



Cellar Notes Ray Jordan

State-of-the-art tipplles

Best of the West selection headed by extraordinary Margaret River shiraz that belies humble price tag

I got really excited recently at a tasting of a current selection of West Australian wines. The thing that got me going was a new release from Mt Barker producer Xabregas (pronounced X – a – bre – gas). It was a shiraz from the excellent 2007 vintage.

After lavishing a healthy 94 points on my score sheet, indicating it was a damn fine wine, I had to check the price, expecting it to be at least \$25. Now this is where it all gets really exciting. This shiraz, which I also found out was in the final taste-off for the coveted Jimmy Watson Trophy at last year's Melbourne Wine Show, costs just \$15.

Here's the drum, guys. I know there are plenty of great wine bargains out there at the moment but if you don't go and grab at least half a dozen of this terrific wine, you are positively loony.

There were plenty of other terrific WA wines in the tasting, which this week I have devoted totally to the

best of the West.

Other smart wines from the 07 vintage are the Xanadu Dragon shiraz and the Plan B Frankland shiraz. Both display those plump fleshy characters that tended to typify this opulent vintage.

I was also taken with the Peos Estate cabernet sauvignon 2004. This producer from down at Manjimup consistently produces appealing wines of some class from its well-managed vineyards. In this case it has a little extra age on it to provide additional complexity.

Some of Western Australia's best wines will be on display at the Taste of WA: Regional Tasting in the Beau Rivage Room at Gloucester Park next Thursday from 5.30pm to 8pm. The event will feature wineries from all round the Margaret River, Geographe, Peel, Perth Hills and Swan District wine regions. To book go to www.winewa.asn.au. Bookings close on Monday.

THE WINES

XABREGAS MT BARKER SHIRAZ 2007 (\$15)

I have no hesitation in saying this is the best Xabregas wine I have tasted. Yes, it comes from this great vintage but it's been beautifully handled in the winery to produce a wine of seductive presence and extraordinary finesse and poise. A tremendous example of Great Southern shiraz. 94/100

PEOS ESTATE MANJIMUP CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2004

Shows some rather nice leafy cabernet from this cool-climate region in the south of WA. Minty red berry aromas and some beautifully fragrant cedary oak notes. Merges into a well-structured medium-bodied wine of some class. 88/100





HAMELIN BAY FIVE ASHES RESERVE CHARDONNAY 2007 (\$39)

This is sourced from the Karridale vineyard south of Margaret River, where the long cool ripening period is ideal for building the type of impressive palate intensity seen in this wine. Lovely mix of quince and oak on the nose with traces of light toast and orange zest. Complex and powerful wine with some cellaring potential. **90/100**

JUNIPER CROSSING MARGARET RIVER SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC 2008 (\$19)

Only a small amount of this has been given any oak and yet it completes the wine perfectly, creating a delightful lift on the nose. Creamy, yet with a lifted tropical lemony palate sustained with crisp fine acid. This is a wine of some complexity for this price. You get a little more than the humdrum standard SSB. **90/100**

PLAN B FRANKLAND RIVER SHIRAZ 2007 (\$19)

Plenty of deep sappy plush plum flavours mingling with some nice toasty oak. It's a full-bodied plump wine of some substance with a nice savoury edge. Tannins are ripe and neatly worked into the mix. Needs some substantial food. **86/100**

FLYING FISH MARGARET RIVER SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2008 (\$22)

Right in the groove for this popular Margaret River style. Minerally herbal aromas with a hint of fresh gooseberry. Its slightly grassy edge completes an easy current drinking wine. **89/100**

XANADU DRAGON MARGARET RIVER CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2007 (\$16)

Mighty good cabernet here. Immediate aromas of cedary French oak and lashings of blackcurrant and slightly leafy fruit. It's juicy and vibrant on the palate, with fine tannins supporting the medium-bodied fruit. Nice wine over the next few years. **87/100**

CULLEN WINES WHITE MARGARET RIVER SAUVIGNON BLANC/SEMILLON/CHARDONNAY/VERDELHO 2008 (\$19)

An enticing and deliciously appealing blended white from both the Cullen and Mangan vineyards. Has a tangy mouth feel with lively acid and stacks of fruit flavour. Lovely current drinking wine. **87/100**

