

Rieslingfreak opens cellar door

By Dave Brookes

1 Aug, 2024

Rieslingfreak has opened its tasting room. Dave Brookes went along to the opening and, of course, tasted some riesling.

It's always an exciting time when those Rieslingfreaks drop their new releases. And this year is doubly awesome as the wonderful John and Belinda Hughes have a shiny new tasting room to share with visitors to the Barossa Valley.

You couldn't find better ambassadors for Australian riesling than the dynamic Rieslingfreak duo; their love for riesling and winemaking acumen is without peer, and their beautiful wines show the clearest of ground-to-glass transmission, shall we say, the cleanest of broadcasts of sub-regional nuance for our much-loved variety.

First, the tasting room. It's a lovely, light-filled oasis on St Hallett Road, and should definitely make it onto your shortlist of places to visit when you head to Australia's most famous wine region. There is a range of tasting experiences on offer – from the 'Everyday Freak', which is a guided tasting through the latest releases across the styles and regions, to the 'Superfreak', which is a very tempting tasting of the latest releases followed by lunch at fermentAsian.



Rieslingfreak has opened its highly anticipated tasting room.

A vertical tasting of John and Belinda's stellar wines is aptly named the 'Vertical Freak', or select the epic long lunch at Vintners Bar & Grill, fermentAsian, Char Barossa or Otherness with the freak himself, John, selecting a range of wines for lunch.

Long lunches are a thing of legend in the Barossa and a person's 'lunch technique' is an oft-discussed metric that takes into account gustatory enthusiasm and stamina, along with a diner's wine knowledge, sense of humour and conviviality. Here is a chance to learn from one of the very best.

The pristine Rieslingfreak wines are sourced from a number of sites in the Clare and Eden valleys. There are a slew of rieslings that come from the Hughes family vineyard, owned by Richard and Anne

Hughes, in the Clare Valley. Wines No.2 and No.8 hail from Jaeschke vineyard in the revered sub-region of Polish Hill, and the No.14 comes from equally-famed terroir of Watervale.



Choose your level of 'Freak' when it comes to tastings.

Whereas wines No.4, No.11, No.12 and No.44 are all Eden Valley born. Two of the vineyards are located in Flaxman Valley in High Eden, farmed by Michael Mason and Ben Zander, respectively. The other two highly regarded Eden Valley sites are the Bartholomaeus vineyard on the edge of Eden Valley township and Avon Brae on the outskirts of Springton.

The new-release wines from the 2024 vintage are a beautiful range that highlight all that is great about riesling. The freak vineyards were spared from the hailstorms that cut through the Clare Valley in late November, but a dry season meant that there was a slight downwards pressure on crop levels... But the quality is very good indeed.

There's also something special this year – the No.50 Riesling celebrates John's upcoming 50th birthday. And it is an absolute stunner from Hughes family vineyard at White Hutt.

I think all the Rieslingfreaks will be delighted with this release. The wines are crystalline in their clarity, with sleek palate shapes and mineral-laden drivelines that deliver velocity, cadence and lip-smacking, thirst-slaking deliciousness.

Image credits: Rieslingfreak, John Kruger Photography, Dragan Radocaj.