

WORDS **WINE EDITOR DAVID SLY**

NEW STARS IN THE CROWDED WORLD OF WINE OFTEN EMERGE FROM UNSUSPECTING PLACES, WITH UNLIKELY VARIETALS FROM REGIONS AND BOLD BLENDS PROVIDING SOME OF THE GREAT, UNEXPECTED TREATS IN DRINKING. HERE ARE A FEW OF THEM:

First Drop

The Big Blind

2007 Adelaide Hills Nebbiolo Barbera

Here's a brassy union of two Italian grapes that complement each other despite their differences – the rich plum colour of barbera softened by the muted tawny edge of nebbiolo, and barbera's pronounced acid offsetting the big tannins of nebbiolo. This interpretation by winemaker Matt Gant is fresh and gutsy – big whiffs of cherry, oak and alcohol, with tastes of cherry, licorice, tar and a hint of vanilla on the palate. It's not something that will seem familiar in a single taste, but let the wine breathe, revisit it a few times, and you'll be seduced. The amusing bottle label – cased in old Brooklyn imagery and Damon Runyon wiseguy language – suggests that First Drop has taken a big gamble on this one. I don't agree. It's a smooth, balanced and beguiling food companion. I had it with roast meat; it's a winning hand. **Screw cap. \$30.**