

Wine as good as Grange that won't put you in the red

Jeremy Roberts

THREE reds selling for as little as \$35 have given the \$400 2001 Penfolds Grange shiraz a run for its money in the James Halliday Top 100 list of Australian wines.

The guide is published today inside *The Weekend Australian*.

Halliday — a respected wine critic with a column in *The Weekend Australian Magazine* — has awarded three shiraz wines 96 points out of 100. The wines were judged at just one point below the 2001 Penfolds Grange, the accepted pinnacle of Australian reds.

The three shiraz wines sell in bottle shops for between \$35 and \$45, about one-tenth of the \$400 Grange.

McLaren Vale winemaker Ben

Riggs, who produced the 2004 Mr Riggs shiraz for \$45 — naming it after early settler and his great-great-grandfather John Riggs — said the price difference represented “ridiculous value”.

“It shows the bargains that people can pick up in this country,” said Mr Riggs, who compared the Australian market favourably to Bordeaux.

In the famous French wine region, second-tier reds sold for about \$250.

“A large number of wines on the second rung of the ladder behind Grange are under \$100, and a significant number are below \$50,” he said.

Winemaker Loic Le Calvez, who produced the 2004 Taltarni Heathcote shiraz, said the \$44 wine was the result of a “high risk” strategy.

Taltarni Heathcote shiraz was “elegant and complex” and contradicted the traditional big taste of an Australian shiraz.

Taltarni has vineyards in the Pyrenees ranges in western Victoria as well as the rich, old soils of Heathcote, north of Melbourne.

Mr Le Calvez sidestepped the comparison with Grange.

“The Heathcote shiraz will always be our premium wine aimed at the connoisseur ... it is not a cheap wine,” he said.

For Jeff Burch, who owns Howard Park winery in Western Australia, his \$35 2004 Scotsdale shiraz was the result of a plan to make inroads into the Sydney restaurant market.

See liftout in today's Weekend Australian for Halliday's Top 100



MR RIGGS SHIRAZ 2004

96 POINTS, \$45 ¹⁵

One-time Wirra Wirra winemaker Ben Riggs has his finger in many pies these days as a contract maker and consultant, plus joint ventures, and his own label, Mr Riggs. In this wine, clean, rich fruit aromas lead into lush red and black fruits with a juicy twist giving lively mouthfeel and a delicious finish.

From: McLaren Vale, SA

Drink: now-2014

With: slow-braised ox cheek



PROCORK

*CLOSURE METHODS C=CORK D=DIAM P=PROCORK S=SCREWCAP
SY=SYNTHETIC CORK TT=TWIN-TOP CORK # = 14 PER CENT ALCOHOL



'Ridiculous value': Ben Riggs at his McLaren Vale vineyard, South Australia

Picture: Sam Mooy