

PENFOLDS BIN 707
CABERNET SAUVIGNON



“The 1990 Bin 707 Cabernet opened a lot of eyes in the US and it has since become recognised as an important Australian and international Cabernet.” – JOSEPH WARD



OVERVIEW: When Max Schubert returned from Bordeaux and began his quest to make a great Australian wine, his mind was on Cabernet rather than Shiraz. Even in 1948, Penfolds made Cabernet-based wines from Block 42, a small patch of vines planted in the Kalimna Vineyard.

Some years ago a bottle of 1948 Penfolds Kalimna Cabernet Sauvignon was opened at a Sydney Wine Show dinner. The wine was memorable not only because of its remarkable concentration, balance and quality, but also because of its extreme rarity. The wine (two bottles with duck-egg coloured capsules) surfaced from a derelict but cool Sydney cellar in the late 1980s. The wine has never been seen since!

Clearly, however, Max Schubert would have considered the mature old Kalimna vines, planted in the mid 1880's, to be an important source for his new experimental wine. Indeed, during the very early days, Schubert experimented with Cabernet Sauvignon as the possible contender for his Grange project. In the end, however, pragmatism won the day. He recognised that Block 42 could not always deliver the consistency of quality he needed, because of variable vintage conditions. Nor could it supply the volume required for a commercially viable fine wine.

The plantings of Cabernet Sauvignon around Australia were extremely limited. Although the variety showed enormous promise, Coonawarra was in the process of rediscovery and Margaret River was a viticultural backlot (the first commercial vineyard had yet to be planted). When Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon was first released in the mid 1960s, Grange had been around for 15 years. However, it did reflect something of a coming of age. Cabernet Sauvignon was seen as an important premium grape variety with a future and Penfolds was keen for some of the action!

The significance of Bin numbers can always yield surprises. Curiously, Bin 707 was named by an ex Qantas marketing man after the Boeing 707! It should be pointed out, however, that brand marketing was in its infancy and that few would have predicted that Penfolds Bin numbers would carry so much cachet in the future. The original Bin 707s (first vintage 1964) were based on warmer climate fruit largely from the Barossa Valley and Adelaide environs. The wine was discontinued after the 1969

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First Vintage: 1964

Variety: Cabernet Sauvignon

Origin: A multi-district blend from South Australia's Barossa Valley, Coonawarra, Padthaway, Robe, Bordertown.

Fermentation: 10 tonne stainless steel tanks with wax lined, wooden header boards. All components complete fermentation in barrel.

Maturation: 18 months in 100% new American oak hogsheads (300 litres).

Comments: Bin 707 was not made from 1970-1975 – nor in 1981, 1995, 2000 or 2003. Packaged in laser-etched bottles since the 1997 vintage.





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vintage because of the inconsistency of quality fruit supply and a niggling but practical concern about house style and the spectrum of cool climate Cabernet fruit aromas, flavours and structure. By the release of the 1976 vintage, the first to use Coonawarra fruit, such concerns had been largely sorted out. Within a few years of this relaunch, Penfolds Bin 707 was already considered a benchmark Australian Cabernet.

The Penfolds philosophy of winemaking is unique because of Penfolds' commercial evolution from major fortified wine to table wine producer. The concepts of multi-district blending and house style are central to fortified wine production. This orientation and culture, based on achieving consistency in quality and reliability in the market place, remains intact. The success of the Penfolds brand is largely based on a highly identifiable thumbprint. When it comes to Bin 707, winemakers are looking for ripe Cabernet characters, concentration and chocolaty tannin structures.

Penfolds Bin 707 draws fruit mainly from Coonawarra, Padthaway, Barossa Valley and select parcels from Penfolds' Bordertown Vineyard. In cooler, sometimes well-regarded vintages, Penfolds is unable to use perfect, high quality fruit for this style. For example, the 2000 Limestone Coast vintage is widely considered a good year. The fruit profile, however, was considered by the winemakers to not be 'true-to-style'. Consequently, a 2000 Bin 707 was not made. This example clearly illustrates the strength of the Penfolds winemakers' commitment to consistency of style and quality.

Huon Hooke comments, "The Bin 707s come of age around 1984. Many of the best vintages – usually the even years – are sensational." Asked whether he prefers the Bin 389 to Bin 707, Joseph Ward responds, "It really depends whether you like the softer tannins of Bin 389, or the muscular structure of the Bin 707. Certainly the 1990 Bin 707 Cabernet opened a lot of eyes in the US and has since become recognised as an important Australian and international Cabernet".

Bin 707 is the Penfolds Cabernet Sauvignon equivalent of Grange Shiraz. Together, the two wines represent the Penfolds red wine style at its most rich and powerful. Everything about Bin 707 is large scale. Winemakers seek physiologically ripe fruit with equally strong flavours derived from partial barrel fermentation



and maturation in new American oak hogsheads for 18 months. These wines are not shrinking violets. Bin 707 is an immensely concentrated style with dark berry/dark chocolate fruit balanced by well-seasoned new oak, plenty of fruit sweetness and powerful, but not overwhelming tannins. This is a medium to long-term cellaring style of wine. If you can wait the distance, Bin 707 builds up into a wonderfully complex and engaging wine.





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1964 **Now – Past**



Brick red. Complex sweet mocha/black fruit/leathery/cedar aromas with some minty nuances. The palate is fully mature with plenty of tobacco/cedar/mocha-berry characters and fruit sweetness. The tannins are soft and fine. A long savoury finish. Entirely sourced from the Kalimna Vineyard's Block 42 established in 1888. Expect bottle variation.

1965 **Now – Past**

Brick red. A fragile wine but still fresh with savoury/mocha/earthy/sandalwood aromas and a soft mellow/mature palate. Drink now.

1966 **Now**

Brick red. A rich deep meaty wine with black fruit/dark chocolate/spice aromas. The palate is velvety-textured and sweet with plenty of concentration and flavour length.

1967 **Now**

Brick red. A smooth fleshy wine with earthy/olive/berry aromas and some mint. A mellow sweet balanced palate with gamy/spicy flavours and fine lacy tannins.

1968 **Past**

Brick red/brown. Overdeveloped wine with toffee/caramel/old leather aromas. The palate is drying and very tannic. Tasted from a half bottle but the wine, on previous record, is clearly past its best.

1969 **Past**

Brick red. Complex leathery/mocha aromas with some leafy notes. The palate is quite leathery and drying with fine slightly bitter tannins.

1970-1975

Not made.

1976 **Now** **2010**



Brick red. Intense dark chocolate/meaty/liquorice aromas. A deeply concentrated palate with dark chocolate/blackcurrant fruit, malty oak and fine sweet grainy tannins.

1977 **Now** **2007**

Medium brick red. Well developed wine with spicy/olive/berry aromas and some earthy notes. The palate is well-balanced with plenty of sweet fruit, fine savoury tannins and vanilla oak. On the downhill stretch.

1978 **Now** **2008**

Brick red. Sweet, solid wine with autumnal/dried fig/warm earth aromas. Blackcurrant/cedar, classic Cabernet flavours on the palate with fine-grained tannins which build up firm and dry at the finish. A lovely mature wine at its peak. Better than at the previous *Rewards of Patience* tasting!

1979 **Past – Now**

Brick red. Chocolatey/earthy/baked aromas and flavours. The palate is quite tarry and austere with some leafy tannins, but dries off at the finish.

1980 **Past – Now**

Brick red. Vellum/leather/olive aromas with some barnyard notes. A dry unyielding palate with fine bitter/green tannins and firm grippy finish.

1981

Not made.

1982 **Past – Now**

Red brick. Controversial wine! Distinctive cherry/tomato leaf, almost porty aromas and flavours. The palate is smooth, rich and fleshy, but the fruit lacks focus.

1983 **Now** **2010**

Red brick. Intense complex leather/cigar box/brassy aromas. A supple, concentrated palate with leather/cigar box/smoky flavours and fine but pronounced tannins. An elegant style of Bin 707 still holding well. Bushfire/drought year.

Outstanding vintages ★



1984 Now 2010

Medium red brick. A stylish wine with earthy/meaty/cigar box aromas. The palate is rich and solid with earthy/meaty/cedar flavours and supple lingering tannins. Not regarded as a strong vintage but has developed impressively.

1985 Now 2007

Red brick. Leather/vellum/ripe berry fruity aromas. A sinewy, almost tough palate, with some sweet leathery fruit. Finishes grippy and dry. Drink soon.

1986 Now 2015 ★

Medium red brick. Very complex beautifully developed wine with blackcurrant/sous bois/cedar aromas and some leafy Cabernet notes. A powerful, rich and concentrated palate with deep set sweet blackcurrant/chocolate/minty fruit and ripe tannins. A persistent dry finish. Classic year.

1987 Now 2007

Red brick. A scented wine with dusty/leafy/cassis fruit. The palate is savoury with some cassis/spicy notes and fine tannins. Finishes quite hard and dry.

1988 Now 2018

Red brick. Powerful earthy/blackcurrant/damson aromas with some mocha/nutty oak. A structured, almost muscular palate with concentrated earthy/blackcurrant/damson flavours and finely grained tannins. Finishes firm and tight.

1989 Now 2007

Medium crimson. Cassis/leafy aromas with some minty notes. The palate is solid and chewy with sweet cassis/minty flavours and leafy tannins.

1990 Now 2020 ★

Deep crimson. Intense, sweet, rich and ripe wine with plenty of blackcurrant/plum/mulberry/dark chocolate aromas. A dense concentrated palate with cassis/chocolate flavours, underlying mocha oak and fine ripe tannins. A great vintage.

1991 Now 2016 ★

Medium deep crimson. Complex developing sweet fruit aromas of black fruits/chocolate/vanilla. The palate is beautifully concentrated with plenty of blackcurrant Cabernet characters and long fine grainy tannins.

1992 Now 2012

Medium deep crimson. A fragrant scented wine with mulberry/blackcurrant pastille/leafy aromas and some new oak. The palate is well-concentrated and solid with cassis/leafy flavours and strong slightly grippy tannins.

1993 Now 2012

Crimson-purple. A cool vintage year. Leafy/minty/dark fruit aromas with some beefy nuances. The palate is strongly concentrated and chunky with beefstock/meaty flavours and green edged tannins. Muscular style.

1994 2006 2025

Crimson-purple. Saturated black fruits and mocha aromas. A very concentrated powerful palate with blackcurrant fruit, mocha/malt oak and masses of ripe tannins. Still very young.

1995
Not made.

1996 2008 2025 ★

Crimson-purple. Beautifully balanced wine with sweet intense mulberry/cassis/dark chocolate fruit. Dense concentrated palate with layers of flavours, plenty of sweet fruit and ripe tannins. A very great wine.

1997 2008 2020

Deep crimson-purple. Intense mulberry/cassis/coffee/leafy aromas. The palate is savoury with bitter chocolate/cassis flavours, a core of fruit sweetness and firm tannins. An early maturing wine.

Outstanding vintages ★



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1998 2010 2025

Deep red-purple. Very intense blackcurrant/coffee aromas with some spicy notes and integrated oak. A very powerful concentrated palate with plenty of cassis/mocha flavours and ripe velvety tannins. A substantial wine with excellent cellaring potential.

1999 2010 2020

Deep red-purple. Raspberry/mulberry aromas with some mocha/smoky oak. Well concentrated wine with plenty of sweet cassis/mulberry fruit and chocolaty tannins. Finishes quite grippy. Slightly in the shadow of the 1998 but needs more time to reveal itself.

2000

Not made.

2001 2008 2020

Deep red-purple. Fragrant blackcurrant/violet aromas with some new spicy vanilla oak characters. The palate is still very youthful with blackcurrant/blackberry fruit, plenty of mid-palate richness and mouth coating tannins. A very promising vintage.

Outstanding vintages ★