



Sami-Odi
'XIV'
Syrah

Barossa Valley - Australia 2014

A lot of truly spectacular wines have emerged from the Barossa Valley. However, more recently there has been one man who is doing his own thing, pushing for ever-more pure and balanced wines: Fraser McKinley. His experience working with the Standish Wine Company and Torbreck Vintners, gave him the tools to embark on a new endeavor in 2006; a small winery, that goes by the curious name of Sami-Odi. He produces minuscule quantities of Syrah of the highest order. McKinley's motivation is to make wines that don't have acid additions, with a very steady eye on picking based on pH, 'this is so much more important for me, and it's based on a stylistic choice. pH for me is the most important part - it gives me a rough idea where I will end up,' says McKinley. The wines are picked earlier than most in the Barossa, generally in February, which sounds extraordinary, but it seems to work from this site.

The grapes are hand sorted enduring their primary fermentation at whatever pace the season dictates, without the use of de-stemming, pumps, yeasts, enzymes or temperature control. The whole clusters are gently pigeaged by foot prior to basket pressing into Burgundian Pièces where they complete both their primary and malolactic fermentations. To encourage the retention of naturally occurring carbon dioxide (a natural preservative and antioxidant) the wines are not racked during their élevage and remain on their lees until they are assembled.

"I like Roman numerals, but I don't know if I should always name wines that way, but I like XIV here. A friend was a chef at a restaurant in Hollywood called XIV. The fourteenth letter of the alphabet is N, there was a Californian gang, I think, called N, that wore red colors," says Fraser.

In 2013 the worst frosting in the history of Hoffman vineyard was recorded, and that's from journals that date back to the 19th century. Then 2014 came along and it was worse. "It was horrible but the Hoffman's worked around it, we re-pruned the vineyard back to bare, then some fruit came back...what we picked from 2014 we picked in the second week of April, we were two months behind, and that growth equated to 962 liters a hectare...it was heartbreaking, but we found our way," said Fraser. Harvest is typically tended to clad in beach attire in mid-late February; this years pickings were carried out in jackets and woollen hats. When all was said and done, yields equated to a rather minute .42 tons per acre.

Composition

100% Syrah

Soil Type

Fractured Red Clay & Ironstone

Vine Age

112 years old

Élevage

9 months in 25% new French barrique

Yields

Average .42 tons per acre

Production

274 cases

Tasting Notes

“Very concentrated, deep, moody wine. Compact, inky-textured, firm with dusty tannins roping through the wine. Smells of black currants, prunes, figs, tobacco, wet earth. Flavors are dark, decidedly savory, of earth, elemental and rugged, but so good. It's a wine that tells a story, but satisfies with its heft and carriage and structure. Lean back, relax, let it unwind, dig in.”

Reviews

The Wine Front (Mike Bennie) | 94+ points