

SWINNEY

Features & Reviews Summary

swinney.com.au

July, 2021

FRANKLAND
RIVER





Winner
Young Gun of Wine
Australian Vineyard of the Year 2020

WINNER — YOUNG GUN OF WINE AUSTRALIAN VINEYARD OF THE YEAR 2020

In March 2021, Swinney was awarded Young Gun of Wine's inaugural 'Vineyard of the Year' trophy, after a six-month search that included multiple rounds of judging and site inspections of vineyards around Australia.

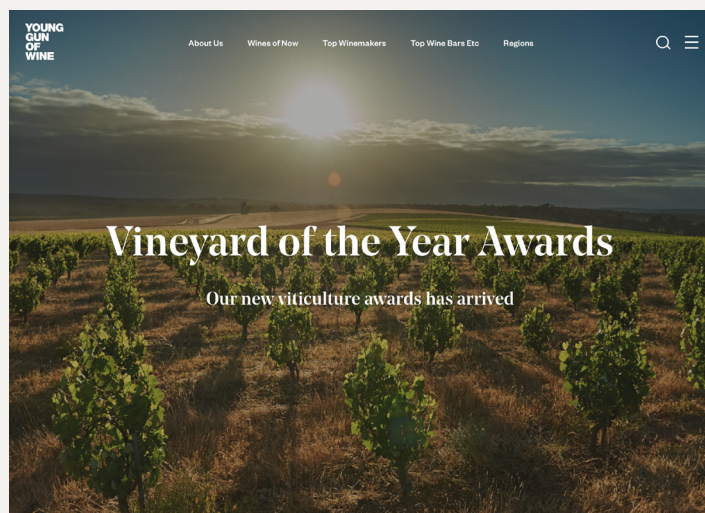
The award is testament to the extraordinary amount of hard work put in every year by the Swinney team. It reflects our goal of growing the highest quality grapes and making wines that sit comfortably amongst the best in the world, while clearly speaking of our home in Frankland River.

"The Swinney vineyard represents modern viticulture interwoven with Old-World techniques, executed with precision through a combination of exhaustive manual work and state-of-the-art technology, and all underpinned by an environmental focus. They are pushing the limits of grape varieties and challenging the norms to search for wines of distinct provenance and expression. The scale of the vineyard, coupled with their pinpoint focus and pursuit of innovation, and the quality of the resulting wines, is truly extraordinary and inspiring."

*Young Gun of Wine
Vineyard of the Year Awards*

"Swinney's Vineyard of the Year award has been earned not just for the small run of exceptional wines the family have produced under their own eponymous label, but for the long list of wines made by an equally long list of eager clients that runs from industry heavy-weights including Penfolds and Hardys to cutting-edge small producers such as Brave New Wine and La Violetta."

*Nick Ryan,
The Australian*



The full judging panel consisted of journalist Max Allen, Dr Mary Cole, Dr Peter Dry AM, Dr Mardi Longbottom, Dr Irina Santiago-Brown and Mark Walpole.

They were supported by vineyard inspectors: Chris Penfold (SA), Colin Bell (WA), John Whiting (VIC), Kellie Graham (TAS) and Liz Riley (NSW/ACT).

Visit

<https://younggunofwine.com/the-awards/vineyard-awards/>

for more information.

WINNER — YOUNG GUN OF WINE AUSTRALIAN VINEYARD OF THE YEAR 2020

Nick Ryan, March 17, 2021
The Australian



ORIGIN STORY

The Young Gun of Wine's newest awards are a thorough appraisal of the boldness, tradition and toil in the vineyards behind our great wines

NICK RYAN

When Matt Swinney stands at a high point of the Frankland River farm his great-grandfather established in 1922, he sees possibilities that will deliver rewards he is unlikely to ever see.

Like the three generations of Swinneys who have toiled beneath the sprawling skies of southwest Western Australia, Matt Swinney makes decisions now for consequences decades down the track.

On a rocky outcrop that was once a handy high point from which a teenage Swinney shot kangaroos, he now talks of planting bush vines of grenache in contours across the hillside, in the hope they will one day tell the story of a place he knows well.

It's that kind of thinking that has delivered the Swinney family, viticulturist Lee Haselgrove and the team that fastidiously work the 160ha of vineyard on the 2000ha property the Young Gun of Wine Vineyard of the Year award.

In an industry awash with recognition for winemakers, this award is the most thorough examination, and significant recognition, of the special sites behind some of the country's best wines.

No winemaker, no matter how willing they may be to sing their own praises, can make the proverbial porcine pun.

Great wines are grown as

much, if not more, than made.

Awards founder Rory Kent says: "In taking the wine conversation to the place of origin, and how the grapes are grown, these awards seek to shift the awareness of wine from a manufactured beverage to a distinct product of provenance and culture."

The four major category winners, announced in a virtual ceremony on Tuesday night, are prime examples of the fundamental importance a wine's origins have in shaping its quality.

Swinney's Vineyard of the Year award has been earned not just for the small run of exceptional wines the family have produced under their own eponymous label, but for the long list of vines made by a



Sampling the wine at Place of Changing Winds; and, below, Matt Swinney

equally long list of eager clients that runs from industry heavyweights including Penfolds and Hardys to cutting-edge small producers such as Brave New Wine and La Violetta.

It's an approach Swinney calls "bespoke wine growing" — an attention to detail that isn't simply absolute, but tailored to the varied stylistic needs of a diverse client list.

It might mean up to half a dozen picks of a vineyard blocks depending on what particular clients require.

That's neither easy nor cheap, but it shows a preparedness to see the grape-growing from the end-user perspective — something a million miles away from the "more grapes equals more dollars" approach of days gone by.

One of the crucial judging criteria, assessed by an eminent panel of many of the leading names in Australian viticulture, was sustainability, and Matt Swinney has clearly inherited the strong farming family gene that focuses the mind on water.

Large swathes of pasture have been shaped to maximise water catchment and Swinney uses all of the significant landholding at his disposal to provide options for water security, while at the same time managing the vineyard to the point, through the encouragement of deep roots, that water is a rarely used fallback plan and dry growing is the norm.

When Swinney first planted non-trellised bush vines of grenache and mourvedre back in the late 1990s, most people thought he was mad, but the fact that the first release of a wine named after his great-grandfather — the 2018 Far-

vie Grenache, produced from those vines — was among the most celebrated releases of last year and redefined the variety in Western Australia, was sweet validation.

Madness is also used as an attempt to explain Robert Walters' quixotic decision to plant an organic vineyard at a vine density considered risky anywhere in the world, let alone a cool, marginal climate like the Macedon Ranges.

But that vine density — of 33,333 plants per hectare at spacings of one metre between rows and 30 centimetres between vines in each row — has a purpose.

The intense competition created by packing them in like circus clowns in a Barina forces roots to dive deep into the subsoil in search of water and helps reinforce the idea that a vine put under pressure produces diamonds.

The Place of Changing Winds

vineyard, by Walters' own admission, is excruciatingly laborious and only just starting to show signs of what it can do, but those signs, and the boldness of vision, make it a worthy winner of the New Vineyard of the Year award.

Henry Best planted the Congella vineyard at Great Western in 1866 and his foresight, and the careful custodianship of the Thompson family for the past hundred years, have ensured this viticultural treasure is still going strong and is a universally celebrated winner of the Old Vineyard of the Year award.

Home to what are considered to be the world's oldest plantings of pinot noir and meunier, as well as an eponymous clone of shiraz that has subsequently been planted all across Australia, the Congella is one of the most significant sites in Australia's wine-growing history.

Ashley Ratcliff's Ricca Terra Farm is just as significant to its future and is a worthy winner of the Innovative Vineyard of the Year award.

Ratcliff has done more than anyone to reimagine the viticultural landscape of South Australia's Riverland region, a prophet of planting the varieties that can thrive in a warmer inland region, without sucking the valuable river dry. His fruit is highly sought after by a raft of winemakers wanting to explore the future as Ratcliff sees it, and the wines produced under his own label are the strongest statement yet that the Riverland, once considered in serious peril, is actually on the rise.

Australia's love of large monuments is on show at The Big Orange, near the Riverland town of Berri. There's a strong argument to be made that it should be replaced, or at least matched, by The Big Rat.

Tasting notes

FARVIE GRENACHE 2019, Frankland River, \$150

The initial release of this wine drew global attention to sleepy Frankland River. This follow-up not only lives up to expectations, it expands them. It's grenache with grit, a sublime entwining of the variety's red berry perfume with the often elusive granitic grip that defines the greats. Already comfortable among the best examples of the variety on a global scale.

WINNER — YOUNG GUN OF WINE AUSTRALIAN VINEYARD OF THE YEAR 2020

Max Allen
The Australian Financial Review, March, 2021



26-28 March 2021
www.afr.com | The Australian Financial Review

Guide to good living

Drinks

Max Allen



“Great wine is made in the vineyard.” It’s a phrase I’ve heard countless times over the decades, and the more I’ve learnt about wine, the more I’ve grown to believe it’s absolutely true.

Yes, a skilled winemaker can turn less than optimum grapes into a perfectly drinkable beverage. But great wine – distinctive wine that tastes of where it’s from – can only be made using top quality grapes grown by skilled viticulturists in well-managed, well-farmed vineyards.

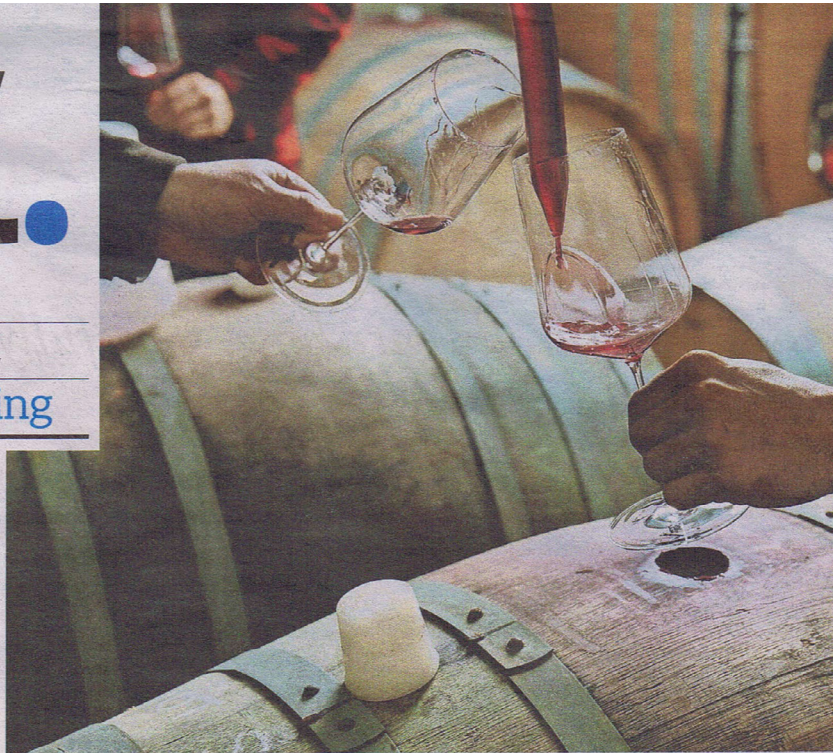
We don’t talk enough about vineyards in Australia, or the people who grow grapes. When wines win awards, it is invariably the winemaker who accepts the trophy, not the person who spent countless hours in the sun and rain, the dust and the mud, pruning, shoot-thinning and harvesting. Often, of course, in the case of most small-scale producers, the maker is also the grower. But even then, it’s usually the *making* that takes precedence over the *growing* in any conversation about that wine.

So when Rory Kent, founder of Young Gun of Wine, asked if I would be interested in helping him develop a series of awards recognising Australia’s best vineyards and the people who farm them – to perhaps help change the wine conversation – I didn’t hesitate.

Kent assembled an impressive team of judges, from esteemed viticultural academics to experts in biological farming and sustainable winegrowing, practising viticulturists (and your correspondent), and invited growers around the country to enter.

We whittled down the entries into a list of 50 finalists. The judges then selected a shortlist of the standout vineyards – potential award winners – that were then visited by an independent viticulturist in each state to assess the entrants’ claims on the ground.

The reports from the assessors glowed with praise for these top sites, a feeling neatly summed up by Hunter Valley-based viticulture consultant Liz Riley.



Let’s hear it for the growers

A toast to those behind the vines.

“The joyous part of the vineyard visits was the chance to kick the dirt and to get inside the minds of the custodians of these great vineyards,” she says. “They are connected to these places and feel the pain of seasonal challenges and share in the joy when the vines respond to the tending that they receive.”

“There is a quiet but true and burning love between the vineyard custodians and the sites that they care for.”

After much debate – and much agreement that many of the top 50 deserved to be recognised – we finally settled on four inaugural award winners, representing a wide cross section of Australian winegrowing, from a new small site at the extreme fringe of cool-climate viticulture, to a large-scale venture offering a vision of a sustainable future in the warm-climate commercial heartland of the Australian wine industry.

While the nature of an awards program such as this means the focus will inevitably fall on these four, I strongly urge you to also check out the other 46 vineyards on the shortlist. **LSI**

Disclaimer: Max Allen was paid by Young Gun of Wine to help develop the Vineyard of the Year Awards, and to host the online awards ceremony.

VINEYARD OF THE YEAR AWARD

■ **Swinney Swinney** is the complete package. A large vineyard at more than 160 hectares, it was originally planted in the ironstone-rich soils of Frankland River in the late-1900s by fourth-generation farmers, siblings Matt and Janelle Swinney, primarily to grow red grapes for Hardys. Since then, it has transformed into a multi-variety site, with acclaimed viticulturist Lee Haselgrove growing everything from cabernet to vermentino grapes – for wines under the Swinneys’ own label, and sold to more than 30 other winemakers – in a number of different ways, from exciting and unusual blocks of bush-vine grenache and tempranillo, to no-expense-spared blocks of shiraz for the family’s top label, Farvie.

■ **2019 Swinney Farvie Syrah [Frankland River]** When I tasted the first vintage releases of Swinney’s top red wines under the Farvie label, the 2018s, I was most impressed with the grenache. In 2019, as good as the grenache is, it’s the syrah that steals the show. An arresting wine from the first sniff: glorious ripe black fruit, but restrained and enticing rather than showy. Then lovely, satisfying density of ripe fruit on the tongue, too, but held together by long, seamless tannins. Really stylish wine. \$150 swinney.com.au **LSI**

Features & Reviews
2018 - 2019 Vintage

MEDIA

Nick Ryan, March 17, 2021
The Australian



WINE

THE WORLD'S BEST GRENACHE IS FROM WA

Yes, you read that correctly—the 2018 Swinney Farvie Grenache is an international leader.

■ For a hundred years, the Swinneys have carried Frankland River dirt on their boots. While those before them were primarily graziers, fourth-generation siblings Matt and Janelle Swinney have overseen an expansion into viticulture that has seen the property become one of the most highly regarded vineyard sites in the country.

The vast majority of the 200-hectare vineyard's output is snapped up by some of the biggest names in Australian wine, and makes its way into a collection of this country's most prized labels.

But a small fraction of its yield, a few fastidiously observed and obsessively managed pockets of the vineyard showing unique character and definition, ends up in an eponymous wine label that impressed pundits in its first decade of production and then really put the foot down and started to blow minds as it embarked on the second.

The 2018 vintage saw the release of two flagship Swinney wines under the Farvie label, a designation reserved for the very best the vineyard can produce, and named in honour of the property's founder, Matt and Janelle's great grandfather, George John Alexander Swinney, known in the family as 'Farvie.'

The two wines, a syrah and a grenache, have turned out to be the most heat-

generating releases of this year. There's a buzz about them like a million bees swinging chainsaws, and they have reframed the conversation about what the high points of Western Australian wine might be.

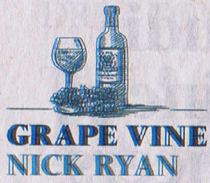
Grenache is a rare beast in WA—Grenache grown on untrellised bush vines even more so. But the masochism required to follow such a labour-intensive and low-yielding practice is something the Swinneys have in spades. This wine is one that actually adheres to the notion that great wine is made in the vineyard. Carefully selected vine rows from elevated sites in the vineyard, where the soil is rich in the ferrous resonance of ironstone, surrender the best bunch or two from each vine to be set aside for Farvie.

That ruthlessness pays off big time. It delivers the bright berry and exotic spice characters often associated with the variety—think wild raspberries, dark cherries, star anise and mace—but within a tight, coiled and tensile structure that stamps this as grenache of the utmost seriousness. It's not just the greatest grenache ever made in the West, but unquestionably one of the finest wines made from the variety anywhere on the planet.

Swinney Farvie Grenache 2018, \$150; swinney.com.au Nick Ryan

MEDIA

Nick Ryan, March 10, 2020
The Australian



Swinney's labour of love a game-changer

Validation is faith's greatest reward, and right now Matt Swinney is up to his eyeballs in it.

Swinney always believed in the potential of the vineyards that form part of the farming property called Franklands that his family has owned in Western Australia's Frankland River region for the past 100 years.

In the 22 years since vines were planted on the property, their tendrils have wrapped themselves progressively tighter around Swinney's heart and mind. For a while it was a long-distance relationship, as Swinney conducted a jetsetting career in international finance, brokering deals to build uranium mines in Hungary and wind farms in Brazil from a home base in London.

He would get back to Frankland River at every opportunity, and every time he'd leave it got a little bit harder to go.

In the past couple of years he has flipped those arrangements completely, basing himself back in Perth and spending as much time as possible down south at Franklands.

Working closely with his calmly capable sister, Janelle, Swinney built the vineyard side of the family business to the point where it was one of the leading growers in the west and a valuable source of premium fruit for some of the biggest players in Australian wine.

They also developed an eponymous wine brand that was well received by the trade.

So, all was going pretty well for Matt Swinney. Things were definitely good, but he knew they could be even better.

In addition to his homecoming and greater focus on the property, two other factors came into play that took a good vineyard and wine brand to the next level.

The first of these was the arrival of viticulturist Lee Haselgrove in 2014. Together with the Swinneys, Haselgrove set about making the changes that elevate good vineyards to great ones, working tirelessly to get a deeper and more detailed understanding of individual blocks, rows and vines.

Finally, all the elements were in place to produce a pair of wines that would take this project to a completely different level

The other was the return of Rob Mann to Western Australia, the place where his surname is woven through wine history.

The grandson of legendary Houghton winemaker Jack Mann, Rob was back home after many years overseeing the Newton winery in Napa for luxury goods giant LVMH.

Mann's first vintage with Swinney delivered immediate results. Not only did the range of Swinney wines in 2018 seem tighter and more focused but, finally, all the elements were in place to produce a pair of wines that would take this project to a completely different level.

The two wines released under the Farvie label represent the most impressive debut we're likely to see all year.

Named in honour of Matt and Janelle's great-great grandfather and original custodian of Franklands, George John Alexander Swinney (otherwise known as Farvie), these wines are the product of a lot of hard work, a bit of bloody-mindedness, and a fortunate set of circumstances that conspired to bring the very best out of a special bit of dirt.

For Matt Swinney, the game has well and truly changed.

FARVIE GRENACHE 2018, FRANKLAND RIVER, WA, \$150

Grenache is a rare beast in Western Australia; grenache grown on untrellised bush vines even more so. But the masochism required to follow such a labour-intensive and low-yielding practice is something Swinney clearly has in spades.

This wine is one that actually adheres to the notion that great wine is made in the vineyard, with each vine picked and sorted in situ, and only the very best bunch or two from each vine, those sitting in the optimal spots in the vine's architecture, being set aside for Farvie.

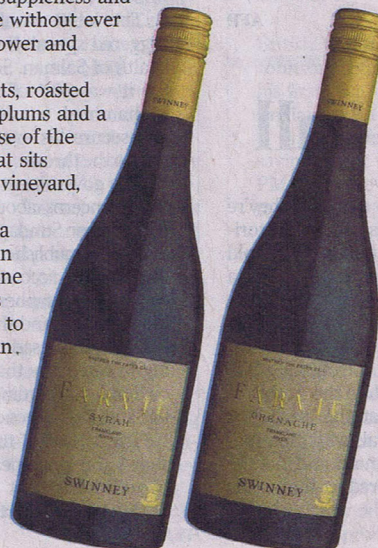
That ruthlessness pays off big time. This wine has emphatically inserted itself into the conversation around the best grenache wines on the planet. It delivers the bright berry and exotic spice characters often associated with the variety — think wild raspberries, dark cherries, star anise and mace — but within a tight, coiled and tensile structure that stamps this as grenache of the utmost seriousness.

FARVIE SYRAH 2018, FRANKLAND RIVER, WA, \$150

This might just be the best shiraz I've seen out of Western Australia. It is a finely etched, tightly wound and mineral-laced wine that redefines the variety in the west.

It substitutes the variety's usual flesh and opulence for a more finely hewn shape, switching out heft for suppleness and sinewy grace without ever sacrificing power and drive.

Black fruits, roasted spices, dark plums and a palpable sense of the ironstone that sits beneath the vineyard, this, like the grenache, is a masterclass in tension; a wine that requires you to come to it, rather than one that explodes from the bottle intent on seduction through sweet fruit.



MEDIA

David Prestipino, September 11, 2020
The Age, Sydney Morning Herald & WA Today - online.

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Gamechanger: Is this rare beast of a WA wine the perfect drop?



It left wine reviewers across the country gobsmacked and the gushing praise that continued on its international release on Wednesday left nodoubt this is the most spectacular and important debut ever of a West Australian wine.

On so many levels, the very first vintage of The Farvie Grenache from leading Frankland River producer [Swinney Wines](#) is quite simply a gamechanger. Its brother-in-arms, The Farvie Syrah, was unleashed simultaneously with similar traits.

Bush vine grenache growing at Swinney Vineyards in the Frankland River.

The 2018 wine releases, which retail for \$150, have turned the wine world on its head about what's great down under, particularly here in the west.

Surprisingly grenache – a rare beast in WA – can challenge cabernet and chardonnay as the greatest variety in WA and be even more exceptional when given the love to grow on untrellised bush vines and treated with the extreme care a parent might give their newborn.

"This wine has emphatically inserted itself into the conversation around the best grenache wines on the planet," said Nick Ryan from The Australian.

From leading east coast wine scribe Huon Hooke: "Has an elegance and lightness of touch seldom seen in grenache in Australia. A stunning wine."

Over in the west, Ray Jordan scored it 98: "A remarkable wine that captures the essence of this variety in a way not seen before in Australia."

So what makes The Farvie Grenache unique? It's a combination of many elements. The fruit was grown on bush vines, untrellised and free to thrive, a practice rare in WA.

Individual bush vines are selected from within the block – those located on the selected combination of soil type (iron stone gravel) and aspect (hill top facing north east) – and farmed in a very exact and precise way.

The best bunch or two are then chosen from each vine, right there in the vineyard, on three separate occasions, the berries sorted, before being gravity-fed to French oak vats.

"This was one of those tastings you will remember for the rest of your life."

UK wine critic Matthew Jukes

For the 2018 Farvie Syrah, shade cloth was applied to rows of blocks to protect fruit from heat and sun exposure, maximising purity and freshness and reducing character variability between bunches.

In the final stanza of the masterpiece, the wines were Mann-made. By Rob Mann, that is; a sixth-generation winemaker of the highest order who joined the team in 2018 just before The Farvie wines were made by the Swinney family.

Mann has spent time in other parts of Australia and the world honing his wine skills, including at Cape Mentelle, where he won a Winemaker of the Year gong, and in California's Napa Valley. His own label Corymbia with wife Genevieve draws fruit from family vineyards in the Swan Valley and has also impressed since the first release of wines last year that make a statement with their focus on organic, old-world principles.

His philosophy that great wine is made in the vineyard makes him a perfect match with Swinney, whose wines thrive on meticulous attention to site selection and precise grape growing practices.

"Bush vines are a relative rarity in WA but the approach, which allows vines to grow in a natural and unforced manner, allows the purest expression of terroir to be captured in the wines," Mann said.

"All the hard work is done in the vineyard, and the individual expression of the site and personality of the vintage to shine in each bottle."

The Farvie Grenache was released in Australia in March alongside The Farvie Syrah. After four years in the making, Swinney had to wait six months to show The Farvie wines to the world after the coronavirus pandemic hit in March.

Once the first shipments of wines landed safely in the UK, Mann and Matt Swinney held a Zoom meeting with an influential audience of 25 wine critics, elite restaurateurs and brokers, with leading UK writer Matthew Jukes guiding the group through the one-hour tasting and discussion.

MEDIA

David Prestipino, September 11, 2020
The Age, Sydney Morning Herald & WA Today - online.

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continued... Gamechanger: Is this rare beast of a WA wine the perfect drop?

"This was one of those tastings you will remember for the rest of your life," Jukes said from London on Thursday. "We talked about two wines for an hour and could've kept going."

"Nobody launches two debut wines like that ... the uniqueness of them I have never seen in my 34 years in the wine business. They are so daring." Britain's top wine critic Jancis Robinson, who provides advice for the wine cellar of Queen Elizabeth II, wasn't at the tasting but has rated the 2018 Farvie Grenache an 18/20, commenting it was "unlike any other grenache I have come across". Perhaps Her Majesty will request a few cases after the 2019 iteration is released next March, pandemic permitting.

Jukes himself rated it a whopping 19.5, a score off the charts while another prominent wine critic, Joe Fattorini, tweeted his unequivocal approval from Wednesday's tasting to 20,000 followers.

The team at Swinney - Mann, long-term viticulturist Lee Haselgrove, Matt and sister Janelle Swinney - are intent on making the hand of the winemaker as discreet as possible, instead focusing on the details: berry sorting, gravity, natural fermentation in oak, a percentage of whole bunch, co-fermentation, ageing in seasoned large format oak, minimal fining, and filtration.

They have the entire portfolio of Swinney wines singing, the estate-range riesling, syrah, grenache and

MSG (mourvedre/syrah/grenache) all a steal at the \$30-40 range and exemplifying the elegance, structure and sophistication of The Farvie range.

On a legacy scale, the newborn Swinney Farvie twins may one day join the ranks of recent icon-range cabernet debuts from Margaret River pioneers Vasse Felix, Cullen, Voyager and bold newcomer Cloudburst in being WA's most important, treasured and very greatest wines.

MEDIA

Jeremy Oliver, March 27 2020
www.jeremyoliver.com

Australian red wine just became better!

In retrospect there was no need for me to have been shocked. It all made perfect sense. If anyone was going to do it, these were the guys. But my world still changed.

The guys in question were the Swinney family, long-time graziers and grape growers in remote Frankland River, WA, plus Rob Mann, one of the finest winemakers this country has produced. And what have they done to change my world? Together they have just made the most southern Rhône-inspired grenache this country has ever seen, plus some shiraz that is more Hermitage than Grange or any other Australian shiraz might ever have been.

Matt Swinney said to me the other day that he actually got criticised by one person for releasing his two premier wines, the Swinney Farvie Shiraz and Swinney Farvie Grenache (both 2018 vintage) for \$150 per bottle. On what basis could he charge that amount for the first release of an entirely unknown wine? Aside from the facts that these are amongst the most game-changing wines created in this country for 25 years and they're limited to a mere 150 dozen of each, they stack up pretty evenly against French benchmarks costing between 2-8 times that amount.

Both deliver opulent layers of complex perfume, a remarkable core of luxuriant fruit and a structure of tightly integrated firm and drying tannins that deliver structure rarely seen in wines from this country. They are fullish to medium in weight and reveal the kind of smoky, savoury and mineral qualities sought after in the best from the Rhône Valley. Yet they are Australian wines, and proudly so, not French.

Importantly, these wines were made by Rob Mann – the reason being that with such outstanding fruit they needed a winemaker of the highest level who could also park his or her own ego to the side. The thing about Mann's wines is that they're superbly balanced, structured and expressive – there is no winemaking ego that needs to be fed with an individual stamp or style. Many Australian winemakers would do better if they heeded this lesson.

Now for the really good news. For those of us to whom \$150 represents just too steep a challenge for daily consumption, the second collection of Swinney red wines from 2018, which comprise a Shiraz, a Grenache and a Shiraz Mourvèdre Grenache, each deliver what I rate as gold medal quality (not something I ever dish out for the fun of it) for \$42 per bottle. These are deeply scented, powerful and ethereal wines of finesse and style. They're spicy and perfumed, with wonderful gravelly textures and savoury aspects. Each offers extraordinary value.

Every now and again it's my luck to experience one of those moments that makes Australian wine a better thing. This release definitely rates amongst them. Do yourself a favour and find out why.

MEDIA

Matthew Jukes , 2nd September 2020
www.matthewjukes.com

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Swinney's UK Farvie Launch & Portfolio Notes

A preview ahead of the event on 9th September 2020

I have known one of the two protagonists in this story for a very long time – even though Rob Mann still looks like he is in his twenties! The other chap is a relatively new acquaintance, but time skips along and so it was around a decade ago that I first came across Matt Swinney.

You are likely to have tasted Rob's wines whether you know it or not given that he has worked all over the world and been responsible for hero brands like Cape Mentelle (for ten years), Hardy's Tintara Winery in McLaren Vale and LVMH's Newton in California. Matt Swinney has his own wine brand but is perhaps better known as an elite Western Australian grape-grower, fourth generation no less, based in Frankland River.

When Rob and his wife Gen moved back to WA, from California, to build their own brand Corymbia (these wines, as an aside, are spectacular) it was Matt who offered Rob a position he couldn't refuse.

It doesn't happen very often in the wine world, but when a collaboration ignites between two uniquely skilled parties, there is always one of two outcomes. It is either a car crash of fierce egos and opposing philosophies, which results in the inevitable break-up or it is a synergistic relationship which spawns otherworldly wines, the likes of which have never experienced before.

I wouldn't be putting pen to paper if it were the former!

I met up with these two fellows in London, in September 2019, for an extraordinary tasting of their inaugural release of the Farvie wines. It is not often that you feel that you have tasted a truly unique set of flavours, but this was my impression and this is also why I agreed to help Matt and Rob present these wines at

their London launch (in their physical absence, but they will be Zooming in). The launch was originally planned for early 2020 but, of course, Covid put paid to that plan. So we now find ourselves in September, a year on from my first taste, and I cannot be more excited about revisiting these wines with a group of experienced tasters and 12 months more bottle age under their belts.

Matt's catchphrase is, 'it's all about the vineyard' and Rob prefers not to give too much away, not least because his winemaking is about as hands-off as its gets, and so there are no tricks up his sleeve, just incredible experience, finely-honed intuition and great taste. It is the way in which these two gentlemen have worked in concert which is extraordinary. There must be many analogies out there in the big, wide world, but the image which springs to my mind was rather unlikely, but it works for me.

I have a rather comedic tennis scenario floating around in my head, in which Rob and Matt are invited to a summer garden party where everyone is paired off to form doubles teams for a tennis tournament. Rob and Matt don't even have their kit with them and are rather reluctant to join in given the buffet lunch and accompanying wines looks so enticing. But, and you have guessed it, their partnership is sensational, moving gracefully around the court, never tripping or bumping into each other and taking every game and set to love.

I have no idea if either gentleman is a dab hand with a racquet, but this is how smooth and harmonious these wines taste. There are no hesitations, no ragged edges, no cul-de-sacs of flavour and no excessive moments in any direction. Instead, these wines are all complete, complementary,

exquisitely balanced and ultra-fine. It is worth mentioning that I have tasted the Swinney 'estate' wines many times before and when a company introduces new, icon-level releases out of the blue, you had better hope that the rest of the portfolio is not left behind. I find it fascinating that Rob's input, across the board, has lifted the entire portfolio of estate wines immeasurably, too, such that while the Farvie wines are indeed one of the most successful debut launches I can remember, it is vital to impress on everyone who comes across this article that the estate wines are utterly thrilling, too. Given the value for money of the aforementioned estate wines, they should find themselves on every decent wine list and on every informed dining table in the land.

It is clear to me that Matt and Rob have catapulted this brand to the very highest echelons of WA winemaking in one fell swoop.

My notes, scores /20 and drinking windows

Here are my instant reaction notes to the wines from September 2019 – forgive their incomplete sentences as they were bashed into my iPad at speed. Wine trade enquiries should be directed to Ants Rixon Swinney's UK agent Entoria&Coe.

2019 Swinney, Riesling Frankland River, WA).

Lime pith, talcy and with a rather nice powderpuff feel, this is a bright, taut and direct wine which takes no prisoners on the palate. The finish is super-dry and energetic, making it one of the most impressive Frankland releases of the year.

18.5/20 (drink now – 2024)

MEDIA

Matthew Jukes , 2nd September 2020
www.matthewjukes.com

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continued... Swinney's UK Farvie Launch & Portfolio Notes A preview ahead of the event on 9th September 2020

2018 Swinney, Grenache, Frankland River, WA

Taken from dry grown, 20-year-old bush vines. Dry, slender and rather pointy on the finish, this is a red-fruited, precise, sour-amaro-style temptress with a white-knuckle finish which keeps on going. Mouth-watering and only 13% alc., there is a dribble of Mourvèdre in here which adds imperceptibly to the tone and lifts the palate right in the centre. Clean and upright, the addition of 20% whole bunch makes this a super-fresh experience.

18.5/20 (drink now - 2025)

2018 Swinney, Syrah / Mourvèdre / Grenache, Frankland River, WA

With 25% whole bunch, co-fermented, this is a darker and more indulgent wine and it has an iron-rich core which hints at more than a little malevolence. Weighing in at 14% alc. the Mourvèdre, again, ties the exuberance down bringing depth and also tartness on the finish. The trademark bitterness is, once again, here and I love it and while it has more density and richness than the Grenache it is similarly vital and expressive.

18/20 (drink now - 2028)

2018 Swinney, Syrah, Frankland River, WA

4% Mourvèdre is deployed, again, here with as much precision and accuracy as it has been in the other two reds. This time there is more succulence and more fruit sweetness and this is cut with meaty notes and cracked pepper tones. This is the most closed of the red trio, as it should be, and yet it still has that lip-smacking, tongue-scouring

bitterness which I adore in these wines. While it sees three more months in oak than the other two, this only serves to soften the scratchy tannins and there is so much energy and brightness in this violet-tinged wine it defies belief.

18.5+/20 (drink 2022 - 2030)

2018 Swinney, Farvie Frankland River Grenache

Only those bunches which are perfectly situated on the bush vines are used for the Farvie wines and that means those grapes which are not overly exposed to the sun's rays. Once again, there is some whole bunch / whole berry fermentation in oak used here and there is also the magical ingredient of an eyedropper of Mourvèdre. This is a very serious wine indeed and it gives me more pleasure than almost anything I can think of this year. To be released in March 2020 (this date was subsequently put back six months thanks to Covid rudely interrupting everyone's plans). The only other winemaking note is that there is a mighty 8% new oak used here! From this moment onwards this wine is all about the fruit and I have tasted nothing like it, at least made from Grenache. The insanely mineral palate reminds me of elite Nebbiolo, visceral, elemental Pinot Noir, majestic Baga and other red grapes which celebrate bitterness! There are clearly insane vibrations emanating from the soil here which make this fruit so damned toned. The flavour silhouette is slender, athletic, toned and immensely powerful and yet the flavour is gentle, caressing, magical and life- fulfilling. It is a near-perfect wine.

19.5/20 (drink 2022 - 2032)

2018 Swinney, Farvie Frankland River Syrah

Made from the old Houghton clone, all I could think of here was Thierry Allemande's Cornas when I brought this wine to my lips. Rob uses 65% whole bunch and 600-litre barrels, 25% of which are new. So, you could say he throws the kitchen sink at this, but from anyone else's winemaking point of view, this 'recipe' could seem pretty tame. The reason for him stepping back is that this fruit is simply terrific. It is a direct reflection of the most rigorous vineyard selection. Matt targets the finest fruit in his 'morning side' picks. These grapes are tighter, firmer and cooler and this is the theme for this extraordinary wine. The pepper and game notes are very much under control here and it is the fruit this is so piercingly clean and refreshing. This is a worthy sibling to the sensational Grenache.

19+/20 (drink 2024 - 2034)

MEDIA

Huon Hooke, Sep 10, 2019
 New And Noteworthy, The Real Review

Swinney's Mann-made wines excite



From the 2018 vintage, former Cape Mentelle winemaker Rob Mann (pictured) is on board as winemaker.

Swinney is the most exciting new wine release of the year so far.

It's not exactly a new name – the Swinney family have been farming in Western Australia's Frankland River region for almost 100 years, and they planted their first grapevines in 1997.

They've had their own brand for some years, but they've been selling most of their grapes to other wine companies – more than 30, including Houghton/Accolade, Treasury and Larry Cherubino.

Matt Swinney is the fourth generation of his family to farm the 2,600-hectare property, which now includes 220 hectares of vines.

But things have recently stepped up into a higher league. From the 2018 vintage, former Cape Mentelle winemaker Rob Mann is on board as winemaker. And former Houghton and Hardys senior winemaker Peter Dawson is consulting.

Dawson is also a partner in one of the Swinney family's vineyards.

To say the latest crop of Mann-made Swinney wines is outstanding would be to damn with faint praise.

These are stonking wines: a 2019 riesling (AUD \$32) and three 2018 reds – a grenache (incorporating 12% mourvedre), a syrah mourvedre

grenache blend, and a syrah (with 7% mourvedre), all AUD \$42.

The riesling is hauntingly fragrant and quite beautiful, the three reds are all remarkable wines which combine intensity, elegance and soft textures. It's a while since I've been so impressed by a crop of new wines.

And grenache in Frankland River is a head-turner. Who would have thought grenache could ripen in this cool region, much less make such gorgeous wine?

"It's one of the coolest sites growing grenache in Australia," Dawson comments.

"It's markedly different to McLaren Vale or the Barossa Valley. It displays a level of spice that you don't normally see in grenache."

Matt Swinney adds:

"We're almost as excited about mourvedre as we are grenache. I think more people (in the Great Southern) will be planting it in future. It has a higher acidity and lower pH than grenache."

Dawson adds:

"We are seeing phenological ripeness at lower sugar ripeness than in McLaren Vale, where they hang it till it's 16 degrees Baumé. We are picking grenache at about 14% potential alcohol."

The grenache is grown as bush vines – untrellised – as it is in South Australia.

Matt Swinney:

"It has an entirely different growth habit and wine style when it's grown as a bush than when it's trellised. It's easy to produce rosé on a trellis but for red wine it lacks intensity."

The Swinney shiraz is also quite special. It's labelled syrah "as a signal to the market that it's not a typical

Aussie shiraz. It's more European," says Rob Mann.

He identifies another point of departure with the Swinney syrah. The clones are different to most of the shiraz growing in Western Australia, which is the Houghton selection.

"Our syrah includes the new Rhône Valley selections and one from New Zealand's Craggy Range, known as the Waldron selection. These new clones offer us something quite different. The fruit even looks and tastes structurally different."

As splendid as these four newly-released wines are, there is something even more riveting waiting in the wings. Slated for release next March are special selections of 2018 syrah and 2018 grenache (with 5% mourvedre). They will be priced somewhere north of AUD \$100 each and are both wines of stunning intensity and power, but not blockbusters. Elegance, texture and refinement are also part of their make-up. The brand name will be Farvie.

The grapes were selected from the sections of the vineyard highest in ironstone, which yielded wine that speaks most clearly of the terroir. To that end, winemaking was minimal and larger barrels were used for maturation, with only 15% of the oak new.

These are all exciting wines, the Farvie super-premiums especially so. It's impossible to recommend them too highly.

MEDIA

Sarah Ahmed, 17 Dec, 2019
www.thewinedetective.co.uk

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Swinney Wines: elevating Great Southern with a Rhône focus

Blog & regional report highlights

Australia

My very first wine judging gig down under was at the Wine Show of Western Australia in Great Southern. It's an area which Aussie wine writer Mike Bennie recently flagged has snagged his attention lately. I suspect he had one of the region's most acclaimed growers in mind. The Frankland River-based family behind their eponymous, relatively new label have put acclaimed ex-Cape Mentelle/Hardy's/Newton winemaker Rob Mann in charge of making wines from a super-selection of the estate's much sought after grapes. The top wines are pitched firmly at the pointy end and, interestingly, save for the Riesling (a huge strength, as Frankland River Estate's peerless portfolio attests), the focus is firmly on Rhône varieties Syrah, Grenache and Mourvedre. Read all about them (below) :



Swinney Wines: elevating Great Southern with a Rhône focus

Rob Mann (l) with Matt Swinney of Swinney Wines

In September, I met Matt Swinney and caught up with his winemaker, Rob Mann, who is making some rather swish Great Southern wines under Swinney's eponymous Frankland River label. Super-selection is the name of the game. Like the uber-ambitious

Dão label I'll shortly be writing up, pin-pointing by bunch, not just parcel - meticulous attention to detail - comes at a price. Swinney makes no bones about it. The region is trying very hard to go for value, but there is an opportunity to elevate, he says.

Mann's pedigree goes without saying in Western Australian wine circles. The sixth-generation winemaker's grandfather was none other than Jack Mann, of Houghton Wines' fame. And he knows a thing or two about premium, indeed luxury positioning, having headed up winemaking at Hardy's Tintara in McLaren Vale, before returning to Western Australia to Cape Mentelle in Margaret River, then making wine at its LVMH sister-label, Newton Vineyard, in the Napa. Mann returned to Western Australia in November 2017 to establish the Corymbia label with his wife, Genevieve, who is also a winemaker (which I have yet to

taste). Drawn to the Swinney's 'wine growing' philosophy and Matt

Swinney's dream to redefine premium Western Australian wines, Mann has made wine for family since 2018, joining shortly before harvest.

As for the Swinney label, it is quite recent. The first wines to be released were made in 2011. However, the Swinney family has farmed the land upon which their sizeable 220 hectare vineyard is located since 1922, when Matt Swinney's great-grandfather, George 'Farvie' Swinney, settled on the banks of the Frankland

River. Having planted their first vines in 1997, the Swinneys originally sold all the grapes, counting Houghton, BRL Hardy and latterly Penfold's amongst their customer-base (Swinney proudly mentioned Penfolds have bought grapes for Bin 389 and Bin 707). The

family still sell 99% of their grapes, keeping just 1% for Swinney wines.

So what distinguishes these grapes? Like a gardener knows the best patches of a garden and what grows best where, Swinney says the family knew where to look when they decided to focus on Rhône reds in addition to Riesling, for which the Frankland River sub-region is already famous. Great Southern also has something of a reputation for Shiraz, but not so much for Grenache or Mourvedre. Strikingly, the Swinney's vines are dry grown and cultivated as individually staked bush vines, as opposed to the usual VSP trellising (another draw for Mann, who enjoyed working with old bush vines in McLaren Vale, during his time at Hardys). It's an expensive business, because it results in lower yields and, double whammy, means the vines must be tended and picked by hand. So you'd want to be sure to plant on a patch of quality dirt. In this case, deep ironstone gravel soils (3/4 to 1 metre deep) at a relatively elevated 150-200m on hills atop the Frankland

River. Soils which, said Swinney, can be found along the red gum (marri) studded first three kilometres of the river valley, before it flattens out and, with heavier soils (more clay), smaller white gum trees flourish.

The climate here is key too. Breezes from the chilly Southern Ocean funnel upstream, moderating the summer heat and extending the growing season. Being inland, the nights are cold. It would certainly account for the

clarity, intensity and structure of the wines. The profile is on the dry side, which bodes well for ageing. On which note, under Mann's watch (he succeeds Larry Cherubino and Tony Davis), a new top tier Grenache and

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Sarah Ahmed, 17 Dec, 2019
www.thewinedetective.co.uk

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continued... Swinney Wines: elevating Great Southern with a Rhône focus

Shiraz was introduced in 2018 under the 'Farvie' moniker. Swinney told me he is really happy with these envelope-pushing wines and has been excited by their reception in

Australia. Explaining the vision, he told me that, having lived in London, he had travelled to Spain and France and become a big fan of especially Priorat Grenache and also Rhône reds. Watching the Cornas producer Thierry Allemand at work in the vineyard inspired him to re-think the level of detail of what we do the precision that we have brought to our vines.

Let's take a look at the range which, I thought, does what Mann intended. With gentle handling by gravity, natural ferments and minimal oak and racking, the aim is to show less the hand of the winemaker, more a sense of place (which is perhaps connected with Swinney's aside that he'd rather invest capital in the vineyard, not building a winery - the wines are made at Stella Bella). I thought the reds shared a freshness/clarity of fruit expression, gravelly minerality (for Swinney, a ferrous quality, which Mann describes as 'rusty nail') and structured tannins. Tightly wound, indeed a touch reductive, I'd expect these slightly stern, bony but hardly ferocious wines to open up over time, revealing more of this 'ferrouisity,' spice and fruit.

Swinney Wines are imported into the UK by Enotria, who sell them through their retail arm - Great Western Wine.

Swinney Frankland River Riesling 2019 (Frankland River, Great Southern)

An aromatic, very floral, but incisive, well-focused bone dry Riesling with a hint of incipient honey - a touch of

texture, a 'roundness' (the natural ferment/lees- ageing?) - to its mouth-watering citrus and subtle, succulent lychee fruit. Lovely line and persistence. This Riesling (classic VSP trellising) was hand-picked on 6th March, picking the patch to farm our wines and picking the bunches we want, said Swinney. In this case, bunches exclusively from the shady (morning sun only) side of rows to avoid tropical notes, because Mann doesn't want kerosene notes to develop. The fruit was whole-bunch pressed, lightly settled, then naturally fermented in stainless steel tanks, prior to ageing in tank on lees for four months. 12% £22.50

Swinney Frankland River Grenache 2018 (Frankland River, Great Southern)

Hand-harvested on 23rd & 29th March 2018, this blend of 87% Grenache, 12% Mourvèdre, 1% Syrah from 18-year old bush vines was co-fermented. I can understand why Mann said the approach was closer to a Spanish Garnacha than the (contemporary) Australian model. Though mid-weight, with its discreetly juicy core of dark berry and plum fruit, structured, gravelly, dusty, chalky tannins and dark liquorice spice, it has a firmness and sense of containment about

it. Although it has a touch of musk stick, they set it apart from the prettier, more perfumed, largely red-fruited Pinot-esque McLaren Vale and Barossa line-up that I tasted in the James Halliday Grenache Challenge in October (where this wine scooped a Silver Medal). Great to see this distinctive minerality and tannin structure feature in all Swinney's reds. It is a signature strength and fits with South Western Australia's reputation for structure and restraint.

With barely there oak, the fruit is defined, rather than buffed; the tannins and spice feel vineyard/grape, not oak-driven. Hand-sorted, this Grenache was crushed into small open top fermenters, with 20% whole bunches and wild fermented. It spent two weeks on skins prior to pressing directly to fine-grained large-format seasoned French oak, where it spent 11 months. Un-fined and only minimally filtered. 14% £28.00

Swinney Frankland River Syrah Mourvèdre Grenache 2018 (Frankland River, Great Southern)

I recall being impressed by Mann's Cape Mentelle Marmaduke at an Australian and French Rhône blend tasting organised by David Hohnen at McHenry Hohnen in 2009. Hohnen memorably described how the Mediterranean varieties walked to ripeness in Margaret River, avoiding the sucrosity which comes with over-leaping sugar-ripeness. This blend of 43% Syrah, 38% Mourvèdre, 19% Grenache was hand-harvested on 19th, 23rd, 29th March & 5 April 2018 and fermented and aged in individual lots. The Mourvedre, always the last of the trio to be picked, is immediately apparent on a meaty, white pepper laced nose and palate. A pick of well spicy tannins smacks of Mourvedre too, bringing nice energy - grip and lift - to the juicy but well-defined black and red berry and red cherry fruit, with no give, as in if we were talking avocados, you'd wouldn't pick it to eat now! Again, both fruit and oak are restrained, lending a firmness to the well-structured palate. Those ironstone dusty gravel notes underscore the finish, seemingly sluicing the fruit and acidity, such is the integration. Very good; lovely structure and minerality and savouriness with clarity of fruit. This

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continued... Swinney Wines: elevating Great Southern with a Rhône focus

GSM was wild fermented with 15% whole bunches. The wine spent up to two weeks on skins prior to pressing directly to fine grained large format 600l French oak (25% new). It was aged on lees for 11 months in barrel and bottled un-fined and minimally filtered. 14% £28.00

Swinney Frankland River Syrah 2018 **(Frankland River, Great Southern)**

This blend of 89% Syrah, 11% Mourvèdre was harvested on 19th & 29th March, hand-sorted and crushed into small open top fermenters. Wild fermented in upturned, open barrels with 5% whole bunches, it spent two weeks on skins prior to pressing directly to fine grained large format French oak (40% new). It was aged for 14 months prior to bottling with minimal filtration. Mourvedre (which imparts a hint of leather/charcuterie) is not the only complexing varietal character. The Syrah is multi-clonal, featuring Rhône and New Zealand (Craggy Range) clones) which Mann likes for their back-palate spiciness (as well as the more typical local Houghton clone). This is certainly a spicy, textural (think linen) red, but not at all rustic. Rather, it has 'nip and tuck' precision – again, good energy. The spiciness steals over the polished palate, which has intensity and restraint to its plum and berry fruit. Accomplished. 14.0% £28.00

Swinney 'Farvie' Frankland River Grenache 2018 **Frankland River, Great Southern)**

Swinney Wines new top tier Farvie range Bush vine Grenache with a (5%) splash of Mourvedre is sourced from the Swinney's Wilson's Pool vineyard and was harvested on 23rd March. The Farvie Grenache reveals a spicy nose and palate with a fretwork of

fine, pithy tannins to anchor and embed its predominantly red (with some black) fruits. Because the fruit is not so much fleshy, as close to the skin and stone or seeds, the profile is drier, a touch aromatised bitters even, in a good way. Creamy oak picks up the baton and smoozes the fruit going through before tapering tannins (which I very much associate with ironstone gravel) assert themselves, making for a fine, focused, mineral-slued finish. Tannins which, Mann is quick to point out, are not fighting, nothing aggressive. With clarity and freshness, this Grenache draws you back to the glass, keen to mine its depths – flavour layers which it has yet to give up. This is a young, very structured Grenache with time on its side. Indeed, it will benefit from a few years in bottle and, I'd imagine continue developing – unfurling – for at least a decade. Berry sorted fruit was gravity fed to a French oak vat and wild fermented with 15% whole bunches. The wine spent 10 days on skins prior to basket pressing directly to fine grained large format seasoned French oak followed by aging for 11 months prior to bottling un-fined and minimally filtered. 14.0%, 143 cases made, release date March 2020, RRP £90

Swinney 'Farvie' Frankland River Syrah 2018 **(Frankland River, Great Southern)**

The fiche mentions that this wine is exclusively sourced from Powderbark Ridge vineyard's bush vines and, elaborated Swinney, hails from a single block which is only exposed to the morning sun. Planted in 1998 on a deep, ironstone gravel ridge, the Swinneys acquired this vineyard in 2015 with Peter Dawson, another ex- Hardys winemaker. The Farvie comprises 100% Syrah, which was hand-harvested on 15th & 19th March.

It is an intense, bright purple hue (think Ribena), with creamy oak and, as yet, tightly clasped black berry and cherry fruit – fleshy, but fresh, with a firm al dente core, with cherry close to the stone and skin. The gravelly, mineral undertow is quite pronounced on a long, persistent, well-structured finish, which has a touch of spice and grip. When I went back to it at the end of the meeting, I picked up some (attractive) earthiness as it started to open up. Needing time to knit together, it is scheduled for release in March 2020 and will benefit from cellar-ageing. This is an ambitious, very refined wine, closer to the Northern Rhone 'continental' Syrah mold than its classic South Australian (Shiraz) peers, as befits the climate down in Great Southern. It reminds me of first tasting Eben Sadie's Columella 2000 – the first vintage of this game-changing Cape Syrah from Swartland. So that's a good sign! Berry sorted fruit was gravity fed to a French oak vat and two demi-muids and wild fermented with 55% whole bunches. It spent 11 days on skins prior to basket pressing directly to fine grained large format French oak (35% new), followed by aging for 11 months prior to bottling un-fined and minimally filtered. 14.0%, 177 cases made. RRP £90

MEDIA

Ray Jordan, Nov 16, 2019
The West Australian

Ray Jordan, Feb 6, 2021
The West Australian



DRINK
Ray Jordan



DRINK
Ray Jordan

DEFINING MOMENT

It is impossible to overstate the significance of two wines from Frankland River scheduled for release early next year. The Swinney Farvie syrah 2018 and Farvie grenache 2018 represent a defining moment in WA wine. I'm telling you about them now because in all likelihood they will be pre-sold before they are officially released in March.

The wines are a collaboration between the Swinney family, their viticulturist Lee Haselgrove, and winemakers — former Accolade head Peter Dawson, and gifted fourth-generation local Rob Mann.

The results are unlike anything seen before in WA and will redefine how Frankland River wine is perceived. These are wines that have been caressed with the lightest of touches to express a brightness and energy of such effortless style. In both cases, a minimalist approach has been taken in the winery to express the purity of the fruit. They are made with minimal sulphites, are unfiltered and only minimally filtered.

They are not cheap, but neither should they be. You would spend a lot more than the \$150 asking price to get anything near as good as these from the Rhone, their nearest stylistic and structural comparison. Order through the Swinney website . . . and do it now.



Two new releases will redefine how Frankland River wine is perceived.

any time

Swinney Frankland River syrah mourvedre grenache 2018 (\$42)

What a superb example of this blend and style we have here. Perfumed aromas with hints of rose petal, raspberry and savoury plum. There's a dry earthiness on the palate, which balances the sweeter fruits of these three varieties. Understated oak lets the fruit do its thing. A belter. **96/100** (Best drinking: Now to 2030)



some time

Swinney Farvie grenache 2018 (\$150)

This is a remarkable wine that captures the essence of this variety in a way not seen before in Australia. It's a medium-bodied wine, yet the palate delivers deep and complex flavours through to an exceptional finish. Has a European gravelly, grainy mouthfeel that carries plenty of intensity albeit delivered with such poise and almost shy coyness. **98/100** (Best drinking: Now to 2040)



good times

Swinney Farvie syrah 2018 (\$150)

A jaw-dropping, ground-breaking syrah from Frankland Estate. This is not the sweet fruit Aussie shiraz or syrah but more a savoury, grainy style more associated with the Rhone in France. Fine, firm tannins run deep and the oak has been expertly and subtly applied. But it is the way the fruit expresses that strikes as different and exciting. **98/100** (Best drinking: Now to 2040)



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SWINNEY ON SONG AGAIN

Last year, I went just a little bit nutty when describing my first tasting of the first releases of Swinney Vineyards' Farvie wines. I wasn't the only one as the wines created something of a sensation as they popped up around the world.

But here's the thing, those wines were both from the fabulous 2018 vintage in WA, so the question was could the follow-ups be as good? The 2019 vintage was cooler but turned out to be outstanding especially in Frankland River, where these wines are sourced.

Once again, the wines have been made in a way that allows the full expression of the vineyards to emerge with little winemaking intervention, including the use of larger format seasoned oak in the main. And at bottling the wines aren't fined and only minimally filtered.

So, to the question: are they as good? Oh, yes. And to the obvious next question: are they better? Yes, by a whisker.

There is no question that this vineyard and the style being crafted under one of Australia's finest winemakers, Rob Mann, have redefined syrah and grenache. These are now the established benchmarks and should be on the buy-now list for anyone with an interest in contemporary Australian wine. The wines are due for release on Thursday. You will need to get in quick.

Swinney Farvie syrah 2019 (\$150)

Tremendous example of syrah from Frankland River. High-end aromatics that release after decanting. And it needed decanting because it is still such a tightly wound and tense wine, withholding its best for a few years. The juice runs by gravity to a large oak vat and two 600L barrels before gentle pressing to large format French oak of which only 8 per cent is new. It's unfiltered and minimally filtered which really maximises the sense that this is a wine of the vineyard. Glorious wine that captures all that is good from this region. **98/100** (Best drinking: Now to 2046)



Swinney Farvie grenache 2019 (\$150)

What a follow-up to the remarkable 2018 debut. The high perfumed notes strike immediately and almost define what is to follow. It's a very pretty wine with more seductive perfumed notes than the 2018, most likely a result of the slightly cooler vintage. There is about 12 per cent mourvedre in the blend and all the fruit comes off the Swinney bush vines. Only large-format seasoned oak has been used. A striking wine of refinement and power that delivers with an effortless deft touch. This is a modern grenache with a distinctive Frankland stamp. **98/100** (Best drinking: Now to 2041)



Swinney mourvedre syrah grenache 2019 (\$42)

Excellent example of this style. The dominant mourvedre brings some healthy firmish tannin into the mix, while the grenache and syrah have some attractive perfumes and supple fleshiness to contribute. Has a distinctive grainy, slightly gravelly, mouth feel that smacks of vineyard. This is a blend with real personality and it's come together beautifully after a few extra months in bottle. **95/100** (Best drinking: Now to 2031)



Reviews
2019 - 2020 Vintage

Reviews for 2019 Farvie Wines
September 2021

"So, to the question: are they (the 2019 wines) as good? Oh, yes. And to the obvious next question: are they better? Yes, by a whisker... There is no question that this vineyard and the style being crafted under one of Australia's finest winemakers, Rob Mann, have redefined syrah and grenache. These are now the established benchmarks and should be on the buy-now list for anyone with an interest in contemporary Australian wine."

Ray Jordan, The West Australian, Feb 2021





2019 Swinney
'Farvie'
Frankland River
Grenache

88/12% grenache/mourvèdre. Hand-picked fruit from an established block of bush vines. 8% of grenache was whole bunches, the rest whole berries sorted and gravity-fed to a single large French oak vat (1600L). Wild ferment. 10 days on skins prior to basket pressing direct to seasoned French oak for 11 months. What sets hearts on fire the world over for Châteauneuf-du-Pape is the muscular, ferrous, salty raspberry humbug and minerally hutzpah. It sets the high-tide mark for grenache. We grenache drinkers yearn for it. And here it is. The strength of Frankland River is its ability to marry sweet (glossy) red fruit to savoury, gravelly earth. The 2018 was a staggering showpiece, this is more restrained, cooler and finer, yet equally long. Choose your weapon. 98pts
James Halliday Wine Companion, August 2021

Headily sweet nose with some subtlety and some qualities that are not unlike burgundy (apart from the alcohol and the quite considerable tannins). Lifted and sweetly fragrant. A real charmer. Very Grenache. I notice that on the notes no vine age is specified. I wonder how old the vines are? Impressive persistence on this. Denser and more complex than the regular Swinney Grenache. That well-used phrase 'haute couture' may be appropriate here. 17.5/20

Jancis Robinson, May 2021
www.jancisrobinson.com

The initial release of this wine drew global attention to sleepy Frankland River. This follow up not only lives up to expectations but expands them. It's grenache with grit, a sublime entwining of the variety's red berry perfume with the often elusive granitic grip that defines the greats. Already comfortable among the best examples of this variety on a global scale.

Nick Ryan, March 2021
The Australian



What a follow-up to the remarkable 2018 debut. The high perfumed notes strike immediately and almost define what is to follow. It's a very pretty wine with more seductive perfumed notes than the 2018, most likely a result of the slightly cooler vintage. There is about 12 per cent mourvedre in the blend and all the fruit comes off the Swinney bush vines. Only large-format seasoned oak has been used. A striking wine of refinement and power that delivers with an effortless deft touch. This is a modern grenache with a distinctive Frankland stamp. 98pts

Ray Jordan, Feb 2021
The West Australian

Refined, complex and crammed with juicy, super pure, intricated layers of pristine red fruits and a plethora of spices. Not at all reliant on its buoyant fruit, keep this as it will be a stunner. GOLD MEDAL
Decanter World Wine Awards 2021



2019 Swinney
'Farvie'
Frankland River
Syrah

Hand picked from a single parcel of 22yo syrah vines. Berries sorted and gravity-fed to a French oak vat (1600L) and 22 demi-muids. 54% whole bunches, wild ferment. Bacon fat, maple, salted pomegranate, raspberry, graphite, red dirt, mulberry and pink peppercorn. Like the Hokusai wave, this crashes and courses with flavours and textures, ebbing and flowing on the palate. This is balanced, restrained, long, powerful and most importantly, shaped and structured by supple, chewy tannins. They hold the fruit in the cups of their hands and usher it through a very long finish. A weightlessly poetic wine. 98pts

James Halliday Wine Companion, August 2021

Tremendous example of syrah from Frankland River. High-end aromatics that release after decanting. And it needed decanting because it is still such a tightly wound and tense wine, withholding its best for a few years. The juice runs by gravity to a large oak vat and two 600L barrels before gentle pressing to large format French oak of which only 8 per cent is new. It's unfinned and minimally filtered which really maximises the sense that this is a wine of the vineyard. Glorious wine that captures all that is good from this region. 98pts

Ray Jordan, Feb 2021
The West Australian

Dark lustrous crimson. Rich and peppery on the nose. Sweet palate entry and then subtle and savoury. Distinctly salty finish. Much finer tannins than in the regular Swinney bottlings. Real polish and lushness with the acidity and tannins in great balance with the fruit. Nothing exaggerated. 17++/20

Jancis Robinson, May 2021
www.jancisrobinson.com

Very deep, bright purple/red colour, with an alluring bouquet of smoked smallgoods, assorted spices, dark plum and a flick of black pepper. It's highly concentrated and essency, with pristine fruit clarity and a tremendously long carry. Red and black fruits carry through an almost endless finish. Great purity of shiraz fruit. A most impressive young shiraz, which should have a tremendous future. 96pts

Huon Hooke, Feb 2021
www.threalreview.com



When I tasted the first vintage releases of Swinney's top red wines under the Farvie label, the 2018s, I was most impressed with the grenache. In 2019, as good as the grenache is, it's the syrah that steals the show. An arresting wine from the first sniff: glorious ripe black fruit, but restrained and enticing rather than showy. Then lovely, satisfying density of ripe fruit on the tongue, too, but held together by long, seamless tannins. Really stylish wine.

Max Allen, March 2021
The Australian Financial Review

Succulent, supple syrah, slick with spice and savoury characters, slips over the palate with silky yet sinewy tannins, delivers serious concentration and a sense of seamlessness. Super stuff. It's fragrant, medium weight, dark fruited, peppery-cinnamon spice laden, feels complex in the sense that lots is going on when you sip it. There's great density yet freshness, shape and drive. A beautiful mouthful here. Potent now as something special, the future should unfurl this wine nicely too. Class all the way. 95pts

Mike Bennie, Feb 2021
www.winefront.com.au

SWINNEY



Reviews for Swinney Wines June 2021





2019 Swinney Frankland River Syrah

All the cracked pepper and blackberry, the hint of wetsuit neoprene reduction, ground spices, char-grilled sausages on the BBQ. Medium-bodied, blueberry and blackberry, husky wheatgerm flavour and tannin, sweetness chopped back with thyme and black olive, clean acidity, boysenberry pie and a dry nutty finish of excellent length. Excellent. Savoury. Regional. Quite the looker. 94pts

Gary Walsh, Sep 2020
www.winefront.com.au

Spicy, wild and meaty, with layers of dark berries knit with cedary oak, this generous and shapely Rhône-inspired shiraz delivers intensity and weight of flavour. Underpinned by a fine, drying spine of powdery tannins, building richness, smoky complexity and structure with aeration, it's long, complete and unctuous, becoming more granular and granitic towards the finish. With time it should throw off the suggestions of mint, menthol and tomato stalk evident in its youth. 94pts

Jeremy Oliver, Oct 2020
www.jeremyoliver.com

Now this is something. The characteristic Swinney vineyard character seems evident from the start. The aromas of savoury plum with dried herbs and thyme provide an almost atypically Australian opening. The palate is a strong point for me. It is more in the dry, savoury mode rather oodles of sweet fruit. And above all, it is bright and fully of energy.

96pts

Ray Jordan
The West Australian Wine Guide, 2021

Glorious perfume combining garrigue, black pepper, sweet earth, dried cranberry and red cherry fruit scents. Potent and pretty. Supple and succulent in the palate, concentrated but with levity and freshness, amazing web of fine, lacy tannins that build and build and build. A stunning and striking wine here that bolsters the world class pedigree credentials of shiraz from Great Southern.

#5 of Top 25 Wines of 2020

The West Australian Good Food Guide 2021



2019 Swinney Frankland River Mourvedre Syrah Grenache

Deep, brooding spicy wine of black fruit and savoury dried herb and lavender perfume. It's defined as much by anything else, by its dense shale-like or graphite tannin. So much good stuff to chew on, and roll around the mouth. Also, black olive and grilled meat strewn with pepper, some raspberry maybe, and freshness to acidity. Length is excellent too, saline and savoury, with uncompromising tannin and grip as it goes. It's a fair way out of the mainstream in terms of Australian wine, and none the worse for that. 95pts

Gary Walsh, Sep 2020
www.winefront.com.au

Ray Jordan, The West Australian Wine Guide 2021

Excellent example of this style. The dominant mourvedre brings some healthy, firmish tannin into the mix, while the grenache and syrah have some attractive perfumes and supple fleshiness to contribute. Has a distinctive, grainy and slightly gravelly mouthfeel that smacks of the vineyard. This is a blend with real personality. 95pts

Ray Jordan
The West Australian Wine Guide, 2021

Deep, rich red colour with a tinge of purple, and a well-rounded, spicy bouquet that is more than simple fruit. Medium to full body, abundant tannins which are smooth and refined, the finish long and satisfying. It has the structure to age well. An excellent grenache to drink young or keep. 94pts

Huon Hooke, Nov 2020
www.therealreview.com





2019 Swinney Frankland River Grenache

Them tannins. Whoa. Italianate and fine, a swish and web that sucks and pulls, draws long and gives this beautiful shape to the mellifluous, come-hither dark fruit and wild herb n spice that features so heavily in this wine. Amazing perfume, a little quieter than 2018 but with all the appeal and flighty, floral and spice fragrance of best grenache from anywhere. Pent up, tight, precise and pure, the palate is a masterpiece example of the variety. That tension, that length! All here. Such a good wine. 96pts

Mike Bennie, Sep 2020
www.winefront.com.au



A magnificent example of the variety here. Cherry pip, fine tannin, sleek and svelte and chalky. Perfumed and pretty, set to medium weight with exceptional length. There's a sense of savouriness and purity hand-in-hand. Oh, those tannins. Such an exceptional wine here. Beautiful.

#4 of Top 25 Wines of 2020

The West Australian Good Food Guide 2021

Stylish and reserved, then impactful and expressive, this utterly drinkable and keep-able grenache marries Old World charm and complexity with New World polish and brightness. Heady scents of red and blue flowers, white pepper and exotic spices, blueberries, cranberries and redcurrants become steadily more perfumed with aeration. Wound tightly around a crunchy spine of drying fine tannins, it's medium to fullish in weight, luscious and juicy but elegant and shapely, with pristine berry/plum flavours and smoky charcuterie undertones moving long and gracefully towards a refreshing finish of vibrant acidity. A must-have for the modern grenache aficionado. 94pts

Jeremy Oliver, Sep 2020
www.jeremyoliver.com

Pale crimson. Sweet, refined nose. Gentle fruit with good freshness and a light charge of fine tannins. Long and really rather gorgeous. Already accessible. Saline finish. Sweet and salty – a winning combination! Delicate. Lightly spicy and overall delightfully delicate. Masses of life here. 17/20

Jancis Robinson, May 2021
www.jancisrobinson.com

2020 Swinney Frankland River Riesling

Lovely wine here. It has a blossom perfume over lime, green pear and green apple, texture is all soft chalkiness, acidity also firm but gentle in a way, maybe some fennel in there as well, and plenty of crunch and pear skin grip on a long finish. Unusually for Frankland River Riesling, really easy to enjoy as a young wine. Really like this. Almost feels Italianate and Soave-like, which is likely a weird thing to say, but there you have it. 94pts

Gary Walsh, Sep 2021
www.winefront.com.au,



Has the powerful intensity that is what the 2020 vintage is all about. Lime and bath salt with a spicy lift on the nose. The palate is super concentrated but with a linear structure and profile. There is so much in here with its citrus and slightly apple-y characters most appealing.

93pts

Ray Jordan, Oct 2020
The West Australian

Very light, almost pale colour, but bright and youthful. The aromas of passionfruit, lemon and lime fresh and vital, crisp and tangy, with a lean, delicate profile and a dry but gently fruity end-palate. Very good line and balance. It's still tight and somewhat in its shell, and will no doubt expand over the next few months. 94pts

Huon Hooke, Sep 2021
www.therealreview.com

Mmmm, that lovely perfume that's a mix of dried grasses, herbs and the mineral/floral complex of a fine Mosel. Firm, lightly phenolic palate with quite a bit of lime fruit. Structured and satisfying bone-dry wine with a certain chewiness and stoniness. 16.5/20

Jancis Robinson, May 2021
www.jancisrobinson.com