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McLaren Vale wineries: Six of the best to visit



Started in 2011 by brothers Richard and Malcom Leask, Hither & Yon is all about "making better wines with a lighter footprint". Photo: Meaghan Coles

SHARE **HITHER & YON**

Started in 2011 by brothers Richard and Malcom Leask, Hither & Yon is all about "making better wines with a lighter footprint". The pair take a hands-off, minimalist intervention approach and use pioneering regenerative agriculture techniques to work with the land, rather than against it. The result? In February 2021, they became the first South Australian winemaker to be certified carbon neutral by Climate Active. Drop into their cosy cellar door on Willunga High Street to sample interesting new varietals such as aglianico and carignan. See hitherandyon.com.au

D'ARENBERG





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Some people love it; some people loathe it. Either way, you have to see it. Created by flamboyant winemaker Chester Osborn, the d'Arenberg Cube is an assault on the senses – a five-storey Rubik's Cube-like structure that bombards visitors with optical illusions, immersive experiences and head-scratching contemporary art. D'Arenberg claims to be Australia's largest biodynamic certified wine grower and its legendary Dead Arm Shiraz is a perennial award-magnet. Reckon you could do better? Have a go at the winery's Blending Bench. See darenberg.com.au

GEMTREE WINES

When Melissa Brown told her father that she wanted to work in the family vineyard, he said she'd last three weeks. That was 27 years ago. Now she's the co-owner and viticulturist of Gemtree Wines, a pioneer in organic and biodynamic wine production. Instead of using chemical sprays and synthetic fertilisers, they use natural improvers such as crushed quartz and cow manure. Learn more about biodynamic farming on the vineyard's informative eco trail before trying its delicious range of organic drops, including savagnin, tempranillo and grenache. See gemtreewines.com

CHALK HILL WINES



Photo: Meaghan Coles

The Harvey family has been growing grapes for six generations, but only started making their own wines commercially in 1996. Clearly, they're doing something right because for the last eight years they've been awarded 5 stars by the Halliday Wine Companion. Last year, they opened an elegant new tasting room with sweeping vineyard views and have since been joined by gin distiller Never Never and Italian restaurant Cucina di Strada. Be sure to sample their multi-award winning Alpha Crucis Old Vine Grenache. See chalkhillwines.com.au

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BONDAR, LINO RAMBLE AND SHERRAH

Why settle for one cellar door when you can visit three? Pull into 148 McMurtrie Road and you'll find a 19th-century stone cottage that's an incubator for three up-and-coming boutique wine producers. Hop between the tasting rooms of Bondar, Lino Ramble and Sherrah and learn about their efforts to champion lesser-known, more sustainable Mediterranean varietals such as fiano, nero d'avola and mataro. As temperatures continue to climb and droughts become more common, it's a sign of where the region is headed. See bondarwines.com.au; linoramble.com.au; sherrahwines.com.au

ALPHA BOX & DICE

Since 2008, Alpha Box & Dice has been on a mission to create an "Alphabet of Wine", with each letter showcasing a different wine style or varietal. Every label has its own story, such as the Golden Mullet Fury Orange Semillon (a reference to how winemaking traditions, like hairdos, go in and out of fashion) and The Dead Winemakers Society Dolcetto (a homage to all the great winemakers of the past). As 32-year-old head winemaker Sam Berketa puts it, "It's all about not being so boring." See alphaboxdice.com

Rob McFarland was a guest of McLaren Vale Grape Wine Tourism Association. See mclarenvale.info



Rob McFarland Nov 26 2021