



JAMES HALLIDAY

**T**he scourge of phylloxera laid waste to the vineyards of Europe, great and humble, in the mid 19th century and was an unmitigated disaster for France. But it has never affected the vineyards of South Australia, and we have been left with a priceless legacy: shiraz planted every decade since 1840.

The centre of shiraz plantings in South Australia is the zone of Barossa, its regions of the Barossa Valley and Eden Valley, and the subregion of High Eden. Simply because of the great number of vineyards (an ambiguity inherent in that word which is for another day) the vignerons of the Barossa promulgated a charter covering the use of words to describe the age of a given planting. It runs thus: Old Vines as 35+ years old, Survivor Vines (70+ years), Centenarian Vines (100+ years) and Ancestor Vines (125+ years).

There is no part of the world that could adopt such a charter because there'd be no meaningful content once you passed 70 years, and not much past 35 years. For there's an asp lurking for those seeking to buy (or establish over painfully slow years) old vines. The only sure way to prevent phylloxera attack is to graft the vine on American rootstock, itself immune to attack. But the asp is that grafted vines are slowly subject to show virus infection, limiting the productivity of the vine once it passes 30-40 years.

Which is a roundabout way of getting to Maverick Wines, a Barossa winery established by vigneron Ronald Brown in 2004 with a dowry of exceptional value. There are "only" three estate vineyards, the jewel being Trial Hill in the Eden Valley, due to the scenic beauty of its 8ha, its biodynamic qualification, and its 1.6ha of Old Vines. Barossa Ridge is small (4ha, of which 0.8ha is Old Vine shiraz). The largest is the 18ha Ahrens Creek, with 3ha of Ancestor Vines.

2017 MAVERICK WINES THE MAVERICK BAROSSA SHIRAZ CABERNET SAUVIGNON  
A blend of two barriques of shiraz, one barrique of cabernet sauvignon. Open top fermented, matured for 22 months. A delicious wine with harmonious cassis fruit and superfine tannins, balanced and long. 13% alc, Diam  
**96 points, drink to 2047, \$120**

2017 MAVERICK WINES AHRENS' CREEK BAROSSA VALLEY SHIRAZ  
The Ahrens Creek vineyard was planted in the 1870s by the Lehmann family. The grapes for this wine were hand-picked, open-fermented, and matured for 22 months in French oak. The quality of the wine is awesome, its intensity, focus and length all of the highest quality. 14% alc, Diam  
**98 points, drink to 2047, \$300**

2017 MAVERICK WINES TRIAL HILL EDEN VALLEY SHIRAZ  
In the Trial Hill organic vineyard, everything is done by hand if possible. The freshness of this shiraz is such that it might coast through 40-50 years. There is a shimmering red fruit heart to the wine, and very fine tannins. 14% alc, Diam  
**97 points, drink to 2050, \$120**

