

A blend in need

Many winemakers have an indifferent attitude to varietal blends. Nick Bulleid MW is one of them, although he's thinking he needs to change his tune.

Whole greater than the sum of the parts

While I agree entirely with Nick Bulleid's article 'A blend in need' in the October edition of *WBM*, I think that much more emphasis needs to be placed on the iconic Australian blend of Cabernet and Shiraz. Most other blends such as GSM and Cabernet Merlot are blends which imitate those that originated in the old wine world a long time ago, so we are in effect being a 'me-too' with these blends, albeit that ours taste different due to the variations in (dare I say it) our terroir from that of where the blends originated.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, no other wine producing nation has taken seriously to the Cab Shiraz or Shiraz Cab combination so as to make quality blends like we do. This could be mainly due to the fact that in most of the Old World the two varieties are grown in separate regions and in some cases it is illegal to grow them both in the same region. In Bordeaux one can only grow the 'permitted' varieties, which do not include Shiraz, so that would be impossible to create a Cab Shiraz blend without risking the possibility of ending up in jail for doing so.

Here, as we are free to grow what we like, where we like, we have

wineries making some stunning expressions of this combination including Penfolds Bin 389, Yalumba Signature and Lindeman's Limestone Ridge. Yes, there are a lot of ordinary, mundane commercial versions of this blend, but then again there is a plethora of ordinary commercial varietal Cabernet and Shiraz as well. Just as we don't judge premium varietal wines by the lakes of mediocrity below them, we should refrain from judging our iconic blend by the sea of under \$10 Cabernet Shiraz blends that are for sale in our supermarket duopoly.

The beauty of this combination is that the Shiraz is full of flavour on the mid palate and this fills the lack of flavour or 'doughnut' hole in the Cabernet's mid-palate. In most instances it is truly a case of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

So how about we hear a lot more talk about the 'Aussie blend' of Cabernet and Shiraz, especially when talking to the rest of the wine world, as here we have a uniquely Australian wine, which when well crafted is world class.

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