

THE AUSTRALIAN

Badenhorst and Maidenii Nocturne the highlights of Rootstock

MAX ALLEN | THE AUSTRALIAN | DECEMBER 5, 2015 12:00AM



Adi Badenhorst and his eponymous wines, from South Africa.

The Rootstock artisan wine and food festival in Sydney last weekend was a blast: I tasted so many delicious and thought-provoking new wines from Australia and around the world. Here are some highlights.

Adi Badenhorst is one of the leading winemakers in the dynamic Swartland region of South Africa. His 2015 Secateurs chenin blanc was the first wine I tried on day one of Rootstock and it was a perfect wake-up call: crunchy and crisp, like biting into a cold nashi pear. I also loved his 2014 Ramnasgras, a pale, juicy, light red made from the cinsault grape, and his pink-grapefruity Caperitif vermouth.

Pale, juicy, characterful reds abounded at Rootstock. If you like this style of wine — perfect drunk slightly chilled over summer — I can thoroughly recommend the following: the delicate, shimmering 2015 Scary Buttons Pinot Noir from new Adelaide Hills producer Commune of Buttons; the pure and perfumed 2014 Himmel auf Erden Redwine, a blend of zweigelt and cabernet grapes from Christian Tschida in Austria's Burgenland region; and the 2015 Relatively Red, a super-bright and vibrant shiraz blend from the Good Intentions Wine Co in Mount Gambier in South Australia.

In the same stylistic vein, I also really liked the 2014 Violet de Mars, a lively, pretty purple grenache from Mylene Bru, a small producer in France's Languedoc region — but I adored her fuller-bodied reds, particularly the 2013 Rita, a magnificently wild, gamy, garrigue-

including a meaty, chewy, earthy blend of shiraz and merlot called 2015 NBG (nothing but grapes) from Macquariedale vineyard in the Hunter Valley, and a wine called 2013 l'Asino Santo (“the holy ass”), a bold, gutsy red made from barbera grapes by Forlorn Hope winery in northern California.

And skin-contact white wines — varying in shade from pale straw to deep amber — were everywhere. Two of my favourites were made from the aromatic gewurztraminer grape: the ripe and luscious 2015 Why Try So Hard from Jauma Wines in the Adelaide Hills, and the 2015 Libiano, from Millton Vineyard in Gisborne in New Zealand — a wine that, despite spending months on skins, tastes almost like a perfectly “normal” gewurz: all musky spice and beautiful grape-pulpy texture.

My “wine” of the weekend, though, was Nocturne, a new amaro (or bitter fortified digestif liqueur) from Victorian vermouth producer Maidenii. This incredibly complex, startlingly original drink started life as a barrel-aged rose, with layers of flavour then built up through additions of botanicals such as quandong, pepper, munthurri berries and black truffle, and a mouth-hugging bitterness provided by gentian and angelica.

It's very limited — just one barrel, or 300 bottles of this first release were produced — and at \$90 a bottle it's not cheap. But it's one of the most remarkable fluids to have flowed across my tongue all year.

For more information on each wine producer and wine, including importer details where

applicable, go to rootstocksydney.com/artisans

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