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Roads less travelled

Australia has many iconic wine regions, and there are lots of lesser-known but no less worthy vineyards popping up. **Winsor Dobbin** reports

New grape-growing areas have sprung up throughout Australia in the past 20 years. In NSW alone there are 14 recognised regions, stretching from New England in the north to the Hilltops around Young. It's worth exploring these new areas – and discovering a more relaxed cellar door ambience.

The Canberra region is home to more than 30 newish wineries, including Clonakilla, Murrumbateman and Lerida Estate at Lake George. Clonakilla has spearheaded the recent popularity of Australia's shiraz-viognier blend, while Murrumbateman's owner and winemaker, Ken Helm, produces outstanding riesling. Both have rustic cellar doors overlooking the vines. Lerida Estate offers delicious pinot noir and pinot gris; try Lerida 2008 Pinot Gris (\$28) – crisp apple aroma and hint of spicy sweetness.

Queensland is often thought too hot for grapes, but the high-altitude Granite Belt region just north of the NSW border has a growing reputation and more than 50 cellar doors: look for Ballandean Estate, Symphony Hill, Robert Channon, Boireann and Golden Grove Estate.

Winemakers in this region are working with French varieties such as durif, mourvèdre, petit verdot and sylvaner, and have combined forces to set up the "Strange Bird" trail, introducing visitors to new wine styles. The Hidden Creek 2007 Tempranillo (\$22) is a favourite red, with lovely softness and flavour.

NSW's Southern Highlands are also producing very good wines. With cool shoulder seasons and crisp winters, they're well situated for aromatic, complex whites.

Centennial Vineyards at Bowral is emerging as a leading producer of fine wines, but also check out Southern Highland Wines, Cuttaway Hill Estate and GrumbleBone. And from the South Coast, the Coolangatta Estate 2008 Semillon (\$19), a classic, citrus-infused young semillon with the potential to age gracefully, is well worth a tasting.

Tell us about your favourite drop in 50 words or less and you could win one of ten DVDs of *Oz and James's Big Wine Adventure Series 2*, in which wine buff Oz Clarke and James May (of *Top Gear* fame) sip their way through the wineries of California. Send your entry to competitions@readersdigest.com.au.



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