Podcast 118 – Australian Wines

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia, with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 118 – Australian Wines

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(This podcast is 10 minutes 14 seconds long.)

Hi,

Australians love their beer (see Podcast 69 http://www.slowenglish.info/?p=1877), but they also love their wine. Australia's wine growing industry is very successful and wines are exported to many countries around the world. In this podcast I would like to tell you a little about the Australian wine industry.

When I ride my motorcycle into the countryside in Victoria, I often pass by vineyards with fields full of grapevines. Many of these vineyards are in rolling hilly country. It is a wonderful sight to see long, long lines of well cared for grapevines running from one side of the valley to another and sometimes over the hill as well, just like a thick, green carpet covering the land. At many of these vineyards, you can stop to sample their offering and buy wine by the bottle. Actually, I drink very little wine so I always ride past, but nonetheless it is great just to admire the vineyards and the neatly cultivated rows of grapevines. It reminds me how important and productive our wine industry is.

https://www.wineaustralia.com/

In fact, Australia has around 2500 wine producers and around 140,000 hectares of vineyards growing grapes for wine making.

Shiraz is the most popular red grape variety being grown, covering around 30% of our grape growing area. Chardonnay is the most popular white grape variety being grown, covering around 16%. Australia is the world's fifth largest exporter of wine. Our main customers are China, followed by the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand. In addition to exporting our wine, we consume locally about 40% of our annual production, or around 490 million litres. That's about 22 litres per capita per year in Australia. Of course, not everyone in Australia drinks wine, so many people are drinking a lot more than 22 litres per year. As a comparison, that compares to around 87 litres per capita per year of beer. Australians certainly love both their beer and their wine.

South Australia is by far the biggest state for grape growing and wine production, with around 50% of the total amount of grapes grown. Recently my wife and I went on a holiday to South Australia. We drove by car from Melbourne to a place called Victor Harbor, not far from Adelaide, South Australia's capital city. It was a long drive but very enjoyable. Our route included driving through many kilometres of famous South Australian wine growing areas. The vineyards seemed to stretch on forever, and we came to realise why South Australia is so well known for its wine production.

A vineyard in McLaren Vale in South Australia. Image by [Michael Baragwanath](#) from [Pixabay](#)

There are so many well-known Australian Wines that it's hard to pick out any wine in particular. The most famous Australian made wine is probably Penfolds Grange. The Penfolds winery is found in South Australia, around 8km from the centre of Adelaide.

https://www.penfolds.com/en-au

It started in 1844 when Dr Christopher Penfold and his wife Mary planted the first vines which they had brought with them when they migrated to South Australia as early European settlers. They had bought a small area of land at Magill near the first settlement of Adelaide, and it was there that Mary planted those first vines. There they built a stone cottage which they called The Grange. Mary and her subsequent descendants built up the winery and established its wine making capability. Today, Penfolds Wines is owned by Treasury Wines Estates and the wine making still goes on at its Magill

winery in South Australia.

Penfolds Grange is the most famous wine made by Penfolds Wines and is named after that stone cottage that was built by Mary Penfold. Penfold Grange is made from Shiraz grapes with a small percentage of the Cabinet Sauvignon grape variety. This red wine was first made in 1951 by Penfolds wine maker Max Schubert. Since then it has grown in popularity and fame. Today, the Penfolds winemaker responsible for Penfolds Grange is Peter Gago.

Each year, around 7000 to 9000 cases of Grange are produced, where each case contains 12 bottles. The wine was first entered into wine competitions in 1962 and since then it has won more than 50 gold medals. The latest vintage which you can buy today (in 2020) is the 2015 vintage. As at March 2020, a bottle of 2015 Penfolds Grange will cost you around $900. If you want to buy bottles from earlier vintages, it can cost a lot more. For example, I found examples of the 1959 Penfolds Grange on sale online for $12,000 per bottle. That vintage must have been one of the best!

I have never been a fan of red wine and I certainly haven't ever tasted Penfolds Grange. However my wife and I have been known to enjoy certain sweeter white wines. My personal favourite is Lindeman's Porphyry, which is a very sweet white wine just suited to our taste. It costs around $5.40 per bottle, which is about how much I like to spend on a bottle of wine. I know that the wine connoisseurs will say I have no appreciation of fine wines, and they are correct. However, whether you are a wine connoisseur or otherwise, there will always be an Australian wine to suit both your taste and your pocket.

If you have a comment or a question to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about

yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 118 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

admire = to like

appreciation = to know and understand something

capability = when you have the skills to do something well

carpet = a floor covering that you walk on, usually made of wool or other material

cases = (here) a wooden or cardboard box which holds a number of things, for example, bottles

comparison = when you look at two people or things and decide which is better

competitions = when teams or people try to win in a game or sport or other contest

connoisseur = an expert who can say what is really good or not

consume = to use

cottage = a small house

cultivated = grown

descendants = the people in your family who come after you, for example, children, grand children, great grand children, etc

established = started

exported = when you send the things that you have made overseas to other countries

fame = when many people know about you

fan = (here) someone who loves something or someone

grapevines = the plants that grow grapes

hectares = an area 100 metres long and 100 metres wide

in particular = when talking about one thing or one group of things

industry = a group of people and businesses which make a product or service

locally = the area near where you live

migrated = when a person has gone to live in another country

nonetheless = despite this, even though

offering = the things that are offered, usually for sale

per capita = per person (all the people in a country – man, woman and child)

percentage = a term in mathematics which means 'out of 100'

probably = most likely

producers = people who make things

recently = not so long ago

reminds me = when you remember something

responsible = when you must make sure something happens

rolling hilly country = when there are hills which have gentle sides which go up and down

route = the way that you go when you take a journey or a trip

sample = (here) to try something

settlers = people who come to live in a place

stretch = (here) to go for a long distance

subsequent = comes after

successful = when things are going very well

variety = different types

vineyards = a place where grape vines are grown so that you can make wine

vintage = the wine made in a particular year

winery = a place which makes wine from grapes