Marjan Simčič, Leonardo, Goriska Brda, Primorska
2006 (12.5%) D

Distinctive and almost tawny in appearance. Intense aromas of apricot marmalade, Christmas pudding and spice over a palate of lifted caramel fruit with orange peel, coffee and nutmeg. Toffee and butterscotch finish.

UK £32 (375ml); Hba

For full profile, see p250
REGIONAL TROPHY: SWEET OVER £15
Marjan Simčič, Leonardo, Goriska Brda, Primorska 2006

A STUNNING AND unique wine made by fifth-generation winemaker Marjan Simčič, (pictured). His ancestor Anton first bought vineyards in 1860 in Brda near the Italian border, and Simčič himself took over in 1988. Behind his long black locks lies an intense passion and commitment to making the very best wines he can and continually to improve what he does. As he says, ‘We believe in our wines because we believe in our grapes.’

Sweet wines from dried grapes (the western Slovenian climate doesn’t allow for noble rot or ice wines) are a long tradition in the Brda region but typically in tiny quantities for family celebrations only. The grapes lose up to 90% of their volume during drying, so the tradition had declined. In 1997, Simčič decided to produce sweet wine again, naming it after his son, Leonardo. The best Rebula grapes are left late on the vines, then hand harvested and air dried in crates until April, giving wonderful complexity and concentration as the grapes shrivel. It’s aged for more than five years in small barrels to develop further amazing flavours and depth.

Leonardo is now old enough to enjoy the wine named in his honour, and spends a lot of time with his father learning about wine. He says, ‘I’m so proud that my dad made the first vintage for me. And I am very happy that the wine won this important award.’ CG