

Queensland Wine Intro - Summary

Premium wine from Qld - Introduction

- Australian wine lovers still express surprise at the notion of wine being made in Queensland.
- This scepticism is found in Brisbane as much as in other states.
- Queensland, with its image of warm sunny weather, tropical coast, beaches and Barrier Reef does not readily present the image and cold mild climate conditions needed for wine grapes.
- There is no denying that quality grapes need a cool and even cold, climate. The fact that enables Queensland to produce great quality wine is the high altitude of the Great Dividing Range to the west of Brisbane and the resulting cold weather.
- The coldest region is the Granite Belt – around Stanthorpe but the Darling Downs and South Burnett – around Kingaroy, are also cold.
- In winter on the Granite Belt, it snows and it is bitterly cold. Here the altitude at the highest point (called “The Summit”) is 950 metres above sea level.
- Another fact is that climate anywhere in the world, whilst being broadly designated as cold, cool, warm or hot, has other characteristics - extremes or mildness, dryness/humidity and so on resulting in a particular climate pattern.
- Wine grapes have different preferences for climate pattern.
- For example, Shiraz and Chardonnay like an inland climate with four distinct seasons – after a cold winter they require a definite spring season so that vine flowering will occur followed by a warm growing season.
- Merlot fits this pattern reasonably well.
- However Cabernet Sauvignon likes a cool mild climate and does especially well when close to the coast or large body of water (such as an estuary) that moderates the climate.
- Pinot Noir, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc like an especially cold climate.
- These are grand generalisations however they explain why mainstream varieties Shiraz, Chardonnay, Semillon and Merlot along with newer grapes such as Verdelho, Viognier and Tempranillo perform well in Queensland.
- National guides to Australian wine include a smattering of Qld producers.
- The volume is growing, the tourism interest is big and growing, and the Queensland Government has become involved with unique promotion support.
- Despite producer Romavilla having been established since 1863 and explaining that early Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes worked there briefly as a young man, and several producers in the Granite Belt also boasting long histories, the image of Queensland wine is of a newcomer that is finding its way.
- It is true that new styles and exploration of existing varieties are occurring but certain wines are succeeding on a consistent basis – Shiraz and

Chardonnay in particular with recent but nonetheless excellent results for Viognier, Verdelho and Tempranillo.

Guides to Queensland Wine Regions

- The brochure from the Queensland Govt (www.industry.qld.gov.au - see site map and follow the links to wine and wine tourism) lists 10 regions! The Wine Map of Queensland (by Hema Maps – see www.hemamaps.com.au) shows seven broad regions.
- In addition to The Granite Belt, South Burnett and Darling Downs there are Queensland Coastal regions D’Aguilar Ranges just north west of Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast Hinterland, Gold Coast Hinterland, Scenic Rim (south west of Brisbane) and North Burnett (near Bundaberg).
- The hinterland behind Cairns is also listed but is more famous for fruit wines than conventional grape wines.
- Most operations in these coastal areas are cellar door facilities with appeal to tourists. The wines offered here are made mostly from fruit grown in inland regions that have cooler drier climates than the coast.

Qld Government Role

- The Queensland Government has established a section concerned with Wine Industry Development within the Tourism and Wine Industry Development are now located within the Dept of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry Development. The Government has assisted with programs for small and medium sized producers. Export of wine by medium/small producers was the subject of a conference in 2005. Since then seminars have continued with sessions on wine business skills in 2008.
- In October 2006 the Qld College of Wine Tourism opened in Stanthorpe – it has affiliation with Stanthorpe State High School, Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, Australian Agricultural College Corporation - Dalby Campus and the University of Southern Queensland (which has links to Charles Sturt University at Wagga). The aim is to teach vocational courses across the wine industry but not necessarily wine making science as a degree (as taught currently at Charles Sturt and Uni of Adelaide). The courses are being developed and will focus on vineyard management, winery processes and cellar door operators. See www.industry.qld.gov.au for details.

Wine business in Queensland

- Liquor licence laws in Qld are different from other states of Australia. The primary difference is that only a hotel licence is able to sell alcohol by retail to the public. Supermarkets are not able to sell liquor as is the case in other states.
- Hotels may have satellite retail shops (known as Detached Bottle Shops) and these are often found in shopping centres, being serviced by the pub/hotel up the road).

- Licences for wine producers allow retail sales at the Cellar Door and also allow a detached cellar door to be located remote from the location of the winery. This has helped producers who are based in the areas remote from Brisbane and the coast where the population lives, to open a cellar door in or near Brisbane; or in the tourist travel regions of the hinterlands of the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast. Some entrepreneurial producers have located their satellite cellar door outlet inside a café or delicatessen in Brisbane, the latter otherwise not having a liquor licence.