



FLAVOUR BURST ... Ochota Barrels is part of a growing wave of wine-makers shaking up traditional Australian varieties.

Over a barrel

New-age wines with attitude have traditional offerings on the run

Every now and then a name pops up out of the blue and it sparks an instant connection. Take David Bowie, Lou Reed and Marvelous Marvin Hagler ... when I first heard about them as a child, their names reverberated somewhere in my psyche and some became obsessions.

I almost feel the same connection, this time with Ochota Barrels (ochotabarrels.com). It is a quirky handle, but an alluring one that, to me at least, holds the promise of something beyond the pale. Even better, it is a label that delivers its promise, despite drawing from vines and regions that are as deeply steeped in Australian tradition as is possible, such as old-vine Barossa shiraz and old-vine McLaren Vale grenache. It slaps you in the face with its attitude, which is a good thing.

So how does an Ochota Barrels Barossa shiraz differ from a St Hallett or a Peter Lehmann? Well it is similar to looking at a Picasso next to a Rembrandt, or a cattle dog squaring up against an afghan: nervy, edgy, unconventional and slightly uncouth meets plush, polished and civilised. Ochota Barrels is the edgy one.

You can see the sort of hipster angle in the whole thing and, as time progresses, I guess the hipster slant will have its day, and attitude in winemaking will become old hat. Meanwhile the wines simply need to stack up, which they do in their own peculiar ways.

I haven't tasted the whole range but I have been through a good portion of them twice, becoming increasingly convinced with each taste.

There are two chardonnays, of which I've tasted one. They are from Lenswood and Basket Range in the

Adelaide Hills. The Lenswood version is labeled as Slim Vineyard and the 2013 version shows the vintage with its saliva-driving acidity. The wine around the acid is quite fine and ethereal, but complex, with hints of dairy peeping between the lemon and nuts. It is also there, texturally, a lick of doughy, creamy fatness in what is otherwise a tense, restrained wine. Nice.

Again with the pinots I tasted one of two, the 2013 Forest (Adelaide Hills). There's no guessing its origin. The Adelaide Hills is plain to see in the thick, ripe strawberry characters and its pleasingly dense structure but there's a wildness and complexity to this wine that is rare for the region.

For me the real excitement was the two grenache wines, Fugazi and A Sense of Compression. They manage that ethereal sort of lightness and perfume which old-vine grenache can achieve, not forced and not over-ripe.

The 2013 Fugazi is savoury and relatively restrained as it weighs in at a conservative 13.8 per cent alcohol. Grenache varieties can easily pip 16 per cent.

Again it talks a heap about the vintage with its bracing acidity and quite fine, crunchy fruit. There's perfume and a sort of red jube fruit but there's also an underlying earthy, savoury character.

A Sense of Compression is a bigger, deeper, more concentrated wine, which it needs to be at \$100 a bottle. However it is not over-ripe and is reined in by zest and crunch. They are terrific wines from a maker that is part of a growing band of folk working in traditional regions producing non-traditional styles.

topdrop

2013 KALLESKE FLORENTINE CHENIN BLANC

This is an unruly textural white with an intricate array of aromas and flavours. It has plenty of acid punch and a slippery, slightly syrupy, texture. It is bone dry, demands food and, who knows, it may repay a few years of ageing. \$22, Cru Cellars, Fortitude Valley.



2010 MOSS WOOD MORNINGTON PENINSULA PINOT NOIR

I've always been a fan of Margaret River pinot, especially with six years in the cellar. But this is classic Mornington, made with Victorian fruit from an excellent vintage. Its structure sets it apart: red cherry fruit glosses the savoury elements. \$52, Craft Wine Store, Red Hill.

