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Beached in Brazil, but Never Far from the Vine

...Winemaker Peter Fraser earned his stripes at Aussie top dog St. Hallett's wines in Barossa Valley and then Normans Wines. He confessed to me that 'winemaking is the easy part. Getting it right in the vineyard is what takes the work.' (His hands-on attitude extends to personal hobbies such as surfing and raising his own cattle).

What struck me about Peter's wines were their depth and intensity coupled with finesse. These aren't in-your-face, extracted Aussie fruit bombs; they express the temperate climate of maritime-influenced McLaren Vale. Less than an hour's drive from the city of Adelaide, the McLaren Vale wine-growing region is bordered by the Gulf of St. Vincent and its nearby beaches.

From white to rosé and red, Yangarra's wines are well-priced, well-crafted and well worth it.

Tasting Notes:

90 Yangarra, McLaren Vale (Australia), Chardonnay 2006: I admit it, I'm a Chardonnay lover. From big and lush to crisp and taut, if they're well-crafted, I'm the first one holding out my glass. One of the hottest wine trends right now is unoaked Chardonnay like this version from Yangarra. Fruit is the keyword, not oak. Mineral-laden with grapefruit and apple aromas, this white is refreshing. But there's much more behind that smiling face. Winemaker Peter Fraser keeps the wine on lees in the tank to gain a lush layer of flavor and textural complexity. His attention to detail has paid off.

89 Yangarra, McLaren Vale (Australia), Rosé 2006: Dry and decadent, this is a serious pink but also seriously fun to sip. A blend of Grenache and Shiraz, it's spicy, deep and packed with pep. The bright acidity allows it to pair well with whatever is on your plate. Summer wine doesn't speak any louder than this.

93 Yangarra, McLaren Vale (Australia), Old Vine Grenache 2005: One of the best expressions of pure Grenache I've tasted in the past several years. You could just get lost in the smell alone. Stick your nose in the glass and let the myriad scents take you away. Licorice, cinnamon, black cherry, earth and pomegranate. Delicious. But it's the texture that really tempts. Ultra smooth and plush but not overpowering.

- Leslie Sbrocco, July 2007