

MENTELLE NOTES

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Pic: Sean Blocksidge

Where sheep safely graze – the original Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Vineyard.

Vine Traditions

Andrew Caillard MW takes a look at our viticulture developments.

The promise of better things to come is a motivating force at Cape Mentelle. Like the winds that bend corners and energise unseen spaces, there is a belief that perfection is just over the horizon.

When David Hohnen won the lauded Jimmy Watson Trophy – twice in a row – for the best one-year-old red at the Melbourne Wine Show for his *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 1982* and *1983*, he brought new attention and admiration for Margaret River's wines. Although David has retired from winemaking, this ambition to make "a great Australian cabernet; a wine that outlasts me" has never been lost.

The 16-hectare Wallcliffe Vineyard was planted in 1970 primarily with cabernet sauvignon sourced originally from Houghton in the Swan Valley. The site, surrounded by marri gums with deep gravelly soils, was first identified by Dorham Mann from WA Agriculture (his father Jack was the legendary

winemaking techniques were also adapted to the steep learning curves of every growing season and vintage. Open-mindedness, vineyard monitoring and doing things "once and well," as Hohnen said often, promoted technical advances and creativity.

Since, advances in science and technology have enabled viticulturist David Moulton to improve vineyard performance in ways unthinkable 20 years ago. The historic records have enabled valuable predictive modelling of vintage dates, yield estimates and grape quality. This information is also aided by GPS and Physio-Cap technology.

Laser sensors are attached to machinery to chart vineyard biomass and ascertain bud numbers, potential canopy growth and grape crop weight. Soil mapping, climatic data, growing degree-days and block-by-block analysis are all used to establish patterns of vine growth, data run through an algorithm to provide a vineyard performance dashboard.

'...superb quality Cabernet Sauvignon with wonderful colours, density and torque.'

winemaker of 51 Houghton vintages.)

Science, happenstance and connections all played their part in Cape Mentelle's early days. David's meticulous record keeping of vineyard practices, yields, soil analysis, vine health and climatic data became a tradition.

For instance, areas of poor vitality can be composted while more vigorous vines can carry a heavier crop load. Vineyard blocks with low soil moistures can be given supplementary water, while preserving this limited resource. Yields and block-by-block

ripening patterns can be forecast delivering time and labour savings at harvest.

Cape Mentelle's technology gives wider and more immediate vineyard visibility. A one-size-fits-all approach is no longer necessary. And a flock of 'weed-eater' sheep minimise the need for tractor access, reducing soil compaction and diesel fuel costs, boosting biodiversity and regenerative practices.

While guinea fowl, geese and sheep have roamed the Wallcliffe vineyard for decades, native grass cover crops, weeding with mechanical cultivation and beneficial native bug releases have energized the environment.

One of David Hohnen's other ideas was a composting program, using grape marc, chook manure and woodchips. A good brew I discussed with him at a Langton's En Primeur auction in the mid-Nineties. This tradition continues to improve vine and wine balance.

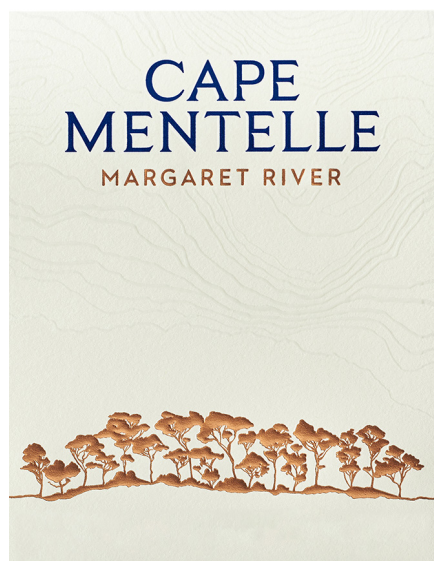
In the winery, vineyard-monitoring technology has helped winemakers Coralie Lewis and Ben Cane predict vintage intake, and manage capacity. Cape Mentelle's enviro-footprint continues to improve with 100% water recycling and solar panels at the winery, a commitment reflected in CMV's ISO 14001 Certification.

And now to 2020 – when the stars dreamily aligned despite pandemic anxieties. Nature was particularly kind with a warm disease-free growing season. Pest pressure in the form of silver eyes and parrots was minimal. The ability to assess vine health, monitor ripening, modify vineyard settings and direct pickers to individual plots has resulted in a superb quality Cabernet Sauvignon with wonderful colours, density and torque.

Having tasted a recent barrel sample of the gorgeously scented, pure-fruited and chocolatey *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 2020*, I take the liberty to observe this is probably the finest vintage yet. It displays awesome freshness, structure and potential; proof that science and technology can bring an extra level of refinement and complexity, while promoting sustainable and precision farming practices.

Andrew Caillard MW, wine expert and author, has been visiting Margaret River and Cape Mentelle for nearly 30 years.

New Releases



This issue of *Mentelle Notes* showcases a quartet of new release wines, all ready for your enjoyment! These wines are available to members of the **Cape Mentelle Wine Club**, online shoppers and at Cellar Door. If you have any queries please contact the knowledgeable Cape Mentelle staff.
T: 08 9757 0812 or
E: cellardoor@capementelle.com.au

CAPE MENTELLE ROSÉ 2021

Delicate Ethereal Seductive

A magical delicately Provence pale three-way rosé blend crafted from shiraz (60%), grenache (20%) and merlot (20%).

‘Opens with wafts of summer berries and cream, talcum and floral notes. The palest of pink but with strawberry and Fuji apple notes on the palate, juicy, medium-weight with smidges of blood orange and a lingering palate. Simply delicious!’

CAPE MENTELLE CHARDONNAY 2018

Elegant Fragrant Textured

Classic chardonnay from a classic year sourced from both the Crossroads and Chapman Brook estate vineyards. Handpicked into small baskets, gently pressed before a wild fermentation and ageing in Burgundian oak. Treated with tradition and respect.

‘Powerful complex aromas of pineapple, stone fruits, cream and toasted nuts open to a complex palate evoking dried tropical fruit, nectarine, cashew, lemon zest and creamy rice pudding. Rich and rewarding now with a 15-year cellar life.’

CAPE MENTELLE TRINDERS SHIRAZ CABERNET 2018

Balanced Impressive Intense

A three-vineyard two-variety blend from a mild season and Indian summer.

‘Dark cherry colour with Black Forest cherry and smoked charcuterie aromas, backed by umami and leather notes. The palate is rich and powerful with dark berry, smoky vanillin oak and elegant tannins.’

CAPE MENTELLE WALLCLIFFE MERLOT PETIT VERDOT MALBEC 2017

Audacious Unexpected Adventurous

Limited edition blend of three exceptional parcels – two sourced from the Trinders and Crossroads vineyards, plus malbec from Wilyabrup. A mild summer and delayed veraison nurtured intensely flavoured fully ripe grapes.

‘On the nose intense mulberry and black plums meet bramble, anise and smoky spices, plus classic petit verdot violets. Seamless, savoury, silky and supple. A striking super varietal blend.’

Vintage 2021

Wow, well what can you say? Other than, we were probably due a testing harvest. We’ve been blessed with consistently stellar years since 2006 so one day it had to happen. In 2021 it rained, and it was warm. Did someone say Hunter Valley?

In fact, we were more than 40% up on the 10-year rainfall average for the growing season, and 1.3C° up on average maximum temperatures. Yet the season was cooler than 2020 and 2016.

A very wet winter gave way to a mild rainier than average spring that affected flowering and fruit set. A bone dry and warm December through January bequeathed lower yields of excellent fruit. The curve ball came with some big February rains, which increased disease pressure and necessitated meticulous selection in the vineyard and berry sorting at the winery.

This year was a triumph of the vineyard gang whose endless hard work delivered excellent fruit quality to the cellar. It was also a year of teamwork, with the cellar door and office staff pitching in, their shears snipping to help relieve labour shortage pressures.

The resulting wines have bright natural acidity, lower alcohols and balanced fruit

concentration and tension. The reds are expressive with ripe, complete tannins and poise standing testament to careful management of the most difficult conditions in 15 years in Margaret River. The whites display intense, complex aromatics overlying bright textural palates. Chardonnay in particular will be long-lived, well balanced with deft oak framing.



Wine Club

Doorstep deliveries are very much in vogue this year and what better way to boost one’s mood than receiving a carton of your favourite wines? **The Cape Mentelle Wine Club** member packs will be shipped slightly earlier this year (in November) to minimise any excessive heat risks and they are sure to bring cheer.

Mentelle Explorer members can look forward to a Chardonnay Vertical selection, and those signed on to the **Mentelle Collection** will be treated to several Cellar Reserve wines including the *Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon* and *Chardonnay* and a preview of the *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon 2017*.

Members of the different Club tiers also have access to selected Back Vintages that at the moment include *Cabernet Sauvignon 2011*, *Shiraz 2010*, *Wallcliffe Cabernet Cabernet Franc 2014* and an esteemed age-worthy *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay 2013*.

To join and for more details about the three different Wine Club options, please check the website. Club members also have the option of bespoke their selections – your favourites, our treats and more. To do so members are invited to log into their accounts and go to the ‘Club List’ for the available wines.
www.capementelle.com.au/wine-club or email cellardoor@capementelle.com.au



Golden Memories



50th Anniversary Lunch, Bondi Beach.



Sue Juniper and David Hohnen – there from the beginning.



Sarah Thomas – still there, the indefatigable Office Manager.



Winemakers Ellie Jarvis (1998 – 2004) and Mark Messenger (1990 – 1998)



Pics: Nikita Booth Photography

Last year Cape Mentelle celebrated its 50th Anniversary (in slightly subdued style).

Smaller than planned events were held by the Pacific Ocean at Bondi Beach attended by loyal wine lovers and the wine trade, while in The West the expansive Cape Mentelle family – neighbours, staff (past and present) and friends gathered in the Cellar Door gardens to reminisce. Much laughter drifted on the warm November afternoon breeze, tales (some tall) were told, old wines tasted, and the mood was mellow and proud.

Cape Mentelle, a small family enterprise established by the Hohnen family, has grown from humble beginnings into a global brand. Its wines are lauded from London to Tokyo and New York but the company's roots are firmly planted in Margaret River's richly productive ironstone soils.

And the current portfolio stands testament to all the talented staff who have contributed over the decades to the evolution of the brand named after a couple of Frenchmen – the Mentelle brothers, one an explorer, the other a cartographer. We reckon they too would be proud of their inadvertent brand bequest.

‘What a thrill to taste David Hohnen's famous winner of the 1984 Jimmy Watson Trophy! Fully mature nose that is by no means unlike the nose of Chateau Margaux 1983 tasted fairly recently.’

JANCIS ROBINSON MW (50TH ANNIVERSARY VIRTUAL CABERNET TASTING)

Pipe Dreaming

A vinous soliloquy by Morris Gleitzman.

Wine, you are amazing. Thank you so much. Love your work. Weddings, birthdays, baby showers, anniversaries, and particularly, global pandemics.

When it all started, dear wine, I was pretty sure two things would get us through. You and positive thinking. Though sadly our prime minister didn't respond to my rebranding suggestion: Covid-19.

I also have to admit, dear wine, that when the first lockdown hit, I made the mistake of starting with just you and hoping the positive thinking would follow. It didn't. It's hard to think positively about anything when you catch a glimpse of yourself slumped unshaven on the settee at three in the afternoon in a shiraz-coloured onesie.

So I decided to devote myself to helping others stay positive. Which as we know happens best when individual members of society feel connected and valued, preferably with a glass in their hand.

The neighbours loved my idea of a virtual wine club. But voted against Zoom. (Onesies, I suspect.) Plus our ageing apartment block has patchy wi-fi, not good in a lockdown.

Dear wine, as you do so often, you fuelled our creativity. We decided to rate the wines by banging on the water pipes. One for excellent, two for passable, three for 'Gleitzman, your shiraz has got fluff in it,' etc. Unfortunately we finished with a wine college nebbiolo that must have been the product of home

old home-schooled riesling does to a bathtub, and if you still doubt the purging power of that much acid, have a sip.

And it's not just Australian authorities who are lagging. What could be more appealing to vaccine-doubters worldwide than a job that is fresh, fruity and pleasantly effervescent. But still no word from the European government about my Asti-Zeneca suggestion.

All this has been too disheartening, dear wine, so I've decided to concentrate solely on personal positivity. Thanks to you and the delightful qualities of your Margaret River rellies, my optimism has been reborn. A few sips of Mentelle chardonnay and suddenly all is OK with the world.

But thoughts of the wider world still bring gloom. Because what if we never get to travel again? Never get to visit our favourite vineyard and give those grapes a grateful squeeze, and the winemaker. Never visit Slovenia again, that wine heaven with two hundred wineries packed into a space half the size of Tasmania, even less if you include the ferry terminals.

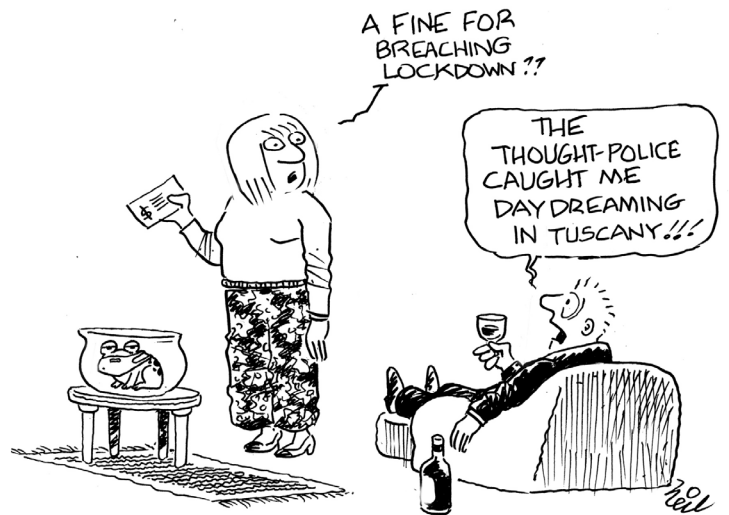
'A few sips of glorious Mentelle chardonnay, and suddenly all is OK with the world.'

schooling, and the plumber had to be called.

Undeterred, I turned to marketing. What more positive response to these trying times than offering reasonably-priced personal protective equipment to fellow wine-lovers.

I still think my wine-tasting face masks were a solid idea, no matter what the authorities said. To their cease and desist claim that masks become porous when wet, I have a single-word rebuttal. Sediment.

As for their threats of criminal prosecution in relation to my riesling hand-sanitiser, come on. I'm not talking 10-year-old Jeffrey Grosset. Come and look at what three-week-



with holiday joy as I listen to the rental car groaning happily under a few dozen too many.

Oh wine, are you doing what I think you're doing? Are you using our tastebuds and olfactories to take us back to those beloved forbidden spots? Even though strictly speaking we should be limited to our personal carpeted spaces, as long as they don't stretch more than 5km in any direction?

I rush to the kitchen, open a bottle of Loire Cabernet Franc, and yes, along with the usual varietal characteristics I'm getting the aroma of garlicky diesel as trucks pull into our favourite lunch place on the D751 *route circulaire*. And, *mon dieu*, dry my tears, I think I can even hear *le patron* grumbling about Australians who don't tip.

Suddenly yearned-for vistas open up. That international trip I've been fantasizing about for the last 18 months is suddenly possible. I grab the phone. Not to ring the travel agent about a round-world ticket with 12 stopovers. But to ring the bottle shop about a mixed imported dozen.

Friends, neighbours, we've been set free. Respect and gratitude to our benefactor. Dear wine, thank you. How will we ever repay your kindness? A start might be to stop putting you into lockdown just because you've got age-worthy tannins and a youthful acid spine.

If you agree, friends and neighbours, bang on the pipes. But I might not hear you because if we're still locked down ourselves, I'll likely be in Slovenia.

Morris Gleitzman, childrens' author and wine columnist, has been caught sipping on his Sydney sofa but is dreaming of a flight back to Busselton when Jetstar starts up...



Viticulturists Dave Moulton (right) with Corentin Bazetoux who assisted with the new Trinders project before recently returning to France.

School's Out

Long-standing and loyal Cape Mentelle fans will probably recall that the undulating Trinders Vineyard adjacent the winery was named after a tiny one-room country school – the domain of headmaster, Mr Trinder. It was Margaret River's first government school, which stood on the site till 1928. Sixty years later, in 1988, this block was planted variously with cabernet sauvignon, merlot and further down towards the winery, Cape Mentelle's two mainstay white varieties – semillon and sauvignon blanc.

Since then Cape Mentelle has expanded its white grape plantings, notably at the Crossroads and Chapman Brook vineyards. Both these sites are further from the coast and cooler (by an average 2°C at night) which conjures lifted aromatics and acidity, best suited to Cape Mentelle's classic Sauvignon Semillon blend.

So, after recent vineyard trials it was decided to remove the white grapes in favour of red. Now devoid of vines, the site's topography and soils display their true colours – fertile top loams with high ironstone gravel content over clay, and exceptional drainage. This is clearly cabernet country and it will soon host seven new hectares of the king of red grapes.

Viticulturist David Moulton is excited by the regeneration project and reports that the new block will combine different red varieties, clones and rootstocks, as well as planting densities. The calibrations are to be based on earlier trials with the intention to nurture the best possible expressions from the site. Planting is due to commence in spring 2023, with an expected first harvest in 2027. A clear case of artful mix and match.

Good Crop

Taking a glass half-full approach to life is definitely the best way to navigate at the moment. And clearly our recommendation is that it be filled with your favourite Cape Mentelle wine! When poured please raise it to the CMV team who have chalked up several significant industry achievements over the past year.

First up, the Cellar Door crew for their recognition by *Gourmet Traveller Wine* for 'Best Tasting Experience' in the magazine's annual 2021 Cellar Door Awards. They look forward to welcoming eastern states wine explorers back very soon!

Other accolades have been showered on the vineyard team led by Dave Moulton. The annual Young Guns Awards now celebrate viticulturists as well as winemakers, and the ever-youthful Mr Moulton was a finalist in the inaugural YG vineyard category.

The judges including Dr Peter Dry and Max Allen commended Cape Mentelle for its 'old vines and proud history of sustainable management and evolving organic practices'. (Not yet certified).

Dave's purple patch continued... he won the Viticultural Excellence Award at the 2020 Margaret River Wine Show, receiving a citation for going "beyond the standard expectations of vineyard management. His down to earth and humble nature belies a driven work ethic. Dave has demonstrated a commitment to innovation, sustainability, longevity and expression of terroir through science as well as good old-fashioned 'walking the rows.' He works closely with the production team honing the harmony that should exist between grape growing and winemaking." But of course!

The Cellar Rat

Dearest Mentelles,

It's been awhile...and maybe you missed my last column. A lot has happened since. Anniversary parties, a new boss, new hoses... oh, and some costly imported oak barrels. More are coming but seems the ship grounded in the Suez Canal and the world's worrying pestilence has disrupted global supply chains. Must be the reason why I waited months for my order of a dozen fine-stemmed super-sipper varietal specific glasses from Austria.

Ordered weeks ago. All because during my home iso (after an aborted trip east to host two Sydney kyboshed wine dinners) I decided to tidy the kitchen cupboards. And the glass cabinet. Some Duralex tumblers, plenty of jam jars, and Nana's cut crystal sherry shots – off to the Op Shop. None of them were chipped but some I admit seem to have come home after Festival frolics. Is that why they're branded, to trigger guilt? Certainly, none were really fit for home consumption. Especially now, when researchers say per capita wine intake is rising. Just ask Uncle Dan.

So I Googled glassware. Such precision and science. SO much choice. Specific shapes, girths and exquisitely fine rims...purposely designed to target the wine flow onto your tongue so it tickles the right tastebuds, and triggers memories.

Ah yes, the correct glass does matter. Which is why the tumblers and those teeny-weeny mean-pour XL5's had to go. To think we (or rather our esteemed winemakers) once relied on the latter for our bench blending.

No longer, and certainly not at my place, now that my box of 12 delicate, generous-bowled, finest cut (never rolled) rim glasses have been delivered. They gleam and beckon.

It's Tuesday after a big day in the cellar, racking and topping. Will it be an aged in perfect balance Margs Chardonnay? Or a mood-booster powerful Barolo?

Of course, the latter might need to breathe first, so I delved again in the cabinet...for the decanter. Then I remembered. Last year I used it for my kombucha trial. That batch was a fail but it made a good vase for the spring daffodils. Which is why I am now waiting and checking the shipping reports for the due date of my hand-blown 'fatto a mano' cornetto decanter. Meanwhile, there is still the glass milk bottle recycled from my last trip to Margs farmers' market... or an ice cream.

Love, light and peace,

Cellar Rat

Go Local

When originally conceived the **Mentelle Ambassador** program was intended to capture travel shots (and Cape Mentelle bottles) in far flung exotic places. Like Antarctica, atop the Eiffel Tower or on safari in the Sahara – destinations all celebrated with well-travelled CMV bottles. These days our horizons are rather more local, but the sentiment remains.

Budding ambassadors, be they atop Cradle Mountain or at Cape York clutching their ambassadorial bottle, are encouraged to snap the occasion and send the photo (high res image please) to info@capementelle.com.au If *Mentelle Notes* publishes the winning image the prize is a current release mixed case of Cape Mentelle's finest!

Congratulations to Club members Laura and Michael Gresham, Perth, whose summer island idyll was Rottneest. The day's snorkelling and cycling whipped up a mighty thirst happily salved by cooling glasses of *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay*, reputedly the last bottle in the Pinky's Beach Club bar.



Chilled CM Chardonnay to end the Rotto day.

Cab Call

Plans are forging ahead for the 39th **Cape Mentelle Cabernet Tasting** (19 November) which will feature a prestige line-up of international cabernets from the 2018 vintage. The pageant contenders will encompass top tier wines from Bordeaux, Napa Valley and Tuscany, as well as the local Margaret River and Australian aspirants. The post-tasting lunch will feature perfect cabernet-match local Angus beef prepared by WA chef Kate Lamont. Tickets sold exceedingly quickly, so sadly there is only a waiting list option. Info: cabernet.tasting@capementelle.com.au



Constant Companion

Red always brightens ones day, especially if it is used to highlight text in the influential *Halliday Wine Companion 2022*. The new edition again rates Cape Mentelle a pinnacle Five Red Stars (Outstanding) with six wines also listed in red – denominating 95+ Point scores. In fact, the star performers all rated 95, including two vintages of *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon* (2018 and 2017) the former 'a powerful statuesque wine'; *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay 2018* 'the best Chardonnay to date'; *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Merlot Petit Verdot 2017* 'Very attractive and quite unexpected'; and that left-field all-time favourite *Cape Mentelle Zinfandel 2018*. Special value icons are granted to two vintages of *Cape Mentelle Sauvignon Blanc Semillon* (2020 and 2019). All in all 2022 rates as a very good year!



Screen Scene

If ever there was a summer to look forward to al fresco movies it must be this year. What better way to enjoy your favourite film than in a beanbag under starry skies on balmy warm nights in Cape Mentelle's native winery garden, sipping Chardonnay or Shiraz. **Movies at Cape Mentelle** is a popular calendar event with regular screenings on Friday – Tuesday nights from 17 December to 1 February 2022. Bookings: www.capementelle.com.au/events

Latest Drops

CAPE MENTELLE CHARDONNAY 2018

'Pure honeysuckle, lantana, mango skin, yellow peach and fig. The palate combines a tropical influence...with a nutty, nougat overlay. Then, in comes the Burgundian oak...juicy, brisk acidity lends its voice... Chardonnay that combines a number of influences to produce a complex result. You can taste it. Ask no more.'

95 POINTS, Jeni Port, WINEPILOT

CAPE MENTELLE SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2020

'...very concentrated and on track. Juniper, red apple, brine, crushed shell, green peppercorn and wisps of jasmine tea and camomile flower.'

93 POINTS, James Halliday HALLIDAY WINE COMPANION

CAPE MENTELLE SHIRAZ 2018

'A very smart wine with a bright future.'

94 POINTS, Huon Hooke, THE REAL REVIEW

CAPE MENTELLE SHIRAZ 2017

'Seamlessly constructed with a layer of soft, plush fruit coated with a thin veneer of oak. Fine, chalky tannins add a little support through the length of the palate. Spicy and generous. Excellent drinking now...'

92 POINTS, Ray Jordan, WEST AUSTRALIAN

CAPE MENTELLE CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2016

'...marvellously complex, black fruit aromas intertwining with mossy undergrowth, tobacco, nori and dried herb notes.

A more elegant vintage...powerful and piercingly intense, with fine, soft tannins and a long carry.'

98 POINTS, Huon Hooke, THE REAL REVIEW

'...the purity and the singularity of this beautiful cabernet. It's all there, all laid out for you, blackcurrant/cassis fruit, spicy/earthy undertones and perfectly ripened tannins standing guard over the fruit. The oak is subtle, but has been carefully orchestrated.'

98 POINTS, James Halliday HALLIDAY WINE COMPANION