

**Cloudburst, Margaret River (Western Australia)**

**Cabernet Sauvignon 2011 (\$250):** Will Berliner, Owner/winemaker at Cloudburst says he cares “about clarity and purity.” He found both in his 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon, an extraordinary wine. In keeping with the Cloudburst style, Berliner squeezes incredible flavor and nuances out of his grapes without imparting heaviness. The initial impact of this mid-weight 13.2% stated alcohol is herbs and ash – an earthy minerality – rather than fruit. It’s a seductive and immediately appealing introduction. A plethora of red and black fruitness then fills in around the edges making for a spectacular Cabernet. The tannins are fine, but not so highly polished that they don’t provide support. Not a cookie cutter style of Cabernet, it retains charms and character, qualities rarely found in wines from new producers. There is a classic – not over ripe – Bordeaux-like sensibility to this Margaret River Wine.

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**Cloudburst, Margaret River (Western Australia) Malbec 2012 (\$225):** Will Berliner, who has already shown his talent with his sensational Cabernet and Chardonnay, has added an equally impressive Malbec to his line up. Berliner included a small amount of Malbec in his Cabernet Sauvignon previously and clearly liked how it did so he decided to make a small amount of wine (5,000 bottles) exclusively from that variety. He’s one of the few to make a Malbec in Western Australia and judging from this wine, it could easily be that grape’s new home. Cloudburst’s Malbec breaks the Malbec mould because it’s not big and bombastic. Instead, it’s subtle, not just fruit-filled, with a haunting earthy complexity and a meaty, almost chewy texture. Most surprisingly for Malbec, it has a real finesse, in part, no doubt because of the modest 13% stated alcohol. It’s likely the best Malbec I’ve ever tasted and redefines that varietal for me.

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**Chardonnay 2012 (\$200):** I first tasted Cloudburst wines last year and was enthralled by them. I figured owner/winemaker Will Berliner either had beginner’s luck or was a visionary. Now that I’ve tasted another vintage of his Chardonnay, Cabernet and, now, Malbec, it is clear that his talents are not explained by beginner’s luck. The 2012 Chardonnay is dazzling – not because of its power, though it has that – but because of its sleek racy profile. Its power sneaks up on you. A subtle refinement and extraordinary length makes it dazzle. Not a muscular wine, there’s a warming touch of brioche – perhaps a hint of

hazelnut – and balancing vivacious acidity that keeps it fresh. What fascinates me is its graceful persistence. It’s not flamboyant, but one sip tells you it’s a great wine.

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