

Wine

INTERNATIONAL

Ultimate guide to festive wines

- 75 Champagnes
1995 & 1996
- 75 red
Burgundy stars
- 40 great value
High Street buys

2003 Sommelier Challenge winner

Wine Personalities of the Year

MOUTON ROTHSCHILD

A century of excellence



have in common? Answer: all are owned by the dynamic Martine Cazeneuve. Château Haut-Carnaillet is also a member of her stable, and anyone looking for a decent affordable claret to enjoy over the next five years should give this gem serious consideration. It's a 50/50 blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon that has been aged in oak for 12-15 months, and then fined with egg whites prior to bottling. The result is a svelte young wine with juicy ripe currant and blackcurrant flavours, light cedar and oak notes, ripe fine tannins and a delicious mellow finish.

Drink 2003-2006 **90 points**



Spier Private Collection Pinotage 2000 Stellenbosch, South Africa
£9.98 @ ASD

Spier is one of a number of labels that come under the umbrella of Winecorp. The Spier Estate includes a 155-bedroom hotel, a country club and an arts complex, plus of course a winery where Frans Smit rules the roost. His best wines appear under the Private Collection label, and this Pinotage shows just what he is capable of. It comes from a single vineyard in Stellenbosch, and has been aged for 14 months in mostly French oak, 60% of it new. This is fresh modern Pinotage with rich earthy red berry flavours spiced to the fore, hints of vanilla and spice in the background and a gutsy cheery finish.

Drink 2003 **91 points**



Shaw & Smith Sauvignon Blanc 2003 Adelaide Hills
£POA @ LIB

Martin Shaw & Michael Hill-Smith have been having success with Sauvignon Blanc in the Adelaide Hills for several years, but their 2003 is different from previous vintages in two respects. Firstly, it's sealed with a Stelvin screw cap. Secondly, Martin was having treatment for cancer at the time the harvest took place, so he was forced to relay his winemaking instructions to the team at the winery. The results are impressive, especially in a vintage that was on the warm side. It's rich in texture but also tangy, with notes of gooseberries, blackcurrant leaves, pineapples and pithy citrus fruit, and a zesty, refreshing finish.

Drink 2003 **91 points**



Black Barn Vineyards Barrel Fermented Chardonnay 2001 Hawke's Bay, New Zealand
£8.90 @ MUS

With an amphitheatre of concert-quality, a farmers' market, a quartet of luxury cottages and a restaurant, it is surprising that the team at Black Barn Vineyards finds time to produce wine. The vineyards on the north-facing slopes of the Te Mata hills just outside Havelock North in Hawke's Bay are planted with Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, the two Cabernets and – a curve-ball – Sangiovese. This Chardonnay comes from the first commercial vintage, and augurs well for Black Barn's future. The flavours of apricot, apple and citrus flavours, spiced up with hints of nuts, cream and oatmeal, are reined in by crisp acidity. Delicious, mouthish and very crab-friendly wine.

Drink 2003-2006 **92 points**



D'Alessandro Cortona Syrah 2002 Tuscany, Italy
£11.95 @ LEA

No, it's not a mis-spelling of a Ford from a bygone age. Cortona is a new Tuscan DOC close to the border with Umbria where Syrah performs particularly successfully. The D'Alessandro brothers have been demonstrating this for several years with their splendid Il

Bosco, and they've now introduced this particular cuvée as a sort-of second wine to maintain the quality of the grand vin. Not that this is second-rate matter. It's a confident, stylish red with supple blackcurrant and berry flavours, hints of earth, menthol and freshly ground black pepper and a crisp, fruity finish. Will it last? Probably, but it won't get much better than it is right now.

Drink 2003-2009 **93 points**



Finca La Anita Malbec 1999 Mendoza, Argentina
£24.99 @ HIS

Last June, Finca La Anita's Tocai Friulano featured on these pages. This time, it's the turn of the wonderful Malbec. The formula for its success is simple – take fruit only from your own low-yielding, minimally-

irrigated, organically-farmed vines in the prime red wine region of Lujan de Cuyo, and handle it with lots of TLC. There are bigger Malbecs than this, but there are few that are so wonderfully drinkable. The flavours of blackberries, violets and leather are enrobed in a supple structure which stimulates rather than overwhelms the palate. Add in hints of herbs and chocolate and you have a delicious, food-friendly wine of some class.

Drink 2005-2010 **94 points**



Giuseppe Mascarello Dolcetto d'Alba Bricco 2001, Piedmont, Italy
£11.00 @ WTA

Mauro Mascarello is best known for his Barolos, especially the stunning wine from the Monprivato vineyard. However, he also dabbles with other traditional Piedmontese grapes such as Dolcetto, Barbera and Freisa. "Bricco" is his top Dolcetto, and comes from a single vineyard in Castiglione Falletto (home of Monprivato). It's usually aged for a couple of months in cask, but this is to calm down the boisterous fruit rather than add wood flavours. The 2001 is still lively stuff, with exuberant berry and bitter cherry fruit, and the classic earthy violet perfume of Dolcetto. Most Dolcetto is at its best on release, but here's a wine with the substance and structure to survive for a few more years to come.

Drink 2005-2010 **93 points**



Podere Castorani Montepulciano d'Abruzzo 2000
POA @ ENO

Formula 1 fans will be familiar with the name Jarno Trulli, who drives for the Renault team. What they may not know is that his father Enzo and manager Lucio Cavuto along with two other partners produce wine at Podere Castorani in the village of Aianno near Pescara. The estate dates back to the 18th century, but had been abandoned for several years before the quartet revived its fortunes in the 1990s. This is their first release, and it's a cracker. Though still desperately young, it's already showing an abundance of rich spicy raspberry, plum and cherry fruit, and hints of liquorice, propped up by ripe tannins. Trulli excellent.

Drink 2005-2010 **93 points**