

**HARKHAM WINES**  
*Hunter Valley, NSW*



“In the nine years we’ve been in the Hunter Valley, I’ve never seen wines like this before,” claims Richie Harkham of the idiosyncratic fruits of his labours in one of Australia’s most famous winemaking regions, with a childlike enthusiasm that is infectious. “The whites always look good from the start – my chardonnay, semillon and amphorae wines are singing. In the beginning we weren’t sure about the shiraz because we were one of the first to harvest in the region and it just looked so different...”

There’s always something on the go for Harkham. The latest is his plan to make kosher chardonnay in Burgundy (say what?). Then there’s his charity work with an African organisation called Saikeri, which sees money from Harkham wines funding the building of a dining hall for an entire community. “To be honest, it’s pretty busy,” understates Harkham.

Harkham and his father were sick of drinking the dross kosher wines imported into Australia when a meeting with the chief rabbi of Israel resulted in the gestation of an idea.

“He told me I should be making wines kosher – that kosher was closer to the purity of wine and preserving the holiness of the grape,” explains Harkham. “That was in great synergy with my spiritual belief in natural wines, and the idea that wine is meant to elevate your soul. It’s God’s gift to the world. So we enlisted our local rabbi’s help, and the rest is history.”

Harkham’s first kosher harvest was in 2008. “I’ve made every mistake you could make along the way but it’s been an amazing journey.” Admittedly, the earlier wines were beset with a languor that made them a little uneasy on the palate though drinkable, but greater experience has resulted in some pure, delicious and highly drinkable releases in recent years – kosher, but also wines of great personality. “Yes, it’s turning some heads making wines in the Hunter Valley in such a way, but we’re cool with that,” says Harkham.



**919 WINES**  
*Riverland, SA*

The Riverland wine region comes with the dubious honour of being home to the world’s second largest winemaking facility – factory winemaking that sees a lazy couple of hundred thousand tonnes of grapes pulverised to produce low quality goon and other nefarious drinks that can be made from large scale industrial ag. A counter-culture was needed.

Cue Eric and Jenny Semmler, winemakers who buck the trend of the Riverland’s mostly poisoned image. With a band of dedicated local growers they’ve set about showcasing the region’s best assets in new-to-Australia varieties and unusual grapes, in the process creating a growing refinement of unique wines from the region. Eric’s magnificent moustache frames a whip smart palate that can jump from exceptional fortified wines to bursting-with-vitality red and white table wines, all the while giving a dissertation in biodynamic viticulture and the benefits of sustainability.

The smaller scale producer was established in 1999 and has set about establishing best practices while making wines with minimal intervention and reduced environmental footprint. Exceptional wines include their award winning Pale Dry Apera with its Fino sherry-like briny tang, and the impressive touriga nacional table wine – the Portuguese grape savoury and rich in style.

Eric’s great love of fortified wines means that 919 Wines Classic Tawny, Classic Topaque and Classic Muscat are all exceptional, complex wines, while easy-drinking vermentino and tempranillo wines complement the more traditional end of the roster. Singular vision make this producer a fascinating game-changer for the region.

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~ RICHIE HARKHAM



*Harkham - Aziza's Shiraz*



*919 Wines - Tempranillo 2010*

