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Ruination at the bottom of a glass

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GRAPE VINE MORGAN DUNN

Does glass matter? A friend tells a story about culinary legend Marco-Pierre White dining in his restaurant and drinking an expensive bottle of white burgundy out of a waterglass. While personal preference reigns supreme, it's worth noting that sommeliers don't change glassware just for a giggle.

The width of the opening, the depth of the bowl, the thickness of the crystal, the way the wine is calibrated on to the palate: all these are considered when selecting a stem, and it is easily possible to ruin a good bottle by drinking out of an ill-suited glass.

When reviewing at home I general taste from a Gabriel Glas (\$36 for two pieces). It's a thoughtfully designed glass with an elegant curve made for drinking all types of wine. It's durable as well; if I'm careful a six-pack will last me a year. (Many will testify under oath that I am notorious for breaking stemware.)

But today I'm experimenting with one great bottle tasted from five receptacles to assess difference. My apologies go to Tim Kirk and the team at Clonakilla for subjecting their marvellous wine to some of these more questionable vessels. To eliminate variables, the wine was decanted for an hour and poured back into the bottle. All glasses were revisited several times.

Clonakilla Shiraz Viognier 2017, Canberra District (\$120)

DC Limited Edition Wonder Woman Mug, \$2.95

The aromas of the wine are lost in the width of the opening; the only sense of fruit is a vague whiff of plum that may have been picked weeks ago. My hope that Diana Prince's superpowers somehow may be imbued into the wine vanishes when presented with texture and tannin that clumsily plods down the palate. The fruit is stripped away and all that is left is a tangy, not overly pleasant taste of raspberry and balsamic salad dressing,

Op shop faux crystal wine glass, \$5

Admittedly, the wine out of this glass doesn't taste too bad. It's a fairly stock-standard glass, one that spreads the wine evenly on the palate and accentuates the juiciness of the fruit and the

freshness of the acid. That said, it does nothing to highlight the detail of the fruit or texture. Drink from this at your own risk.

Riedel Degustazione white wine glass, \$40 (four pieces)

This is the standard drinking glass that you come across in most Australian restaurants and it does its job pretty well. The earthy spice of the wine lifts out of the glass well, perhaps dominating the fruit a little, but when it hits the palate you get a fine sense of the detail of the tannin.

Riedel Overture red wine glass \$49 (two pieces)

The glass has a much wider mouth, and a deeper aromatic set wafts up from the wine. All that lovely, juicy dark fruit and nuances of cut red berries become apparent alongside a hint of smoked meat — prosciutto, perhaps. Spice is still there but it sits a little more relaxed into the wine — a once slightly nervous guest made to feel at ease. The wine comes across as softer and fuller than from the white wine glass, which, when revisited, looks a touch angular.

Zalto Universal, \$55

Crafted in Austria, these handmade and mouth-blown glasses are so precisely crafted that the angles on the bowl align with the tilt angles of the earth. As I sip from the paper-thin crystal, the wine doesn't seem to touch the tongue at all, rather hovering on the palate and emanating its personality. Fruit and tannin, texture and acid come together harmoniously, and a broader picture of the wine is formed. If I have any criticism it is that the glass is so pretty and delicate that one is almost too afraid to give the wine a good swirl. A glass well deserving of so fine a wine.

