

The 100 Most Exciting Wine Finds

A number of these wines will be available on certain markets, but many are so new, restricted in production, or downright obscure that the only way to get hold of them would be to visit the producer – if he has not already sold out.

The entire *raison d'être* of this section is to bring to the attention of serious wine enthusiasts the different and most surprising wines being developed in classic areas, the best wines from emerging regions, and other cutting-edge stuff. The prices are retail per bottle in the local currency of the country of origin (see About This Guide, p.5). My tasting note follows the contributor's own note, for comparison or contrast, or simply a different take.

Touraine Gamay Cuvée d'Eos 2003

Domaine Jacky Marteau (Loire Valley, €9)

Fine, spicy fruit – the back label says blackberries (mûres) ... I'd go with that. A hint of surmuri, almost overripe grapes on the nose. Palate and attack all soft fruit and fraîcheur – big, fat, and enticing allspice finish.

Charles Sydney

Very ripe, creamy-blackberry aromas: striking! A melange of creamy-blackberry and strawberry fruit on the palate, both individually distinct. Quite rare and extraordinary for a Loire red, and a totally ridiculous price! A brilliant selection, Charles; thank you. TS

Alpha Syrah 2003

Alpha Estate (Greece, €23) *Bright fruit with black pepper spice. Deftly fuses concentration with elegance. Finely oaked. Poised. Good ageing potential; at its peak in 8–10 years. From the never-ceasing-to-surprise vineyard of Florina.* Nico Manassis

The most impressive wine (by far) from the most impressive estate (by far) I visited in Greece in early 2006. It has beautiful Syrah fruit of such elegance and is supported by tannins that are so silky and ripe that I suspect most bottles will be consumed years before this wine starts to show its true potential complexity. TS

Saumur-Champigny Lisagathe 2003

Philippe Vatan, Château du Hureau (Loire Valley, €15) *Huge mass of soft, sweet blackberry fruit – without even a hint of pepper, green or otherwise. Great concentration on the middle palate, and fine length. A wine that just pretends it's easy to drink but that will keep on getting softer and more complex.* Charles Sydney
Definitely, Charles. All chocolate and soft fruits, yet with nice grippy tannic acid on the aftertaste. Beautiful. TS

Rully Les Pucelles 2004 Domaine Henri and Paul Jacqueson (Burgundy,

Dark-red full-bodied wine, with a nose of forest fruits and discreet oak; rather like a southern French wine, with smooth tannins and good length.

Dr François Lefort

I have not had much experience of Reberger (Regent x Lemberger), but this example certainly has a more classic vinifera character than other hybrids that have been recently and uniquely permitted for wine production by EU authorities. Good length, with nice grippy tannins on the finish. TS

Pinot Noir Réserve 2003 (Marjan Simčič, Slovenia (Eastern & Southeastern Europe, SIT 4,320) *Not many Pinot Noirs are produced in Slovenia and certainly not at this level of quality and finesse. Simčič has a surprisingly fine touch with his reds – a young but graceful wine with notes of wild strawberry and cocoa, and an elegant structure. Dr Caroline Gilby MW* *First bottle corked. Second bottle clean. A touch of VA-lift on the nose, but the palate is excellent, with fresh, sappy fruit and a nice grippy finish. TS*

Minervois Les Aspres 2002

Domaine Cros (Languedoc-Roussillon, €18) *Almost a Guigal style of wine, pure Syrah, deep brooding colour, peppery and spicy on the nose, with huge concentration; tannins just starting to soften, complexity on the finish starting to develop with age. Twenty months in new barrels have mercifully left the fruit more or less intact. Paul Strang*

The oak hits you immediately, and it returns pretty quickly after a brief appearance of the mid-palate fruit. While I appreciate this wine might develop more favourably, I still think that 10 months in new oak would have been more than enough. TS

Syrah 2004 Ziereisen, Baden

(Germany, €28) *Eighteen months in oak have not managed to subdue the pronounced morello-cherry aromas backed up by an abundance of*

pepper and spice. Will it improve with age? Not in my house, where I would not be able to keep my hands off it!

Michael Schmidt

This has so much ground white pepper on the nose that I felt like sneezing, yet it is surprisingly soft in the mouth. Fascinating to find a German Syrah, but I'm sure it will be even more fascinating when the vines are older, and the grapes are riper, to provide the concentration and depth of fruit that is lacking and to replace the spadeful of ground white pepper with just a pinch of cracked black peppercorn for complexity. TS

Condrieu Côte de Vernon 2003

Georges Vernay (Rhône Valley, €45)

This is a fabulous combination of concentration and elegance. With rich aromas of exotic and tropical fruits, combined with a mineral touch, the wine has a steely finish. Olivier Poels Gosh, Olivier, where's the wine? It has so much oak that I'm still pulling splinters out of my teeth! TS

Pinot Noir 2003 Genoels-Elderen,

Belgium (Belgium, Netherlands & Scandinavia, €21) *The warm climate in 2003 helped red-wine production in Belgium, and Genoels-Elderen has shown the way forward with this quite sweet and well-made Pinot Noir. Aged for one year on fine lees in barrels and a further year in bottle, this is well balanced with honest Pinot Noir flavours, soft tannins, and decent depth for the northern climate.*

Fiona Morrison MW

Belgium comes an honourable third behind Luxembourg and England in the 2003 stakes to produce the best red wine in a marginal viticultural region blessed by extraordinary climatic conditions. I think it would have been even better with a little acidification – not something I normally encourage. It would also have benefited from just two-thirds the time in barrel, but unlike