

HOWARD PARK RIESLING

2010 Howard Park Great Southern Riesling

2010 Howard Park Porongurup Riesling

2006 Howard Park 'Museum Release' Riesling

TONY HARPER, Brisbane News

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“The latest release of three markedly different but stunning rieslings is a compelling sign that the decision to back the variety was an inspired one as these are some of the most pure, pristine wines in the country.”



PRIDE OF PLACE ... remarkably affordable in any vintage, Howard Park's rieslings are precise and shine with cellar time

Riesling stars

Fruit from WA's Great Southern region produces three clear winners

Howard Park's first release was a 1986 Great Southern riesling. There has been a lot of water flow under the Howard Park bridge in the past 25 years, but its dedication to serious riesling appears to have remained unchecked. The latest release of three markedly different but stunning rieslings is a compelling sign that the decision to back the variety was an inspired one as these are some of the most pure, pristine wines in the country.

Rieslings at Howard Park have traditionally been made from selected, high vineyard sites in Mount Barker and the Porongurups. For the 2010 vintage, however, a parcel of the Porongurup fruit was fermented and bottled separately.

The Howard Park Porongurup Riesling is a starkly different wine from the Howard Park we usually see: far more textural and dominated by mineral rather than fruit. This could be due in part to some extended lees time that makes it eerily like an ultra-fine chablis. (I tasted this wine with a few other decent palates, so I'll warn you that they looked at me sideways when I made this comparison.) It doesn't have the bright, floral, limey notes that pre-empt Australian riesling. It's more muted and subtle, but its texture is one of mineral and bread: chablis. It is an unusual riesling as it's subdued in terms of aromatics, and is long, lean and subtly complex.

Beside it is the Howard Park Riesling 2010, a wine that draws upon both Mount Barker and Great Southern fruit. If you can find a more pure, precise version of the grape in this country, I'd be amazed. What its Porongurup sibling avoids in terms of classic lime blossom fragrance,

this has in spades. But it's tight and fine with a length that can be measured in minutes.

This is Australian riesling at its best. It's tighter, finer and leaner than most of the Clare or Eden Valley big guns, but no lesser a wine because of it. I'm confident that it will repay a decade or so of patience for those who like their riesling aged.

Just to prove the point, Howard Park has rereleased its 2006 riesling. Right now, it's in a magical spot. Still tight and fresh with a colour – a pale, pale gold with a hint of green – that defies its five years in bottle.

The only real giveaway is the aroma, which has a layer of freshly toasted bread woven into the blossom and lime. It's a more complex and slightly richer wine than the 2010, more because of its time in bottle than any extra structural weight, and it is nowhere near its peak.

They are a remarkable trio of rieslings that show the suitability of the Great Southern sub-regions for production of this variety, but also the remarkable vineyards with which Howard Park is able to work.

Riesling drinkers have had an easy run in Australia for a long time. Even the most expensive bottles rarely climb above the \$50 mark, and most of the serious bottles can be bought for \$30 or less; compare that to a bottle of heavy-hitting shiraz. The Howard Park wines are no exception. The two current vintage wines pull up at \$30 a bottle and the Museum Release 2006 is a mere \$2 more. For wines of this style and quality it is almost laughable, especially when you consider that they will improve with a decade or two in the cellar.



HOWARD PARK
WINES OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA