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THE INDEPENDENT DRINKS JOURNAL

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DOURO VALLEY – GOLD COAST WINE BARS – HARVEST FEAST



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Good Sorts

You'd be forgiven for thinking Mike Bennie has a thing for eponymous labels, or for people whose last name starts with 'Good'. But as he discovers, these are just really great wines.



Goodman

Kate Goodman is widely regarded as one of Australia's leading winemakers, wine judges and high-profile proponents of Australian fine wine. While Goodman is her more recent eponymous wine project, her resume runs deep. Indeed, Seppelt (Great Western), Tim Knappstein (Clare Valley), Wirra Wirra (McLaren Vale), Punt Road (Yarra Valley) and now Penley Estate (Coonawarra), have all gained from Goodman's winemaking nous, vision and talent.

Goodman didn't originally envisage a life at the apex of the Australian wine community. After high school she enrolled in a degree focusing on microbiology, but the white lab coat environment ran counter to her vision of a more creative, outdoorsy career. After completing her undergraduate degree, she took a cellar hand job in a winery, quickly

followed by enrolment in a winemaking degree that was undertaken via correspondence.

Goodman focuses on Victorian wine regions (currently Yarra Valley and Heathcote) and single site expressions. Despite her geography (her full-time winemaking job is in Coonawarra), the lure of Yarra Valley staples pinot noir, chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon, were too compelling, particularly from marque vineyards like Willowlake (pinot noir and chardonnay) and Yering Grange (cabernet).

Additionally, Goodman has sourced a clutch of negroamaro and Pyrenees shiraz, but it's the Heathcote vermentino that draws significant attention. The **2016 Goodman Vermentino** (A\$28) is produced from fruit grown on the Chalmers Vineyard and provides a neat counterpoint to the statelier offerings from the Yarra.

Whole-bunch pressed and sent to used oak and stainless steel, the resulting vermentino wine has more depth and personality than expected from the variety. It's pretty in perfume of green melon, citrus blossom, almond paste and faint tonic water. The palate treads a similar path with a good, refreshing zing of tangy, lime juice acidity.

The chardonnay is stellar with the **2015 Goodman Chardonnay** (A\$40) given gentle handling and judicious oak seasoning to bring the notable Willowlake Vineyard to life. It's a wine redolent of ripe stone-fruit, green apple and mellow marzipan-like oak scents, plus a faint whiff of flinty-mineral character. The palate is gentle, yet tightly wound, refreshing yet imbued with some light, creamy oak and lees, extending to a pulpy, grapefruity finish. It should cellar well in the medium term.

The **2015 Goodman Pinot Noir** (A\$40) from a lauded harvest year and a marque site is a

beautiful, just shy of medium-bodied red with fresh cherry fruitiness coupled to wonderful undergrowth and dried herb characters. The 25% whole bunch included seems to have added these appealing savoury elements, and though tannins give good ribs to the wine, there's a sleek-silky feel.

For cabernet fans, the **2014 Goodman Cabernet** (A\$40) has a sense of more 'old school' Yarra Valley with its reserved feel, firm, succulent tannins, and leaner blue fruit spectrum of flavours. It takes a while to open up, but it does so beautifully, which is a sign of its long future in a dark, cool cellar.

Goodman's wines are worthy of attention for their steadfast focus on high quality. They're fine-tuned with strong regional expression, easy appeal and a reflection of over two decades of experience. Kudos is due.

Xavier

The wines from **Xavier Goodridge** over the past several years, typically amusingly named and exceptionally vibrant in bottle, have made for a thrilling ride. And while brightness and vivacity might be the impression, there's a deep thought and consideration to his approach. Goodridge joins a coterie of Victorian producers championing minimal intervention winemaking and producing some of Australia's most exciting wines.

Past releases have seen Goodridge source fruit from varying sites across Victoria, so the next logical step was to find vineyards to work himself. He scoured the Victorian countryside and settled on a site in Dean's Marsh in the Otways, not far from his home. A second co-farmed vineyard is located further afield in Mount Gambier, South Australia.

Goodridge stumbled into wine. At 18 he headed to the UK and found himself running a wine bar in London. On returning to Australia, he began studying winemaking and travelled broadly to fuel his understanding of viticulture and oenology. He settled at Bress in Harcourt, Victoria, where biodynamic farming and mixed agriculture bolstered his winemaking apprenticeship.

While Goodridge's 2018 wines from his own sites are eagerly anticipated, the 2017 releases come from Yarra Valley and Geelong locations

as well as his Mount Gambier vineyard. These are statement wines, brilliant for their unique feel, refreshment factor and purity, but perhaps also for being Goodridge's most complex and compelling wines yet.

An unusual blend of Geelong chardonnay and sauvignon blanc brings **2017 Xavier Halfway To Heaven** (A\$35) to life. Texture, through skin contact fermentation, is formative in the wine with chalky pucker a theme throughout the lemon-meets-stone-fruit flavours. Underlying in the palate is a crystalline acid profile and, importantly, a mineral feel that brings liveliness and detail to the wine. The perfume is pretty, floral, ultra-fragrant and dusted with light savoury spice. It's a wine for contemplation, yet has a 'gulp me' quality; a potent combination.

Produced using cabernet sauvignon sourced from the noted St Andrews vineyard in Yarra Valley, **2017 Xavier Shirley Rose** (A\$35) is one of the best Australian rosés I've seen in recent times. In the bright and attractive bouquet there's strawberry whiffs and hints of briar. The palate echoes the perfume, offering a mix of strawberries and light herbal detail. There's a sense of juiciness with just a touch of slipperiness and a brisk, burst of acidity to close. A pleasing dusting of peppery spice seems to accompany all that's going on in the mouth. The lingering message is 'delicious'.

Perhaps the most serious of the wines is **2017 Xavier Papa** (A\$35). It's also a wine from Goodridge's leased and organically-farmed Mount Gambier vineyard. The wine saw about 60% whole bunch included in the ferment.

It's a heavily perfumed pinot with savoury scents of strong, dried Provençal herbs and peppery notes, though there's also a touch of game meat and charcuterie among the latent red and sour cherry fruit. Flavours are quite light, though pretty. The wine feels elegant and fine with a silkiness upfront that builds on slender tannins to a gently puckering grip. It's a unique, but clever expression from an unusual place for pinot noir.

Xavier Wines is rising through the ranks as vineyard focus and finetuning of winemaking takes place. Honesty, integrity and a lot of thoughtfulness have been realised in a small, but super, suite of modern Australian wines. 🍷

