

Info from Amietta: Shiraz

Style influences

Amietta Shiraz is a multi-layered, cool climate Shiraz that leans toward the Northern Rhone style, and is to some degree influenced by two benchmark Shiraz producers: Michel Chapoutier of the Rhone Valley, who we worked for in 2001, and our friend Steward Anderson, the founder of Balgownie Estate (Bendigo) and the man credited with re-starting the Bendigo/Heathcote wine region in the 1970s.

Shiraz at Amietta

Amietta is on the edge of the Moorabool Valley on the (warm) north side of Geelong. Within a 5 kilometre strip, the neighbouring vineyards along the valley are *Bannockburn Vineyards*, by *Farr*, *Clyde Park* and *Amietta*. At Amietta, our vineyard soils are generally a black version of the red Coonawarra soils: we have a thin layer of black clay over the top of limestone, whereas in the Coonawarra they have a thin layer of red clay over limestone. Although we are in a cool-climate region, our Shiraz vines grow on a warm, sun-trapping site protected from the prevailing cool southwesterly winds. The site receives 1450 degree-days of sunshine – so the ripening climate is about the same as Bordeaux and Margaret River.

Viticulture:

In the Rhone, the best Shiraz comes from vineyards with mixed geology, so at Amietta we planted our Shiraz to maximise soil differences. The uphill end of our Shiraz blocks are ancient marine limestone, while the downhill end has a layer of volcanic clay 45 centimetres deep. At harvest, the fruit from the limestone soil at the top of the slope has a completely different flavour profile (mineral, structured, floral) to the fruit from the clay soil at the bottom of the slope (plush, plums and red berries). We have 2 Shiraz blocks: one has black clay over limestone soil, whereas the other has red clay over limestone. Although both blocks produce similar minerality, we find that one produces fruit with more black currant/blackberry and cinnamon spice flavours, while the other produces more floral/violet and dark plum flavours. Thus, as the fruit is harvested, we already have four distinct flavour elements in our Shiraz. To add to this natural complexity, we harvest and vinify the Shiraz in four separate parcels at differing levels of ripeness. The first is harvested at 12.3° Beaumé, the second at 12.8° Beaumé, the third at 13.5° Beaumé and the last at 14.5° Beaumé, resulting in a spread of berry-fruit characters from red cherries to ripe mulberries to black cherries to stewed dark plums.

Our Shiraz is a Barossa Valley clone – BVR30, which we selected because it shows sweet spice (cinnamon/allspice) rather than the green peppercorn characters more commonly seen in cool climate Shiraz clones. We cane-pruned, hand pick and crop the Shiraz at 1.5 tonnes per acre.

Winemaking: The grapes are mainly destemmed, crushed and foot-stomped before ferment with a mix of ‘wild’ and selected yeasts in small open fermenters. A small proportion of the Shiraz (5-10%) is whole-bunch fermented to provide additional structure (stalk component) and some carbonic maceration/enhanced berry fruit character (whole berry component). Fermentation temperatures are generally kept below 30°C to preserve floral/violet character which can ‘boil off’ at higher fermentation temperatures. The wine is left on skins for 2-4 weeks before being pressed. After the completion of malolactic fermentation, the wine is racked off heavy solids, sulphured and barrel aged for 14 months in French Oak *Saury* medium toast barrels. The barrels selected for Amietta Shiraz each vintage are those we consider to have the most ‘personality’: those with the best structure, minerality and complexity.

2007 Amietta Shiraz

An elegant, complex, *terroir* driven Shiraz, that seduces, rather than batters the senses. It shows red berries, dark fruits, violets, leather and forest floor characters supported by a spine of cool climate acidity. Only 80 cases of this wine were produced in 2007.

Amietta is a hands-on, family owned and run micro-boutique winery. All Amietta wines are grown, hand-picked, hand-made and bottled at Amietta Vineyard and Winery, on the edge of the Moorabool Valley, Geelong. Winemakers: Janet Cockbill and Nicholas Clark.

