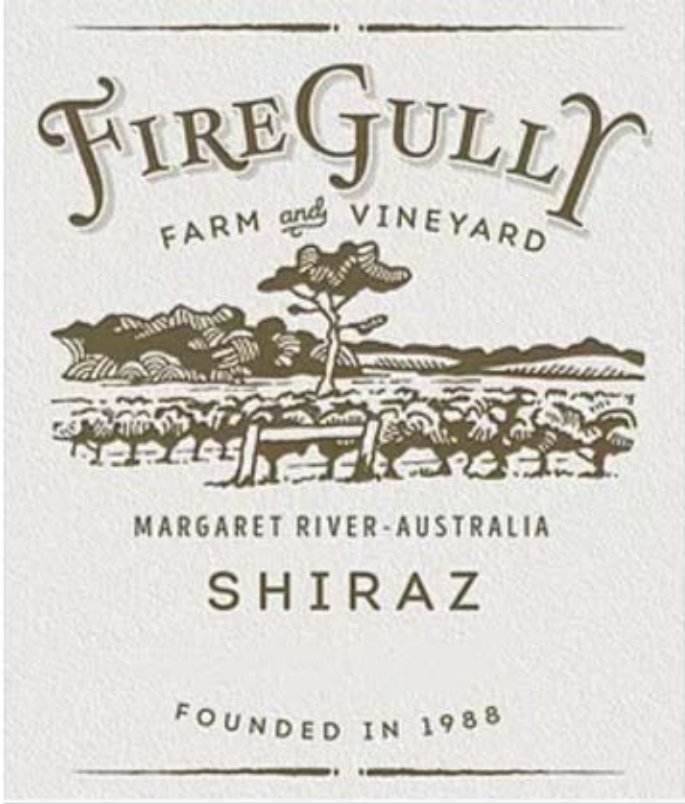

Fire Gully Shiraz

The shiraz viognier blend originated in the Cote Rotie region of the Northern Rhone Valley where a small amount of the white wine grape viognier is blended with shiraz to give it a more perfumed bouquet and silkier texture. Viognier does particularly well in this area with the world's finest examples of the variety coming from nearby Condrieu. To get the best integration of the varieties, shiraz and viognier are co-fermented by most producers in the Northern Rhone. This is the practice, too, at Fire Gully where shiraz from the two mature blocks - the older planted in 1992 and the other in 1997 – are fermented with viognier from a more recent planting. In making the wine, Mike Peterkin uses open and closed fermenters, though not whole bunches (to avoid any stalky character) and mature oak to maximise the fruitiness of the wine and make it more suitable for immediate consumption.

The style has only recently been adopted in Australia: however, in the last decade or so, it has become extremely popular. There are complex aromatics, more in the briary, wild herb spectrum, and more savoury, less overtly fruity flavours. The palate has the complex, gamey, charcuterie characters that were evident in the 2012 which in 2010 complement subtle ripe vibrant blackberry and mulberry flavours. It's smooth, pleasingly approachable and satisfying drinking.

The 2013 Fire Gully Shiraz Viognier is the best so far. It has complex briary, black fruit aromatics, brambly, blackberry flavours, silky texture and subtle fine tannins. There's depth, weight and power so it can be cellared with confidence. The brightness of the fruit and softness of the tannins means that those who drink now will be well pleased.