



Harkham_Winery_Old_Vines_Shiraz_2011.

Posted on 13 September 2012.

Harkham tends to fly under the radar in the Hunter – I took one of their wines to a ‘natural wine’ tasting for the local young winemakers group and many had to ask who they were and where they were in the region. Regardless, Harkham have a growing following, particularly in Sydney where wine provocateur and wholesaler/importer Andrew Guard distributes the wines. There’s been some mixed wines released that I have tasted; some I have loved, others not so much, but this release is an exciting interpretation of Hunter from 2011.

Harkham also have a range of preservative free wines and are even kosher certified – emphatically the best kosher wines in Australia, for what that is worth, and that’s not faint praise for some of the releases, kosher or not. 330 cases of this wine are produced.

The fruit for this wine is sourced from a Debeyers Road in Pokolbin; a vineyard planted in the 1960s that has been tended by Richie Harkham and his crew for over the past four years. The wine is fermented in two parts and blended back together – one ferment is indigenous yeast, riper fruit, bolder flavoured wine, the other inoculated with cultured yeast, sees 20% wholebunch in the ferment – some yin and yang. I asked why the two ferments took place like this and the response was ‘to ferment the juice faster’ I assume referring to the latter ferment. There’s a small inclusion of sulphur before bottling, but aside that no additions in the winemaking, and no filtering/fining before bottling.

Old campfire sweet char, wet earth, black berry on brambles with a good hit of perfumed flowers – a vibrant, exotic array of scent that immediately engages. Feels loose knit, gently sweet with another dose of piquant stem influence. There’s spicy herbalness and equally spicy but tempered oak flirting with fruit, coupled to slick acidity and a feel of lifted freshness. More of the floral stuff to taste, too. This is easy to drink with a feel of purity and brightness and shows a supple medium weight – there’s an en vogue appeal here for sure, but it’s more interesting for its Hunter Valley origin, nigh on unique. Cool wine, I kept going back for more.

Rated : 92 Points

Tasted : SEP12

Alcohol : 14%

Price : \$36

Closure : Diam

Drink : 2012 - 2019

-- **Mike Bennie** -- © 2012 The Wine Front.

Wine writer/journalist/presenter/wine judge

