

MENTELLE NOTES

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David Hohnen's latest passion is his classy roadster Triumph Bonneville T214.

On His Bike

It is 50 years since the Hohnen family established Cape Mentelle, led by David Hohnen for over three decades.

These days David Hohnen is happiest talking to you about his pasture-reared mostly caramel-coloured pigs or the smoky, succulent charcuterie they make at The Farm House, the Margaret River based farm shop, smokehouse and butchery established by 'Farmer Dave' in the post-Mentelle era. Their plump porcine bloodline is primarily Tamworth, with a splash of Berkshire, Duroc and Landrace. According to David, genetics matter.

It's likely he might pour a generous glass of Tempranillo with their barbecued chorizo sausages, David's current favourite alternative

campus in California. He journeyed back via Taltarni in Victoria's Pyrenees (Hohnen arrived in the early 70's in time for the first commercial harvest) at the behest of global agribusiness entrepreneur, and still Taltarni's proprietor, John Goelet, whom David attributes as pivotal to inspiring his career.

The return of the prodigal and the participation of David's brother Mark in the early Cape Mentelle days are well documented in Peter Forrestal's book *The Way It Was*.

'In the beginning it was hard going. And there is great irony in the fact that it was

'I didn't start with a grand vision. It was head down, arse up and no time to dream.'

red variety. But our talk is less about charred meat, and more about the River's classic red varieties and Cape Mentelle's foundation.

Cape Mentelle evolved in the 1970s from a friendship between David's father John and neighbour, surgeon Tom Cullity (Vasse Felix) while David was studying wine at the Fresno

Cloudy Bay's sudden success and recognition (1986) that filtered back to Cape Mentelle,' mused David. 'Plus of course the dual Jimmy Watson trophies for 1982 and 1983 Cabernet. We really didn't have wheels till Cloudy Bay.'

'I didn't start with a grand vision. It was head down, arse up and no time to dream.'

But gradually Cape Mentelle's reputation grew and in 1990 David attracted a suitor, the Champagne house Moët Hennessy that would subsequently take Cape Mentelle's now legendary Cabernet (and the CMV portfolio) to the world.

That is one of David's proudest business achievements. 'We developed a wine estate that has contributed to Brand Australia, Brand WA and Brand Margaret River, and we did it very successfully.'

Asked about his personal legacy, Hohnen hesitates. 'I think I built an inclusive culture and empowered people. We stayed humble.' Few would challenge that, but not every day was a winner.

'I made mistakes,' confesses David 'because I was a softie with self-serving people.'

But he was a stickler for vineyard management and winemaking.

'To make landmark wines you have to walk the vineyard and be a good observer. You have to have eyes under the ground and smell the soil to understand.' In his holistic view any successful winemaker needs to be across soil, bugs, minerality and plant genetics, for starters.

Such insights may not have been to the fore in the Nineties but the 1991 – 1993 vintages are in David's mind the best of his tenure. A 50th Anniversary retrospective tasting is yet to determine this.

Margaret River's future won't rely on the outcome, which David feels is assured.

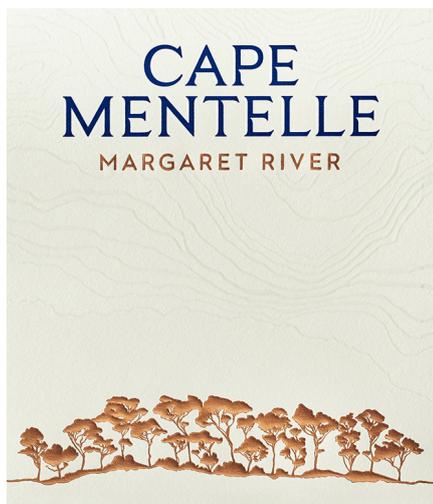
'These days society needs to be entertained. There is Byron, Noosa and Margs. But we have agriculture, tourism and wine. So we're fine, and we can earn a few bucks and repeat customers,' muses the pig farmer.

'Cape Mentelle is a destination winery and hasn't veered far from its origins. There is a humble quiet confidence about the estate that I founded, and there are no bells and baubles...'

It's just how he likes it. And if the rammed earth walls could talk they would surely endorse the legacy that David Hohnen has gifted the brand he created.

Ed's Note: Just for the record, Mentelle Notes originated in 1982 and has been published almost continuously since.

New Releases



This issue of *Mentelle Notes* showcases two tempting new releases, both summer sippers! These wines are available to members of the Cape Mentelle Wine Club, online shoppers and at the Cellar Door. If you have any queries about the selection, please contact the knowledgeable Cape Mentelle staff.
T: 08 9757 0812 or
E: cellardoor@capementelle.com.au

CAPE MENTELLE ROSÉ 2019

Seductive. Summery. Sippable.

An almost fanciful blend of no less than nine different red varieties combine to create this delicate rose petal pink, zingy spicy rosé. Mostly shiraz, the traditional saignée method combines eight other red grapes, from zinfandel and pinot noir to savoury sangiovese and graciano.

'It seduces with strawberry, watermelon and rose petal aromas with hints of honeysuckle, lemon zest and lingering minerality. The medium weight palate is long and expressive, creamy too with a hint of salinity...' Just succumb.

CAPE MENTELLE SEMILLON 2017

Textural. Arresting. Unique.

Predominantly semillon from the Chapman Brook vineyard and vinified in a unique 700-litre concrete egg, this wine was aged unsulphured on lees for two years with regular lees stirring.

'Bursts forth with wisteria blossom, lime leaf and cut hay evolving to a restrained mineral, linear and savoury palate with hints of cream. Medium weight, rich yet lithe with intriguing peach and toasted pecan notes.'

Red Classic

Just in time to mark the end of our 50th Anniversary year comes the addition of a new red wine to the Cape Mentelle portfolio. In fact it's really an evolution from the once *Trinders Cabernet Merlot* to the new *Cape Mentelle Shiraz Cabernet 2017* – that classic Aussie varietal blend. This new stallion in the Cape Mentelle stable is a bit of a ground-breaker for the Margaret River region and evokes the plush spice and savoury notes of shiraz with the elegance and length of cabernet.

Originally launched in the US market, it has already attracted the attention of US wine commentator James Suckling who rated it 92 POINTS. And WA's Ray Jordan commends its striking balance. '*Seamlessly constructed with a layer of plush fruit coated with a thin veneer of oak...*' That bodes well, as does his rating – 92 POINTS.

The winemakers are proud of their new progeny...so try it soon!

CAPE MENTELLE SHIRAZ CABERNET 2017

Balanced. Expressive. Intense.

'Deep garnet with black cherry and charcuterie aromas, tinges of licorice, cardamom and tobacco. Rich powerful palate with more dark berries, truffles, earthiness rounded with plush volume and length.'

Old and Rare

It's said good things come in small parcels. Well the **Cape Mentelle Back Vintage Collection** does too and offers exceptional wines from our cool, temperature controlled cellars. This rare opportunity affords Cape Mentelle Wine Club members and connoisseurs an exclusive chance to secure highly collectable wines.

The cellar selection of 10 older vintages includes *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2010*, *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay 2011* rated 97 Points by Jeremy Oliver; *Cape Mentelle Shiraz 2011* 'One of the finest shiraz in the state' according to Ray Jordan; and four iconic vintages of *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon* – 2010, 2007, 2000 and 1999.

Limited allocations may apply to some vintages. To enquire please call the Cellar Door. T: 08 9757 0812
E: cellardoor@capementelle.com.au

Wine Club

Most wineries have a wine club. At Cape Mentelle we have several! So you are able to mix 'n' match your wine preferences and choose a tier that best suits your wine needs. Or those of your friends or family if you choose to gift a membership... and it is nearly Christmas!

The newly launched **Mentelle Companion** club tier offers access to pre-release wines and the Back Vintage Cellar, plus invitations to special events. The initial purchase tier is \$500. All wine orders attract a 15% member saving and free freight Australia-wide. Membership offers convenience, exclusivity and savings. www.capementelle.com.au/Wine-Club/Mentelle-Companion

Alternative Club options include the **Mentelle Explorers** and the prestige **Mentelle Collection**.

To give you a preview taste, here is the current exclusive **Mentelle Collection** Museum Release offer, one carefully cellar-aged bottle of the following:

- 2010 *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon*
96 POINTS
Halliday Wine Companion
- 2016 *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Sauvignon Blanc Semillon*
95 POINTS
Halliday Wine Companion
- 2013 *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay*
97 POINTS
Halliday Wine Companion
- 2012 *Cape Mentelle Shiraz*
97 POINTS
Ray Jordan, Weekend West
- 2014 *Cape Mentelle Wallcliffe Cabernet, Cabernet Franc*
96 POINTS
Huon Hooke, huonhooke.com
- 2014 *Cape Mentelle Cabernet Sauvignon* (cork)
98 POINTS
Huon Hooke, huonhooke.com

Club members now have the option of bespoking their selections – your favourites, our treats and more. To do so members are invited to log into their accounts and go to the 'Club List' for the available wines. www.capementelle.com.au/Wine-Club or contact cellardoor@capementelle.com.au



A Cuppa with Jancis

Jancis Robinson MW joined Mentelle Notes for a chat and a cuppa from her Languedoc home...



Pic (Left): Roel Loopers, (Right): Elizabeth Clancy

Serious cab chat, 1988 Cape Mentelle Cab Tasting – David Hohnen and Jancis – then and now.

In other circumstances it's quite possible that the global wine doyenne Jancis Robinson MW might have journeyed to Margaret River to help celebrate Cape Mentelle's 50th Anniversary.

Jancis was the special guest at the 1988 Cabernet Tasting (and again in 2017) and originally wrote in *Mentelle Notes*:

'What cabernet sauvignon has however, arguably more than any other grape variety, is the ability to produce wines that have the potential not just to last but to evolve into something much more subtle and richly complicated...'

The intervening three-plus decades have certainly delivered evolution for us all, a perfect excuse to touch base for a wide-ranging chat with the world's most influential wine commentator.

MN: November marks the 20th Anniversary of your website www.jancisrobinson.com How has our appetite for wine knowledge changed in the past two decades?

JR: 'I think wine consumers have become much more sceptical and knowledgeable – which is great. Scores no longer dominate consumer thought even if merchants still rely on them too much for their sales pitches. I also like the fact that wine drinkers can and do choose from a much wider range of accepted good and great wines – not just the old European classics but a wealth of different styles, provenances and grape varieties.'

MN: What in your world view primarily distinguishes the Margaret River region from other southern hemisphere wine producing countries (South Africa, NZ, Chile etc)?

JR: 'Am I allowed to say the scenery?! It's such a great region for tourism. Some of the others have stunning scenery but some pretty crippling social problems. And I love the fact that Margaret River produces equally good reds and whites.'

MN: Are you an advocate of blind tasting?

JR: 'Professionally when tasting a group of similar wines such as young Bordeaux, it's wonderful to judge how they taste without the distraction of labels and reputations.'

'I'm a strong proponent of fine Australian cabernet and don't think it quite gets its due.'

But the Bordeaux producers have now forbidden it for the *en primeur* tastings! As for tasting completely blind as a party trick, you can waste a heck of a lot of good wine while trying to make up your mind...

When I started out everyone expected me to get it wrong and only remembered when I got it right. Now, alas, it's the other way round. I can't win!

MN: What is your earliest memory of a Cape Mentelle wine?

JR: 'I'm sure it's not the first CM wine I had but I vividly remember being invited by David Hohnen to the Cabernet Tasting in 1988.'

I remember spending the afternoon on the beach before having to pontificate and making the point that cabernet is about so much more than fruit.'

MN: This has surely been a challenging year. How have you and your wine team managed to navigate the hurdles and still report the world's wine news?

JR: 'I am rather ashamed to report that, much to my surprise, JR.com has proved relatively virus-proof. All of the 15 team members have always worked from home anyway. And during lockdown much of life has been lived online so we saw a distinct increase in site traffic, not least because we worked very hard to produce a massive international list of wine retailers who would deliver to self isolators, and also offered three months' free membership to our informative **Purple Pages**, to those in the beleaguered hospitality industry.'

MN: What is your preferred red grape variety?

JR: 'It's very wimpy not to make up my mind but honestly I don't have favourites in wine (though I wave the flag for underdogs such as riesling – which I do know is not red). I just love the variety and being able to choose something different every evening.'

MN: Australian winemakers are increasingly exploring the suitability of numerous 'alternative varieties'. Which alternative varieties do you think will do well here? Or should we stick to the classics?

JR: 'Definitely not stick to the classics to the exclusion of all else – though I'm a strong proponent of fine Australian cabernet and don't think it quite gets its due.'

I'm glad grenache is getting its day in the sun, and of course there's a host of other Iberian and Italian varieties that should flourish.'

MN: What are you sipping while chatting to Mentelle Notes?

JR: A mug of tea in the Languedoc waiting to be interviewed by Elaine Chukan Brown, one of our team members for her online series *Between the Wines*.

The indefatigable Jancis Robinson MW, OBE is the wine columnist for the Financial Times and founder of JancisRobinson.com Hopefully she will get back to Margs soon.

Sky High



Keeping an eye on the vineyards with Cape Mentelle's all-seeing drone.

Fifty years ago when Cape Mentelle was established, vineyard management was a matter of walking the rows with eyes wide open, looking for growth and nutrient factors, and any pests and disease. Then the vineyard crew would descend to rectify trouble spots.

We still walk the rows, but these days some of the viticultural observations, notably canopy growth and vine health, are undertaken by a drone. The aerial surveillance overseen by Aerovines, measures vegetative density (NDVI). This vegetative index measures chlorophyll levels in the leaves, an indicator of vine health. Simply put, if a vine is dehydrated or diseased it absorbs more infrared light and this is detectable in the images recorded by the drone.

Such precision viticulture is used to tailor bespoke selections in the vineyard.

'So instead of picking whole rows or blocks of our cabernet, we actually isolate sub-selections. They might get pruned or shoot-thinned differently and we can target compost applications on weaker vigour sections.'

Viticulturist David Moulton likes his new vineyard inspector.

'It will never completely replace the ability of the viticulture and winemaking team to appraise the vines and taste the fruit, but the drone images tell us where to look. It is a snapshot of the vineyard at a key point, not altered by opinion or time and delivers a high level of accuracy to assist both vine management and picking decisions.'
Almost as good as frequent flyer points...

Vintage Report 2020

Given all the turmoil of the year it is pleasing to be able to report that Vintage 2020 was a boomer in Margaret River. The salient facts are that it was the warmest vintage in over seven years (33 days over 30°C), and considerably drier than average – the rain gauge was 11% down on preferred levels. The effect of these two factors was predictable – lower yields for the white varieties and just on average for the reds, leading to a shorter, more hectic harvest period – and peerless quality grapes.

On the upside, all varieties achieved impeccable ripeness and incredible fruit

intensity and captivating lingering aromatics. The standout white variety is chardonnay, destined according to winemaker Ben Cane, to be a magical wine.

Among the reds both cabernet and shiraz impress. The shiraz for its spicy pepperiness and depth of fruit, while the cabernet sauvignon evokes compact seamless tannins, dark berries and a complementary mocha palate. Start salivating now...

Ben rates the year 8 - 9 (out of 10) that equates to a classic year for Margaret River. So do be sure to look out for these beguiling beauties when they make their debut.

Cape Mentelle's Big Screen

Warm summer nights, picnic rugs and the big screen... What better way to unwind than al fresco movies under the stars? **Movies at Cape Mentelle** opens again on 11 December and is guaranteed to divert and delight. Enjoy the old faves, thrillers and arthouse selections with friends – and glasses of your favourite CMV wines! More fun than Netflix on the sofa. Details: www.capementelle.com.au/Events



Wide Horizons

Eugene Tan in focus at Cape Mentelle.



Pic: Aquabumps

Cape Mentelle's 50th Anniversary continues on the east coast this month at Bondi Beach – a coast-to-coast inter-active photographic celebration and tasting to celebrate the Mentelle milestone with a marine theme. Cape Mentelle has collaborated with

photographer Eugene Tan of Aquabumps to capture unique and memorable moments that will be shared at the **Explore Your Horizon** pop-up exhibition, 28 - 29 November at the North Bondi Surf Club (Level 2). To join us please [click here](#) or go to eventbrite.com.au

Penny's Thoughts



Meet Cape Mentelle Estate Director.

Penny Dickeson now helms the company and shares her grand plans.

Penny may have been born in the nation's capital but is a proud Adelaide girl. Although the world of wine didn't impinge on her formative years, by her 18th birthday friends had noticed an evolving passion and collaborated to give her a cherished wine rack. While studying commerce and management at Adelaide University, Penny's wine interests evolved, especially through weekend sorties into South Australia's icon regions – the Barossa, Adelaide Hills, Clare, McLaren Vale and Coonawarra.

Perfect backgrounding for a post at Deloitte in Adelaide where her primary audit client was a large French wine and spirits producer (Hint: not LVMH).

'I spent a great deal of time in winery offices and one of my favourite tasks was the stocktake when I would spend days in cellars, and inevitably they finished with a glass...'

A decade ago Penny sought an overseas experience and accepted a position in New Zealand at Cloudy Bay becoming the company's Operations Controller.

'The past decade at Cloudy Bay has instilled significant skills and I take pride in my holistic view and role as a guardian of the heritage of Cape Mentelle in its 50th year. We are all here to nurture that legacy and the land for future generations.

'That's what the Maori call *Kaitiakitanga* and we can learn to share their aspirations to care for our land.'

Penny is moving to Margaret River from Marlborough with her husband Graham and two young boys who are already aspirant members of the local Margs Nippers Club. Surfing classes are not far off.

Her favourite wine variety is chardonnay and there is already a project afoot to create an iconic Cape Mentelle Chardonnay, crafted from 'magic parcels' carefully selected from mature vineyards.

'If you can bottle magic, why wouldn't you?' poses Penny. Indeed.

The advent of the next 50 years heralds exciting evolution and innovation at Cape Mentelle, kicked off by the passionate new Estate Director. And you can be sure the stocktakes will be accurate.

Halliday's Highlights

If ever there was a go-to reference for Australian wines, it's the annual *Halliday Wine Companion*. The recently published 2021 Edition again rates Cape Mentelle 5 Red Stars (Outstanding) and showcases three wines rated over 95 Points.

So to celebrate we have created the **HALLIDAY WINE COMPANION SIX-PACK** – two bottles of each wine listed below:



CAPE MENTELLE CHARDONNAY 2017

'Takes a milli-second for its flavour mass to reach every corner of the mouth...'
97 POINTS

CAPE MENTELLE TWO VINEYARDS SHIRAZ 2016

'A powerful layered shiraz of great length and balance.' 97 POINTS

CAPE MENTELLE CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2016

'Cape Mentelle has some very expensive but very effective grape sorting equipment and that may be part of the reason for the purity and singularity of this beautiful cabernet.'
98 POINTS

[ORDER HERE](#) or from the Cellar Door.

Shop Online

The Cape Mentelle Online Wine Shop is just a click away for all your favourite wine orders. All purchases of 12 bottles or more receive a 10% **SAVING** and **FREE FREIGHT** in Australia. And you can also send wine to Singapore or Hong Kong at attractive freight rates. Please contact us:
www.capementelle.com.au/Wines/Buy-Wine

Cabernet Parade

Not even a global pandemic can stop the **Cape Mentelle International Cabernet Tasting**, especially in our big anniversary year. While the guests will necessarily be local, the wines from the 2017 vintage will be representative of the world's best cabernets. For the 38th Cabernet Tasting wines have been selected from Tuscany, South Africa, Napa Valley, Chile, Bordeaux, and of course, the one and only, Margaret River.

Guests at this year's event will enjoy a post-tasting long lunch prepared by renowned WA chef Kate Lamont. On the menu – Exmouth prawns, Shark Bay whiting, Pemberton marron and for the cabernets – succulent duck confit, followed by cheese, and birthday cake. A fitting celebration indeed!



The very first 1982 Cape Mentelle Cabernet Tasting, at the winery.

'The variety was cabernet sauvignon, the year 1982. I can't be sure, but I think I was at the first event, and have been to several over the ensuing years. Cape Mentelle got the formula right from the word go and, sensibly, hasn't tinkered with it since.' JAMES HALLIDAY

Travel Alert

Staying positive is important, especially at the moment when all our travel plans are hampered and restricted to closer-to-home escapades. But that doesn't have to inhibit any budding **Mentelle Ambassadors**. You may recall that in the past *Mentelle Notes* ran an encompassing global Mentelle Ambassador campaign – well, it has been revived!

Next time you are in a remote or exciting location, whether it be Darwin or Devon, Kakadu or Kyoto, be sure to take (or buy) a bottle of Cape Mentelle and keep your eyes peeled for a unique photo opportunity – of you or someone you love with your favourite CMV bottle. Send that photo (high resolution please) to info@capementelle.com.au

The winning image will be published in *Mentelle Notes* and social media and the winner will receive a mixed case of Cape Mentelle's finest.

And now a drum roll for Paula and Andy Toshack from Perth, the winning Mentelle Ambassadors for 2020 who trekked to a beach villa at Monkey Mia on the WA north-west coast and chilled with *Cape Mentelle Chardonnay* after dark. Congratulations!



Oceans away for Cape Mentelle Chardonnay.

Musts

Looking towards a new year...

MOVIES @ CAPE MENTELLE

11 DECEMBER 2020 – 13 MARCH 2021

www.capementelle.com.au/Events/Movies-at-Cape-Mentelle

GOOD FOOD & WINE SHOW 2021

SYDNEY – 25 JUNE 2021

PERTH – 30 JULY 2021

www.goodfoodshow.com.au



Field Games – Mentals vs Loonies 1986.

Golden Daze

MN's chat with founder David Hohnen sparked some funny memories and the one about the annual Golden Chook softball challenge against the Loonies crew at neighbouring Leeuwin Estate. Back then proprietor Dennis Horgan had recruited American personal motivator Lou Earl Tice, since deceased, to inspire his winery team.

The Mentals decided to rev the troops with 'Blue Twice' who roared onto the pitch driven by viticulturist and tactician Brenton Air in a show-stopper canary yellow Ford Compass. He did a sharp 360-handbrake turn and slid sideways on slippery turf into the Leeuwin shrubbery, taking the entire irrigation system with him. Blue's bottle of bourbon did little to dull the pain of that or of watching the Mental's Trooper Hooper whacking countless home runs into the trees. In his acceptance speech captain coach Hohnen said. 'Never in the field of human motivation, or indeed any other field, has so much been dug up by one man.' Those were the days.

Wine Peeps

Cape Mentelle's Cellar Door is 'back to normal' and looks forward to welcoming wine explorers wending their way to southwest WA.

The **Behind the Scenes** tours have restarted and offer our guests a very personal and enjoyable experience. The tour [90 minutes] includes a guided vineyard walk and private tasting of six current release Cape Mentelle wines, paired with local produce. Bookings are essential.

Another Cellar Door diversion may be a game of petanque in the winery's native gardens...What better way to while away an al fresco afternoon!
www.capementelle.com.au/Cellar-Door/Tours-and-Tastings

Latest Drops

CAPE MENTELLE SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2019

'This has a fresh, lemon and lime nose with a herbal edge, too. The palate has some attractive peaches and lemons, as well as a smooth, fresh, gently herb-tinged finish.'

92 POINTS, JAMES SUCKLING.COM

CAPE MENTELLE SHIRAZ 2017

'Plums and sweet tobacco...It shows a vivid and bright palate with very fine tannins and a crisp long finish.'

92 POINTS, JAMES SUCKLING.COM

CAPE MENTELLE TWO VINEYARDS SHIRAZ 2016

'A deluxe Cape Mentelle wine...Seriously structured with ample fine-grained tannins.'

95 POINTS, Huon Hooke
GOURMET TRAVELLER WINE

'Rich, savoury, complex and appealing bouquet, which combines black fruits and spices, touches of dried herbs and on the palate, fruit-sweet nuances. Hints of vanilla, chocolate and ironstone-mineral traces. Ample tannins balance the generous flavour...Full-bodied and savoury: a totally serious shiraz. The finish is long and resonant.'

95 POINTS, Huon Hooke, THE REAL REVIEW

CAPE MENTELLE CHARDONNAY 2017

'Creamy, crushed cashews, almond meal, yellow peach and a salty, pithy acid line. Refreshing and bright, but also round and rich. Power and drive from the Gin Gin fruit. Good length. Cooler vintage equals tighter, more refined, leaner... this has a more linear approach.'

18.3/20 POINTS, ERIN LARKIN.COM.AU

CAPE MENTELLE ZINFANDEL 2017

'Got the Gold ribbon. A bright, youthful wine...an array of spices meld happily with quality toasty oak, mulberries and plums. There's nothing shy about it, concentrated and ripe, yet balanced and demanding the next sip. Red raisins, cinnamon and those dark plums return. A delicious wine...'

95 POINTS, THE REAL REVIEW