

RIVERLAND, RIVERINA AND MURRAY DARLING

AUSTRALIA'S HEARTLAND REGIONS

Guide



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AUSTRALIA'S
HEARTLAND REGIONS



AUSTRALIAN WINE DISCOVERED

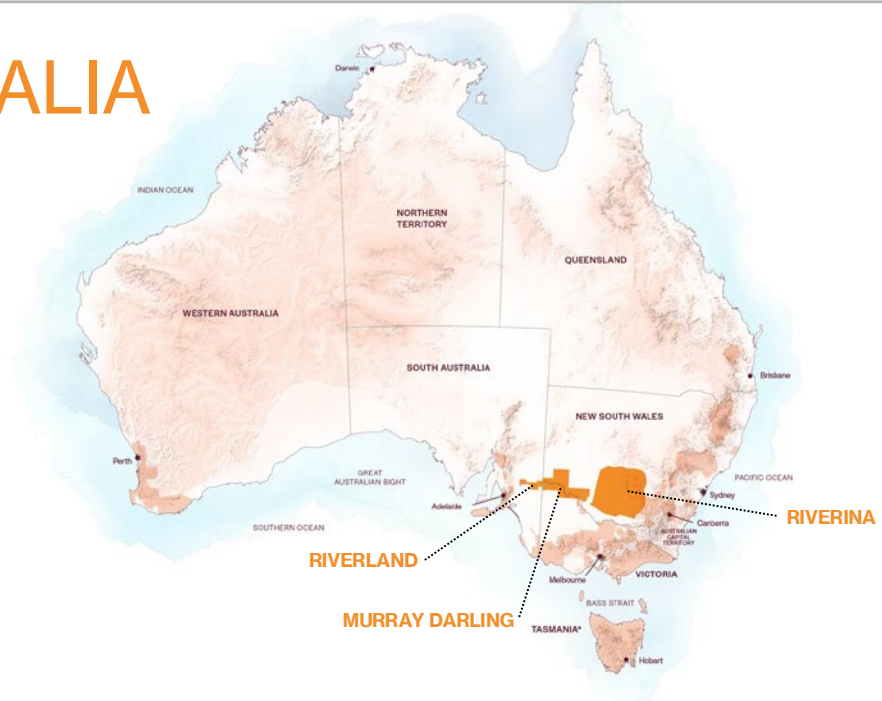


Crafted from grapes grown under vast and diverse climates, across landscapes millions of years in the making, every glass of Australian wine tells a story.

Like those who came before us, our modern growers and makers continue to be passionate, resilient and creative; constantly driven to explore new ways to perfect old techniques. Our community is connected by a mutual respect and shared love of crafting exceptional wine, while protecting the natural wonders for future generations to enjoy. Applying modern thinking to our ancient lands, we take playful experimentation very, very seriously.

So, if you're looking for the taste of adventure, let Australian wine be your compass. Because in every bottle of Australian wine, you'll experience the wonders of Australia – a reminder of the adventure and diversity that defines our culture and our land.

AUSTRALIA





AUSTRALIA'S INLAND POWERHOUSE

- At the heart of Australia's wine scene are Riverland, Riverina and Murray Darling – the nation's production powerhouses.
- Large-scale production in these regions has allowed for great international export success with both white and red varieties.
- Today, the regions are recognised for their contribution to a wider discourse that celebrates ecologically-minded decisions and innovative winemaking practices.

LOOP VIDEO

Now is an appropriate time to play the *Heartland Regions* loop video as you welcome people.

FIRST TASTE – This may be a good opportunity to give everyone a taste of a classic wine from one of the feature regions.

AUSTRALIA'S INLAND POWERHOUSES

Riverland, Riverina and Murray Darling are vast regions at the heart of the Australian wine community. Home to many world-renowned wine brands as well as boutique producers, these regions receive much praise, with large-scale production allowing for international export success. In recent years, there has been an emergence of new brands, an influx of innovative ideas and even some generational changing of the guard. These regions embody the modern Australian wine experience, combining innovative technology and technique with over a century of viticulture expertise.

TODAY WE'LL COVER

Riverland, Riverina and Murray Darling

- Introduction
- History
- Geography
- Notable varieties



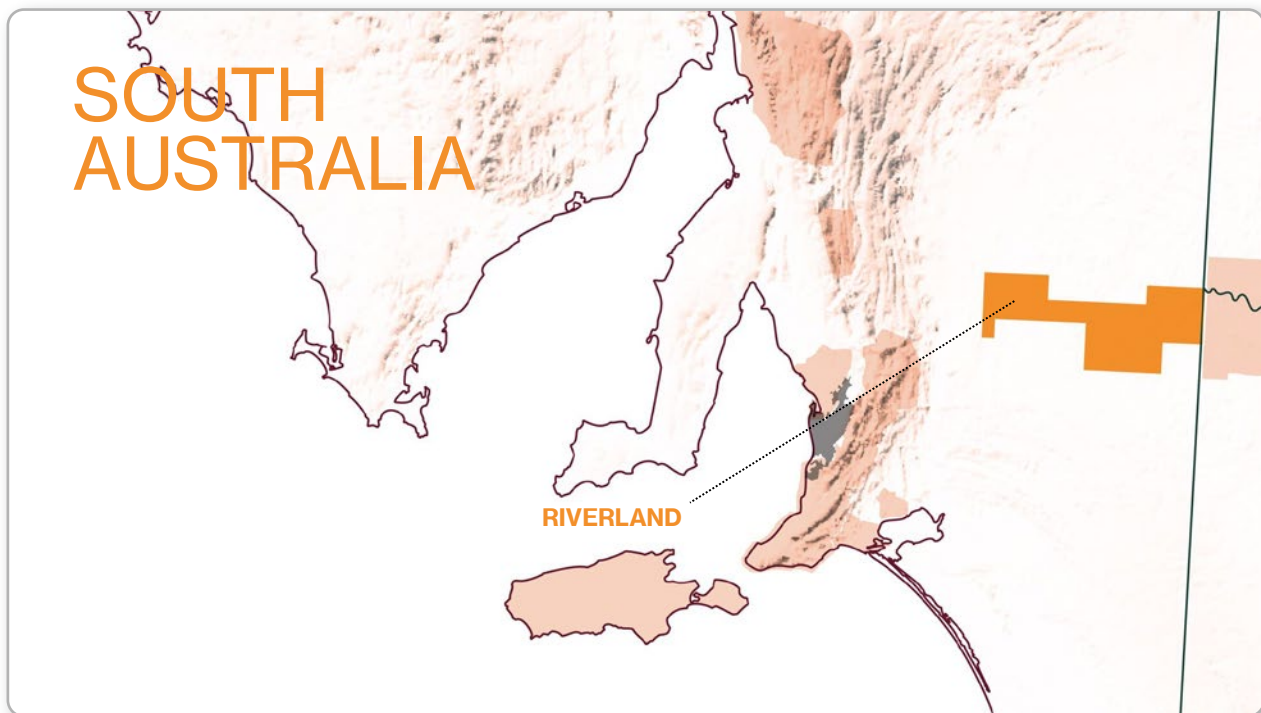
MEET THE REGIONS

Riverland is a wine-producing powerhouse in South Australia, located east of the Barossa Valley and extending for 330km (205mi) along the Murray River. With a continental climate, fruit ripens quickly with its relatively low humidity ensuring vine health and stability, further bolstering the efforts of sustainable viticulture. Riverland is best known for its bountiful Shiraz, Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon.

The eastern cousin of Riverland is Riverina, New South Wales' primary producer of wine, harvesting huge volumes of grapes each year. The region is celebrated for its Mediterranean climate with high evaporation and humidity later in the season. This allows for the growth of botrytis, the 'noble rot' for which it is renowned, facilitating the creation of some of the country's most desired honeyed Semillon.

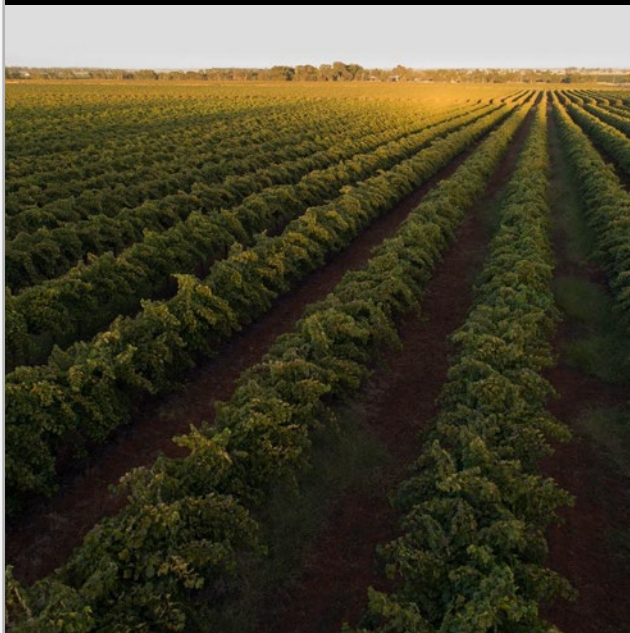
Much like Riverland and Riverina, Victoria's Murray Darling region has witnessed a renaissance of viticulture, visibly combining industry prowess and the soul of boutique wineries to become a culturally rich region. While its Chardonnay receives much praise, the recent developments in alternative varieties have stolen the show. Murray Darling is closely linked with its GI neighbour to the southeast, Swan Hill.

All three regions offer a less travelled but unique and significant wine trail, including quintessentially Australian townships, diverse flora and fauna, and a scenic background of the spectacular Murray River.



RIVERLAND: VOLUME & VARIETY

Ancient red soils from the Murray River, long sunny days and viticultural expertise are the hallmarks of this South Australian wine region. The largest wine hub in Australia, Riverland is a feat of modern innovation, combining cutting-edge technology with time-tested technique and a reverence for natural process. Just two hours' drive northeast of Adelaide, the region reaches from the Murray River to the edge of the Great Australian Outback. Its warm climate has allowed for the development of a vibrant winemaking tradition, providing a third of Australia's national crush with a focus on Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay.



RIVERLAND VOLUME AND VARIETY

- Ancient red soils from the Murray River, long sunny days and viticultural expertise are the hallmarks of this South Australian wine region.
- Just two hours northeast of Adelaide, the region reaches from the iconic Murray River to the edge of the Great Australian Outback.
- As the largest wine hub in Australia, Riverland combines modern innovation with time - tested technique.

Shoulders of giants

Often referred to as the 'backbone' of the Australian wine industry, Riverland is a critical player in the local viticulture scene. Its commitment to the highest-quality yield with a focus on scaled farming over 21,000 hectares of land is unparalleled on Australian soil. This makes it an immensely important GI, providing over 70% of South Australia's annual crush and more than 30% of the nation's.

Murray River resonance

The Murray River is the lifeblood of Riverland, providing precious resources for growers and winemakers. As one of the world's longest and largest river systems, its influence on viticulture in the region cannot be overstated; protection of this significant natural asset is paramount.

Climate ripe for picking

The continental climate, with long sunny days and cool temperate nights, is ideal for fruit ripening, with relatively low humidity ensuring vines stay healthy. This lack of disease pressure has made the region ideal for organic and biodynamic farming. Growers focus on efficient use of irrigation and planting of cover crops to retain soil moisture and assist land regeneration.

A-to-Z variety

Riverland is home to over 80 different grape varieties. Shiraz, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are grown extensively, used both for single-variety wines and in blends.

THE HISTORY OF THE RIVERLAND A PIONEERS DREAM

1830

Traditional owners of Riverland are joined by European settlers.



In the Beginning

The traditional owners of Riverland, home to many sacred cultural sites, are the Erawirung people.

1919

'Soldier Settlement Bill' passed. Many immigrants move to the area, bringing their European farming and vineyard practices.

THE HISTORY OF RIVERLAND: A PIONEER'S DREAM

In the beginning

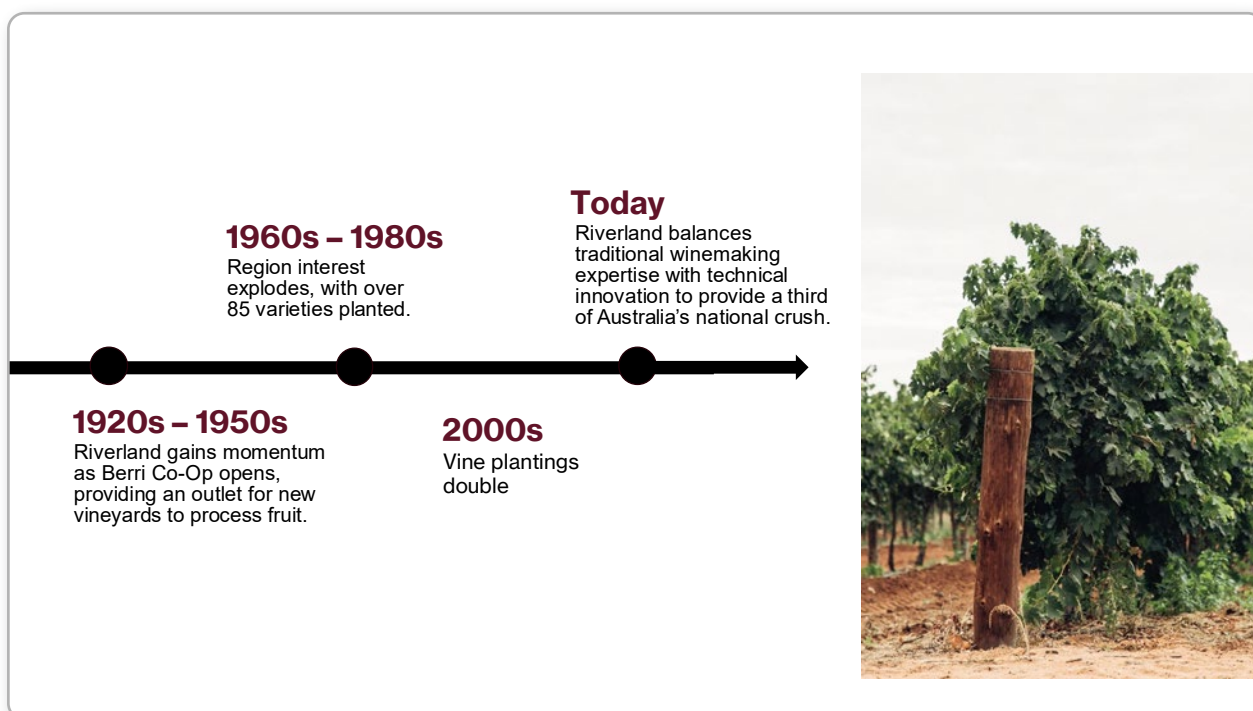
The traditional owners of Riverland are the Erawirung people, also known as the Yirau and Juju. The region is home to many sacred cultural sites, mostly found within Murray River National Park.

1830s

The Erawirung people are joined by Europeans who arrive and settle in South Australia as a free 'non-convict' colony. In the late 1800s, the first irrigation settlement is established in Renmark, a town situated on the banks of the Murray River.

1919

An important year for viticulture as the 'Soldier Settlement Bill' – which set apart land throughout parts of Australia for purchase or lease by returning servicemen – is passed, with many European immigrants choosing Riverland as their home, bringing expertise as farmers, artisans and business people.



1920s–1950s

Riverland's momentum continues to build with the foundation of the Berri Co-Operative Winery and Distillery. One of the first documented vineyards, the co-op was formed to process market grapes grown by its members, used for the production of mostly fortified wines such as Port, Sherry and Brandy.

1960s–1980s

Interest in Riverland explodes with an increase in grape production and export value. European immigrant influences see an expansion of the planting of 85 different grapes, including both traditional and alternative varieties, with a focus on Sultana and Palomino. Powered by the expansion of Australian wines to international audiences, Riverland continues to make wines the world loves to drink.

2000s

Vine planting doubles in response to demand. While the region experiences prosperity in yield and grape usage, a global oversupply of wine-grape fruit and the ongoing issue of water supply present challenges to farmers and innovators.

Today

The region has redefined itself as both an industry stalwart and innovation hub. With new technologies offering greater water efficiency and an increase in organic and biodynamic growing and production, Riverland's understated and intelligent wine community harnesses agricultural expertise and intuitive knowledge to generate some of Australia's most refined warm-climate wines.



GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL

RIVER HARMONY AND REMARKABLE TERROIR

- Generously sized region reaching from Murray River to edges of the outback.
- Continental climate: long sunny days, cooler nights, low annual rainfall.
- Nutrient-rich soils that vary across the landscape.

GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL: RIVER HARMONY & REMARKABLE TERROIR

The Murray River defines the geography of Riverland, providing life, water and precious resources for growers and winemakers. As one of the world's largest, longest and most significant river systems, the Murray has been described as a 'slow-moving serpent', contributing to the region's moniker: "We are winegrowers. We must work in harmony with nature, we can't control it."

Riverland extends between the bends of the Murray River and the edges of the Outback, northeast of Adelaide and roughly 200km (125mi) inland. The GI region is 4,105km² with over 22,000 hectares of vineyard.

Climate

Riverland enjoys a continental climate, resulting in long sunny days, noticeably cooler nights and low annual rainfall. With balmy summers and mild winters, Riverland is an ideal home for growers and grapes. Long sunshine hours ensure fruit ripens fully and low relative humidity results in little or no disease pressures. For white wine grapes, the vintage appears early, kicking off in late January. Red varieties follow shortly after in mid-February, with some holding off until March and April.



Mean January Temperature (MJT)

— 24.3°C (76°F)

MJT refers to the mean temperature of the warmest month.

Growing season rainfall (GSR)

— 145mm (5.7in)

Calculated from October to April in Australia, GSR is a good indication of how much water is available to the vine.

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 1991-2020 averages from the Bureau of Meteorology. GSR is calculated from October to April.



SOIL

Ancient soils range from those in the river valley – sandy loams over clay subsoils – and those on higher ground, consisting of wind-blown sands over lime and clay.

Soil

When the Murray River formed a valley 600,000 years ago, nutrient-rich soil was deposited across the broad delta we now call Riverland. If you stand by the water's edge, you rest on alluvial terraces of mixed sands, silts and clay. This unique combination contributes to the remarkable terroir of the region and its unique expression of wine.

Riverland soils vary significantly across the region. River valley soils, consisting of sandy loams over clay subsoils, produce wine that is generally richer and more full-bodied. The Mallee soils on higher ground, consisting of wind-blown sands over lime and clay layers, offer a little more acidity than their valley counterparts, with vivid fruit tones present in both white and red varieties.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

GRAPEWATCH: THE FUTURE OF WINE TECH

Riverland continues to lead the charge for vine health and monitoring technology systems. Growers in the region are trialling an evolved version of vine-disease service CropWatch, founded in 1980 by scientists at the Loxton Research Centre. The new and improved GrapeWatch features alerts for bunch rots and powdery mildew – two potent effectors of vine health – as well as an automated system that generates alerts when the nearest weather station receives data that signals risk. This marks a new frontier for growers, aiding prevention efforts with revolutionary new technology that ensures high crop yields and exceptional quality wine.



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why do you think Riverland has emerged as one of South Australia's premier wine destinations?
- Has Riverland's warm climate helped or hindered its progress as an Australian wine region?
- Why do you think there is such a diverse range of growers and wine styles? Consider changes in consumer preferences.

TASTE OF RIVERLAND NOTEWORTHY VARIETIES

- Retention of primary fruit character is a top priority
- Fermentation with both cultured and wild yeasts
- Maturation vessels vary, with larger oak formats on the rise
- New generation of innovative winemakers experimenting with low-intervention techniques



TIME TO TASTE – Now is an appropriate time to taste and discuss your selected mix of riverland wines.



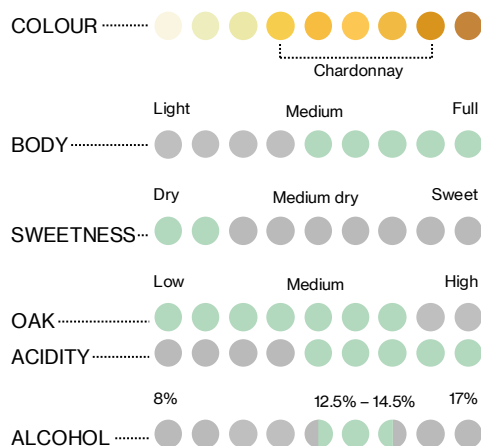
DID YOU KNOW

RIVERLAND GOES VIRTUAL

In 2020, Riverland Wine was the first Australian wine region to launch a completely immersive virtual reality journey, showcasing its spectacular scenery and wine credentials. Named 'Riverland on the Verge', the virtual initiative is accessed via free 3D viewing goggles (ordered through the Riverland Wine website), allowing viewers to dive into its rich cultural and geographical landscape. Virtual travellers can drive their own journey, eating local produce and tasting wines as they explore all 10 cellar doors.

CHARDONNAY

CHARACTERISTICS



TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Peach
- Nectarine
- Apricot
- Melo
- Citrus
- Vanilla

CHARDONNAY

Riverland boasts more Chardonnay plantings than the combined total of any other region in South Australia. Riverland Chardonnay often exhibits vivacious and ripe flavours, with the preference of oak barrels supporting the richness of the wine and adding further complexity to the palate. It's full-flavoured and rich with tropical fruit flavours and a luscious texture.

Noteworthy Riverland Chardonnay producers include:

- 919 Wines
- Kingston Estate
- Oxford Landing
- Mallee Estate

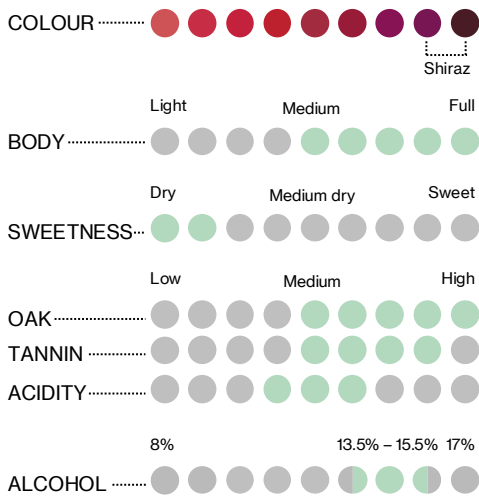


DID YOU KNOW

As the region continues to grow and adapt, some Riverland grape growers and winemakers are exploring new grape varieties. Southern Mediterranean varieties such as Montepulciano, Vermentino and Nero d'Avola are showing real promise.

SHIRAZ

CHARACTERISTICS



TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Dark berries
- Blackberry
- Dark Cherry
- Plum
- Spice
- Pepper

SHIRAZ

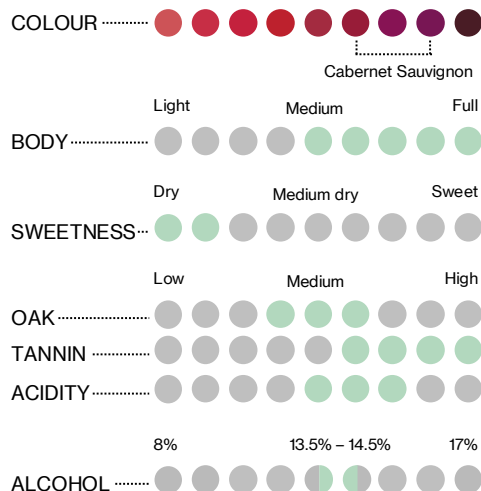
A fair proportion of Australia's Shiraz grapes are used by big-volume producers to make easy-drinking, approachable wine. Much of this fruit is grown in Riverland, whose long-established, warm-climate wineries are primed for full-bodied Shiraz. Shiraz is currently the most significant red variety grown in the region, with the temperate conditions producing deliciously fruity wines filled with bountiful berry flavours.

Noteworthy Riverland Shiraz producers include:

- Sixty eight Roses
- 919 Wines
- Whistling Kite
- Oxford Landing
- Malee Estate
- Angove Family Winemakers
- Yalumba

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

CHARACTERISTICS



TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Dark berries
- Blackberry
- Dark Cherry
- Plum
- Spice
- Pepper

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Used as single-variety wines and in blends, Riverland's Cabernet Sauvignon is usually deep purple with intense flavours of raspberry and blackberry and a rich texture. The region's warm temperatures tend to bring out the richer raspberry characteristics, while in cooler years the overall profile reveals mint and blackcurrant.

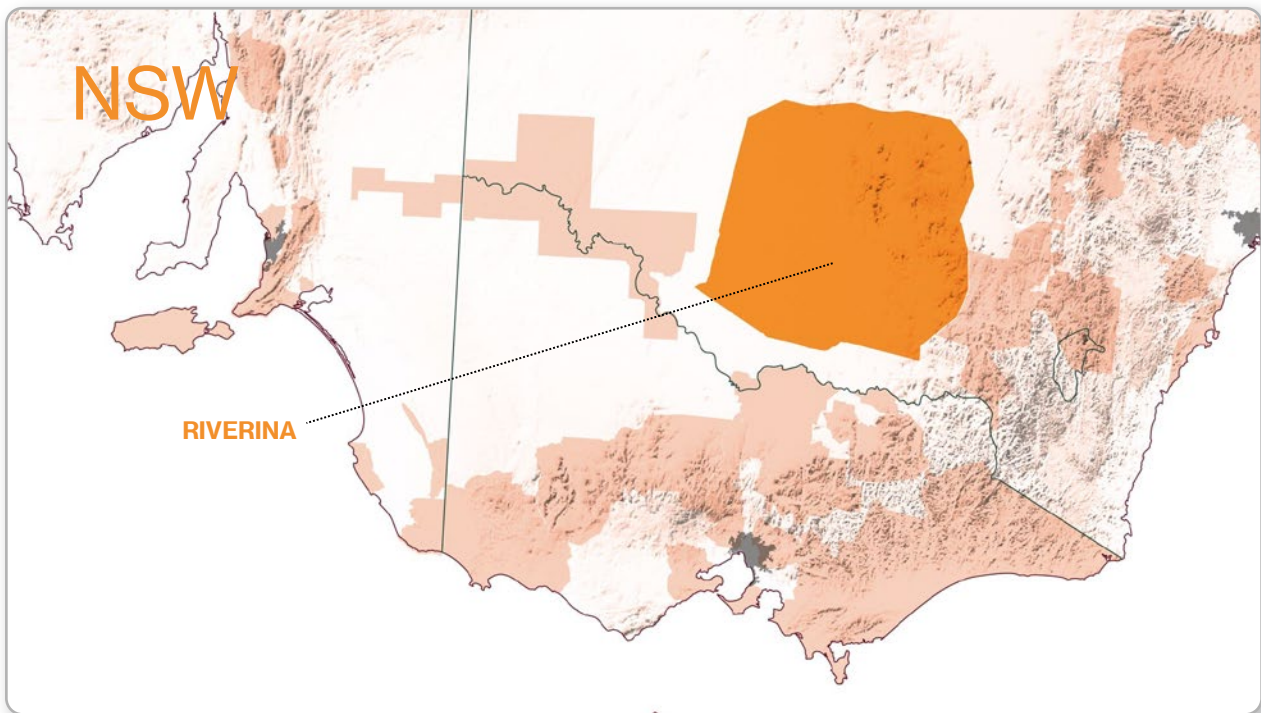
Noteworthy Riverland Cabernet Sauvignon include:

- Malee Estate
- Banrock Station



COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAM

To discover more about Australia's most prominent wines, explore our variety programs at www.australianwinediscovered.com



RIVERINA: WHERE INNOVATION AND TRADITION MEET

As the largest wine-producing region in New South Wales, Riverina is a bastion of the industry, producing some of the country's most well-known and loved wines. Producers in the region are benefiting from a recent renaissance driven by its producers, many boasting a rich Italian heritage including De Bortoli, Calabria Family Wines and the Casella family, whose winery produces the internationally successful Yellow Tail wines.

As with its Mediterranean-climate cousins, the region has employed innovative, technology-driven solutions to deal with increased temperatures and reduced rainfall. The resulting wines are vivacious and compelling, providing noteworthy examples of Chardonnay, Shiraz and Semillon.

Six generations of expertise

The Riverina story begins in 1913 when JJ McWilliam planted the first cuttings in the region. Six generations and 140 years of experience later, Riverina remains community-led with many wine estates run by families whose history in the region dates back to the early 20th century.

Soaring prospects

The region spans across a flat tract of land on the state's southwest plains, with vineyards spread across thousands of hectares. The region's climate, including low relative humidity, ample sunshine and low natural rainfall, allows for the consistent production of grapes assisted by modern drip irrigation. High productivity has allowed for great export success with both whites and reds.



RIVERINA WHERE INNOVATION AND TRADITION MEET

- NSW's largest wine-producing region and home to some of the country's most well-known wine brands.
- Ample sunshine and low humidity allow for consistent grape production across the region's flat plains.
- Growers benefit from new research into heat-resistant varieties and vine stress assessment tech.
- Riverina is renowned for its Botrytis Semillon, a rich, honeyed wine that results from the action of the 'noble rot'.

Climate consideration

Summer temperatures can rise high several times throughout the ripening season. The region benefits from research into hardier, heat-resistant clones and vine-stress assessment technology.

The noble rot

Riverina is particularly celebrated for its Botrytis Semillon, a rich, honeyed wine that is a product of 'noble rot', a benevolent form of the fungus *Botrytis cinerea* that dehydrates the grape and concentrates its nectar. Thanks to this natural phenomenon, Riverina's Botrytis Semillon is sought after worldwide.

THE HISTORY OF THE RIVERINA A CENTURY OF WINE PRESTIGE

1913

J.J. McWilliam plants 50,000 cuttings, pioneering wine trade in the region.

1916 – 1919

Region develops, with prominent wineries set up. New irrigation schemes and dam development allow for viticulture to prosper.

1920s – 1950s

Many Italian immigrants move to the region, expanding the region's Mediterranean varieties.



THE HISTORY OF RIVERINA: A CENTURY OF WINE PRESTIGE

In the beginning

For over 40,000 years, the Riverina region was home to many Indigenous peoples – most notably the Wiradjuri people. The area was colonised by Europeans in the mid-19th century as a pastoral region, providing livestock and wool to markets in Australia.

1913

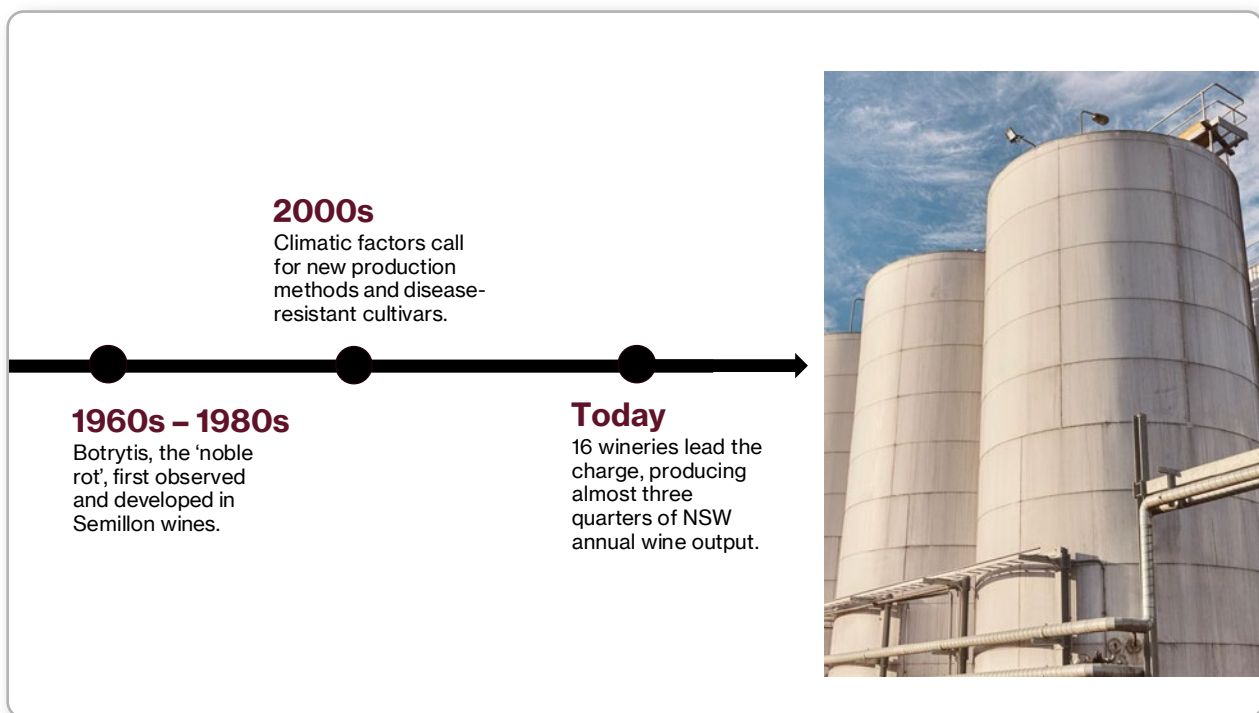
JJ McWilliam carts 50,000 vines to Riverina, pioneering the wine industry in the region. McWilliam and his eldest son plant the cuttings in their Hanwood nursery, irrigating them by carting water from nearby waterways.

1916–1919

The first grapes from McWilliam's vineyard are picked and sent to Junee, near Wagga Wagga, for processing. Following the construction of the Hume Dam and instigation of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme, proper water access and support allow the industry to prosper, attracting growers from all over the world.

1920s–1950s

Many Italian immigrants gravitate towards Riverina after the first and second World Wars. New growers implement techniques and plant varieties inspired by their Mediterranean upbringings as demand for their product evolves into businesses.



1960s–1980s

As the market moves away from traditional fortified wines, the region experiences a boom in demand for premium grape varieties. Early in this period, McWilliam's Hanwood winery notices the presence of Botrytis and develops the sweet white wine styles the region is now famous for.

2000s

Climatic factors encourage growers to explore innovative production methods, allowing for strong export success. The region becomes a key player in national efforts to determine the best disease-resistant grapevine cultivars and a testing ground for new irrigation-efficient technology.

Today

Riverina's 16 wineries represent a modest meeting of traditional technique and contemporary innovation. Producing almost three-quarters of New South Wales' annual wine output, it balances the innovation of the industry with the care and precision of boutique winemaking efforts.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

THE YELLOW TAIL LEGACY

The iconically Australian Yellow Tail wine has called Riverina home since its inception in 2000. Considered a 'critter wine', the endearing term used to describe affordable Aussie wines with animals on their label (penguins, turtles and, in this case, yellow-footed rock wallabies), Yellow Tail became immensely popular in the international market, selling over one million bottles in its first 13 months of US export.

Despite international success, Yellow Tail's legacy is a humble one. The founders of Yellow Tail's parent company, Casella Family Brands, Filippo and Maria Casella, arrived in Riverina in 1957. Immigrating from Sicily after World War II, they purchased a farm on which they hoped to build a winery. Their resulting estate would go on to produce over one billion bottles of wine, becoming synonymous with the success and growth of the Riverina wine region.



FUN FACT

To keep up with its rapid growth, the Casella winery installed the world's fastest wine-bottling line, capable of processing 36,000 bottles per hour.



GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL

ANCIENT PLAINS AND NOT MUCH RAIN

- Located on a flat tract of land in NSW's southwest plains, centred on Griffith.
- Mediterranean climate sees high evaporation, low humidity and plenty of sunshine in summer.
- Highly variable alluvial soil, deposited from the Murray and Darling rivers.

GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL: ANCIENT PLAINS AND NOT MUCH RAIN

Geography

Riverina is characterised by its flat plains, warm Mediterranean climate and access to both the Murray and Darling rivers. It's located on a flat tract of land in New South Wales' southwest plains and is centred on the city of Griffith. The largest wine region in New South Wales, Riverina has over 20,000 hectares of vineyards with a GI of 77,974km², roughly one-third the size of the entire Victorian state.



Climate

The region's Mediterranean climate sees high evaporation, low relative humidity and ample sunshine in summer. It experiences high growing-season temperatures, with autumn conditions favouring the onset and spread of aforementioned 'noble rot'. Higher humidity later in the season allows Botrytis development to occur after the picking of most red and white varieties. Given the region's low rainfall, grapes can only be grown here economically with irrigation.

Mean January temperature

— 26°C (79°F)

Growing season rainfall

— 230mm (9in)



SOIL

Deposited by ancient streams, Riverina has variable alluvial soils embedded with sands, gravel and clay.

Soil

Deposited by the action of ancient streams, the Riverina plains are the descendants of the Great Dividing Range. As a result, the highly variable alluvial soils are embedded with sands, gravel and clay. The main soil type of Riverina is red-brown earth. It has a loamy surface horizon 10–35cm deep and passes abruptly to a reddish-brown clay which contains lime at a depth of about 70cm. Many of these also contain limestone rubble. It is on these soils that the majority of vines are planted.

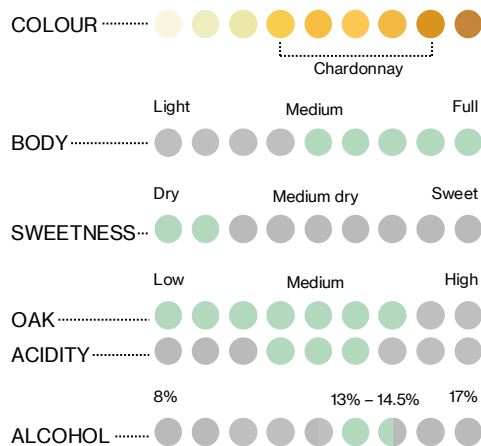
TASTE OF RIVERINA NOTEWORTHY VARIETIES



TIME TO TASTE – Now is an appropriate time to taste and discuss your selected mix of Riverina wines.

CHARDONNAY

CHARACTERISTICS



TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Peach
- Apricot
- Melo
- Pineapple
- Toast
- Vanilla

CHARDONNAY

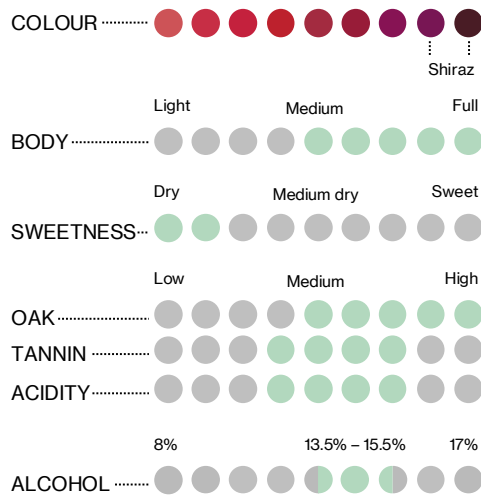
Typically full-flavoured and affordable, Riverland Chardonnay is ideal to enjoy with food. Judicious use of oak produces a wine of pleasant varietal flavour, weight and style. Chardonnay is also blended with other white varieties.

Noteworthy Riverina Chardonnay producers include:

- Nugan Estate
- De Bortoli
- Yarran
- Sans Pareil
- Lilly Pilly Estate
- Yellow Tail

SHIRAZ

CHARACTERISTICS



TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Dark berries
- Blackberry
- Dark Cherry
- Plum
- Spice
- Pepper

SHIRAZ

While cool-climate Shiraz often receives the limelight, the variety favours moderate to warm climates. Riverina is the perfect match for Australia's number-one wine grape, as its fruit reaps the benefits of warm, sunny days, delivering wine with a bold upfront flavour kick, juicy jammy fruits and seamless texture from ripe tannins.

Noteworthy Riverina Shiraz producers include:

- Nugan Estate
- Dee Vine Estate
- De Bortoli
- Sans Pareil
- Yellow Tail

BOTRYTIS SEMILLON

CHARACTERISTICS

COLOUR ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Botrytis Semillon

BODY ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Light

Medium

Full

SWEETNESS... ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Dry

Medium dry

Sweet

OAK ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

Low

Medium

High

ACIDITY ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

ALCOHOL ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

8%

9.5%

11%

17%



TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Dried apricot
- Apricot nectar
- Peach
- Citrus
- Marmalade
- Mango

BOTRYTIS SEMILLON

This rich, honeyed wine is a product of 'noble rot', a benevolent form of the fungus *Botrytis cinerea* that dehydrates the grapes and concentrates their sweetness. Along with late-harvest Riesling, it's one of Australia's most celebrated and successful sweet wine styles.

With its foggy, humid mornings and warm, still afternoons, Riverina has ideal weather conditions for the spread of noble rot. Botrytis occurs best in humid conditions, including the warm region of Riverina, and a number of these wines are highly sought after globally.

Riverina Botrytis Semillon is a gloriously sweet, opulent and complex dessert wine with impressive intensity and length, and a refreshing citrus lift. It is pale golden in colour with aromas of dried apricot, marmalade, honey and crème brûlée, and flavours of stone fruits and citrus. Oak ageing can lend the wine nutty, vanilla and biscuit characters. These rich, elegant wines will generally benefit from ageing for five to 10 years.

Noteworthy Riverina Botrytis Semillon producers include:

- De Bortoli 'Noble One'
- R.Paulazzo Sweet 'F-1366'
- Yarran Wines
- Nugan Estate 'Cookoothama'
- De Bortoli 'Black Noble'



ADVANCED NOTES

NOBLE ROT: FRIEND AND FOE

Botrytis cinerea is one of several different fungi that can cause bunch rot in grapevines. It's a weather-driven disease that can cause significant loss of grape yield and quality. Grapegrowers use a range of management measures to help prevent botrytis. However, there are times when growers encourage noble rot to occur – specifically when they wish to create sweeter, more complex dessert wines. Riverina's humid mornings and warm, sunny afternoons are ideal conditions for the helpful fungus *Botrytis*. An ideal growing season involves long warm days and summer rain, which creates high humidity levels and initiates the *Botrytis*, followed by drier conditions in early autumn, which allows the grapes to dry out while the *Botrytis* develops. The grapes are carefully monitored, and once the optimum flavour and sweetness levels have been reached, picking by hand begins – typically in May, though this can vary depending on weather. In the winery, the juice is fermented in oak barrels or stainless steel tanks (or a combination of both) for several months, as the high sugar concentration prolongs fermentation. The wine can be matured in new and/or seasoned oak barrels for up to 12 months. It may be blended with a small portion of unoaked wine after maturation to add freshness and balance before being bottled, usually under screw cap.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

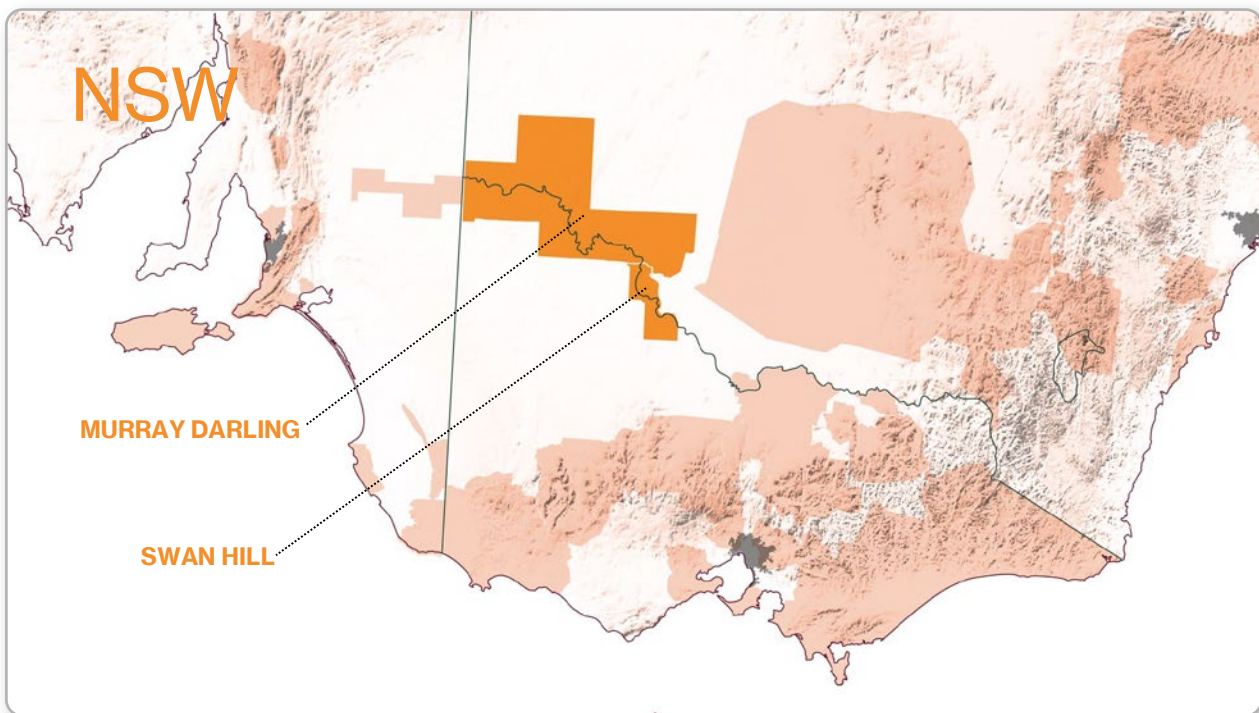
DE BORTOLI WINES: AUSTRALIA'S BOTRYTIS PIONEER

One of Australia's most awarded wines is also one of its sweetest: the internationally acclaimed 'Noble One' *Botrytis* Semillon from De Bortoli Wines in Riverina. It was first produced at the family winery in 1982, when no one else in Australia was making such a style. But Darren De Bortoli was convinced it would work. His pioneering spirit has been handed down through the family. Darren's grandfather Vittorio arrived in Australia from northern Italy in 1924 with almost nothing to his name. He worked hard to carve out a life for himself and his family, and built a reputation as a quality winemaker at a time when table wines were still a rarity. His son Deen learned the ropes and began expanding and modernising the winery. He focused on the new wine styles that were capturing the imagination of emerging wine consumers. Sharing his determination, it was Deen's son Darren who took De Bortoli to the very top of the wine world. One of his most ambitious ideas was to produce an Australian version of the *botrytis*-affected wines from France. It was the early 1980s and many people thought he was crazy for even trying. But he quickly turned doubters into believers with De Bortoli's great 'Noble One' *Botrytis* Semillon. It was soon recognised as one of Australia's great wines and was named 'Best *Botrytis* Wine' at the International Wine & Spirit Competition in 1985. More than three decades on, it has set the benchmark for Australian dessert winemaking and remains one of the most awarded Australian wines in history.



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why is Riverina Semillon so revered?
- How does the region's warm climate influence practices in the vineyard and winery?
- Why do you think Riverina has become a hub for experimental and innovative winemakers?



MURRAY DARLING: AUSSIE INDUSTRY DARLING

Straddling the Murray River in northwest Victoria and western New South Wales, the Murray Darling is a vast region. Combined with Swan Hill immediately to the southeast, it is the third-largest wine-growing region in Australia after Riverland and Riverina. Much like its other heartland cousins, the Murray Darling has experienced a resurgence of wine production, combining structural prowess and boutique spirit to become a deeply cultural and economically prosperous region.



MURRAY DARLING AUSSIE INDUSTRY DARLING

- The region is a viticulture hub, combining production prowess with boutique spirit.
- Marked by the presence of the Murray River, the region's geography consists of mostly flat semi-arid plains.
- New technologies for irrigation systems and drought-resistant grapes are some of the techniques used by growers to manage changes in climate.
- The region is closely linked with Swan Hill, a fully independent wine region with its own GI.

Warm-climate considerations

Murray Darling's climate continues to shift, with increasingly warm days and negligible growing-season rainfall. Instead of relying on seasonal input, growers have sought innovative solutions, such as new technologies for irrigation systems and the planting of alternative varieties from the Mediterranean.

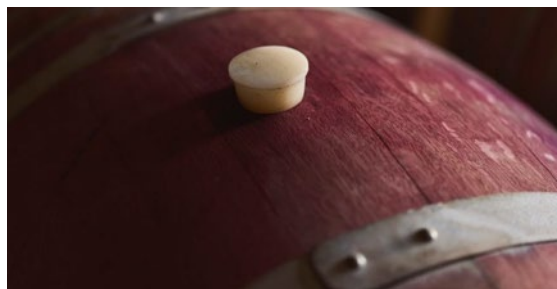
Culture meets creativity

Its easy-going atmosphere and creative community have made the Murray Darling region a holiday destination, welcoming guests with a growing list of vibrant local produce as well as premium and alternative drops. The region hosts annual food and wine festivals, including the popular Jazz Food & Wine Festival in November and the Swan Hill Region Food & Wine Festival in March.

Producer hub at Swan Hill

Swan Hill is a modest east Australian wine region that borders the Murray River, straddling the line between Victoria and New South Wales. It is considered a fully independent wine region with its own GI, however it is often grouped with the larger Murray Darling region to its north-west. Similar to its sister region, Swan Hill benefits from a warm climate and its accompanying bounty of harvest, focusing on smooth Shiraz, flavoursome Chardonnay as well as heat-tolerant varieties such as Vermentino and Durif.

THE HISTORY OF THE MURRAY DARLING FROM QUANTITY TO QUALITY



1888

First vines planted
in region

1920s – 1940s

New irrigation efforts allow
for pioneer scheme
success. Returned soldiers
from WW1 bolster the
growing wine industry.

THE HISTORY OF MURRAY DARLING: NATURE & NURTURE

In the beginning

Distinct groups of Indigenous Australians inhabited the Murray Darling up to 45,000 years ago. The Naualko and Kurnu peoples lived in the uppermost catchment while the largest group, the Barkindji, inhabited stretches from Wentworth to Bourke.

?

DID YOU KNOW

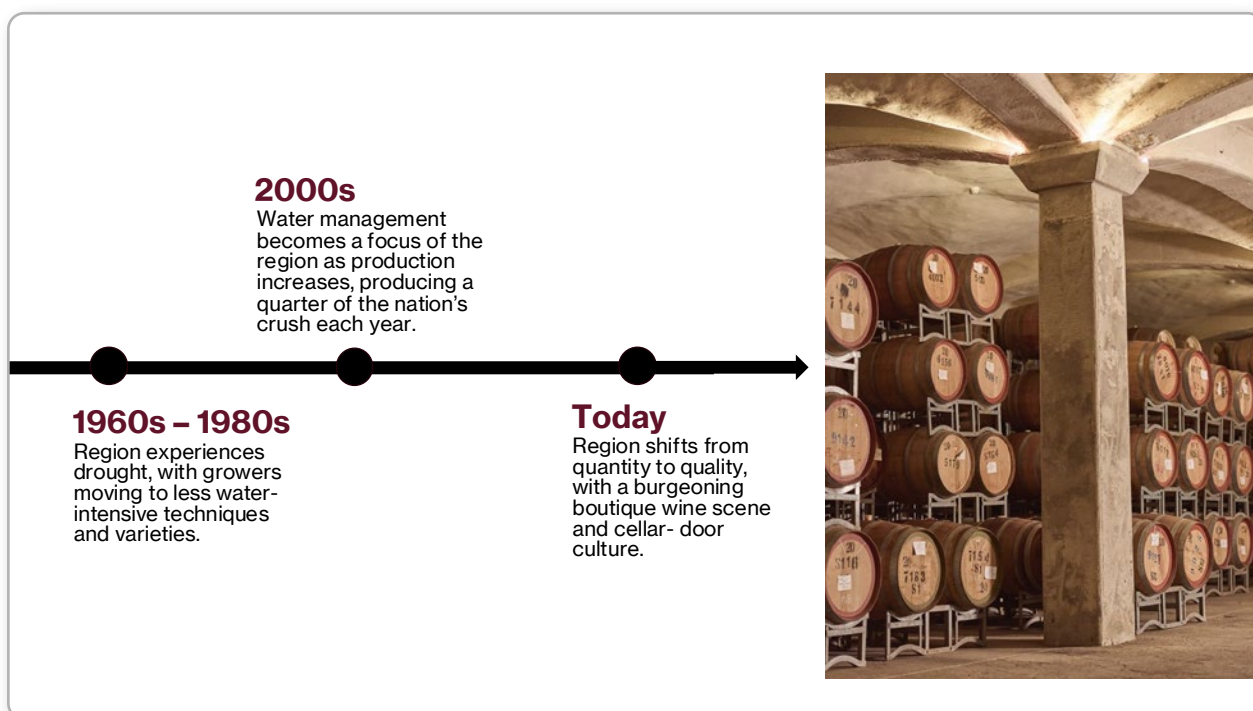
The Barkindji name for the Darling River is Barka – so its traditional custodians, the Barkindji means people of the Barka (the river).

1888

The first vines are planted in the Murray Darling region. Irrigated crops provide formidable opportunity, but salinity and other environment-based complications cause pioneer schemes to fail.

1920–1940s

Following the foundation of the 'River Murray Waters Agreement', a 13-year effort to develop Commonwealth guidelines around the sharing of the Murray River, construction of storages, locks and weirs begins. Returned soldier settlements bolster the region, providing helping hands for its burgeoning wine industry.



1960–1980s

The region experiences several droughts, providing challenges for growers. Winemakers turn to innovative techniques and less water-intensive varieties to survive. This, in part, catalyses the region's revolution, shifting from large-scale production of traditional varieties to smaller-scale modern Mediterranean alternatives.

2000s

The Murray Darling emerges as an industry powerhouse, responsible for a quarter of all wine produced nationally each year. After the protracted drought of the century prior, public awareness shifts to the need to better manage natural resources around the Murray Darling. Water management policy takes centre stage in 2010, when the Murray–Darling Basin Plan comes into action, designed to mitigate the effects of historic overallocation of water resources.

Today

The region's focus has shifted from quantity to high-quality drops with the reinvigoration of thoughtful wineries throughout the region. Boutique cellar doors, vigneron and a thriving tourist scene have created a lively and enticing wine region that stands by its values of sustainability and generosity.



COMPLEMENTARY READING

THE STORY OF STEFANO DI PIERO

Since the arrival of celebrity chef Stefano de Piero in the 1990s, Mildura – the regional town at the heart of the Murray Darling – has become a food destination worth travelling for. De Piero migrated from Treviso, near Venice, to Australia in 1974, settling in Mildura 15 years later. The restaurant he opened, Stefano's Cantina, was built in the original cellars of Mildura's historic Grand Hotel in 1991. Relying mostly on memory (de Piero was a public servant for most of the 1980s), he channelled the ethos of his Italian home. What started as a very simple affair – bare wooden tables, a blackboard menu, rustic Italian fare – evolved into a revered dining establishment that would define the gastronomic experience of the region. His recipes, seasonal and refined, ranged from grilled asparagus with Taleggio in spring to timeless ricotta gnocchi and tortellini with prosciutto and chicken. More than 25 years later, Stefano's in Mildura offers a five-course dinner and reduced lunch menu available most of the week.



GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND SOIL

THE TALE OF TWO REGIONS

- Geography marked by presence of Murray River – mostly flat semi-arid plains in both Murray Darling and Swan Hill regions.
- Hot-climate region with relatively low annual rainfall and negligible disease pressures.
- Soils ranging from brown to red-brown loamy sand, sandy loam or loam.

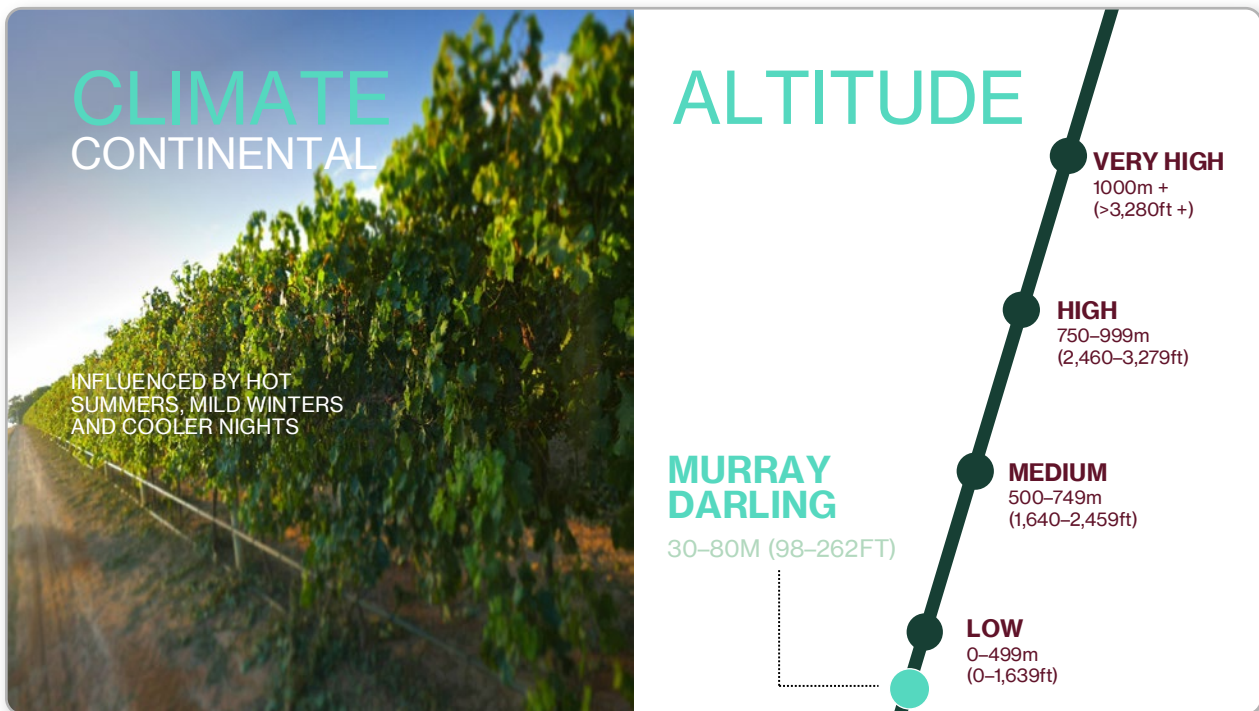
GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE & SOIL: A TALE OF TWO REGIONS

Geography

The presence of the Murray River is a marked feature of both the Murray Darling and Swan Hill regions. Drought is a considerable challenge for growers, so having access to the rivers, when they aren't dry, is critical to local viticulture.

The two regions share similar geography – that is, mostly flat semi-arid plains, feeding off the Murray River. The Murray Darling region is situated between northwestern Victoria and southwestern New South Wales, and although the distance from end to end is more than 350km (217mi), the climate throughout remains relatively constant. The Murray Darling GI is 25,578km² with more than 16,000 hectares of vineyards, roughly six times that of NSW's renowned Hunter Valley GI.

Straddling both sides of the Murray River, at the heart of a fertile agricultural region between Mildura and Echuca, is the Swan Hill region. The GI here is 2,741 km² in size with over 2,000 hectares of vineyards.



Climate

Despite the size of the Murray Darling GI, the climate throughout is virtually identical. It is hot, with long sunshine hours, low humidity and negligible growing season rainfall, making irrigation essential. The continental influence is strong, with high shifts in diurnal temperature ranges, but these shifts are insufficient to make spring frosts a problem. Disease pressure remains low throughout the year.

Swan Hill is an undeniably hot region with a slightly higher annual rainfall than the Murray Darling. This gives Shiraz, for example, a budburst date around five days later, a flowering date 11 days later and a ripening period eight days later. Some varieties of wine grapes in the Swan Hill region have a delayed harvest of up to two weeks compared to the Murray Darling.

Mean January temperature:

— 25.5°C (88°F)

Growing season rainfall:

— 159mm (6.3in)



SOIL

Soil in both regions supports vigorous growth and wine health. Murray Darling has mostly calcareous earth with neutral to moderately alkaline properties. Swan Hill enjoys soil structures of limestone, marine sands and clay with neutral to alkaline properties.

Soil

The soil is unique to the Murray River system and is known technically as calcareous earth, ranging from brown to red-brown loamy sand, sandy loam or loam. The surface is neutral to moderately alkaline, with increasing alkalinity at depth as textures become more clayey and calcareous. Overall, the soil supports vigorous growth and high grape yields.

Like the Murray Darling region, Swan Hill's flat area straddles the Murray River and has red-brown loamy sand, which ranges in pH from neutral to alkaline. This is a relatively arid region with soil structures of limestone, marine sands and clays associated with the Miocene sea overlain by lacustrine (from a lake), fluvial (from a river) and aeolian (wind-borne) deposits, which have built up over cycles of stable and unstable periods of history. Some of these structures are more than 90m deep.

TASTE OF MURRAY DARLING NOTEWORTHY VARIETIES



TIME TO TASTE – Now is an appropriate time to taste and discuss your selected mix of Murray Darling wines.

ALTERNATIVE VARIETIES

Mediterranean varieties like Pinot Grigio are perfectly suited to a warm climate, with a growing list of wineries producing alternative varieties such as Nero d'Avola.



VERMENTINO
Medium-bodied wine



FIANO
Medium-bodied wine



SANGIOVESE
Medium-bodied red



BARBERA
Full-bodied red



NERO D'AVOLA
Full-bodied red

ALTERNATIVE VARIETIES

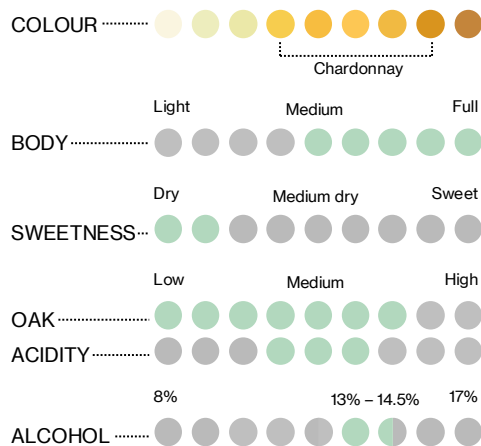
Although the Murray areas are a major source of affordable wines, several wineries are striking success by planting varieties from across the Mediterranean that are perfectly suited to the warm climate of Murray Darling. Nero D'Avola is one such variety – first imported to the region in 2001, there are now more than 55 vineyard plantings across Australia. Its success is attributed to its versatility and love of warm, dry conditions, pairing perfectly with rich, meaty foods or tomato-based dishes. Expect heady, cherry and berry red with ageing potential, generous tannins and a savoury edge.

Noteworthy producers include:

- Trentham Estate
- Monak Wines

CHARDONNAY

CHARACTERISTICS



TYPICAL FLAVOURS

- Rip peach
- Melon
- Pineapple
- Vanilla
- Toast

CHARDONNAY

An important variety for the region, renowned for producing crowd-pleasing wines with tropical fruit and citrus flavours. Styles have shifted over the years, from big, oaky and buttery Chardonnays to wines that have a fruity softness and generosity with a lighter, more aromatic style. Close by, Swan Hill Chardonnays are renowned for their soft, melony, peachy, easy-to-drink style and are designed to be consumed generally within two years of vintage or soon afterwards.

Noteworthy Murray Darling Chardonnay producers include:

- Trentham Estate
- Deakin Estate
- Zilzie Estate



SUGGESTED DISCUSSION POINT

- How does the topography of the Murray River influence the expression of wine in the region?
- What commonalities do the Murray Darling and Swan Hill GIs share? What sets them apart?
- How has the shift from traditional to alternative varieties shaped the wine landscape of Murray Darling?

MURRAY DARLING RENAISSANCE IN AUSTRALIA'S HEARTLAND REGION

Riverland, Riverina and Murray Darling are powerhouses of industry, renowned for their production prowess and export success. Their story goes beyond volume, with a growing number of premium producers and alternative varieties adding diversity to the landscape.



RENAISSANCE IN AUSTRALIA'S HEARTLAND REGIONS

Riverland, Riverina and Murray Darling are three progressive and important regions for Australia's wine industry. They represent the burgeoning talent of new wine producers whose innovative approach to managing changing climate results in aspirational wines with alternative characteristics and premium taste.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Riverland is South Australia's wine-producing powerhouse, home to many of the state's premium wineries and cellar doors.
 - Its continental climate allows many varieties to thrive, notably Chardonnay, Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon.
 - The presence of the Murray River defines the geography of the area, creating legendary soil that contributes to the region's unique expression of wine.
 - Riverland has become a hub for new wine tech, allowing for the promotion of vine health and consistently dependable yields.
- Riverina is the largest wine-producing region in New South Wales, renowned for over a century of premium wine expertise and prominent varieties of grapes.
 - The vibrant and nutrient-dense soils of the region create some of the country's most well-known wines with a focus on Chardonnay, Shiraz and Semillon.
 - Riverina's humid mornings and warm, sunny afternoons are ideal conditions for the helpful Botrytis, the 'noble rot'. By dehydrating the grape and concentrating its nectar, Botrytis creates a rich, honeyed Semillon, revered worldwide.
- The Murray Darling, and Swan Hill to its southeast, are two of Victoria's largest wine-growing regions.
 - Like its warm-weather cousins, the region has experienced a renaissance in wine tradition with a focus on new technologies, sustainable fruit varieties and surrounding community culture.
 - Nearby waterways deposit fertile and unique soil primed for vine planting and vigorous growth.
 - Classic French varieties are being replaced by Italian grapes, such as Nero d'Avola and Vermentino, whose late-ripening suits a warmer climate.

Suggested timings

This program is designed to be taught in one to two hours. How long you spend on each topic – or whether you cover it at all – will depend on your attendees as well as time allocation. Below are two different examples of how you may wish to divide your time.

ONE-HOUR CLASS

Topic	Time
Welcome and introduction	5 mins
Riverland introduction, geography and noteworthy varieties (including tasting)	20 mins
Riverina introduction, geography and noteworthy varieties (including tasting)	20 mins
Murray Darling introduction, geography and noteworthy varieties (including tasting)	15 mins

TWO-HOUR CLASS

Topic	Time
Welcome and introduction	10 mins
Riverland introduction, history and geography	15 mins
Riverland noteworthy varieties (including tasting)	20 mins
Riverina introduction, history and geography	15 mins
Riverina noteworthy varieties (including tasting)	20 mins
Murray Darling introduction, history and geography	15 mins
Murray Darling noteworthy varieties (including tasting)	20 mins
Summary and close	5 mins

SUGGESTED WINES TO TASTE

These are just suggestions – you can select whichever wines best suit your tasting and audience. Wines may or may not be available in your area.

- Delinquent 'Screaming Betty' Riverland Vermentino
- Malee Estate Riverland Chardonnay
- 919 Wines Reserve Organic Riverland Shiraz
- Banrock Station Riverland Cabernet Sauvignon
- Nugan Estate 'Third Generation' South Eastern Australia Chardonnay
- Nugan Estate 'Scruffy's' Riverina Shiraz
- De Bortoli 'Noble One' Riverina Botrytis Semillon
- Deakin Estate Murray Darling Chardonnay
- Trentham Estate 'The Family' Murray Darling Nero d'Avola



Australian
Wine

THANK YOU

AUSTRALIAN WINE DISCOVERED