

MENTELLE NOTES

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Where Margaret River meets the Indian Ocean.

Run River Run

Mentelle Notes talks to Peter Richards MW about 'Margs.'

Last November cabernet lovers from far and wide gathered at Cape Mentelle's annual Cabernet Tasting. Among them UK-based Master of Wine Peter Richards who has since shared his impressions (of vine and wine) in a podcast. But MN decided to call London to delve a little deeper into his first trip.

When you wake to sun shimmering gold on orderly vine rows, then check the surf break at Bombie and catch a coffee at Gnarabup, you know you're in God's Own. And we haven't got to the grapes yet...

For 50-plus years Margaret River has been forging a reputation for its wines and the region's dramatic coastline, mighty tall trees, yes waves too and legendary winemakers. Not just the founding vigneron (mostly doctors) but also the talented Now-Gen making their own waves.

According to Peter Richards MW, Margaret River is simply 'a bloody glorious place to be.' And not just for its surf breaks. Climate, candour, cabernet and chardonnay rate highly too.

'It's such a pristine environment, there is a warmth and freshness in the air, then the

ocean influence, and of course there are all those kick-arse winemakers. I came away excited.'

Richards is clearly impressed by the terroir and classic wine styles but equally by some of its wine tasting traditions.

'The international comparison Cape Mentelle Cabernet and Cullen Chardonnay tastings should be celebrated around the world,' enthuses Peter. 'So many other wine tastings are too insular. They can be echo chambers that conjure cellar palates.'

Lining your best bottles up against the world's lauded labels may be brave but according to Peter the risks pay back handsomely. 'There was shocking honesty among winemakers at these events and that's a huge strength.'

'A bloody glorious place to be...'

After a serious immersion in the region during the Pair'd Festival he has some more observations.

'Margaret River wines marry freshness with finesse. They are accessible and they are not

priced out of reach. They deliver consistency and the prevailing use of screwcaps ensures their vitality.'

When asked to nominate a one-word descriptor for his 'Margs' varietal champions Peter offered *Revitalising* for the region's classic semillon sauvignon blend; *Savoury* for chardonnay and *Insistent* for cabernet sauvignon.

And his trip highlight wines? Among many, he cites *Cape Mentelle Heritage Cabernet Sauvignon 2021* and Vasse Felix Heytesbury Chardonnay.

Still clearly excited by his first trip to Margaret River, Peter enthuses about the perfume, structure and age-worthiness of Margaret River cabernet and the thrilling fresh savoury, saline complexity of its chardonnays. And he thinks SSB blends are under-valued.

When it comes to less traditional varieties he gives a big thumbs up to malbec, which he considers 'a real star' in the region. And commends winemakers for their innovation with varieties like albarino and savagnin. 'There are huge opportunities to experiment and this shows confidence in the region.'

On a roll Peter has another listen-up suggestion. He strongly believes there is significant untapped opportunity in the UK market for Margaret River's 'joyful wines' and envisions wine shop windows dressed with surfboards and blow-up images of the ocean coast.

'The way to win is to create wines others can't replicate,' and he thinks Margaret River does.

'Your winemakers are talented and brilliant company and we need to see more over here to share a beer and boost Margaret River's global reputation.'

Thanks for the invitation Mr Richards. We promise to share more than a beer.

Peter Richards MW is an award-winning writer and broadcaster. He first discovered wine as a journalist in Chile. His latest Wine Blast podcast features Margaret River.



New Releases

This quartet should draw as much attention as the original Fab 4 (aka The Beatles.) Two for the fridge and a standout pair for now or the cellar – spanning both the tradition and diversity of Cape Mentelle’s portfolio.

All wines are available to Wine Club members, online shoppers and at Cellar Door. If you have any queries please contact the helpful Cape Mentelle staff.

T: 08 9757 0812 or

E: cellardoor@capementelle.com.au

CAPE MENTELLE BROOKS SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2024

• *Crisp* • *Radiant* • *Aromatic*

Classic Margaret River blend speaking loud and clear...pure, intense fruit, complex and compelling. Senior winemaker Coralie Lewis is attracted by its ‘Bright summer fruit flavours from the sauvignon blanc and generous texture of the semillon from a warm vintage where the tension and focus remain.’

‘Pale straw, bright green hues. Expressive aromas of grapefruit, green mango and lime. A punchy palate with green melon, passionfruit and guava combines with vibrant citrus creating an elegant crisp wine with driving minerality.’ Match with yuzu kingfish sashimi.

CAPE MENTELLE HERITAGE CHARDONNAY 2023

• *Purity* • *Elegance* • *Finesse*

The Heritage tier chardonnay in the portfolio crafted from fruit from the best blocks at Chapman Brook and Crossroads vineyards – plush with power and depth – and according to winemaker Coralie Lewis the essence of haute couture.

‘Opens with white flowers, sea salt and light pepper evolving to apple tart with bitter almond hints. Poised and precise palate that’s both delicate and dynamic. Complex and intriguing with layered citrus blossom, candied lemon and macadamia balanced by mineral wet stone and flint.’ First catch a dhufish then add lemony sauce!

CAPE MENTELLE WALLCLIFFE CABERNET FRANC 2020

• *Powerful* • *Charming* • *Unexpected*

A stunning expression of our mature cabernet franc blocks, complemented by a smidge of cabernet and merlot, that delivers great class. Lasting memories are made of this.

‘Deep ruby with aromas of blackberry, violets, lavender and spice. Charming precise palate echoing cherry, dried plums and black tea over a core of silky tannins and umami end notes.’ Mushroom fettuccine folks!

CAPE MENTELLE CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2022

• *Elegant* • *Pure* • *Fragrant*

An in-depth exploration of Margaret River’s hero variety. Fine tannins carry the beautiful fruit plushness displaying its formidable regional identity and a long cabernet lineage.

‘Deep ruby with a purple hue. Classic varietal aromas of redcurrants, bramble and fennel seed leading to the notice-me seamless palate of wild cherries and plums with fine tannins and a savoury nori finish.’



Super Cellar

Constancy and care matter in our ever-changing world... That’s why visits to the **Cape Mentelle Cellar Door** are so popular. Our staff proudly offer personal bespoke tastings to showcase the heritage, diversity and appeal of the Cape Mentelle portfolio.

Join us for a memorable Cabernet Cellar Tasting or perhaps a Back Vintage Tasting or Behind the Scenes tour and tasting. Then relax in our outdoor wine lounge... Check the [website](#) for details.

Wine Club

As we head into autumn days shorten and temperatures fall – time to swap chilled rosé and spritzes for some swirl and sip serious reds, which feature in both these mid-year Wine Club selections that will ship mid-year.

Mentelle Explorers Six-Pack offers a contemporary cabernet trio and friends:
2020–2022 *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon*
2022 *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay*
2020 *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Cabernet Franc*
2020 *Cape Mentelle Heritage Shiraz*

Mentelle Collection Six-Pack spans eight exceptional vintages from 2012 to 2020, including five reds and an aged semillon:

2016 *Cape Mentelle Shiraz*
2018 *Cape Mentelle Zinfandel*
2017 *Cape Mentelle Grenache*
2012 *Cape Mentelle Heritage Cabernet Sauvignon*
2020 *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Cabernet Franc*
2017 *Cape Mentelle Semillon*

If you are heading to Margaret River this autumn don’t forget that Wine Club members are invited to join us for a complimentary tasting – for you and your guest. There are two options to choose from daily – the Regional and Heritage Tastings.

If you are not yet a member of our Wine Club and would like to join, please follow this link: www.capementelle.com.au/Wine-Club
We look forward to meeting you!

First Class

Cape Mentelle’s Wine Club is heading up to Mayfair Lane, West Perth for our first off-site member tasting on **Thursday 22 May**.

Two Masterclass sessions will be hosted by Chief of Winemaking and Viticulture David Moulton and Senior Winemaker Coralie Lewis. The evening will feature a curated tasting of current, museum and pre-release Cape Mentelle selections, plus canapés. Strictly a ticketed event. Why not make a night of it and add dinner at Mayfair Lane reputed for

top-notch food and somm Foni Pollitt’s award-winning wine list. Details: wineclub@capementelle.com.au
Cost \$70 per person.



On The Rank

Jane Faulkner sips through 20 global cabernets.

Pics: Orvis Creative



Cabernet cavalcade – Vintage 2021 – requiring concentration.

No discussion about the Cape Mentelle International Cabernet Tasting can start without a big nod to Dave Hohnen. Yes, the legend who co-founded the winery in 1970 and this world-class event in 1982. The reason why it's important to remember this, aside from history and the fact it goes from strength to strength, a thoughtful theme has ensued since its inception – it is an unabashed celebration of cabernet, says Dave.

'There are no winners and no losers. It is a celebration of the variety (or blends), widely regarded as the pinnacle in the evolution of red wine world-wide,' words he posted after attending the 42nd Tasting in November 2024.

Well, he's right. It's not a competition so there aren't winners or losers but gee, the 100-plus cabernet aficionados certainly don't hold back in picking favourites. That's what wine does – it resonates. Some with others, others with some.

All up, 20 distinguished labels from the 2021 vintage featured, tasted blind, in silence,

'That's what wine does – it resonates.'

then later indulged with lunch. That's the way to do it. A bit of concentration while assessing what's in the glass, some variable commentary at the end of each bracket, three all up, and a lot of pleasure afterwards – exquisite food with better discussion.

Now, it's worth noting there's a lot of work, effort and expense to ensure the success of this tasting. It's a big-ticket event, so there's

an expectation icon/cult wines will feature, and they do. While I loathe such descriptors, you get the gist – Bordeaux and the Napa, three from the former the likes of Château Margaux, powerful yet in fine form, and two from the latter including Spottswoode Estate, a personal favourite, always a highlight.

Of course, this cab fest showcases some of the finest from Margaret River, seven all up, plus two very fine Yarra Valley names, Yarra Yering Carrodus and Oakridge 864 Single Block Release; the gorgeous Te Mata Coleraine the only New Zealand entry, plus Tuscany's concentrated Ornellaia La Generosità.

While securing international producers is a priority, what about Australian ones? They are invited to submit wines for consideration, then the Cape Mentelle team led by chief of winemaking/viticulture, David Moulton, considers what to feature. An outsider joins in as the independent palate – it was Freya Hohnen, Dave and Sandy's daughter. Love these connections. Freya also secured

one of the two reputed outliers, Lapostolle 'La Parcelle 8' from the Apalta Valley in Chile, full of voluminous tannins, richness yet composed. The other, the intriguing Oldenburg Rondekop Per Se from Stellenbosch, South Africa. Always a diverse line-up, always plenty of conversation.

While I'm told Cape Mentelle's Cabernet is also judged blind, I say, really? If you're



hosting such a significant vinous experience, and have done so for 42 years, give yourself permission to be included regardless. You've earned that right.

However, David says it's about showcasing the components of structure, complexity, ageability, plus importantly, pedigree. I reckon Cape Mentelle's Cabernet fits the brief.

Anyway, all the Margaret River inclusions were excellent, that's not bias, they are world-class: Cullen Diana Madeline, Fermoy Reserve, Xanadu, Stella Bella, Voyager Estate MJW and Devil's Lair, the latter one of my top wines on the day, plus the brilliant Houghton Jack Mann from Frankland River.

In Cape Mentelle's barrel hall, while tasting each bracket noting differences and similarities alongside preferences especially the beguiling, wandering thoughts, I think gosh, what a lot of glassware to wash – several thousand by day's end (bravo to all staff), then I look up and see Dave, Sandy by his side, Freya opposite, immersed in cabernet, relishing it all. It's a joyous sight.

Just before lunch, Dave mentions his most enjoyable drink of the day is the Oldenburg. And that's what all wine including great cabernet should be about, enjoyment.

Jane Faulkner was a guest of Cape Mentelle 42nd International Cabernet Tasting. The 43rd will be held on 21 November 2025.

Talking Tradition

Pics: Ovis Creative



Cape Mentelle's oldest vines 55-year old Estate Heritage Cabernet at veraison.

Recently Jancis Robinson MW posted news that the **Old Vine Registry** now lists over 4000 vineyards worldwide, and among them Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Vineyard that boasts an esteemed 55 years since conception.

Why do old vines matter?

According to Jancis it's because 'they represent part of our ecological heritage, they withstand the vagaries of climate much better than young vines' and significantly because 'there is the small matter of the generally superior quality of wine they yield.'

Simply put, age does matter. And not just of the vine but also the gently maturing wine, be it in amphorae, medium toast French oak barriques, big casks or even still novel concrete eggs. And then of course that extra delicate matter of ageing your prize new additions to the home cellar. Yes, the latest case of Limited Release Margaret River Cabernet does deserve temperature-controlled storage, not a random spot under the stairs squeezed next to the golf clubs.

Margaret River is blessed with a five-decade-plus wine history and Cape Mentelle was there at the get go. Sure there are stories about some early plantings going into the ground upside down (not entirely unrelated

to the recreational habits of the early vineyard crew) and many other tales best not be told. But 50-plus years do add up. And in Margaret River its vigneronns have nurtured a heritage that is deeply rooted and applauded.

Margs is all about tradition. Traditional varieties. Cabernet Sauvignon and chardonnay. Shiraz and the region's very own 'SBS' Bordeaux inspired blend. And largely traditional viticulture. Not too many low, close-planted vines between Vasse and Witchcliffe.

'Old vines represent our ecological heritage.'

JANCIS ROBINSON MW

Thumbs up too for other solid Margs traditions – the preservation and conservation of the glorious coastline, the Cape-to-Cape landscape and its landmarks, including the actual Cape named Mentelle by French explorer Baudin after French Mentelle brothers, geographer Edmund and cartographer Francois-Simon. We're sure they'd approve one special Indian Ocean view, from the evergreen White Elephant Café.

At Cape Mentelle we're proud to celebrate tradition, albeit with a focus on heritage-led innovation, and recognition for our winemakers dedicated to crafting peerless wines that proudly espouse their terroir, old vine status, constancy and prestige quality.

This issue of *Mentelle Notes* features four wines with eminent lineage. Be sure to try them all!

Winner Winner

More than chicken dinner in Margaret River.

MIKI'S OPEN KITCHEN

Simply a must. Miki's modern Japanese-accented restaurant is a local icon where innovative chef Miki weaves magic. The focus is local and fresh and menus comprise anywhere between 14 and 24 elements, all paired to a wide selection of regional wines and sake. Book well ahead or run the risk of missing out. T: 08 9758 7673



Miki's morsels delight...

LA SCARPETTA TRATTORIA

Specialising in authentic Italian dishes from fresh, locally sourced ingredients, with pastas made daily by Italian chefs. The pappardelle with lamb ragu is a dead-set match for Margs shiraz. Bene, bene! T: 08 9757 9234

MAI TARDI GELATO

Always a favourite at Movies at Cape Mentelle, Mai Tardi now has a stunning new gelateria in town. Born in Italy, made in Margaret River, feel like you're in Europe as you stroll in for this unique gelato experience. Bellissimo! T: 0448 591 782

MORRIES

The locals' fave drop-in cocktail bar. Sit out on the main street sipping chill-time creative and classic cocktails with tapas-style share plates, seasonally inspired. T: 08 9758 8280

NORMAL VAN

Starting life as a food truck, Normal Van is now firmly established as a Margaret River favourite right in the heart of town. Go for seriously good burgers, everything made from scratch, plus an ever-changing menu of North American food done right! T: 0475 442 566

SETTLERS TAVERN

A local institution renowned for its multi-award-winning wine list with 40+ wines by the glass and 600 bottles in their legendary Wine Bible – something for every palate. Add grown up pub grub and regular live entertainment and you're guaranteed a great night out. T: 08 9757 2398



Planting Guide



Above: The planting crew. Below: From little things big things grow...

No, we aren't talking planting runner beans in the veggie patch. But the vineyard team led by viticulturist Annabel England has over time been implementing an extensive vineyard rejuvenation program at two of Cape Mentelle's mature vineyards – the original Trinders Estate and at the Chapman Brook Vineyard.

Simply put, vines age and their productivity wanes. Viticultural research and vine management protocols change too, so it's a given vineyards are never static.

Over the past couple of years serious effort has gone into renovating certain Cape Mentelle sites. The western side of the Trinders Vineyard (previously planted to sauvignon blanc and semillon) has had plenty of TLC – cover cropping to build soil health and organic matter – followed by the planting of two blocks of cabernet sauvignon, on different rootstock matched to the characteristic soil type.

Budwood of the chosen 412 Bordeaux clone was propagated on rootstocks and planted in spring as dormant vines, according to the new block design. Then just add trellising and irrigation and wait for the new vines to flourish. If only it was that simple.

Over 11,000 cabernet vines were planted. The entire process essentially involving the total removal of the original Trinders vineyard spanned four years, an exercise in logistics, patience and sheer hard work by the energetic



Cape Mentelle vineyard team and the Tongan support crew.

There has also been regeneration work at the Chapman Brook Vineyard where chardonnay rules the rows. New plantings, to be specific 17,000 vines of the Gingin clone were established in 2024 with more planned, along with a strategic refinement of vine and row spacings based on insights gleaned over the past 30-years.

All up the crew dug 28,000 holes, installed 5198 posts, 272 strainers, 49.8km of wire and 25km of irrigation dripline. That could be a question for a budding viticultural whizz ABC *Hard Quiz* contestant.

Vintage Preview

There is one sure thing about the Margaret River 2025 Vintage, not all the weather reports will be accurate.

Some long-term forecasters are predicting volatility...fancy that! However, we can report that spring was slightly warmer than average with ample rainfall. The resulting soil moisture levels created the need for more regular slashing of the inter-row pasture. As we head into the ripening phase of the season the vine canopies look exceptional, verdant green and healthy.

Looking closer, the cabernet bunches are pleasingly elongated, plumping up nicely. And the new clonal blocks on the hill at the Wallcliffe Vineyard appear exceptional. Mantras running...

Down at the Chapman Brook and Crossroads vineyards (20km south of Margaret River) the portents are good too. The chardonnay blocks are also showing good canopies, which will assist the development of fruit elegance and balancing acidity. As ever, the vintner's fingers are crossed!



Pic: Ovis Creative

The first pick is always chardonnay.

'Wine is one of the noblest cordials in nature.'

JOHN WESLEY

All Stars

Calling future Mentelle Ambassadors!

Long-time *Mentelle Notes* readers will be aware of the 'be-in-it-to-win-it' **Mentelle Ambassador** program – and the chance to win a Mixed Case of Cape Mentelle's finest! All you need is your phone and a fave Cape Mentelle bottle in a far-flung, exotic or special local location... Take a happy snap and send it to us!

Back in the day Cape Mentelle fans sent grainy travel photos from distant destinations clutching their ambassadorial bottles – atop camels at the Egyptian pyramids, on Antarctic icebergs with penguins, scuba diving on coral reefs. More recently, Sydneysider Ben Tolstoshev was captured celebrating the New Year in true Mentelle style.



No guesses where Ben Tolstoshev went...

Now it's up to you gentle MN readers to get out and about. Whether you are on a Mekong River cruise, trekking in Nepal or catching trout in NZ be sure to take a Cape Mentelle bottle along on the adventure (or to Nana's 100th birthday). Take a selfie (high res image) and send it to: info@capementelle.com.au

If *Mentelle Notes* publishes your image, the prize is a current release mixed case. Snap!



International Womens' Day 2024.

King Fit

If you are not an ardent royalist you may have missed a moment late last year when King Charles III and Queen Camilla were briefly Down Under. One night they dined with PM Albanese and Co. whose catering team chose among others to pour *Cape Mentelle Marmaduke Cabernet Sauvignon 2023*. We're sure it was a sovereign match with the WA black barley falafel or maybe too, the smoked chicken terrine.

'I have to admit it's not every day you get to say royalty has sipped your wine! What a buzz for the Cape Mentelle team,' enthused Cape Mentelle's David Moulton, who is hoping the Palace cellarmaster now has Margaret River cabernet on HRH's radar.

And just for reference *Cape Mentelle Marmaduke* is not named after the comic strip Great Dane. Rather it honours Marmaduke Terry a surveyor and Margaret River resident who in 1990 discovered the Mammoth Cave in Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park.



Musts

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS' DAY @ CAPE MENTELLE

7 March

Grazing lunch in the Vat Cellar
Hosted by Margaret River Business Network and Cape Mentelle

Bookings: <https://mrcci.com.au/event/international-womens-day/>

CAPE MENTELLE INTERNATIONAL CABERNET TASTING 2025

21 November

20 Global Cabernets from 2022 Vintage
Focal Event – Pair'd Festival 2025

Enquiries:
cabernet.tasting@capementelle.com.au

Latest Drops

CAPE MENTELLE WALLCLIFFE SAUVIGNON BLANC 2022

'Rich and exotic on the nose... upswell of voluminous fruit...aromas of gooseberry and enoki...aniseed, white chocolate... Has generosity, phenolics and spice to boot. I like this 2022 iteration the best of the Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blancs...robust and powerful yet remains fresh...'

94 POINTS, Erin Larkin, WINE ADVOCATE

CAPE MENTELLE CHARDONNAY 2022

'Aromatic, warm and textural chardonnay, sunny in disposition... Lime peel, citrus, white peach, toast and almond meal aromas. Speaks of summer stone fruit, nougat and lifted citrus, well defined...Almost understated... except for middle palate richness and texture. Good tension throughout. Good length.'

93 POINTS, Jeni Port, WINE PILOT

CAPE MENTELLE WALLCLIFFE CABERNET FRANC 2020

'Right Bank influenced Bordeaux blend (91% cabernet franc.) A mix of red berry and dark cherry and violet on the nose. Palate still quite tight but elegantly framed with firm fine tannins. A serious statement of cab franc with cellaring potential.'

94 POINTS, Ray Jordan
WA WINE REVIEW 2025

CAPE MENTELLE SHIRAZ 2020

'Amazing bright colour for starters, all dark purple shot with black and red. The delight continues across a fuller-bodied palate – dark plums, cloves, turmeric and Sichuan pepper – a bit of excitement here. Tannins are shapely, slightly grainy and everything plays a harmonious chord.'

95 POINTS, Jane Faulkner
HALLIDAY WINE COMPANION 2025

CAPE MENTELLE HERITAGE SHIRAZ 2020

'A marvellous ensemble production. Fruit from three vineyards...comes together to produce a corker of a shiraz. A flurry of fragrant, sweet mulberry, bramble, plum with Aussie bush notes, spice...Unfolds cleanly, evenly, across the palate...Margaret River shiraz at its bright and lifted best.'

95 POINTS, Jeni Port, WINE PILOT