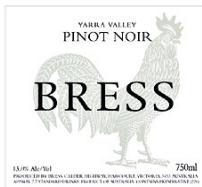


## \$18 to \$30

**BRESS YARRA VALLEY PINOT NOIR 2006**  
\$20

This is at the spicy end of the spectrum for pinot noir. Not shiraz-spicy, though — more gentle. Red cherry and light floral/leafy notes mark the aroma, and it tastes light and fresh with cherry nougat flavours that are smooth, soft and likeable. It's one of those well-mannered wines that deserves a place with relaxed company and casual cuisine. Well-priced, too.

**Ageing?** Drink over two years.  
**Food ideas:** Grilled spiced chicken.  
★★★★ \$\$\$

**MITCHELTON SHIRAZ 2005**  
\$21

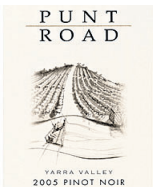
The Nagambie Lakes, 100 km north of Melbourne, has two principal wineries that couldn't be more different. One (Tahbilk) is a living museum of 19th-century winemaking, the other (Mitchelton) a 1970s "folly" of impressive proportions. Shiraz is a regional speciality, and Mitchelton's current vintage has blackberry pastille-like fruit and a meaty note, with oak very restrained. The palate is smooth with spicy flavour, good length and soft tannins. Easy drinking.

**Ageing?** Drink over five years.  
**Food ideas:** Cevapcici.  
★★★★☆ \$\$

**PAXTON AAA SHIRAZ GRENACHE 2005**  
\$23

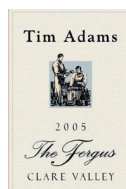
The Paxton family's vineyards at McLaren Vale have long been a source of excellent grapes for other makers, and in the past decade a very good range of table wines bearing the family name has appeared. This blend has an intense nose of ripe raspberry and plum, some earthy regionality and attractive levels of ripeness. It tastes smooth and persistent with balanced ripe fruit and soft tannins.

**Ageing?** Drink over four years.  
**Food ideas:** Middle Eastern lamb pies.  
★★★★ \$\$

**PUNT ROAD PINOT NOIR 2005**  
\$25

Lightweight Yarra Valley pinot noir such as this is very versatile; it has enough intensity to stand up to all sorts of foods. It could also be slightly chilled when the weather is warm, but not too much. On the nose there are cherry, strawberry caramel and undergrowth aromas, and it tastes succulent and fresh, finishing dry and long.

**Ageing?** Drink over two years.  
**Food ideas:** Roasted quails.  
★★★★ \$\$

**TIM ADAMS THE FERGUS 2005**  
\$25

This Clare wine is named after Fergus Mahon, whose vineyard provides the grenache grapes that comprise most of this agreeable red. The balance is cabernet franc, cabernet sauvignon, merlot and malbec. The '05 Fergus smells typically mellow with aromas of sweet raspberries, plums' spice and dark soil. At 14.5 per cent it's not overly alcoholic like some SA grenache-based wines, and it tastes velvety and soft with a lingering berry aftertaste.

**Ageing?** Drink over two years.  
**Food idea:** Home-made lamb and vegetable pasties.  
★★★★☆ \$\$\$

**RESCHKE VITULUS CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2003**  
\$25

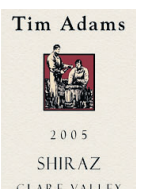
"Vitulus" is Latin for "bull-calf", a reference to the Reschke property's history as a source of thoroughbred cattle. Made from younger vines, this wine has a typical regional cabernet nose of tart, juicy blackcurrants with an earthy thread, and an unintrusive veneer of spicy oak. It's a fine-textured middleweight in the mouth, clean-tasting and refined.

**Ageing?** Drink over five years.  
**Food:** Beef, of course.  
★★★★☆ \$\$\$

**WITCHMOUNT CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2004**  
\$26

The Witchmount winery is almost in suburban Melbourne, at Rockbank in the Sunbury region. Wine quality is very good under well-known winemaker Steve Goodwin. This generously proportioned cabernet sauvignon is dense and jammy on the nose, but not overripe. Lovely concentration makes for a deliciously round, satisfying palate, with black fruit, plum and dry herb flavours trimmed in cedary oak. The sustained finish is carried by balanced firm tannins.

**Ageing?** Drink over eight years.  
**Food ideas:** Braised lamb shanks.  
★★★★★ \$\$\$

**TIM ADAMS SHIRAZ 2005**  
\$26

There's a traditional thread of slatey regionality that runs through Tim Adams shiraz, and the intense black fruit and currant characters are well concentrated. It's Clare Valley writ large, yet less jammy and obvious than a lot of reds from SA. Complex spicy notes are there in attractive balance, and cedary oak is folded in seamlessly. Balance is good, and a layer of alcoholic warmth almost goes too far, but not quite.

**Ageing?** Drink over six years.  
**Food ideas:** Roast beef.  
★★★★ \$\$

**THE BEST CLYDE PARK PINOT NOIR 2005**  
\$27

Clyde Park was established by Geelong pinot noir guru Gary Farr in 1979. Now owned by the Jongbloeds, its pinot noir vines are among the district's oldest. Perhaps it's not quite equal to Farr's best Geelong pinots but it does add lustre to the region's reputation with the variety. It's concentrated with sumptuous depth of spicy, plummy fruit that's aromatic and sustained. The palate is velvety and complete with lovely softness and length.

**Ageing?** Drink over four years.  
**Food ideas:** Sautéed veal kidneys.  
★★★★★ \$\$\$

**TYRRELLS RESERVE STEVENS SHIRAZ 2003**  
\$26

The Stevens vineyard in the Hunter Valley is one of Tyrrells' best sources of shiraz. The '03 has a nose of cherry and spice, with some typically wild regional hints of earth and saddle leather. In the mouth it's a smooth "Hunter burgundy" style of some chocolatey richness, complex flavour and friendly softness. Hunter shiraz like this grows on you as you top up your glass — ignore the rustic edges and before you know what's happened, the bottle's empty.

**Ageing?** Drink over five years.  
**Food ideas:** Steak pie.  
★★★★ \$\$\$

**YARRALOCH PINOT NOIR 2004**  
\$30

Yarraloch's first release of wines last year added a new name to the list of top Yarra Valley brands. The high quality is reinforced by new releases such as this pinot. It has a slightly syrupy, dark fruit nose indicating excellent ripeness levels, and spicy, meaty notes add rich complexity. The medium-bodied palate is rich in flavour and long, with ripe tannins perfectly incorporated. It's a slightly dry-reddish pinot, but very good.

**Ageing?** Drink over three years.  
**Food ideas:** Cantonese roast duck.  
★★★★☆ \$\$\$

**ROCHFORD MACEDON RANGES PINOT NOIR 2004**  
\$30

As the vines mature, Macedon is becoming a source of good pinot, given the proviso that it's not a cold year, when they can be a bit thin and weedy. This example has an excellent varietal aroma of plums, raspberries, spice and well-handled, moderate oak. The palate has a satiny feel and good intensity with good integration of mild tannins.

**Ageing?** Drink over two years.  
**Food ideas:** Roast duck.  
★★★★ \$\$\$