style; however, early-picked, unoaked versions are now increasingly being produced.

**Riesling** is also made in a style that is unique to Australia. The wines typically have pronounced citrus fruit aromas and flavours (lime, lemon, grapefruit) in youth that develop rapidly into toast, honey and petrol notes as the wines age. The wines are unoaked with high levels of acidity, and are usually dry or slightly off-dry, although some sweet wines are also made. Classic regions include the Eden and Clare Valleys in South Australia. Tasmania, and the Frankland River sub-region of Western Australia, are also developing reputations for high-quality Rieslings. Here the wines are less citrusy and more floral.

## WINE REGIONS:

### SOUTH EASTERN AUSTRALIA ZONE

This 'super-zone' covers all the GIs within South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland, allowing blending of grapes or wines from across most of Australia's wine regions. The majority of wines that are labelled with this indication are high volume brands and take advantage of being able to source fruit from the fertile, irrigated vineyards of **Riverland** in South Australia, **Murray-Darling** in Victoria and **Riverina** in New South Wales. These regions can produce high yields of healthy grapes, but they lack the flavour concentration of those from high-quality areas. Blending in components from regions such as Barossa, Adelaide Hills or McLaren Vale



may enhance these wines. The choice of components in the blend will depend on the grape variety, the style sought and the price point that is to be met.

Riverina also specialises in the production of botrytised wines made from Semillon. Autumn morning mists and fogs in this region favour the development of noble rot.

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The majority of Australia's wine is produced in South Australia. The vineyards are concentrated in the south east of the state. With such a range of premium vineyard locations offering different characteristics, some of Australia's most prestigious, and most expensive, wines take advantage of the blending opportunities provided by this GI and are simply labelled South Australia.

#### KEY

2000 m+
1000-2000 m
500-1000 m
200-500 m
0-200 m

**Big companies in Australia take advantage of economies of scale and often tanker juice or grapes to large central wineries. This is a common practice for large producers throughout the world.**





### Barossa Valley

To the north of Adelaide, the Barossa Valley region is the heartland of fine wine production. In the warm, dry climate, old bush vines produce outstanding Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache. Classic Barossa Valley Shiraz is full-bodied, with soft tannins and ripe black fruit complemented by sweet American oak. It softens and develops aromas of leather and spice as it ages. The most notable white variety is Semillon, which is increasingly made in a fresh, unoaked style. Wines labelled Barossa come from the Barossa zone and can be made from fruit sourced from Barossa Valley and Eden Valley.

### Eden Valley

Located in the hills to the east of the Barossa Valley, the Eden Valley region has a cool to moderate climate that varies with altitude. Outstanding quality Rieslings are made in the cooler vineyards, having intense lime and grapefruit aromas and a steely character. The best have longevity displaying marmalade and toasty characters after ten years. Shiraz, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are also grown with success.

### Clare Valley

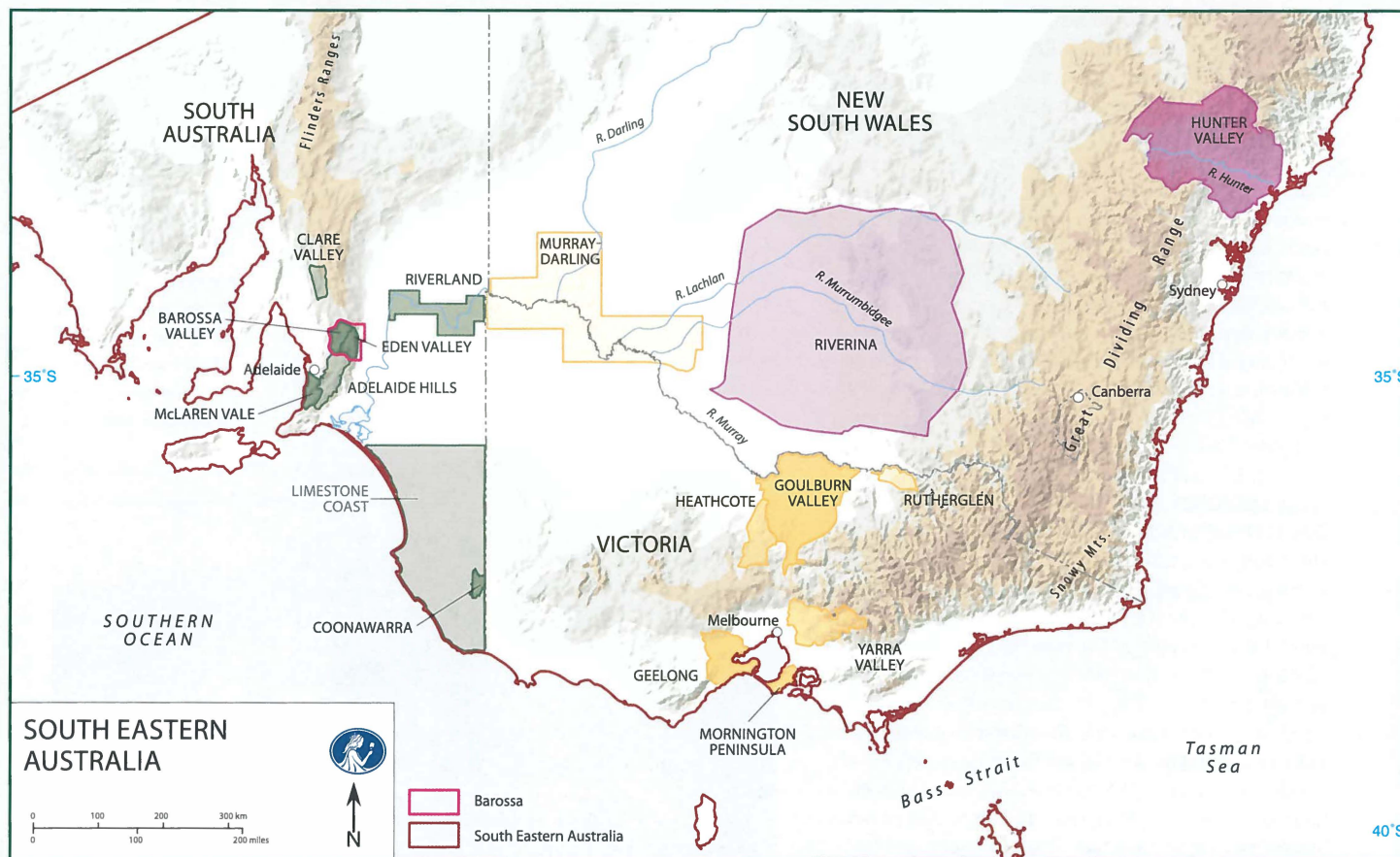
Riesling is also the speciality of the Clare Valley region,

which lies to the north-west of the Barossa Valley. Here, the warm climate is tempered by cool afternoon breezes and nights are cold. Many vineyards are planted at altitude (300 to 400 metres), some even as high as 570 metres. Clare Valley Rieslings are dry in style with intense citrus and lime aromas and a high acidity. With bottle age they can develop honey and toast characters. Clare Valley Shiraz is fragrant, powerful and structured. Excellent quality Cabernet Sauvignon is also produced with varying styles depending on the vineyard location, soil and elevation. The best red wines have a long cellaring potential.

### Adelaide Hills

Twenty-five kilometres east of Adelaide, the Adelaide Hills region has a moderate climate where all vineyards are planted above 400 metres in altitude. Rainfall occurs mainly in the winter, and soils have limited water-holding capacity meaning that irrigation is often necessary during the growing season. The region specialises in making refreshing Sauvignon Blancs as well as elegant Chardonnays that have high natural acidities and pronounced citrus and peach aromas. Pinot Noir is also grown for still red wines and blending with Chardonnay for sparkling wine.

#### KEY





The Hill of Grace vineyard in Eden Valley, which is home to exceptionally old Shiraz vines.



### McLaren Vale

The McLaren Vale region is located on the coast to the south of Adelaide. Here, afternoon breezes from the nearby ocean temper the warm climate. The region largely produces red wine from Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Grenache. The wines are intensely flavoured with dark fruit aromas and have soft, ripe tannins. Some old vine Shiraz and Grenache are used to create wines with depth and complexity.

### Coonawarra

The Coonawarra region is a narrow strip of land 1.5 kilometres wide by 15 kilometres long, with a distinctive red, *terra rossa* soil over a limestone subsoil. It lies 400 kilometres south-east of Adelaide, towards the Victorian border. Under the influence of cold currents from the Antarctic, the maritime climate is moderate. Cloud cover moderates summer temperatures.

Cabernet Sauvignon, which predominates, is made into concentrated, structured wines with characteristic cassis and eucalyptus or menthol aromas. The best examples age very well. Shiraz, Merlot and Chardonnay are also widely planted.

## VICTORIA

Victoria offers some of the coolest vineyard locations on the Australian mainland. The wine regions around Melbourne and Port Phillip Bay benefit from ocean breezes, giving conditions cool enough to grow high-quality Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and grapes for sparkling wine. Further inland, the Great Dividing Range provides



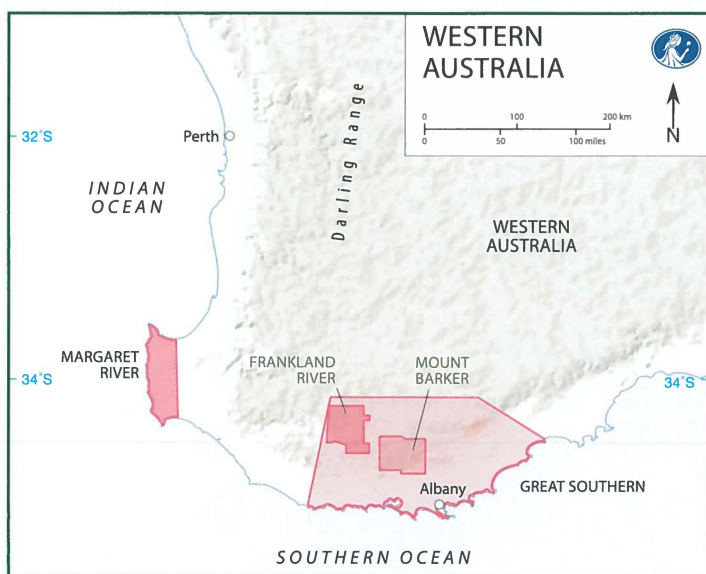
A tractor mounted mechanical pruner. The cutter removes the trellised shoots above the horizontal cordon.

a range of altitudes and aspects. High altitude sites such as those in the regions of Macedon Ranges and Upper Goulburn make elegant Pinot Noir and Chardonnay as well as aromatic Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc. Regions on lower slopes grow later-ripening black varieties such as Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon; these wines are often fresher and lighter in style than those from Australia's hotter regions.

### Yarra Valley

The Yarra Valley region is located to the north-east of Melbourne. Broadly speaking the climate is cool to moderate and maritime, but this is a very varied region with a wide range of altitude and aspects. Pinot Noir is the speciality. As well as producing high-quality table



**KEY**

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<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span>	200–500 m
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:mediumgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span>	100–200 m
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span>	0–100 m

wines, the region is renowned for its excellent quality sparkling wines. Yarra Valley Pinot Noir is generally rich in fruit, with strawberries, plums and dark cherries. The tannins are ripe and soft and careful oak handling adds complexity. The top producers make age-worthy wines. The geographical diversity here means that Chardonnay, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon are also successfully made in a range of styles although never with quite the weight of similar wines from warmer regions.

**Mornington Peninsula**

Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are also specialties of the Mornington Peninsula region, located to the south of Melbourne. This coastal wine region has a cool to moderate, maritime climate and is home to small boutique estates. Vintages can vary here due to the chance of cool, wet and windy weather at flowering and often at harvest. The best years have a long growing season producing fragrant, elegant wines with finesse. Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir ranges from light and delicate, to more structured, but all tend to display very pure fruit characteristics. Chardonnays reflect the cool growing conditions having citrus, pear and apple aromas and high acidities that are usually softened by MLF.

**Geelong**

The Geelong region lies west of Melbourne and has similar climatic conditions to the Mornington Peninsula. Geelong Chardonnay is renowned for its quality and tends to be complex, concentrated and full bodied. Pinot Noir and Shiraz are the major red grapes planted. Pinot Noir can take on earthy aromas, and Shiraz is generally fresh and peppery. Both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are also used for sparkling wines.

**Heathcote**

Heathcote is located in the centre of Victoria, much further inland than the Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula and Geelong. Cooling influences here come from altitude rather than the ocean giving a moderate climate, and helping to produce Shiraz wines that have a firmer structure and fresher fruit flavours than those of warmer regions. Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon are also widely planted and Mediterranean grapes such as Sangiovese and Tempranillo have shown promise.

**Goulburn Valley**

To the east of Heathcote is the warm Goulburn Valley region. Heat is mitigated slightly by the lakes and creeks associated with the Goulburn River. Shiraz is the most planted variety but Marsanne is the speciality of the area, producing wines with citrus fruit in youth and developing honeyed aromas with bottle age.

**NEW SOUTH WALES**

New South Wales has the longest history of wine production in Australia. The main region here is the hot Hunter Valley; however, the regions of Mudgee, Orange and Cowra offer wine producers slightly cooler conditions. Located inland from Sydney, on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range, the vineyards are planted at altitude and are capable of producing some very concentrated Chardonnays and structured Cabernet Sauvignons.

**Hunter Valley**

The Hunter Valley region has a hot, humid climate. Fortunately, high cloud cover and ocean breezes reduce the effect of the heat in the peak of summer. Unfortunately, the region often suffers from unsettled rainy weather at harvest. Good canopy management techniques are essential to minimise rot. The most planted grape variety is Semillon. The wines it makes tend to be light bodied, with low alcohol, high acidity and flavours that are initially rather neutral but evolve into a complex spectrum of toast, nut and honey flavours with bottle age. Chardonnay is also widely planted and made in both oaked and unoaked styles. Shiraz is the black variety with the largest production. Here, it usually makes wines with black fruit flavours (blackberry and cherry), soft tannins, a medium body and an earthy undertone.

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

The wine regions of Western Australia are located in the south-west tip of this large state. The fruit or wine from these regions can be blended together and labelled as Western Australia. These are the only wines not part of the South Eastern Australia super-zone.

**Margaret River**

The renowned Margaret River region is located approximately 200 kilometres south of Perth. This coastal region has a warm maritime climate. The rainfall is high

compared with other Australian regions, but falls mainly in the winter. Cabernet Sauvignon is widely planted, and often blended with Merlot in a Bordeaux-style blend. A number of different styles are produced ranging from elegant and restrained to fruity and powerful.

Chardonnays display concentrated stone-fruit aromas and retain high levels of natural acidity; a range of styles are produced using barrel ageing and MLF to add complexity. Sauvignon Blanc is also widely planted. Here, it is often blended with Semillon and the resultant wines often have attractive gooseberry and tropical fruit aromas with high acidity.

Over time the area to the south has also been opened up for wine production. The **Great Southern** region

includes the sub-regions of Mount Barker and Frankland River, known for deeply coloured Cabernet Sauvignon, elegant, peppery Shiraz and floral Riesling.

## **TASMANIA**

Tasmania has a cool maritime climate, cooled by prevailing westerly winds off the Southern Ocean, providing conditions that are generally free from extremes. Although Tasmania started as a prime source of base wine for Australian sparkling wine, the region has since proved it can also make excellent still wines. The principal varieties are Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris, but even Cabernet Sauvignon can ripen in the warmest, driest areas.