



JAMES HALLIDAY

cold water. Bring to the boil. Cover loosely with a lid and simmer for about 20-25 minutes, until lentils are just tender yet still holding their shape. Top up the water if you need to during cooking. When ready, drain, remove the garlic and bay leaf, and set lentils aside.

Heat a frying pan and add extra-virgin olive oil. When hot, add the halved tomatoes and toss them in the pan until they take on a little colour. Add lentils, porcini and their liquor, parsley and lemon juice, and season well with salt and pepper.

In a separate frying pan, heat a drizzle of olive oil over high heat. Season scallops with salt and pepper and put them in the pan, cooking over a high heat for about 2 minutes on each side, until nicely golden. Remove scallops from the pan, drizzle over more oil and add asparagus. Fry for a couple of minutes while you are plating up.

Divide lentils between four plates. Arrange three or four scallops per person and a few asparagus spears on top. Finish with a twist of black pepper and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.

Serves 4

Tip: You can make this dish vegetarian by swapping the scallops for some pan-fried cauliflower. Cut a small cauliflower into fairly equal-sized florets. Heat a good drizzle of olive oil in a large frying pan. Add cauliflower and cook for 3-4 minutes until deep golden. Flip over and continue to cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until the cauliflower is browned; this should take another 5-6 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and serve as you would the scallops.

Jo Pratt is a chef, writer and presenter. Edited extract from her cookbook *The Flexible Pescatarian* (Quarto, \$39.99). Photography: Susan Bell

If, for the sake of discussion, you were to propose that the four most important red varieties for the fine wine market in Australia are (in alphabetical order) cabernet sauvignon, grenache, pinot noir and shiraz, the shouting would instantly erupt.

Let me highlight the most obvious omission: merlot. Its '18 vintage crush (all figures for volume or value are for that year) of 58,000 tonnes was twice that of the Johnny-come-lately pinot noir and seven times greater than grenache. Merlot's problem is that its popularity has plummeted over the last decade, having soared in the late 20th century. Why? Few reading this column like it, let alone buy it. Why? It's been dumbed down in a circular spiral of price and the use of sugar to mask increasing yields.

So, what about the king of all grape varieties, cabernet sauvignon? It has one stronghold: south-western Australia, and its epicentre, the beautiful Margaret River. Direct flights are proliferating, the beaches beautiful, the food and lifestyle second to none. And on its own or with a dash of merlot *et al*, the perfect viticultural climate puts its cabernet sauvignon on top.

Coonawarra has relinquished the hold it once had, due to accountants in big companies deciding how much money could be spent on the vineyard each year, and its crushing remoteness. This, despite providing the crucial part of the greatest wine of the 20th century, 1962 Penfolds Bin 60A Cabernet Kalimna Shiraz.

Shiraz is Australia's greatest variety (and wine). I could write a thousand words arguing the truth of that proposition and still have more to say. Which leaves two varieties, grenache and pinot noir, which in some ways are the oddest couple on the wine landscape. I'll continue that discussion next week, and give you a glimpse of what's to come with the three featured grenaches.

2017 CORIOLE ESTATE McLAREN VALE GRENACHE

Estate bushvines, hand-picked, destemmed, open-fermented and matured for 15 months in used oak. Beautiful hue, silky mouthfeel; rainbow array of red fruits, and savoury/spicy finish. What a vintage. What a wine. 14.5% alc, screwcap **97 points, drink to 2029, \$40**

2017 SERAFINO RESERVE McLAREN VALE GRENACHE

From three vineyards across McLaren Vale, two in Blewitt Springs, carefully destemmed to retain as much whole berries as possible. This is truly exciting, with zesty, spicy red cherries and plums drawing saliva from the mouth. Trophy Sydney Wine Show '18. 14% alc, screwcap **96 points, drink to 2027, \$40**

2017 YANGARRA ESTATE VINEYARD GSM McLAREN VALE GRENACHE SHIRAZ MOURVÈDRE

A 60/22/18% blend, a lovely wine from a lovely vintage. It's not an ounce over medium-bodied, but it articulates the place, varieties and the year with utmost clarity. Fine tannins are stitched through the scarlet taffetta of the perfectly pitched palate. 14% alc, screwcap **95 points, drink to 2027, \$35**

