

2011 BLACK DOG SHIRAZ



Tasting Notes June 2014

Appearance: Deep, bright purple / crimson.

Nose: Dark plums, prunes and dark chocolate are the dominant characters. There are some herbs and sweet spices playing a supporting role.

Palate: Only medium bodied, but the palate has iron fist in a velvet glove exuberance. Fruit sweetness, richness and a generous, but supple tannin structure make it complete.

Cellaring: It's delicious now (June 2014), but will definitely reward time in the cellar. Halliday says to 2036 and has pretty good experience with cellaring, so who are we to argue?

Technical Details

Variety: 100% Shiraz

Region: 100% Geographe, Western Australia

Winemaker: Simon Burnell

Analysis: Alcohol 13.7%, pH 3.55, Titratable Acidity 6.3g/L, Residual Sugar <2g/L (ie dry)

Style: Plush and sophisticated yet without any excess baggage.

Background: This Black Dog is a classically styled Shiraz whose name hails from our second ever vintage in 2001 when cellarhands noted that the wine from our most spectacular hilltop block of estate shiraz was "as black as dog's guts". The nickname caught on amongst family and friends, so today, provided vintage conditions deliver us a shiraz of suitable depth and concentration to do the name justice, a new Black Dog is born. This release was fermented in small open topped stainless-fermenters, hand-plunged and then pressed off skins once sugar dry and only when the desired balance of fruit, body and tannin had been achieved - 14 days this year. The wine underwent malolactic fermentation and subsequent maturation for 18 months in Burgundy coopered French oak barriques, one third of which were new. It was given a light egg white fining prior to being bottled in December 2011. Only 260 dozen were made.

The Season: Unlike much of the rest of the country, 2011 was another magnificent vintage in the Ferguson Valley - our fifth in a row. Post vintage 2010 we saw our regularly calm, mild and sunny autumn last until.....summer came along again. 2010 was thus the driest year for a century or more in much of the area. Our normally clockwork-like winter and spring cold fronts generally bypassed us to dump on the south-eastern states they had been avoiding for the last few years. The growing season to veraison (grape puberty where they start to soften and reds become...red) therefore saw some reduction in disease pressure, vegetal growth and potential yield versus the 'average' year. January 2011 delivered two unseasonal rainfall injections of an inch or so each. With twenty days of dry and sunny weather in between them, they couldn't have been better timed. Just when we thought that the worm may have had turned and we may be harvesting from canoes like some of our eastern-states brethren, Australia Day onwards saw the start of another record spell, with local stations recording up to 90% of days to the end of February over 30 degrees. The absence of any nasty spikes above 37 degrees meant that the Black Dog block ripened in perfect condition. The warmth and a record low yield of 2.7T/Ha saw it ripen earlier than ever, with harvest on the last day of February, three weeks ahead of 'normal' for this block.

Vineyards: At an elevation of around 270m, our 1.4 Hectare 'Black Dog' Shiraz block is both the highest and the most level vineyard on our Ferguson Valley estate. It was planted to a very sparse 1250 vines per hectare in 1997 on an even bed of classic freedraining WA "Marri soil" (a deep layer of ironstone gravelly loam over reddish friable clay). Vines are spur pruned and vertically trellised and yields restricted to five tonnes per hectare (two tonnes per acre) or less.

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