

Barossa Chapters  
**Old Vines**



## Old Vines

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Barossa owes much to Europe. Its name, cultural instincts, languages, food, viticultural and winemaking heritage, are all transportations that have been moulded and honed by 175 years of Australian innovation.



# Barossa

One could be forgiven for thinking Barossa was settled by the Spanish. Its name can certainly be traced back to the windswept Barrosa Ridge in the Spanish region of Andalusia where in March 1811 Lieutenant General Thomas Graham of the British Army defeated the French Marshal Victor, during the Napoleonic Peninsular Wars.

Graham received a peerage and was named Lord Lynedoch but it was his young aide-de-camp Lieutenant William Light who was to remember the name. When he was appointed Surveyor General of the new colony of South Australia in 1836 and discovered a verdant valley he named it Barrosa – and a slip of the pen by a public administrator gave the region its unique name, Barossa.

However it was not Spanish but English and Silesian settlers who pioneered the region. The English, including the colony's founder George Fife Angas, took over pastoral sheep and cattle runs in Eden Valley, east of Angaston; and the Silesian settlers – mainly peasant farmers and artisans fleeing Prussian religious persecution – settled the Valley floor at Bethany, Langmeil, Tanunda and Nuriootpa.

After experimenting with a range of crops, from flax to tobacco, the Silesians found the Mediterranean climate suited wine grapes.

Entrepreneurs with big visions built stone wineries and started making fortified “ports” and “sherries” as well as fine table wines called “claret” and “hermitage” and “burgundy”, paying homage to European tradition. Barossa became the largest wine-producing region in Australia by the turn of the century, sustaining a community of grapegrowers, winemakers, cellar hands and coopers and earning significant export income for the state of South Australia.

Through the 20th century Barossa had its booms and busts – Imperial demand crashed during both wars and in the post-war 1960s and 1970s customers wanted sweet sparkling wines such as Barossa Pearl and Cold Duck. Finally Barossa settled on what its soils and climate do best – ripening red wine grapes – and from the 1980s onwards its fame grew for its full bodied Shiraz and Cabernet, Grenache and Mataro. In the late 1990s during an international boom in demand for Australian wine, the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation decided to define Australia's regions along similar (but less restrictive) lines to Europe's appellation system.

The Barossa's winemaking geographic indication zone was formalised in 1997, comprising two regions: the warmer Barossa Valley “floor” specialising in red wine and the cooler, higher altitude Eden Valley, which focussed on fine

white wines such as Riesling and Chardonnay as well as medium body reds such as Shiraz and Cabernet. Now Barossa is the most recognised name in Australian winemaking, due to its forgiving viticultural environment, its treasure-trove of century old pre-phylloxera vines and its six generations of grapegrowing and winemaking heritage.

But it has also evolved over 175 years into much more than a wine region. Old Silesian cultural food traditions continue to be celebrated, such as the fermentation of meats into sausage and wursts; salting and smoking hams and bacon; the preservation of fruits and vegetables such as pickled onions and dill cucumbers and the maintenance of age old baking traditions: sour dough breads, pretzels and streuselkuchen.

There are also European music traditions still maintained such as brass bands and men's and women's choirs and Barossa continues to be the epicentre Lutheran faith in Australia with more than a dozen steepled churches dotted across the valleys.

This colourful culture has attracted thousands of new settlers over subsequent generations, continuing the immigration that started in the 1840s, making Barossa a vibrant, diverse and exciting contemporary Australian community.

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Barossa's multi-generational vineyards have outlived floods, fires and wine industry booms and busts to be among the oldest in the world. Dry grown and low yielding they produce concentrated, long living wines that are in high demand internationally. Now Barossa has an Old Vine Charter to help preserve and protect these rare plantings.



# Barossa Old Vines

Barossa is home to some of the oldest surviving winegrape vineyards in the world, with one gnarly old cluster believed to date back to 1843.

This claim isn't marketing hype. In the 1860s the vine aphid phylloxera was introduced to European vineyards in vine planting material from the USA and by 1889 nearly 90% of European vineyards had been killed. The pest also spread to Australia, devastating vineyards in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia.

South Australia was the only colony to have a far-sighted quarantine policy that restricted the importation of vine planting material, which meant that vineyards planted by the early Silesian settlers in the 1840s and 1850s in the Barossa continued to flourish.

The other reason that Barossa has such old vines is attributed to typical Silesian frugality – why pull out a vine if it is still bearing fruit, especially good fruit that makes great wine?

In the 1980s a State Government sponsored scheme to remove old unwanted varieties and “modernize” the industry saw many of these vines fall to the bulldozer. However, a small group of true believers paid growers to keep their old vines – mainly Shiraz and Grenache – and by the 1990s they became highly prized for their low yields of concentrated fruit. Small pockets continue to be maintained in Bethany, Langmeil, Krondorf, Greenock and in the northern Barossa.

While the idea of a Charter had been debated for a number of years, it was the Yalumba Wine Company that declared its own framework for classification in 2007, gifting it to the broader Barossa region in 2009.

The Barossa Old Vine Charter – classifying vines into four categories by age – is dedicated to the recognition, preservation and promotion of old vineyards.

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We were the first to acknowledge that these old Shiraz vineyards were a rare and valuable resource in the Barossa, something that we should value and protect. There was definitely a distinctiveness about the wines that came from them. For me the realisation of how precious these vineyards were, was a turning point in my winemaking career.”

*Robert O'Callaghan,  
Rockford Wines*

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Our old vineyard was planted by the Graetz family in 1848 and is the oldest continuously producing Grenache vineyard in the world. They are not good because they are old, they are old because they're good. They stayed in the ground all of those years because they produced good wine consistently. In the hotter years they manage the heat better than younger vines, and in wetter years they plod along at about the same pace producing soft, delicate Grenache, year in, year out. Young vines make great wines too but they are more affected by the environment. Our old vines are part of the environment.”

*Marco Cirillo,  
Cirillo Wines*

# Barossa Old Vine Charter & Old Vine Wines

## Barossa Old Vine

### **Equal or greater than 35 years of age**

These vines have grown beyond adolescence and are now fully mature. They have a root structure and trunk thickness that promise grapes that have a diversity of flavour and character. Their worthiness has been proven over many vintages, consistently producing the highest quality fruit for Barossa wines of distinction and longevity.

- Pewsey Vale, The Contours Riesling, Eden Valley
- Chateau Tanunda, Old Vine Semillon, Barossa Valley
- Bethany, LE Shiraz, Barossa Valley

## Barossa SurvivorVine

### **Equal or greater than 70 years of age**

These very old vines are a living symbol of traditional values in a modern environment. A Barossa Survivor vine has reached a significant milestone, and pays homage to the resolute commitment of those growers and winemakers who value the quality and structure they impart to old vine wines.

- Kalleske, Old Vine Grenache, Barossa Valley
- Burge Family Winemakers, Garnacha (Grenache), Barossa Valley
- The Willows Vineyard, Single Vineyard Semillon, Barossa Valley
- Teusner, Avatar Grenache Shiraz Mataro, Barossa Valley.

## Barossa Centenarian

### **Equal or greater than 100 years of age**

These pre-phylloxera vines have been protected and permitted to mature into their thick, gnarly trunks and naturally-sculptured forms without interference. Noted for their low yields and intensity of flavor, planted generations ago – when dry-farming techniques demanded careful site selection – Centenarian Vines have withstood the test of time.

- Henschke, Mount Edelstone Shiraz, Eden Valley.
- Elderton Command Single Vineyard Shiraz, Barossa Valley.
- Chateau Tanunda The Chateau Shiraz, Barossa.

## Barossa Ancestor Vine

### **Equal or greater than 125 years of age**

An Ancestor vine has stood strong and proud for at least 125 years – a living tribute to the early European settlers of the Barossa. Their genetic material has helped to populate the region with irreplaceable old stocks that underpin viticultural tradition. Mainly dry-grown, low-yielding vines yielding grapes of great flavour and intensity, they are believed to be among the oldest producing vines in the world.

- Cirillo Estate, 1850 Grenache, Barossa Valley.
- Hewitson, Old Garden Mourvèdre, Barossa Valley.
- Langmeil, The Freedom 1843 Shiraz, Barossa Valley.
- Henschke, Hill of Grace Shiraz, Eden Valley
- Penfolds, Block 42 Cabernet Sauvignon, Barossa Valley.
- Poonawatta Estate, The 1880 Shiraz, Eden Valley.



Cirillo 1850 Old Vine Grenache vineyard

## Major Varieties Planted & Still In Production

MAJOR RED VARIETIES PLANTED & STILL IN PRODUCTION (HECTARES)												
Planting Period	Cabernet Sauvignon			Grenache			Shiraz			Mataro		
	Area	Area (%)	Own Roots	Area	Area (%)	Own Roots	Area	Area (%)	Own Roots	Area	Area (%)	Own Roots
Barossa Ancestor Vine 1891 & Older	4.44	0.24	100%	7.55	1.09	100%	12.54	0.16	88%	2.63	0.98	100%
Barossa Centenarian Vine 1916 to 1891	0	0.00	0%	23.49	3.39	100%	100.62	1.29	82%	5.39	2.02	100%
Barossa Survivor Vine 1946 to 1916	4.65	0.25	100%	93.51	13.51	98%	88.48	1.14	96%	12.2	4.56	98%
Barossa Old Vine 1981 to 1946	121.1	6.44	91%	302.98	43.76	94%	589.06	7.56	95%	45.5	17.02	91%
Other 2016 to 1981	1741.33	92.55	68%	249.19	35.99	85%	6939.18	89.02	72%	190.3	71.20	79%
Unknown Age	6.4	0.34	57%	15.59	2.25	81%	45.35	0.58	73%	11.27	4.22	86%

MAJOR WHITE VARIETIES PLANTED & STILL IN PRODUCTION (HECTARES)									
Planting Period	Chardonnay			Riesling			Semillon		
	Area	Area (%)	Own Roots	Area	Area (%)	Own Roots	Area	Area (%)	Own Roots
Barossa Ancestor Vine 1891 & Older	0	0.00	0%	0	0.00	0%	3.75	0.99	100%
Barossa Centenarian Vine 1916 to 1891	0	0.00	0%	6	0.83	100%	1.98	0.52	100%
Barossa Survivor Vine 1946 to 1916	0	0.00	0%	16.24	2.24	98%	26.4	6.97	94%
Barossa Old Vine 1981 to 1946	37.63	6.33	83%	321.47	44.28	94%	84.65	22.36	88%
Other 2016 to 1981	551.51	92.78	62%	379.31	52.25	60%	253.35	66.93	62%
Unknown Age	5.29	0.89	74%	2.93	0.40	100%	8.4	2.22	45%

Source - Vinehealth Australia 2017

# Barossa

