



Shiraz season

Irecently attended an event that was described by several managers and wine writers as “the tasting highlight of the year”.

This annual tasting was hosted by Songlines, one of the more understated of the new breed of McLaren Vale reds. More than anything, the tasting showed how well the Australian wines stack up against the other Shiraz-producing nations.

Songlines is produced by two of the industry’s most experienced winemakers – David Fatches and former Penfolds star John Duval. This superior McLaren Vale shiraz was first released in the UK and is finally available in Australia.

In previous years, guests have compared the Songlines \$120 shiraz

to similarly priced wines from Washington State and different regions of France. This year shiraz/syrah from South Africa, Italy, France and New Zealand were served and once again, the tasting

proved the outstanding quality that talented winemakers and old McLaren Vale vines offer.

In Sydney, we were served French wines from the renowned August Clape and the Cornas appellation (\$180) as a point of comparison. 2003 in France was an Australian-style vintage, with long hot days bringing the wine to a peak of ripeness that is only seen once every 25 years. The Clape has a tight structure, with firm tannins that will take years to soften.

Songlines has been described as the “Chateau La Tour of McLaren Vale” and the 2006 Songlines was typical of the previous vintages: it has that unmistakable, Aussie upfront-ness, with a ripe potpourri of dark red and black fruit. It’s richly structured and more mouth-filling than the other wines served, with silky tannins capable of aging. You can happily drink it now or cellar it for 15 years.

In any clash of the titans there are


bound to be some bruised egos. There was little doubt that the \$110 South African Boekenhoutskloof was not in the same league, nor would it have the same ability to age gracefully.

Also interesting was the 2003 Fontodi from Italy. Retailing for \$125, this chianti does surprisingly

well, and seems to require nearly the same conditions as shiraz to ripen successfully. A lean and savoury wine, it was a fascinating insight into the flexibility of Northern Hemisphere reds.

Songlines wines are distributed through Scotchmans Road, info@scotchmans.com.au.

• www.agoodnoseandgreatlegs.com.au

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