

If you like your syrahs to show density, richness, ripe berry and plum aromas and chocolate mocha characters, then look no further. Gimblett Gravels in Hawkes Bay turns out the lion's share but Waiheke Island is also producing some very impressive drops.



95★★★★★
2009 Man O'War Dreadnought Syrah, Waiheke Island, A\$50/NZ\$50
 Man O'War has a multitude of tiny but carefully sited vineyards scattered over its vast estate on Waiheke Island. This wine is a blend of seven of those vineyards. A fine-boned, perfumed syrah in an elegant rather than blockbuster (as expected) style. Red fruits, floral and white- and black-pepper flavours. Firm, ripe tannins give a pleasantly drying finish. It has good cellaring potential, at least for the mid-term, but is approachable now. This is a very serious syrah indeed.



92★★★★★
2008 Cypress Terraces Syrah, Hawkes Bay, A\$47/NZ\$42
 Cypress was established by Gus Lawson, the founder of Te Awa, after he sold the winery. Grown on a terraced hillside vineyard in the heart of the Gimblett Gravels district with limestone and clay influenced soils. Deeper, darker and more concentrated wine than the regular label with strong berry and plum flavours together with chocolate, licorice, black pepper and spicy oak. This is an appealing syrah with good cellaring potential.



95★★★★★
2010 Mudbrick Shepherd's Point Syrah, Waiheke Island, NZ\$46
 Made from grapes grown in Mudbrick's Onetangi Valley vineyard on Waiheke Island near Auckland. 2010 was an extraordinary vintage for Waiheke with a long, hot and thankfully dry ripening season. With nearly 16 per cent alcohol this wine may have achieved a New Zealand record. It's a big, ripe and incredibly intense red with strong plum notes, and the sort of chocolate and mocha character I expect to find in Barossa Valley shiraz. A heroic wine from a marvellous vintage.



92★★★★★
2009 Stonecroft Reserve Syrah, Hawkes Bay, A\$60/NZ\$60
 Stonecroft founder, Dr Alan Limmer, pioneered syrah in recent times when he rescued a number of trial clones from a viticultural research station and planted them in his Gimblett Gravels vineyard. He made cuttings freely available to other winemakers. This is a lovely wine with a haunting perfume of ripe berry and floral flavours. They follow through onto the palate with the addition of anise, licorice and spicy oak characters. An elegant and moderately powerful syrah with a lengthy finish.



95★★★★★
2009 Villa Maria Cellar Selection Syrah, Hawkes Bay, NZ\$40
 A blend of grapes from two vineyards in the heart of the Gimblett Gravels district. The wine was co-fermented with a small amount of viognier and, after 30 days on the skins, was matured in barriques for 18 months. This is an elegant and attractive syrah delicately scented with berry and violet aromas; it delivers moderate power with great subtlety. Ready now but should continue to deliver pleasure for many years. Exquisitely balanced.



91★★★★★
2009 Trinity Hill Gimblet Gravels Syrah, Hawkes Bay, NZ\$35
 From two vineyards with vine-age spanning 11-16 years. The vines are a mix of seven clones including the mass-selected clone from Stonecroft. The grapes were hand-picked and de-stemmed, but not crushed, to give a mix of whole berries. The wine was co-fermented with viognier. It has weight and flavour intensity plus a rich texture and great mouthfeel. Dark berry and plum flavours with a hint of pepper and some chocolate and mocha character. Big, chewy and complex syrah.

Read how wines are tasted and rated on page 147.