

# NZ Syrah



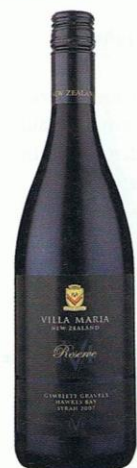
**98**★★★★★  
**2008 Bilancia La Collina Syrah, Hawkes Bay, A\$95/NZ\$90**  
 Produced from grapes grown on a tiny hillside vineyard in Gimblett Gravels. It shows dense, sweet, ripe fruit, with strong raspberry, currants, plum, violets, vanilla, black pepper and spicy oak characters. It's a powerful wine with linear and lengthy flavours. Supremely elegant and surprisingly accessible, although there's an undercurrent of flavour that will need time to reveal itself. The wine has a great texture – fine-grained with silken sweetness. It has edged to the front of a strong field thanks to its elegance, power, complexity and potential.



**96**★★★★★  
**2008 Church Road Reserve Syrah, Hawkes Bay, NZ\$37**  
 An intense, supple wine with lifted violet flavours and an array of white and black pepper over a core of sweet red fruits. An exotic, Rhône-style red offering an edgier alternative to other blockbuster styles produced in Hawkes Bay this vintage. Firm tannins suggest excellent cellaring potential. In fact, the wine positively needs another year or three to give a better measure of its true worth. Excellent value at this price.



**97**★★★★★  
**2008 Craggy Range Le Sol Gimblett Gravels Syrah, Hawkes Bay, A\$120/NZ\$100**  
 This is a big, dense syrah with an almost chewy texture. While hard to read, as the wine is in its infancy, it is easy to recognise the power and complexity. Strong, sweet fruit is interwoven with ripe tannins. It coats the mouth and lingers long after it has been swallowed. I can identify an array of dark fruits, Oriental spices, vanilla, bitter chocolate and very classy oak but there are myriad other flavours yet to be released. This is a serious syrah and one of the most impressive vintages since the first in 2001.



**96**★★★★★  
**2007 Villa Maria Reserve Syrah, Hawkes Bay, NZ\$58**  
 Made from grapes grown in the Gimblett Gravels district of Hawkes Bay. Juicy plum, chocolate, coffee and red berry flavours with a seasoning of black pepper and Oriental spices plus a suggestion of wild herbs. The wine has a great texture – dense and chewy. Strong, sweet fruit is supported by fine glycerol-coated tannins which means it can be enjoyed now but also guarantees good cellaring.



**97**★★★★★  
**2007 Trinity Hill Homage Syrah, Hawkes Bay, A\$120/NZ\$120**  
 A strongly spicy syrah with dense, sweet fruit forming a solid core. The wine offers an impressive array of flavours. In addition to the black pepper and star anise, I noted violets, toast, coffee, black currants and black Doris plum. Big but supple with impressive potential. A relatively high (9 per cent) proportion of viognier adds to the wine's elegance and lifted aromatics. It earned a trophy in the syrah class of the Royal Easter Wine Show in New Zealand.



**95**★★★★★  
**2008 Kusuda Syrah, Martinborough, NZ\$68**  
 Elegant syrah with a fine-grained texture and appealing floral, spice and red fruit flavours. My first impression was that the wine was reasonably light (it was tasted in a line-up of mostly blockbuster syrahs), but it actually exhibits extraordinary power measured by its very lengthy finish. I like its slightly edgy, floral and white pepper characters. It's a focused syrah showing excellent flavour purity. It has good potential for cellaring.