What's a mollydooker?

By The Wine Whisperer

I 'll solve the mystery right at the top of this article. In Australian slang, a mollydooker is a left-handed person. Kind of like we'd say "southpaw" in real English. In fact, our friend Sparky Marquis and his wife Sarah have a winery by that name in McLaren Vale, just outside of Adelaide. Sparky is a fun-loving sort and Sparky is a fun-loving sort and very committed to the whole left-making sweet wines, that's quite an achievement.

■ Jerry Greenfield

handed idea, so if you meet him, stick out your left hand to shake, not your right.

But aside from their gleaming personalities, the best thing about Sarah and Sparky is their fun-loving and fairly irreverent approach to winemaking. This is not to say that they don't take it seriously. After all, their 2012 Carnival of Love Shiraz was named Number 2 Wine of the Year by Wine Spectator magazine. So their wines are a big deal...but they don't all have big prices.

A few years ago, Debi and I were at lunch in McLaren Vale, sitting across from Sarah and Sparky, with

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Americans like the Aussie approach so much that the country will soon be the second largest importer of wine to the U.S. For a country that spent much of its winegrowing history making sweet wines, that's quite an achievement.

In this category, it's the big fruity reds that capture our attention and interest most vividly. In fact, the big Shirazes and blends can be so powerful that they need to age for eons before you'd dare open the bottle. We attended a vertical tasting of Penfold's Grange a few years ago, and we drank the 1971. It could have used another 10 years in the cellar.

Unlike other countries, most Aussie wines, even the greatest ones, are blended from fruit that's sourced from very extensive areas. The designated winegrowing regions are enormous,

several glasses of their legendary Carnival of Love Shiraz in front of us. As I sipped through the vintages, I was blown away for several reasons. First, their wines are consistently ranked in the world's Top 100, and as a couple they're practically Australian legends or national treasures or something. Second, the wine is arguably one of the purest expressions of what Australian winemaking is all about.

Sparky believes that people take wine too seriously...and treat it the same way. At lunch, he opened the bottle, poured out about two ounces, put the top back on, and gave it what he calls "The Mollydooker Shake." I tast-

Jerry Greenfield (center)
with Sarah & Sparky Marquis

ed the unshaken wine, then the wine he mistreated so dreadfully. The shaking made the wine open up. It was softer in the mouth, less tannic, and offered up a lot more fruit flavors. Amazing.

Another thing that makes Australian wines so much fun is that they like to put puckish and whimsical names on their bottles. The Monkey Spider. The

and the grapes that wind up in the bottle may come from hundreds of miles in every direction. It would be like Napa winemakers blending in grapes from as far away as Washington State. They'd sooner slit their wrists.

Sparky believes that people take premium offering, The Velvet Glove, which goes for about $140 a bottle.

You can't go wrong seeking out Mollydooker wines. The Boxer, at about $20, is a true bargain. For a bigger treat, find the Carnival of Love or Enchanted Path Shiraz. And if you want to give someone a really nice Purim present, go for the Velvet Glove. It comes in a purple velvet bag with a cute little gold string around the top.

Until next time...g'day, mate! (They really do say that.)

Dead Arm. The Stump Jump. Woop Woop. The Marquises are no exception. Their only white wine, a Verdelho, is called The Violinist. Their bargain Shiraz is The Boxer. They also make Two Left Feet, Giggle Pot, and their premium offering, The Velvet Glove, which goes for about $140 a bottle.

P.S. Considering their winemaking success, the Australians have no native grapes. Everything grown in the country originated at one time or another from cuttings brought from Europe and South Africa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Questions? Comments? The Wine Whisperer loves emails. Send yours to jerry@thewine-whisperer.com. For more information about Jerry Greenfield's books and other publications, visit winewhisperer.com.