We asked 100 wine experts to decide the country’s top 10 wine producers—and found a male domain has been invaded.

In 2008 we dared to ask the question: who are Australia’s best winemakers? To get the pulse racing, the jury smacking in anticipation of not just a wine but something magical and truly uplifting in a glass.

The results showed a mix of old-school, technological brilliance and new wave, with rising winemaker extraordinaires—John Vickery of Leura Park Estate fawned over first. Followed by Pettiyim’s founder Brian Coon and chardonnay master Rick Steinbrunner of Giorgianni.

Today, we revisit the question: Who are the best living working winemakers in Australia? We have asked 100 winemakers, wine buyers and sommeliers across the nation and here are the results. As you will see, a lot has changed in 11 years. In 2008, there were no women in the top three. There were two in the Top 10 with the highest placing going to Vanya Cullen at number four.

In 2016, three women are now considered among the best winemakers in Australia. Is this a step towards greater recognition in what has been a traditionally male domain? It seems that way.

Eight winemakers (including both “equal” fourth place getters) in the 2014 Top 10 represented small winemakers where some of the most idiosyncratic and exciting winemaking developments are taking place in Australia. But it also appears that the role models many winemakers hold dear today are long-time industry stalwarts. Five winemakers in Gold, Silver and Bronze winners are:

1. Louisa Rose
   Yalumba
   To her Barossa Valley winery colleagues she is Lou but to her admirers—and she has legions among her colleagues—she is a “rockstar”, a “leader” and a “great communicator.”
   Louisa Rose’s correct title is head of winemaking at Yalumba and the Hill-Smith Family Vineyards. But in simpler terms, she is the custodian of both Yalumba tradition and innovation at the 155-year-old winery. It’s a big task but one she has been groomed for since her first vintage at Yalumba in 1997 straight from her wine studies and her parents’ vineyard in the Barossa Valley. Her gifts as a taster and winemaker have been on display ever since. She is acknowledged as one of the country’s top winemakers, the voice of the Eden Valley riesling under Yalumba’s Pewsey Vale label.

And then there’s viognier. It’s her baby, the wine she is now most closely associated with. Simply because Yalumba dared to believe the Eden Valley white grape had a future in this country.

“She took on the winemaking challenge with gusto,” recalls her mentor, former Yalumba chief winemaker, Brian Walsh. He considers Yalumba is the most influential producer of viognier in the world today due in large part to her work.

The great viognier project turned into an often frustrating search for flavour. “Of all the grape varieties I deal with, viognier has relatively low flavour and its ripeness,” she explains. “You’ve got to be patient and then one day you’ll taste apricots and honeysuckle (in the grapes). Delicious!” Walsh recruited Rose for her “intelligence” and “practicality” but soon found, he says, a person with a profound work ethic and ability to multi-task. She is not only chief winemaker but farmer, senior wine judge and wine industry representative on many boards and councils. As chair of the board of the Australian Wine Research Institute, co-chair of the South Australian Wine Industry Council... and member of the South Australian Agribusiness Council (among other out-of-hours pursuits) she is one of the most influential winemakers in the country.

Signature wine? Yalumba The Virgilian in Eden Valley, vinsoge $50.00.

Louisa Rose’s top winemakers: Iain Riggs (Brokenwood), Sue Hodder (Wynns), John Duval (John Duval Wines).

The Top 10

1. Louisa Rose
   Yalumba Wines (Barossa Valley)

2. Jeffrey Grosset
   Jeffrey Grosset Wines (Clare Valley)

3. Vanya Cullen
   Cullen Wines (Margaret River)

4. Tom Carson
   Yabby Lake and Heathcote Estate (Mornington Peninsula/Heathcote)

5. Stephen Henschke
   Henschke Wines (Eden Valley)

6. Jeffrey Grosset
   Gundagai Wines (Canberra)

7. Stephen Henschke
   Henschke Wines (Eden Valley)

8. Phillip Jones
   Bass Phillip Wines (South Gippsland)

9. Virginia Willcock
   Vasse Felix (Margaret River)

10. Louisa Rose
    Yalumba Wines (Barossa Valley)