



WHAT THE LOCALS ARE LOVING

Get the inside story on the top wines and producers trending in South Australia's Vintage Cellars stores.

Mérite Wines, SA

It's not often that a true disruptor comes along in the wine world, with the ability to change how a varietal is viewed. Mérite is an exception.

What started as curiosity about a clone of merlot that was new to the country – when Colleen Miller and husband Mike Kloak (pictured far right) started planting their new vineyards in South Australia's Wrattobully wine region in the year 2000 – soon turned into a single-minded determination to produce Australia's best merlot. The couple was growing cabernet sauvignon, shiraz and merlot for international wine exporters when the positive reception to their merlot grapes – grown from four different clones, including two that had arrived straight from Bordeaux – ignited their ambition to produce their own wine.

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The wine grabbed everybody's attention – from being picked up by Australia's top restaurants such as Bennelong, ARIA, Tetsuya's and Grossi, to rave reviews from the critics.

Together with the exceptional clones, also crucial to the wines' success was careful nurturing by the passionate duo, so the vines benefited the most from the remote region's gently sloping red clayey soil and the temperate climate with diurnal shifts.

"I had been paying attention to the way these newer clones grow – they ripen earlier so the flavours are not as overripe and confected as the other clone's wine offerings," says Colleen. "They can be harvested earlier so they have a brightness, and more savoury, herby flavours."

This proclivity for a fresher, brighter merlot profile led to the next logical step forward for the label – French-style rosé.

The timing couldn't be better, as rosé is seeing a renaissance like never before. Mérite is also blending their "new clone" Merlot into their cabernet, and have set their sights on producing cool climate shiraz and malbec next.



Mérite Vegan Friendly Rosé

Refreshing yet dry and highlighting the newer, brighter clones of merlot.



Mérite 343 Merlot

Brilliant and balanced with flavours of black currant, dark berry, with herb notes.

→ New horizons

It is this bold, innovative spirit and belief in the product that has led the brand to such heights in three short vintages. While their idyllic location lends itself to extraordinary wine, its remoteness – north of Coonawarra – means Mérite doesn't have a cellar door. Instead, they are now focusing on expanding into premium retail stores and exports, to retell the story of what Australian merlot can look like.

Keep to try some of Mérite's outstanding wines? Adelaide's 2K.W Bar & Restaurant serves Mérite's delicious Merlot and Malbec, alongside the best local farm-to-plate produce. 2kwbar.com.au

Grape expectations: Mérite Wine's Colleen Miller (left) has realised an ambition to produce uniquely Australian merlot and rosé blends.