

# Penfolds Bin 60A, 1962

Coonawarra/Barossa Valley, Australia

## A legend because...

In a country where success at professional wine shows counts for a great deal, wineries from the 1950s onwards sometimes released special bin bottlings of wines that were essentially experimental, so as to test the reaction of the senior winemakers who dominated the judging at Australian wine shows. No Penfolds wine has enjoyed more triumphs than Bin 60A, winning a total of 19 trophies. André Tchelistcheff, the most famous winemaker in California at the time, was among those to hail the classic quality of this wine. Over 40 years would go by before Penfolds ventured to produce another version of this blend in 2004, one that has not been repeated since.

## Looking back

Max Schubert, who created Australia's most famous wine, Grange, in the early 1950s in the teeth of opposition from the company bosses, was then the presiding genius at Penfolds. By the late 1950s, Grange was accepted and established, but Schubert had not finished with experimentation and new styles. Then as now, the Australian show system was a way to test whether a particular style or blend could achieve a chorus of approval from a panel of judges mostly composed of rival winemakers. Curiously, Penfolds entered a similar wine called Bin 60 (with more Shiraz than Cabernet) into shows at this time, but it was the Bin 60A that walked away with the gold medals and the trophies.

## The vintage

The 1962 growing season in the Barossa Valley was ideal, with mostly dry weather and warm dry conditions at vintage. Michael Broadbent gives the vintage for Australia as a whole his top five-star rating.

## The terroir

Like so many top Australian wines, this is a cross-regional blend, uniting cool-climate Cabernet Sauvignon from Sharams' Block and Block 20 in Coonawarra (planted on the famous *terra rossa* soils) with the decidedly warm-climate, original Shiraz blocks from the Kalimna Vineyard in the Barossa Valley, which lies on sandy soils in the western part of the valley. Kalimna has long been an important component in the Grange blend.


## The wine

The wine was produced at Penfolds' Magill Estate, outside Adelaide in South Australia. It was foot-crushed, say some witnesses, and then fermented in wax-lined concrete vats

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equipped with wooden boards that would keep the cap submerged to assist extraction. The average fermentation temperature was 22°C, and there was a daily *délestage* (the 'rack and return' method of emptying the tank and then returning the aerated fermenting must). As the wine was completing its fermentation, it was pressed in a basket press before being transferred to new American 300-litre barrels, where it stayed for around 15 months.

## The reaction

Michael Broadbent, sampling the wine in 1999, succinctly noted that it was 'delicious'. It was the only New World wine to make the top 10 when *Decanter* listed its greatest wines of all time, in August 2004. In 2008, James Halliday, Australia's best-known critic, described it as: 'An utterly superb wine, a glorious freak of nature and man... The palate is virtually endless, with a peacock's tail stolen from the greatest of Burgundies... This is possibly the greatest red wine tasted in our times in Australia.' At the same tasting, American writer Joshua Greene noted: 'It has lovely, bright red berry, grilled fig, sandalwood, cedar characters and extreme length of flavour.' Halliday added that he thought it was at its peak and might soon decline, and in 2010 described the wine as 'a beautiful grandmother'. In 2012, Andrew Jefford adored the perfume: 'Mushrooms, incense and leather, finessing the ripe fruit... It stayed generous and articulate to the last drop, sweet-fruited yet refined and spicy.' In the same year, Australian wine auctioneer Andrew Caillard MW, who claims to have tasted the wine almost 100 times, noted: 'Supple and fine-grained, with generous developed dried fruits, espresso, apricot and herb flavours, fine, loose-knit chalky tannins and gentle acidity. Finishes lacy, firm and long.' 

## THE FACTS

**Bottles produced** 5,100

**Composition** 66% Cabernet Sauvignon, 34% Shiraz

**Yield** N/A

**Alcohol** 12.8%

**Release price** Not released commercially

**Auction price today** £2,343

