

FROM THE CELLAR... RIESLINGFREAK

YOU HAVE TO VISIT OUR WINERY BECAUSE...

“After spending an hour with us, tasting Riesling from the Clare Valley, Polish Hill River, and Eden Valley, you will become a Riesling Freak!”

John Hughes, Owner and
Winemaker, Rieslingfreak



Outside and inside Rieslingfreak's cellar door (shared with Michael Hall).

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

November 18, 2018

After booking a tasting with the owner and winemaker, John Hughes, we couldn't wait to sample Rieslingfreak's numerous offerings, all showcasing one of our favourite varieties.

As soon as we entered the rustic, stone cellar door and had our first sample of the No. 2, Polish Hill River Riesling, we could tell why the estate has gained such a reputation for being one of Australia's premier Riesling producers.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

We first learned about Rieslingfreak and its "cult following" at a wine shop in South Yarra (Melbourne), of all places, where the sales representative espoused the virtues of the estate. We soon came to learn the cellar door sits on the outskirts of Tanunda in the Barossa Valley, although its grapes are grown in different vineyard sites located in Clare Valley and Eden Valley.

Why Barossa? John Hughes has an affinity for good food (and wine, of course) and, simply put, Barossa Valley offers more options for the so-called "foodie."

It also allows him to share a cellar door with Michael Hall Wines, another fabulous producer. The building, a beautifully-preserved barn dating back to 1860, provides an alluring, relaxed environment with a salt-of-the-earth feel.

Rieslingfreak labels its wines from 1 to 10, with each number offering something different, sometimes markedly so. As an example, Rieslingfreak No. 2 through No. 4, represent different vineyards, two in Clare Valley and one in Eden Valley.

Rieslingfreak No. 10, the origin of which dates to John's wedding, is a blend from various vineyards, the best-of-the-best, as it were, whereas Rieslingfreak No. 7 and No. 9 are fortified and sparkling wines, respectively.



So, part of the fun, at least for us, was finding our favourite number. Now we challenge you to find yours.

As an aside, we erroneously heard the higher the number, the greater the sweetness of the wine, but this turned out to be grossly misleading, so don't make that mistake.



Antique equipment outside Rieslingfreak's cellar door.

WINEMAKING PHILOSOPHY

One need look no further than the Rieslingfreak label to figure out estate's raison d'être, namely, "Reverence of Riesling."

In less abstract terms, this means respecting and expressing the diversity of the varietal through various styles (dry, off-dry, fortified, and sparkling), as well as through the diverse soils in Clare Valley and Eden Valley.

ONE-ON-ONE WITH JOHN HUGHES, OWNER AND WINEMAKER, RIESLINGFREAK

During our tasting at the Cellar Door, John Hughes took his time explaining his wine-making philosophy, his vision, and his ten different offerings.

Q: What do you like most about wine?

A: What I like most is it is all Riesling! I suppose the label and variety tells you what my passion is in wine, and there are not many wineries around the world that just focus on one variety, especially Riesling! I love how you can taste Rieslingfreak and experience different regions and styles.

Q: Of all the wines you produce, which one is your favourite and why?

A: No.10, my wedding wine, should have to be my favourite! I have always wanted to make a blend of regions, and never really had the "story" to do so. Now, by having that story, and the focus being the "best representation of the vintage," I am able to make my "ultimate" Riesling.

Q: What is your ultimate favourite wine and why?

A: This is a very difficult question. Depending on the day, time, and place, I may pick a different favourite! Enjoying some great food, I love to indulge in a German GG Riesling or an aged Riesling from Eden Valley. Having a lighter meal, or fun drinks with friends, give me a German Kabinett or Spätlese. Having a work lunch, I would always pull out a Clare Riesling to show off the region. Anywhere and time, give me an aged Riesling from anywhere around the world!

Q: What's the best part of your job?

A: Working with the one grape variety I love!

Q: What's the worst part of your job?

A: When people ask, "Do you make a red?"

Q: What is your most embarrassing wine moment?

A: I don't have a real embarrassing wine moment. I always remember being in Hong Kong, and being interviewed by the media. They asked, "What do you drink when you don't drink Riesling?" I responded by saying, "Beer." I don't think their sense of humour got that joke. I should have responded with my second favourite: a big, bold, Barossa Shiraz!

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Q: Tell us one thing about you or your winery nobody else knows.

A: With my family vineyard, together with Riesling, we have Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec, and Chardonnay. Every second vintage, I make a barrel or two of red, for family drinking only!!

You have to visit us because we will spend time immersing you in Riesling. You will spend an hour with us, tasting Riesling from the Clare Valley, Polish Hill River and Eden Valley, together with looking at various styles, including sparkling, fortified, sweet, and dry. You will exit our winery being a Riesling Freak!



A tasting at Rieslingfreak

“I love the diversity of the varietal.” – John Hughes

THE TASTING...

And now, for the best part...

We started with the complimentary 2018 No. 2 Polish Hill River Riesling (price: \$37 AUD) and ended with the 2011/2012 No. 7 Clare Valley fortified Riesling (price: \$27 AUD for a 375 ml bottle).

In between, we tasted the:

- 2018 No. 3 Clare Valley Riesling (price: \$27 AUD)
- 2018 No. 4 Eden Valley Riesling (price: \$27 AUD)
- 2018 No. 10 Zenit Riesling (price: \$45 AUD; a blend from Clare Valley and Eden Valley)
- 2013 No. 6 Clare Valley Aged Release Riesling (price: \$42 AUD)
- 2018 No. 5 Clare Valley Off-Dry Riesling (price: \$27 AUD)
- 2018 No. 8 Polish Hill River ‘Schatzkammer’ Riesling (price: \$27 AUD; this offering is made from a few rows of vines planted east-west in the Jaeschke Vineyard)

Admittedly, we struggled to choose a favourite, so in the end, we settled on two. The 2018 No. 8 Polish Hill River ‘Schatzkammer’ Riesling rivaled anything we have tasted to date, and that speaks volumes because we adore the varietal and have sampled more than a few. With only 5.9% alcohol, this full-bodied, superbly balanced offering had high, crisp acidity and hit all the right notes. The gorgeous bouquet consisted of nectarine, clementine, honey, and petrol. On the palate, we had more clementine, as well as lemon, lime, orange marmalade, minerals, and wet stone. Tart citrus notes lingered in the long, satisfying finish.

The 2013 No. 6 Clare Valley Aged Release Riesling also left a most favourable impression. Pale gold in colour, this full-bodied wine had high acidity, but a somewhat different aroma and flavour profile. On the nose, kerosene, minerals, and citrus rind combined in a characteristic manner (although kerosene sounds less than

appealing, it distinguishes the varietal, usually in aged Rieslings). We enjoyed lemon rind, white grapefruit, minerals, and flint in the mouth, as well as an enduring finish that left us wanting more. In fact, we left with a bottle, so we could enjoy it back home.

FINAL NOTES

If you enjoy Riesling, you have to visit Rieslingfreak! Need we say any more?

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