

# Gourmet

February 2007  
New York, NY  
Circ: 994,951

## DRINKS

### A LITTLE TIME IN THE BOTTLE

In 2003 I was invited to be a judge at the Hawkes Bay A&P Mercedes-Benz Wine Show. I'd never judged at a wine show before, so I was reluctant, but I'd also never been to New Zealand—or, for that, matter, flown business class. Which is how I came to find myself, one sunny morning, sitting in front of 58 glasses of Chardonnay. Despite my trepidation, it turned out that my scores (we used a 20-point scale) were in line with those of my four fellow judges. I was completely relieved. And then we got to the Syrahs. Suddenly I found my scores either a point lower (on the 2002 releases) or a point higher (on the 2000 and 2001 vintages). The 2002s just didn't have the fruit I was looking for, and many of them seemed extremely tart and tannic. There were only a few older wines in the Syrah category, but whereas the other judges awarded them bronze-medal scores, I saw most as solid silvers. Our panel agreed on the vast majority of the 181 wines we tasted over those two days, but I couldn't get the scoring discrepancy for those 24 Syrahs out of my mind. One of my fellow judges suggested I take a few bottles home with me and try them again in a year or two...

I don't want to give the impression that I don't like Australian Shirazes. In fact, I love them—even the monsters, as long as they're balanced and have clean fruit flavors. The **Poonawatta** and **Pannell** wines are from relatively cool microclimates, and it would be possible to drink an entire glass of either without having your mouth go numb. —*James Rodewald.*

### TWENTY COOL SYRAHS

**Older vintages took the top spots on our Syrah tasting. The bad news: They'll be difficult to find. The good news is that in just a few years, the current releases will be ready to drink.**

**POONAWATTA ESTATE '03, Eden Valley, AU**  
**S.C. PANNELL '04, McLaren Vale, AU**

