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## Ian and Ken bid farewell to 2008 — a ‘hellish’ vintage that yielded BlackJack a brace of excellent reds

- BlackJack 2008 Major’s Line Shiraz (\$25)

For Ian McKenzie and Ken Pollock — who share ownership and winemaking duties at Bendigo’s BlackJack Vineyards — the launch of their 2008 Major’s Line Shiraz represents something of a relief.

“This is our last release from what Ken and I have often described as our vintage from hell, easily the most difficult one we have experienced in BlackJack’s 20-plus years,” said Ian.

“Most of southern Australia suffered an exceedingly hot spell during early 2008. We couldn’t quite match the Barossa’s unprecedented 15 days in March over 35°C, but we must have been very close.

“We had to use, beg and borrow every fermentation vessel we could find in an effort to get the grapes off the vine before sugar levels went over the top or the fruit simply shriveled.

“We picked continuously for 13 days. Contrast that to some vintages — especially back in the ’90s, and most likely this year — when we could spread our harvest over six or more weekends.”

Ian and Ken may have lost a bit of hair and a few kilos in early 2008, but they survived and, almost as importantly, managed to produce a brace of red wines that sit very well within the parameters normally associated with the terroir of the Harcourt Valley, at the southern end of the Bendigo GI.

This is the fifth vintage of BlackJack’s Major’s Line Shiraz.

“The impetus for the launch of the Major’s Line label was the superb quality of fruit we were getting from David and Ruth Norris’s vineyard at Faraday, just up the road from our own vineyard at Harcourt,” said Ian.

“Quality-wise, it could easily be blended with our own fruit for our main BlackJack labels, but we don’t want to compromise the estate-grown status of those wines.

“At the same time, the fruit from the Norris vineyard is of a more robust style than we generally use for Chortle’s Edge Shiraz, our lower-priced Monday-to-Thursday wine that we source from the Bendigo region as a whole.”

The creation of Major's Line has provided BlackJack with an important halfway point, both pricewise and regionally, between its estate-grown shirazes and Chortle's Edge.

Ken and Ian regard the wine as a fine example of what Harcourt shiraz is all about.

"It shows, elegant, subtle flavours with awesome power and length," said Ian.

"There are aromas of plums, liqueur cherries and black pepper, with subtle background oak. And a lovely, vibrant palate of red berries and creamy oak with balanced acid and fine tannin that carries the wine long on the finish.

"This wine should drink well over the next five years or more."

NOTE 1: For further information please contact Ian McKenzie on 0428 126 539 or visit the company's website ([www.blackjackwines.com.au](http://www.blackjackwines.com.au)).

NOTE 2: For stockist details, please contact Andrew Watts at Vintners Pty Ltd on (03) 9872 5775.

NOTE 3: High-resolution images can be downloaded from WineMedia's website ([www.winemedia.com.au](http://www.winemedia.com.au)).

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