

# Australia's Wine Values of 2011: Better than Ever

I'm going to cut to the chase with this final report of the annum summarizing Australia's best wine values of 2011. There's been a massive culling of extraneous wines from Australia's value offerings in the last couple of years. In short, Australia has learned the hard way that it cannot compete at the commodity wine end on price alone. Loss of market share and shelf space, particularly in their largest export countries of the USA and the UK, has resulted in a lot of soul searching and rationalizing. The pared-down results are very good news for consumers. Most of the good value brands that have survived offer a level of character, complexity and regionality that in my view blow the competition from similarly priced wines from other countries clean out of the water. Australia's value end of the spectrum is better than I have ever seen it. So if you thought you were bored with what Australia had to offer at the under US\$25 / AU\$25 price points, it's time to revisit the Australia section of your local retailer shelves.

I've selected what I consider the top twenty good value producers in Australia for 2011; most have reviews in the report to follow, while others had their ranges reviewed in previous issues this year. They represent both large and small volume wineries from throughout Australia producing a wide range of styles. All export to major markets around the world. Producing singular wines of great character and expression for under US\$25 / AU\$25 is no easy task, but these guys and gals have all managed to create wines that are nothing short of incredible in this capacity.

## Ad Hoc / Ad Lib, Western Australia

Produced by top Margaret River winery Larry Cherubino, this wine label is known as "Ad Hoc" in some markets (including Australia) though it goes under the brand "Ad Lib" in the USA. Cherubino does a superb job sourcing fruit from vineyards around Western Australia that excel at the varieties they produce. Of particular note are the "Hen & Chicken Chardonnay" (named in reference to the Gin-Gin Chardonnay clone) from Pemberton as well as the "Middle of Everywhere Shiraz" from Mt. Barker and the "Etcetera Cabernet Merlot" from Margaret River.

**Robert Parker**