



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

CLARE VALLEY WINE

**AUSTRALIAN WINE
MADE OUR WAY**

Discover why this small wine region has a big reputation for its world-class wines.

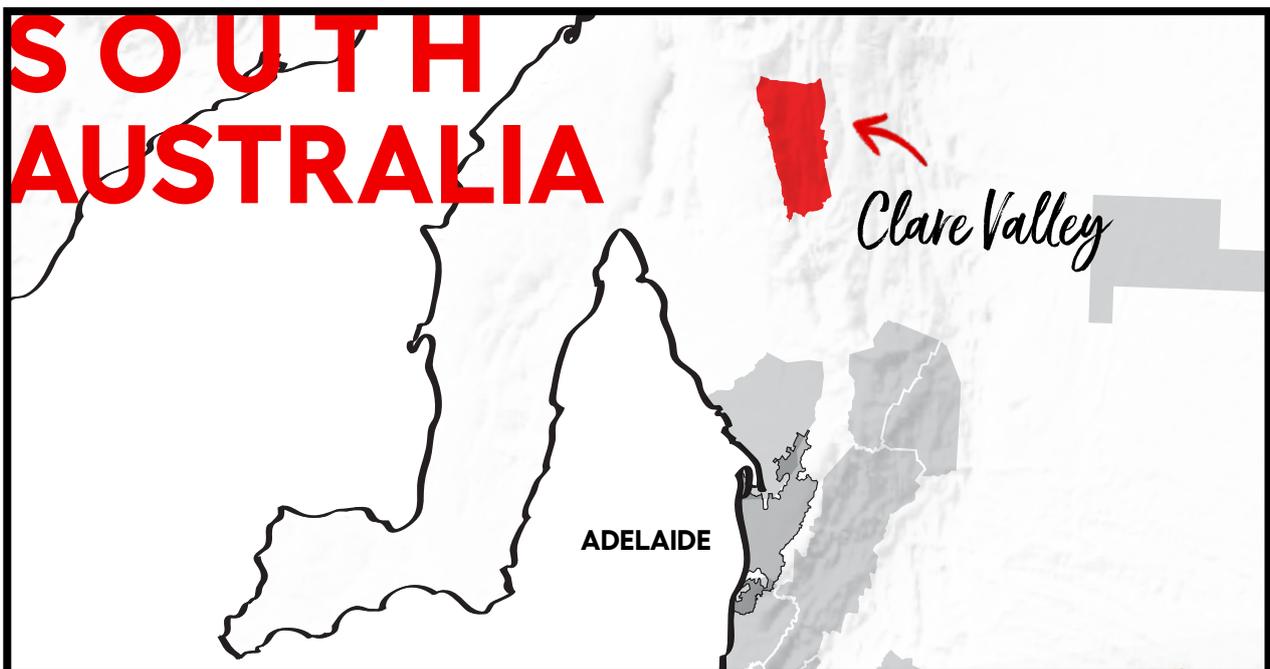
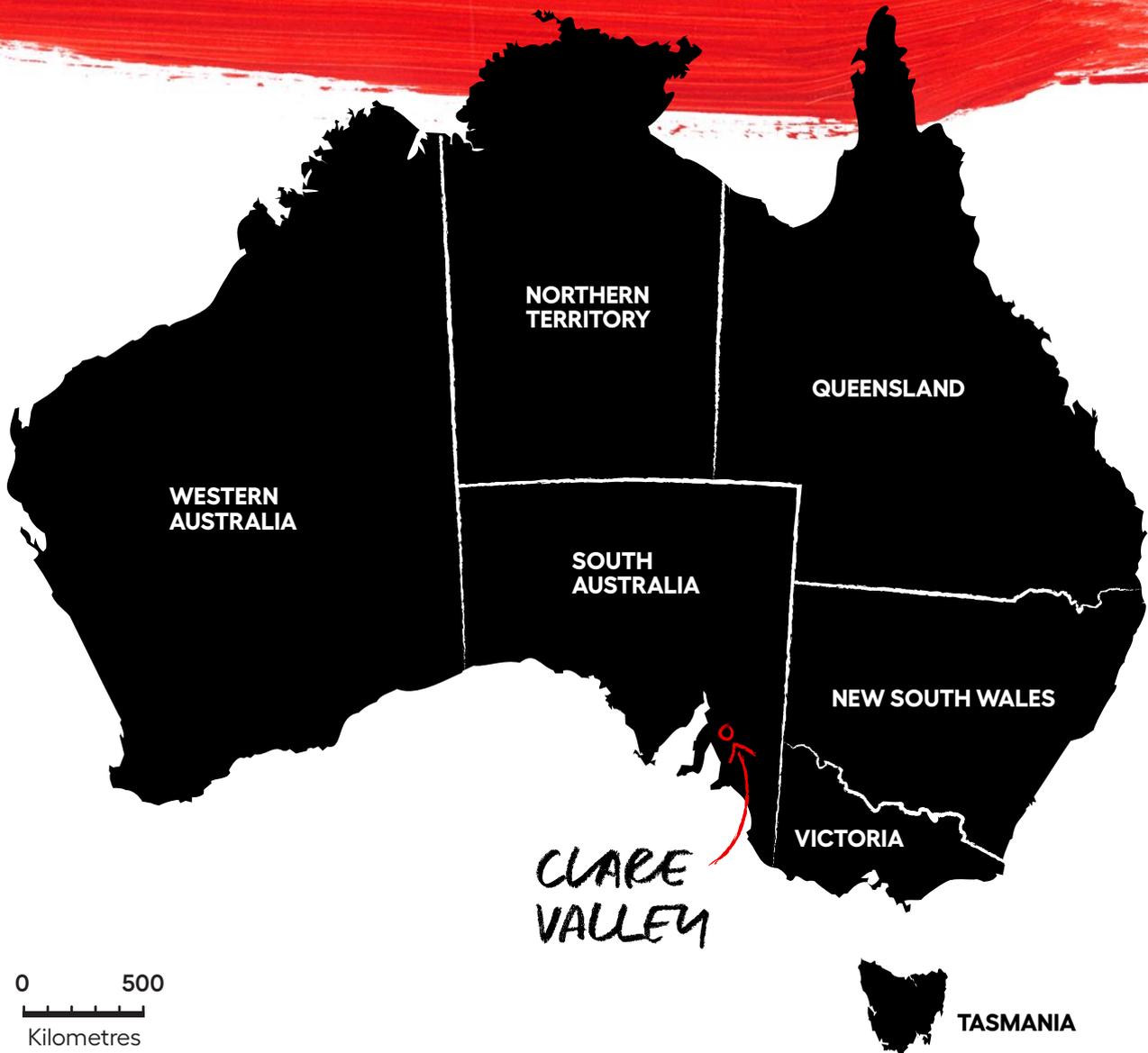


C O N T E N T S



- The history of Clare Valley
- Geography, climate and soil
- Viticulture and winemaking
- Prominent varieties

A U S T R A L I A





CLARE VALLEY: THE QUIET REVOLUTIONARY

- Small wine region with a big reputation
- Long history in Australia coupled with tradition of innovation
- Variation in altitude and aspect allows for both full-bodied reds and delicate whites
- Ancient soils growing diverse varieties
- Renowned for Riesling, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon

CLARE VALLEY: THE QUIET REVOLUTIONARY

Hidden away in the Mount Lofty Ranges of South Australia, Clare Valley is a small wine region with a big reputation for its world-class wines. Home to some important innovations in Australian wine, this scenic region is a place of contrasts. It's retained its relaxed rural spirit yet built a global reputation. The climate is warm yet capable of producing elegant cooler-climate styles. Ancient soils grow exciting alternative grape varieties, and its long history hasn't stopped local winemakers embracing modern techniques.

History of innovation

Clare Valley is one of Australia's oldest wine-producing areas, and its winemakers have been behind several breakthroughs in Australian wine. This combination of tradition and experimentation has made Clare Valley an influential region. At the same time, it's retained its down-to-earth spirit, with small-scale producers dominating the wine landscape.

Diverse terroir

Clare Valley's unique geology and climate hold the keys to its success in producing diverse wine styles, from delicate whites to full-flavoured reds. A wide array of soil types sit atop rocks formed hundreds of millions of years ago. Varying altitudes and dramatic drops in temperature create different mesoclimates.

World-class wines

Clare Valley produces a diverse range of wines, with local winemakers winning countless international awards. Regional producers continue to experiment with new and alternative varieties, but three lead the charge: Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Riesling.

Peaceful and picturesque

Around 130 kilometres north of Adelaide, Clare Valley is a retreat from city life. Rolling green hills, gum trees, wildflowers and tranquil streams make it one of Australia's most picturesque wine regions. Evidence of its history can be seen in its heritage buildings, and a growing food scene showcases local produce.

THE HISTORY OF CLARE VALLEY: TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION

1851

The first winery, Sevenhill Cellars, is established by the Jesuits to produce sacramental wine. It still exists today.

1900s

The number of vineyards and wineries grows steadily, with many becoming household names.

1840s

First vines planted by settlers John Horrocks and Edward Gleeson.

1893

Alfred Percy Birks establishes the Wendouree vineyard, planting vines that are still thriving today.

1993

A disused railway line is reborn as the Riesling Trail.

2012

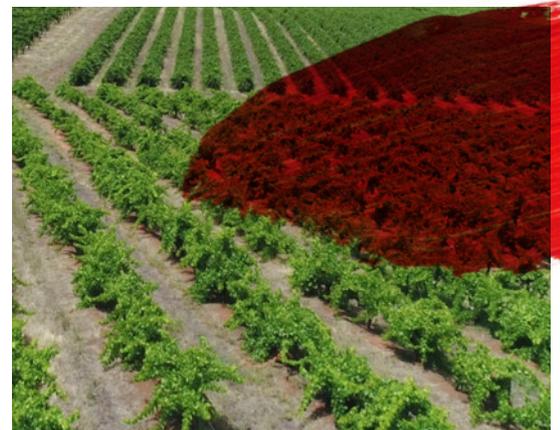
Jim Barry Wines becomes the first Australian vineyard to grow the Greek variety Assyrtiko.

TODAY

Clare Valley is an influential wine region producing world-class red and white wines.

2000

13 Clare Valley winemakers champion the screw-cap closure.



THE HISTORY OF CLARE VALLEY: TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION

In the beginning

The traditional custodians of the area were the Indigenous nomadic Ngadjuri people. The first Europeans in the region arrived in 1838.

1840s

The first vines were planted by settlers John Horrocks and Edward Gleeson, who most likely planted Grenache. Gleeson established the town of Clare, naming it after his home county in Ireland. In 1846 copper was discovered in the region, resulting in the building of a new major road and the key villages of Mintaro, Leasingham, Watervale and Auburn.

1851

Clare Valley's first winery, Sevenhill Cellars, was established by Jesuits to produce sacramental wine. It provided work for studying priests and generated income for the church. Sevenhill still exists today and is one of South Australia's oldest wineries.

1893

Alfred Percy Birks established the Wendouree vineyard, planting vines that are still thriving today.

1900s

The number of vineyards and wineries grew steadily, with many becoming household names. These included Jim Barry Wines, established in 1959; Wakefield Taylors Family Wines and Knappstein Enterprise Winery, both established in 1969; and Grosset Wines in 1981.

1993

A disused railway line, damaged by bushfire in 1983, was reborn as the Riesling Trail. It follows the contours and curves of the old train line from Mount Horrocks at Auburn through the township of Clare.

2000

Thirteen Clare Valley winemakers banded together to champion the Stelvin screw-cap closure for their premium Rieslings. The consistency, freshness and vitality of screw-cap-sealed wines appealed to consumers, and it soon became part of mainstream Australian wine across all varieties.

2012

Jim Barry Wines became the first Australian vineyard to grow the Greek variety Assyrtiko, using it to produce a vibrant white wine.

Today

Clare Valley is an important and influential wine region producing world-class red and white wines. Famed for its Riesling, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon, it also boasts a growing list of exciting alternative varieties. Unlike some wine regions that have embraced commercialisation, Clare Valley retains the core of its relaxed, rural character, providing both a window to the past and a doorway to Australian wine's bright future.



GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL



- Around 130km north of Adelaide
- Warm climate moderated by cold nights and afternoon breezes
- Undulating landscape creates different mesoclimates
- Ancient and diverse soils

GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL: DIVERSITY ON ANCIENT GROUND

Nestled in South Australia's Mount Lofty Ranges, Clare Valley is one of Australia's most picturesque wine-producing regions. With undulating hills and meandering streams atop an array of ancient soils, Clare Valley's geographical advantages make it a successful agricultural region, providing the basis for premium wine production.

Clare Valley is around 130 kilometres north of Adelaide, and has a relatively warm continental climate. At night, however, temperatures can plummet, and this large diurnal variation (variation between a high temperature and a low temperature during the same day), along with elevation and cooling afternoon breezes, helps create excellent conditions for producing top-quality wines.

Although it doesn't have official subregions, Clare Valley comprises five distinct areas – Auburn, Watervale, Sevenhill, Polish Hill River and Clare – that each have their own climatic characteristics and wine styles, from light and elegant to rich and robust.

CLIMATE



CONTINENTAL

WITH SIGNIFICANT
DIURNAL VARIATION AND
COOLING BREEZES

ALTITUDE



CLARE VALLEY
250–550M (820–1804FT)

VERY HIGH

>1000M
>3280FT

HIGH

750–999M
2460–3279FT

MEDIUM

500–749M
1640–2459FT

LOW

0–499M
0–1639FT

Latitude

- 33° 89'S

Climate

The region enjoys a warm, moderate continental climate, with warm to hot summer days moderated by cooling afternoon and night breezes.

- Temperature data can be misleading due to the large diurnal variation (variation between a high temperature and a low temperature during the same day). Drops of temperature from as high as 40°C (104°F) during the day to 1°C (33.8°F) at night are common during the main ripening months, slowing ripening and adding complexity – especially important for aromatic vines such as Riesling.
- The undulating geography means sites receive protection from or exposure to cool breezes. Depending on their location, sites receive protection from or exposure to these cool breezes, making both altitude and aspect important factors.

Altitude

Clare Valley's altitude is quite varied, meaning that although it is classified as a warm region, higher-altitude sites have cooler climates perfectly suited to producing delicate wines.

Growing season rainfall (GSR)

- 232mm (9.1in)

Calculated from October to April in Australia, GSR is a good indication of how much water is available to the vine. Rainfall in the Clare Valley arrives in winter, kickstarting the soil for the dry growing season ahead.

Mean January temperature (MJT):

– 22.3°C (72.1°F)

MJT refers to the mean temperature of the warmest month. Clare Valley features a warm to hot summer, but cooling afternoon breezes play a major role in slowing down the ripening process.

Please check the Wine Australia website for up-to-date information. Altitude refers to the highest and lowest vineyard in the GI region, not necessarily the highest or lowest point within the region and is calculated using the National Vineyard Scan and state contour datasets. Latitude is taken at the central point of the GI region. Meteorological data is taken from the national climate data bank of the Bureau of Meteorology: the Australian Data Archive for Meteorology (ADAM). Climate indices have been calculated across the whole GI region by the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystem CRC as part of a research project co-funded by Wine Australia. Growing season rainfall (GSR) and mean January temperature (MJT) based on 1991–2017 averages from the Bureau of Meteorology (2018). GSR is calculated from October to April.



SOIL

Clare Valley has 11 recognised soil types, ranging from terra rossa red topsoil over limestone (Watervale) to broken slate (Polish Hill River). Sandy loams and degraded quartz are also found in the region's west.



SOIL

Clare Valley has 11 recognised soil types, most of which hold enough water to sustain vines, though some irrigation is often needed in the hottest months. Pockets of the Clare Valley, such as Watervale, hold classic terra rossa topsoil over limestone, similar to that found in South Australia's famed Coonawarra. Polish Hill River vines are planted in grey loam soil over sandstone interspersed with broken slate – a 'hard rock' site that is naturally low in fertility. This leads to the vines struggling for nutrients, and typically results in small berries and low bunch weights, producing wines that are typically taut and mineral driven with particularly high acidity. Vineyards in northern Clare Valley are grown in deep, fertile alluvial soils, while areas in the west are planted to sandy loam dotted with fragments of quartz.

+ ADVANCED NOTES

WHAT LIES BENEATH: CLARE VALLEY'S UNIQUE GEOLOGY

Clare Valley has a fascinating geology thanks to its dramatic climatic and geological past, in which it varied from glacial to arid environments over millions of years.

The region is home to rocks that are hundreds of millions of years old. Around 800 million years ago, the sediments of what is now Clare Valley were deposited, mainly silts, sands and carbonates that were being eroded from the north and west. The landmass and sediments then transformed significantly over many years. Around 500 million years ago, Clare Valley sat atop a mountain range 10,000 metres high, and over the next 100 million years, this mountain range eroded completely, leaving the region as an eroded plain. But the land continued to shift, with rivers cutting channels through rock and uplift creating an undulating landscape.

Today, Clare Valley is a series of north–south trending valleys and ridges. Below the surface it has 11 different recognised soil types, formed by the varying underlying rock types that have been broken down, eroded and weathered to create surface soils. You can find different soil types over very short distances – sometimes within just tens of metres.

This diversity of soil types contributes to the region's ability to produce an array of different wine styles. In recent years, the wine-producing community has taken steps to tell the story of Clare Valley's unique geology and many wineries now have examples of their dominant soil types on display.



VITICULTURE AND WINEMAKING:

TRAILBLAZERS AND TRADITIONALISTS



GRAPE GROWING IN CLARE VALLEY

Clare Valley is home to passionate viticulturists, many of whom have spent years honing their craft in the region's unique soils. Many vineyards are small and family run, with a focus on fruit quality and regional authenticity. There's also an increased focus on sustainability and the use of organic vineyard practices.

The top varieties grown are Shiraz, Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon, and these account for the vast majority of wine production. The warm climate, particularly in lower-altitude sites, helps red grapes reach ideal ripeness to develop concentration, depth of flavour and clear varietal character.

Vineyard management

Growers use a wide range of vineyard management systems and techniques. Vineyards are generally low to moderate vigour, which requires less-complex trellis systems; Vertical Shoot Positioned trellising, for example, is common. Vine-training

systems are commonly bilateral cordon, and vines are spur-pruned. Most of the region now uses mechanised pre-pruning, which means trellis design has to accommodate barrel pruning by machine.

Cane pruning is becoming more widely practised, largely to help manage eutypa, a fungus that occurs in vineyards worldwide. Aside from eutypa, Clare Valley has few pest and disease risks to manage.

Soil management

Soil management is gaining focus, with growers pioneering some approaches for improving soils and minimising evaporation to reduce water use. Under-vine straw mulch is quite common, with straw mulch used under vines and between rows to conserve soil moisture and reduce weed competition.

Irrigation

Some vineyards are dry-grown, but most use some form of supplementary irrigation when required. Drip-line systems are commonly used.



GRAPE GROWING

- Variety of vineyard management systems; Vertical Shoot Positioned trellising common
- Vineyards are low to moderate vigour
- Soil management is a growing focus
- **Harvest:** Early Feb to mid-April

Harvest

Harvest typically occurs from early February to mid-April. As in other regions, this has changed significantly in the last decade or two, with harvest starting earlier and finishing more quickly due to rising temperatures. Harvest generally happens earlier in areas at lower elevation, such as Leasingham, which is warmer than sites higher up. Vineyards are typically machine harvested in the cool of the night to help preserve fruit flavours and retain natural acidity.

DID YOU KNOW

Clare Valley has around half the amount of land planted to vine as the neighbouring Barossa Valley but more than the Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula and Tasmania combined.

ADVANCED NOTES

OLD VINES OF THE VALLEY

Australia has the largest selection of old-vine material in the world, and you'll find some of the oldest vines growing in Clare Valley's ancient soils. At historic Wendouree Cellars, dry-grown Shiraz vines, first planted in 1893, are still producing grapes today, generations after Alfred Percy Birks founded the winery as a hobby in the late-19th century.

The Shiraz vines at Wendouree contain genetic material that has helped populate the region with irreplaceable old stocks that underpin viticultural tradition. These highly prized, low-yielding vines produce grapes of great flavour and intensity, and are believed to be among the oldest in the world. Wendouree also boasts some very old Malbec vines, which were planted in 1898.

To learn more, check out the **Australia's old vines** program, available at www.australianwinediscovered.com



WINEMAKING IN CLARE VALLEY

- Wide variety of techniques used
- Experimenting with varieties and styles
- Move away from high volume to small batches

WINEMAKING IN CLARE VALLEY

Diversity and experimentation

There are so many different winemaking techniques used in Clare Valley, it is difficult to generalise. Until the last few decades, many red grapes left the region to be used in multi-region blends by big-name brands. Today the majority of this fruit stays in the region, with local wineries producing high-quality red wines, as well as Riesling and other white wines.

Alternative varieties are a growing trend too, and producers are exploring a wide range of new and re-emerging varieties. This increased diversity of wine styles has been the biggest influence on winemaking in recent years. Winemakers have become more flexible in their approach and are experimenting with new techniques and varieties.

From big to boutique

There has been a move away from high-volume production to smaller batches, smaller tanks and generally a more boutique approach to winemaking. This allows Clare Valley's winemakers to showcase the terroir of different sites throughout the region. It has also given them more opportunities to experiment and make their mark.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

HOME OF INNOVATORS

Scenic Clare Valley offers a peaceful retreat from city life – yet it's been the site of some exciting innovations in Australian wine and is home to a community of creative, forward-thinking producers.

Varietal trailblazers: Jim Barry Wines

In the 1950s, wine pioneer Jim Barry was the first qualified winemaker to work in Clare Valley, and encouraged other growers to explore new varieties, including Riesling, which was uncommon at the time.

In 2006, Peter Barry, who now heads up Jim Barry Wines, visited Santorini in Greece and fell in love with bright and vibrant Assyrtiko wine. Ten years later, Jim Barry Wines made history when it released Australia's first bottles of commercial Assyrtiko wine.

Organic vines and alternative wines: Mount Horrocks

Stephanie Toole is another Clare Valley innovator. When she bought Mount Horrocks winery in 1993, she had never made wine before, and come harvest time she was three months pregnant and worked to produce her first batches. She now has three vineyards, all of which are certified organic, and makes some of the region's best wines. In 2006, Stephanie was one of the first in Australia to plant Nero d'Avola vines, and today uses it to produce a popular red wine.

International heavyweights: Grosset Wines

Stephanie and her life partner, fellow winemaker Jeffrey Grosset, were once named one of the "Famous Five Wine Power Couples of the World" by Decanter wine magazine. The pair share a winery but run separate businesses and vineyards. Jeffrey is a Clare Valley heavyweight, and Grosset Wines has won a string of national and international awards.

Screw-cap revolution

It was the winemakers of the Clare Valley, keen to retain the pristine freshness and vitality of their Riesling, who drove the screw cap revolution in Australia – and the world. The first trials were instigated in the 1970s by Yalumba, and in 2000, 13 winemakers – led by Jeffrey Grosset – banded together to champion the Stelvin screw-cap closure. Consumers liked the consistency and freshness of the screw-cap-sealed wines, and the design set the standard that virtually all screw caps follow today. Now it's rare to find any Australian wine – let alone an Australian Riesling – bottled under cork. It was Clare Valley's appetite for experimentation and innovation that led to the widespread success of the screw-cap in Australia and the spread of this revolutionary sealing method to other countries.



TASTE OF CLARE VALLEY

Noteworthy varieties

TASTE OF CLARE VALLEY: NOTEWORTHY VARIETIES

Diversity defines the topology, climate and wine styles of Clare Valley. Above all else, winemakers strive for quality and authenticity, crafting wines that reflect the region's unique environment.

Clare Valley's signature wines are:

- Riesling.
- Shiraz.
- Cabernet Sauvignon.

BEST OF THE REST

Clare Valley's diverse soils and mesoclimates enable producers to grow and craft a wide range of wines using both classic and alternative grape varieties. In recent years, varieties that have long been planted in the region, such as Grenache, Mourvèdre and Malbec, have enjoyed a resurgence, while newer varieties are adding even greater diversity.

Other noteworthy varieties include:

- Semillon.
- Pinot Grigio.
- Fiano.
- Vermentino.
- Sangiovese.
- Tempranillo.
- Montepulciano.

CLARE VALLEY TOP 5 VARIETIES



RIESLING

29%



SHIRAZ

32%



**CABERNET
SAUVIGNON**

18%



MERLOT

6%



CHARDONNAY

5%

Source: Wine Australia National Vintage Survey. Variety share based on average tonnage from 2015–2019.



RIESLING

MANY CAN BE AGED FOR DECADES

AROUND **1/3** OF TOTAL ANNUAL CRUSH



DISTINCTIVE STYLE

TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Lime zest
- Lemon
- Apple
- Orange blossom
- Honey
- Toast

RIESLING

The slate and limestone soils of Clare Valley, combined with its cool nights, produce a very distinctive style of Riesling that is light-bodied to medium-bodied with fruit richness and a long lingering acid sensation. Traditionally, most Clare Valley Rieslings have been made in a dry style, but increasingly producers are experimenting with off-dry, lower-alcohol styles. Many Clare Valley Rieslings can be aged for decades and are unoaked. The vibrant, citrus-based characters transform into flavours of honey, toast and lemon curd, while the perception of crisp acidity softens over time, giving the wines a smoother texture and richer mouthfeel.



Noteworthy Riesling producers include:

- Grosset Wines.
- Jim Barry Wines.
- Mount Horrocks Wines.
- Petaluma.
- Pikes.
- Tim Adams Wines.
- Vickery.
- Wines by KT.
- Skillogalee.
- Mitchell Wines.

SHIRAZ



RICH AND TEXTURED
YET WELL BALANCED

WARM DAYS PRODUCE
FULL-FLAVOURED FRUIT

AROUND
1/3 OF TOTAL
ANNUAL
CRUSH

TYPICAL
FLAVOURS

- Blackberry
- Black cherry
- Plum
- Liquorice

SHIRAZ

Clare Valley's warm days are ideal for the development of vibrant Shiraz flavours, and the consistently cool nights aid in acid retention. Shiraz wines are typically medium-bodied to full-bodied and richly textured yet elegant, with varietal flavours of blackberry, black cherry, plum and liquorice. Many have good ageing potential.

Noteworthy Shiraz producers include:

- Wendouree.
- Jim Barry Wines.
- Wakefield Taylors Family Wines.
- Leasingham.
- Mount Horrocks Wines.
- Knappstein.
- Kilikanoon.



CABERNET SAUVIGNON

RICH YET ELEGANT WITH DARK FRUIT CHARACTERS

MORE RESTRAINED STYLE THAN SOME WARM-CLIMATE CABERNETS



ALMOST **1/5** OF TOTAL ANNUAL CRUSH

TYPICAL FLAVOURS

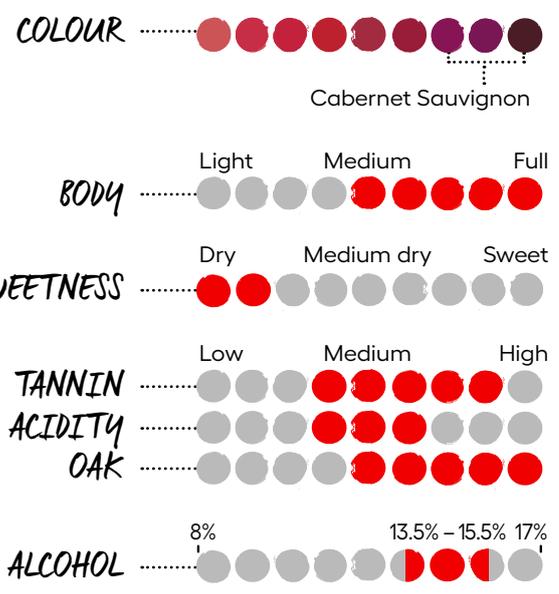
- Cassis
- Blackcurrant
- Blackberry
- Dark cherry
- Dark chocolate

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Clare Valley Cabernet Sauvignon wines are luscious and powerful yet elegant, with riper, richer dark-fruit characters than their cool-climate counterparts. However, they are typically more restrained than some warm-climate Cabernets, offering balance, finesse and good ageing potential. Winemakers often blend Cabernet with Shiraz and sometimes a little Malbec.

Noteworthy Cabernet Sauvignon producers include:

- Wakefield Taylors Family Wines.
- Wendouree.
- Reillys Wines.
- Mount Horrocks Wines.



FUN FACT

IN 2013, A CLARE VALLEY CABERNET WAS NAMED BEST IN THE WORLD. WAKEFIELD TAYLORS FAMILY WINES' 2010 'ST ANDREWS' CABERNET SAUVIGNON WAS AWARDED BEST CABERNET SAUVIGNON AT THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL WINE AND SPIRITS COMPETITION.



CLARE VALLEY HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

World-class wines and old vines in a picturesque region that continues to influence Australia's wine scene.

CLARE VALLEY: HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

Clare Valley's early wine pioneers and more recent generations of innovative producers have secured the region's future. It might account for only a small proportion of total national wine production, but it has long been an influential producer of world-class red and white wines. With boutique winemakers and a uniquely regional authenticity, Clare Valley is the ideal wine region that showcases the past while embracing its bright future.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Clare Valley is one of Australia's oldest wine-producing areas, established in the mid-1800s, and is home to some of the world's oldest vines. It's also been behind important innovations, including the introduction of the screw-cap closure.

- Nestled in South Australia's Mount Lofty Ranges, it is one of Australia's most picturesque wine regions, and one of the most fascinating geologically. An array of soil types sit above ancient rocks on undulating terrain.
- The climate is warm, but factors including altitude, diurnal temperature variation and cooling breezes create different mesoclimates, making it possible to grow a wide range of grape varieties.
- Clare Valley is famous for its rich, vibrant reds, particularly Shiraz and Cabernet, as well as its pure, age-worthy Riesling.
- Small-scale producers dominate the wine community, giving the region an intimate, down-to-earth feel. Growers and winemakers are experimenting with new techniques and varieties to take Clare Valley into the future.

AUSTRALIAN WINE MADE OUR WAY

Australia's unique climate and landscape have fostered a fiercely independent wine scene, home to a vibrant community of growers, winemakers, viticulturists, and vigneron. With more than 100 grape varieties grown across 65 distinct wine regions, we have the freedom to make exceptional wine, and to do it our way. We're not beholden to tradition, but continue to push the boundaries in the pursuit of the most diverse, thrilling wines in the world. That's just our way.

Discover more about Australian wine
at www.australianwine.com

Get the facts
**DRINK
WISE**
.ORG.AU

Wine Australia
supports the responsible
service of alcohol.

