

Single Sites

BALHANNAH VINEYARD

The spark that ignited the Single Vineyard project for Shaw + Smith began with the Balhannah Vineyard. Early on, the Shaw + Smith team recognized it as an exceptional site for Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and later Gamay, as well as, undeniably, Shiraz. It wasn't just their confidence in the vineyard itself but its distinct expression of the Adelaide Hills that demanded it be shared with the world.

Situated between 340-380 meters above sea level, the vineyard surrounds the winery and tasting rooms. Its soils are a mix of free-draining sandy loams over red clay, scattered with ironstone, chunks of quartzite, and shale. Of the total plantings in the Balhannah Vineyard, approximately 8.5 hectares are dedicated to Shiraz, with Block 2 being the cornerstone of Shiraz production.

The mix of clones includes historic ones such as the Best's clone and SAVII 17, alongside newer plantings like 470, 2626, and 1654. Viticulturist Murray Leake varies his approach depending on the clone and block. For example, early defoliation techniques are used in Block 2 before flowering, to reduce bunch and berry size, which intensifies berry flavour. In contrast, lateral plucking is applied to clones like 470 and 1654, promoting early sun exposure without compromising their naturally small bunch size.

LENSWOOD VINEYARD

The Lenswood Vineyard, with its elevation of 455–500 meters above sea level, its higher rainfall (around 1200mm per year) and exposure to cool winds, is an ideal location for the single-site Chardonnay and Pinot Noir bottlings. The soils are a mix of brown sandy loams over red clay, with crumbly shale intermixed throughout.

The heart of east-facing Blocks 3 and 4 is what defines the Lenswood Chardonnay bottling. These blocks feature old vine material, wider spaced rows, and spongy ground underfoot, which minimizes compaction and fosters microbial activity, promoting optimal plant health. The canopy is kept fairly open to allow cooling breezes to pass through while providing enough shade to protect the fruit. Murray takes great care in determining viable cropping levels. To optimize vine density, they employ layering techniques, burying a cane which forms a new vine, while still connected to the parent plant.

The south-facing Block 1, first planted in 1999, is the source of the single-site Pinot Noir, predominantly featuring the revered 114 clone. This clone is celebrated for its perfumed aromatics, meaty tannins, and strong structural foundation. The Shaw + Smith team never rests on their laurels and the Pinot Noir story is an ongoing tale of exploration and constant refinement.

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S H A W + S M I T H

To Cellar or not to Cellar?

In our fast-paced world, the time we devote to making a drinking decision let alone considering when to drink something down the line is rapidly diminishing.

Wine, however, stands apart as one of the few beverages appreciated on a level that prompts us to ask:

How do I enjoy this at its best?

Whether it's the choice of glassware, serving temperature, decanting, or the decision to age the wine, this thoughtful consideration elevates wine to a unique status.

This is why the discussion around cellaring and maturation remains so significant. Now, more than ever, the practice of laying down wine in a cool, dark cellar should be embraced as a meaningful ritual.

By doing so, we preserve the wine's potential for future enjoyment and honour the evolution and transformation that the lifeblood of the grape undergoes over time. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Life is a journey, not a destination." In the same spirit, we might say, "Wine is an experience, not just a snapshot of empty bottles."

The journey of wine is precisely that - a vessel that allows you to travel through regions, countries, and even time.

Cellaring and aging wine require both scientific understanding and a touch of intuition. A prayer to cellar gods might help too.

Within a bottle, wine's proteins, acids, sugars, esters, alcohol and phenolic compounds interact with one another, creating an intricate metamorphosis over time. The simplest and, let's admit, most intriguing way to appreciate these changes, is to translate them into flavours.

In wine parlance we define primary characters as being grape derived and are also known as varietal aromas, secondary characters come from the wine making process and we reserve the term tertiary for characters that develop from extended maturation in bottle such as the honeyed, toasty lift of an aged white or the leathery, savoury characters and general softening of an older red. And it is these cerebral, intellectual and intriguing tertiary characters we miss out on when we drink wines in their youth. Moreover, great old wines are special, they deserve to be valued and most importantly they need to be cellared under the best conditions, opened carefully, decanted and then discussed and appreciated for their rare and wondrous qualities.

So, before you stack those bottles in your wine fridge or shove them to the back of your cellar and forget they're there, take a moment to honour the art of maturation. Reflect on the passage of time and consider where these wines might fit into your own life's journey.



Drinking windows

So, when do we drink these Shaw + Smith Single Vineyard wines? Whilst calculating prime drinking window is an inexact science, the Single Vineyard wines are built to age. They mature over time, developing intriguing tertiary character in bottle and are a fine addition to any cellar. Investing in multiple bottles to revisit each year or so will allow you to learn alongside the wines how these special sites respond to aging. Generally one should look to cellar the Lenswood Chardonnay and Pinot Noir for up to 12 years and the Balhannah Shiraz up to 15-18 years.

- Morgan Dunn

Why do we revere older wines?

The reality is that in our wine world older wines are often more revered than younger. At their best, older wines have an additional dimension because of how they have evolved.

Moreover, aged wines are part of our liquid history, and legendary wines such as Max Schubert's 1962 Penfolds 60A, 1955 Wynns Michael or John Vickery's amazing 1973 Leo Buring's Rieslings deserve respect and reverence. History, emotion, connection, quality and complexity all come into play when experiencing wines with age.

Tasting Notes

A note on Lenswood Chardonnay

Capturing the essence and personality of Lenswood Chardonnay requires a quieter space. It’s not a wine that shouts or demands attention. Instead, it unfurls with delicate white florals, intricate mineral nuances, and a unique dynamism unlike any other.

As Kavita Faiella so eloquently put it, this is a wine “ripened by light, not heat,” and its radiance is truly something to behold.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2014

Lenswood Chardonnay epitomises the citric grace of the Hills cool climate with an undercurrent of power. This first vintage shows candied grapefruit peel, tarte tatin apples followed by powdered nutmeg, cumin and mustard seed spice. The mouthfeel is a fine lace doily of texture, with a chorus of echoing acidity. Finishing with roasted hazelnut and a treacle-like bitterness. This is the yardstick by which the following vintages can be measured.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2015

A stellar vintage that captures your attention immediately and manages to hold it for eons. Wild lime leaf, winter melon, and lemongrass. There is a exotic, Vietnamese mint flicker that leans towards cashew cream and a pine nut savoury tone. Acidity is persistent and adds tension and excitement.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2016

The abundant sunshine and warmer temperatures and an even gradual ripening period has resulted in a wine of immediate satisfaction. You won’t need to go looking for the frangipani flowers, white peach and creamy monstera deliciosa fruit, they are centre stage. There is a mealy mid palate creaminess that plays into buttered crumpets and baked pastries. This is impossible to stop sipping.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2017

The cool 2017 vintage stands out, across all three single vineyard wines, for their quirk and character, and sadly there is not enough to go around. They walk the line between genius and insane. It’s a game of pick your side, I guess. Yuzu curd, gardenia petals, grated turmeric, saffron and lemon pie. It’s then followed by the salinity and mineral salts your body is aching for, restoring vitality and life once again. Fruit is stonkingly youthful and belies its vintage date.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2018

Another vintage that greets you at the door, beckons you in and provides as Wadewitz will tell you “deliciousness, deliciousness, deliciousness”. There are yellow florals, apricot kernel, apple blossoms and yellow plum flesh. A hint of guava and raw Marcona almonds. Acidity builds gradually over time and there is a plump, perky round shape to its form.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2019

An even growing year where longer elevage times were introduced and met with resounding approval. You’ll discover an edge of just tropical papaya and lemon sorbet, jonquil flowers and sage leaf, all swept up in the crackle of firecracker flint. Acidity perks up with kefir yoghurt and gently melts into a creamed honey finish. There is also a touch of burdock root bitterness to add further dimension. It’s laden with flavour and detail.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2020

2020 was memorable for many reasons and in the Adelaide Hills this affected yields, with only miniscule amounts bottled. This vintage sees a pomelo citrus core with peach melba, halva and sugared almonds. It’s a Moroccan sweetshop of delights with tangible extract, and a slippery dip of acidity. There is not enough of it to be smashable but that’s exactly what it is.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2021

The first of the La Niña years produced a classic style of Lenswood Chardonnay. Passion blossom, white tea and orchard apples. There is an otherworldly mineral tone, like stalactite limestone crystals dancing on your palate. There is a frivolity and upswing of positivity that exudes with each sip of this wine. This is a very good example of this site, showcasing power without heft, brawn delivered with grace. Everything you are looking for in premium cool climate Chardonnay.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2022

A vintage that started warm and came full swing to end cool, a long extended growing season. The protracted vintage shows in an electrically charged wine with lemon granita, powdered talc and struck blue stone. There is feijoa skin, crème fraîche creaminess that leads to oyster shell and nashi pear skin. There is a never ending horizon in the length of this wine, it goes on and on. This will age glacially and reward in decades to come.

Lenswood Vineyard Chardonnay 2023

Another cool season with many vagaries throughout the growing season that led to a very late harvest. A thrilling aroma of star jasmine blooms, snow pea tendrils, white peach fuzz and Greek yoghurt creaminess. There is oyster mushroom, cheese rind savouriness and raw cashews. The sheer attractiveness of this wine on release is astounding.

A note on Balhannah Shiraz

Perhaps the Single Vineyard wine that most vividly captures the essence of site, vintage, and the transformative power of time, Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz offers a play-by-play of the growing season. From the timing of the pick to the artful craftsmanship of the hands that nurtured it, this wine tells a story of care, precision, and true character. Its ability to perform beautifully in both warm and cool years reflects something far deeper than human intervention. It’s a testament to the vines and their profound relationship with the environment. Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz is sui generis truly in a class of its own.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2013

The wine that started the Single Vineyard project and gave Shaw + Smith the determination to unearth single site expression. Balhannah is not ordinary in any way. Here the wine maintains its red berry core surrounded by blackberries. It’s also showing its tertiary side of powdered brown spices, macerated rhubarb, cured meats and ironstone. Its trademark meatiness apparent here. Finishing with mocha and cumin, this classic vintage is a good example of where the wine can journey to and evolve its shape with careful cellaring.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2014

The cooler vintage shows here in its aerial perfume of lingonberry, umeboshi plum and rosehip. It stands out for its intoxicating plumes of paprika and togarashi spice. The slow transformation in the bottle exhibits on the palate with brooding undercurrents of rich chocolatey tones and cracked terra cotta clay. There’s kalamata olive and rosemary spread too. It’s sumptuous and yet picante with lively acidity.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2015

It’s all here, a bit of everything you want in the cool climate Balhannah Shiraz. Another refreshing vintage settled in well in the Hills and turned out some truly remarkable wines. Here the floral perfume of rosella and steeped hibiscus is seductive. The red fruit feels exotic, juicy blood plums and bleeding pomegranate seeds. A weaving thread of tannin pulls at the seams and tightens this wine’s fabric. It’s sappy and succulent, poignant and impossible to put down.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2016

The abundant sunshine of 2016 and low winter and spring rainfall was a lesson in how the Balhannah site managed heat stress, with the welcome rain of January this is a warmer vintage with serious street credit. The fact is Balhannah shows well in both warm and cool years, as Shiraz can when planted in the right spot. Here there is both a basket of red and black fruits. Two tone mulberries, bilberry and dark cherries. Lifted caper leaf and a smattering of allspice. What’s remarkable in this warmer vintage is the steep waterfall of acidity, it’s slinky and forces the trajectory of the wine forward.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2017

A vintage bottling that split the room, those who fell in love, did so swiftly, and without a parachute. This is a wine that sparked debate, conversation and chatter, like all great wines do. The coolness and lateness of vintage expresses itself with blackberries, acai and creeping ivy. Fresh bay leaf, and purple basil. The wine is built like a bow spring pulled to its max, it twinges with unleashed energy and vitality. Oriental spice, shitake mushroom and hemp. Utterly memorable and unmistakably Balhannah 2017.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2018

A slightly warmer vintage, Balhannah committed to showing its charming side. Fruit nudges the blue tones, Mirabelle plums, picked blueberries and Bing cherries. It’s plush and even as it advances across the palate. A wine to appease many a palate, its undeniably delicious and forthwith in all its allure and appeal. Soothing tannins and a long line of flavour. This has the capacity to win over any Shiraz drinker.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2019

A challenging and demanding vintage, all hands and eyes were on deck for the labour required to see out a successful vintage. They were rewarded by this character driven wine of very low yields. 2019 is full of grunge, we are talking punk rock and heavy metal here. Its aching and assertive in its biltong and cured meat spice. Rounded bramble and prune plum fruit then finishes with amaro bitters and Italian digestifs. Supremely focused and full of attitude. You might be tempted to think this is of an older world, but in fact this is how good Aussie Shiraz can be.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2020

When the world started to spin off its axis in 2020 Balhannah kept its composure. So describes the wisdom of the land that’s survived long before us. Here it is showing off Morello cherry, raspberry and red sauteed peppers. Sweet paprika spice gives way to integrated middle palate tannins that stretch and bend, pliable and wholesome.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2021

Finally some reprieve for the Hills with an even growing season and reasonable yields. This vintage is all about wild purple florals, pansy, lilac and crushed Kampot pepper. Blackcurrants, soft licorice and clove. Acidity is punchy and reflective of the cooler conditions which will see this age gradually and worthwhile of a spot in the back of your cellar.

Balhannah Vineyard Shiraz 2022

Another cool vintage with a very late harvest. A bouquet of lavender, Swiss mushroom and boysenberry. There is super concentration, not an ounce has been left behind in the vineyard. Supremely dense and compact the wine delivers from the moment you pick up the glass to the long minutes after you’ve put it back down. If you are looking for pound for pound quality and detail, this is the horse you should back. For those seeking power and finesse this is drinking well now but for those willing to seek the reaches far beyond, this will age glacially and no doubt manifest in its intensity.

A note on Lenswood Pinot Noir

The lofty aspirations for Pinot Noir in the Adelaide Hills have been both challenged and met with remarkable resilience for this notoriously finicky grape. Its alluring fragrance and vibrant, crunchy acidity make it an utterly delightful wine we all keep circling back to. The future of Pinot Noir in the Hills is now more firmly established, thanks to the dedicated efforts and vision of the Shaw + Smith team, who continue to pave the way for excellence.

Lenswood Vineyard Pinot Noir 2016

The inaugural first vintage set a smart scene for the Hills Pinot Noir. It captures Christmas bush florals, red cherries and goji berries. Macerated figs, cherry pit and a touch of dried kombu. You’ll also find the umami note from the whole bunch works particularly well here. A taut blood plum skin finishes with persistent dust of tannins. Acidity curls and twirls throughout and those tertiary edges of dried leaves and porcini mushroom begin to peep through.

Lenswood Vineyard Pinot Noir 2018

This vintage is up in lights with beautifully stewed rhubarb, persimmon, and red gum bark. There is leaf litter and pine mushroom meatiness with strips of jerky and other cured meats. This has it all, exotic spice, chewy tannins and length for days. Shockingly youthful with power and finesse.

Lenswood Vineyard Pinot Noir 2019

A vintage with some abundant sunshine and warm summer days. The wine stands out for its immediacy and presentation upfront. There are squashed red figs, raspberry and strawberry pulp. A smattering of brown baking spices lead to surprisingly dense and packed tannins. Acidity maintains its pace, weaving its way through some savoury potting soil and a sawdust of disturbed topsoil. This is accessible early on, meaning you don’t have to decant and swirl waiting for your wine to come to you.

Lenswood Vineyard Pinot Noir 2021

A perfumed concoction of raspberry coulis, plums and alpine strawberries. This is a stellar example of a wine you need to drink now, in six months, one year, five years and so on. Here the crimson fruit bedazzles with the structural integrity of the harbour bridge. The mid palate weight snuggles in and nestles itself comfortably, it’s a wine that is the embodiment of integrated, finished and resolute.

Lenswood Vineyard Pinot Noir 2022

Like all things too good to be true the 2022 vintage was good but scarce, but those lucky to encounter it, will find the temptations of glossy red toffee apples, persimmon and bleeding pomegranate seeds. There is a kiss of reduction that is holding everything tightly wired and perky, followed by star anise, five spice and pink peppercorns. This is full of life and potential and its sinewy tannins make for a wine that will delight in years to come.

Lenswood Vineyard Pinot Noir 2023

Heat beat candies, Gala apple and hibiscus flowers. Musk strawberry and maple leaf earthiness. The cool vintage has unleashed the high tone perfumes into a wine replete with intensity and pulsing with life. Tannins assert themselves, speaking loudly of the possibility for a very long happy life.

