

## We are thrilled to be recognized, as Argentina's Most Admired Wine Brand 2014 • 2015 • 2017



TRAPICHE has been recognized among the World's Top 50 Most Admired Wine Brands.

Drinks International, London, April 2017.



Tim Atkin

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ine has come a long way from the days when people in wine-producing countries bought whatever was local or national. In non-producing countries it tended to be the classes who knew their wines and didn't need either branding or informative labels.

As a generalisation, it has been the combination of multiple retailers selling wine and New World producers, unhindered by stifling rules and regulations, who grasped how to sell their wines to mainstream consumers.

Simply, this led to clear labeling telling uninitiated drinkers what this wine is made from, where it has come from, what it should taste like and possibly what foods it goes with.

With this has come the assurance of branding. While brands have been around forever with the likes of scotch and beer, they are relatively new to wine – but here to stay. Most mainstream wine drinkers want the reassurance of a name – it can be Chablis or Bordeaux, Jacob's Creek or even Tesco Finest. In many consumers' minds, there is no difference.

So we asked our readers – both 'commercial', as in buyers, and 'intellectual', as in MWs – and wine writers to vote for the brands they most admire for whatever reason.

I commend the results to you.

#### CHRISTIAN DAVIS

EDITOR, DRINKS INTERNATIONAL

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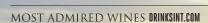
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DDIMIZE







A look at how our Academy chooses the wines that make the list

orres has reclaimed its place at the top of the World's Most Admired Wines list after losing out to Australia's Penfolds last year. The Treasury Wine Estate's brands slipped down to third, with Concha Y Torro moving up two places into second.

This year's list saw 18 brands on an upwards trajectory, the highest climber being Château Petrus, up 22 places to number 14. And, with Château Margaux rising 20 places to number nine, it looks like Bordeaux is enjoying something of an upswing.

Just ahead of Château Petrus at number 13 is this year highest entry – and perhaps biggest surprise – New Zealand's Felton Road. The label produces just 12,000 cases a year and owner Nigel Greening is certainly a little stunned by its high debut, saying: "Some might see us as more of an anti-brand."

This year saw the same number of fallers as it did risers, with Oyster Bay losing favour to the tune of 33 places. But, despite its precarious placing at number 46, the New Zealand wine remains one of the few brands to be ever-present since the World's Most Admired project first started.

There were six new entries for 2017, including the super-Tuscan Sassicaia at number 15, Sandeman at 38 – bringing the number of port brands featured in the top 50 to four – and the very recognisable Freixenet at 39.

While brands may come and go, our Academy of judges remains constant – if not in members in its scrutiny of the possibilities. We polled wine professionals, journalists, educators and MWs and, as ever, have endeavoured to improve the product again this year.

We constantly keep an eye out for new judges with first-rate credentials to take part in the survey and amend the contact list accordingly.

Ultimately, we are asking for brands our Academy admire – the clue is in the name. We aren't asking the elite group to vote based on a particular wine



region's success in the past year or quantify admiration based on case sales and margin.

Every year we are inundated with requests from brands that have not made the cut – or did one year and not the next – asking how they can get into the list and every year we have to gently reiterate the following:

Our academy members are given three votes and presented with a list of previous winners and other well-known brands. Should their admired brands fail to appear in the list, the



THERE WERE SIX NEW ENTRIES FOR 2017, INCLUDING SANDEMAN, BRINGING THE NUMBER OF PORT BRANDS UP TO FOUR members put forward their own for inclusion. They are also able to give reasons for their choices or remain anonymous if they wish. They are asked to base votes on the following criteria:

- the wine should be of consistent or improving quality
- it should reflect its region or country of origin
- it should respond to the needs and tastes of its target audience
- it should be well marketed and packaged
- it should have strong appeal to a wide demographic

In the case of a tie, a small jury of key voters is assembled to decide final positions, but it should be known this does not affect any of the top 10 brands.

You cannot buy your way into the list or rely on marketing spend to secure a place. Some of the biggest 'brands' do not appear. And five million-case brands can be trounced by brands that sell 100th of that.

Old and New World wines sit in an order many may not expect or agree with. There is no way to ensure a place in the top 50.





# 1 TORRES

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: TORRES FAMILY

fter being pipped to the number one spot by Penfolds last year, Torres returns to the top of the tree for this year's chart.

Like just about every major wine producer you can name, Torres started out from humble beginnings – a small vineyard in Penedès in its case. Where it differs from many is that almost 150 years later it's still in the hands of the family whose name it carries.

"My family is still very involved in the day-to-day decisions, from the vineyard to the table, as we say, and this gives us direction in the long term," says general manager and fifth-generation family member Miguel Torres Maczassek.

"Short term is not something we talk much about. Every generation has created wines that we keep today. Our oldest brand apart from Torres is Coronas, registered in 1907.

"They all represent a legacy, a mosaic of wines that allow wine lovers around the world to enjoy the culture of wine."

With this long-term view, it's perhaps no surprise that sustainability in the vineyards and Torres' work with old Spanish grape varieties registered highly with our academy members.

One gives Torres the nod because of "its work to sustain or bring back Spanish grape varieties that have been neglected or forgotten". Another says that "Torres is a leader in viticulture, winemaking and concern for the climate".

Torres Maczassek says its ancestral varieties research

is ongoing, with 2016 seeing the reintroduction of the prephylloxera grape Moneu into Penedès and the white variety Forcada into higher parts of the region.

"It is really exciting to see how we, together with other winegrowers, are gradually reviving the winegrowing heritage and lost richness of the Penedès and Catalonia in general," says Torres Maczassek.

He adds: "Every year we invest 11% of our profits into projects focused on the environment and climate change. So far we have invested more than €12 million." New developments include charging stations for electric cars at the main winery and research to find alternative uses for the CO2 released during wine fermentation.

"In Spain we will reach soon 800ha certified as organic viticulture, while in Chile all of our vineyards are already certified," Torres Maczassek adds.

There's also been plenty of product development with the launch of Esplendor by Vardon Kennett – its first Catalan sparkling wine – and the release of the first bottles of Sons de Prades, a Chardonnay from the Milmanda vineyards in Conca de Barberà. It is produced in small quantities and mainly aimed at restaurants and specialist stores.

Torres Maczassek adds:



EVERY YEAR WE INVEST 11% OF OUR PROFITS INTO PROJECTS FOCUSED ON THE ENVIRONMENT

"During 2016 we grew in value almost all our markets, but specially in the UK, Germany and Spain.

"We are working better in the high end restaurants, and especially in those with Michelin stars where we have a great presence for our single vineyard wines."

But US really stood out in 2016, he adds.

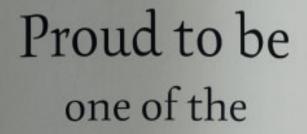
"My family has successfully exported to this market for the past 75 years – my aunt Marimar is producing outstanding wines in Russian River Valley with her daughter Cristina – but we wanted to bring our presence to the next level and we are now getting there," he says.

"Our alliance with Ste Michelle Wine Estates as exclusive importer has been very positive.

I believe that the US will be one of the top five markets for Torres in the coming years."



Mas La Plana Estate



# World's Most Admired Wine Brands

2017



# CONCHAYTORO

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# 2 CONCHAY TORO

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHILE OWNER: CONCHAY TORO

f there's something that many of the world's top wine brands have in common it's the ability to produce high quality across the board for everyday drinking and fine wines that reach out to the top end of the market.

Latin America's biggest wine producer is no exception, with its lead brand, Casillero del Diablo, among the most popular on the planet, notching up sales of 5.4m cases a year, while labels such as Don Melchor Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmin de Peumo Carmenère and the Terrunyo range satisfy its fine wine ambitions.

This year, Concha y Toro chalks up two decades of a partnership with Bordeaux's Baron Phillippe de Rothschild making Almaviva in the top vineyards in Puente Alto.

One academy member sums it up as the company "delivering perfect value for money in huge volumes". Another, who also numbers Château Petrus among their choices, says: "Concha y Toro is the perfect demonstration that you can be both big and good."

The company's main shareholder since the 1960s has been the Guilisasti family, and corporate communications manager Blanca Bustamante says the foundations of Concha y Toro's success were laid down by its "long-term vision and commitment to quality wines".

She adds: "Since its foundation in 1883, Concha y Toro has focused on producing distinctive wines from their place of origin.

"This constant adherence





to excellence has gone handin-hand with a history of entrepreneurship, vision and work, responding to a dynamic industry and new challenges."

Last year it made its greatest gains in premium segments, where sales were up 9% says Bustamante, with the Don Melchor Cabernet ahead by 17%.

"Although we are a large

company, we are attentive to every detail in production, from vineyard to the bottle," says Bustamante. "Each of our brands has its own winemaker who ensures the quality of that wine.

"This attention to detail ensures we never lose focus. We continually strive to create world-class expressions of each individual terroir."

Some 2m of those 5m-plus cases of Casillero del Diablo were sold in the UK, its largest market, where it is the fourth biggest wine brand of all and benefits from a partnership deal with Manchester United football club. Global sales of the brand rose 8.6% in 2016.

Volumes across the portfolio grew 7.6% to total 16.3m cases, with Asia at up 23%. In that region, China saw a 90% increase, South Korea was up

18% and Japan rose 12%.

They're impressive figures which support the high ranking afforded Concha y Toro by its peers in the industry and put firmly at the top table in the global wine market.

At the root of it lies the rather simple mission to provide consumers with an enjoyable wine-drinking experience, says Bustamante.

"One of our goals is to get closer to the consumer, to better understand them and learn their needs," she adds. "I believe consumers and our clients can trust the brand. I also think that consumers recognise our wines are best value wines. This is a commitment we do not break.

"Concha y Toro has shown the quality of wines from Chile in all major markets, and is really an ambassador for Chilean wine."





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# 3 PENFOLDS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA OWNER: TREASURY WINE ESTATES

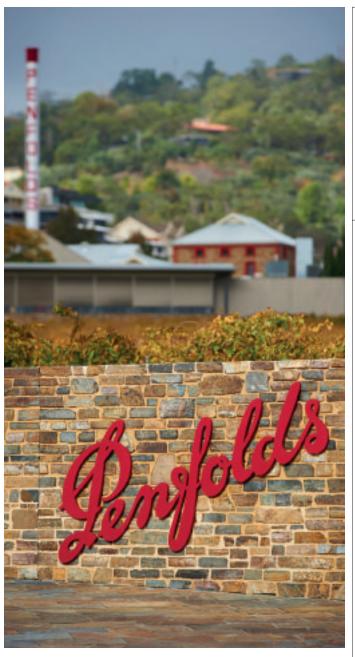
enfolds' reign at the top of the World's Most Admired list lasted but a single year and for 2017 it has returned to the number three spot that it occupied two years ago.

But there is still plenty of respect around for the Australian brand among members of our academy.

One voter brackets it with the likes of Nederburg and Cloudy Bay as examples of brands that display "constant winemaking improvements across the range, crafting wines that are representative of their areas of production and reflections of vintage influence". Another succinctly nails what many in the industry have long-observed, that: "Penfolds excels at producing some of the best quality wines in the world at all price ranges."

One could go so far as to argue that no other brand or producer in the world so successfully competes at affordable supermarket price tiers, while having labels that send collectors scurrying to grab their credit cards and auctioneers to polish their gavels.

In the UK, for example, one can buy a bottle of Koonunga Hill Shiraz Cabernet for £9 in a Tesco store in London's West End, then walk a few hundred yards down the road to the luxury drinks emporium Hedonism Wines to salivate over one of 12 ampoules – a hand-blown glass plumb-bob suspended in a wooden case – of Block 42 Kalimna Cabernet Sauvignon 2004, with a price-tag of £12,000.



But it's not simply that Penfolds cuts across all parts of the market. Whatever Penfolds wine you buy, whatever the price, you're never going to have a disappointing or dull experience. That you won't is largely due to the skill of the winemaking team, currently combining some 150 years' experience between them and with chief winemaker Peter Gago at the helm – one of the most recognisable and



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SAUVIGNON
INSPIRED BY
THE BOEING
AIRCRAFT OF THE
SAME NUMBER

respected technical bods in the global wine industry.

At the top end, Grange is the jewel in the Penfolds crown, arguably Australia's leading collectable wine – and Penfolds collectors are among the only ones in the world to be offered their own after-sales care plan in the form of the Re-Corking Clinic, a touring affair which, over the course of 25 years, has inspected, certified and recapsuled some 130,000 bottles of Penfolds red wine of 15 years or more in age.

Last year, the release of the Penfolds Collection 2016 added to its top end. The launch of 2012 Grange saw a special collaboration with luxury glassmaker Saint-Louis for a decanter for the bottle and an 'objet d'art service vessel' for its first commercially-sold 6-litre Imperial size of Grange.

Another recent release is a Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon inspired by the Boeing aircraft of the same number that comes in a presentation box with a horn button from one of the aircraft.

Penfolds reports
"extraordinary demand for
Australian premium wines such
as Penfolds in all key markets
around the world", but it has
made particularly rapid gains in
Asia in recent years.

# The World's Most Admired New Zealand Wine Brand

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# 4 VILLA MARIA

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: NEW ZEALAND OWNER: SIR GEORGE FISTONICH

t's a bounce-back year for the top ranking New Zealand wine on the list, recapturing the number four position it held in 2015 after slipping to number eight last year.

While some others among the country's producers are prepared to stick to the knitting in the form of landfill Sauvignon, the company that's still headed by Sir George Fistonich, who founded it in 1961, has never been afraid to innovate. It was, for example, the first New Zealand winery to abandon cork for screwcap in 2004, a move which led the industry and became standard in a relatively short space of time.

This coming May will see the debut of Ngakirikiri, a 2013 Cabernet-dominated Bordeaux blend from vines that are into their second quarter-century of life. Chief operating officer Richard Thomas says it "sets a new benchmark for quality and will be positioned at the top of Villa Maria's portfolio, only to be bottled when exceptional vintages produce outstanding wines for consideration".

It's also showing others in New Zealand the way in Albariño, lighter-alcohol wines and experiments with Sauvignon Blanc orange wine in a research and development project whose fruits are currently sold only at the cellar door.

"It provides us an opportunity to evolve current wine trends and winemaking styles that are outside of our traditional methods," says Thomas. "It's also an opportunity to get direct consumer feedback and gauge changing interests and palates.



We are also always looking to explore new opportunities with our wines."

He adds that growth on both its main SKUs and higher-tier wines, which form the backbone of its commercial success, was "healthy in many markets" in 2016.

Thomas says: "This positive performance in both areas is critical for the brand and the business as we strive to give more people an exceptional New Zealand wine experience, across all levels, from casual drinker to connoisseur.

"Consumers' love of New Zealand wine continues apace," adds Thomas, "which is positive news for both Villa Maria and the industry as a whole. Our stand-out markets in 2016 have probably been the US, Canada



and Ireland, with continuing strong performances from our historically important markets of the UK and New Zealand."

As one academy member notes: "Villa Maria is an extraordinary success story... amazingly reliable wines, with a range that is consistently excellent, from basic to premium."

Thomas thinks the solid backbone of family ownership is key.

"We're one of the few remaining New Zealand family-owned wineries of our size left in New Zealand," he says. "This, teamed with our focus on quality, means wine lovers can enjoy consistently good wine from well-known varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir, right through to exciting new wines such as Albariño.

"When you ally this with our commitment to sustainability – the fact that we're always taking a long-term view of the wine industry from an environmental perspective, making investments in organics and sustainable practices – it means the brand and our approach resonates with people."



# RHÔNE RISING

he Rhône Valley occupies a fascinating leg in the trio of most recognised French appellations. The array of wines and geographies, and in particular the style of the wines, is both a synthesis and contrast with Bordeaux and Burgundy. In an increasingly global market, the past several years have seen consumer demand for any number of Rhône wines increase dramatically. The latest calendar year 2015 Rhône Valley statistics indicate that, since 2008, sales of appellations such as Côte-Rôtie, Condrieu, Crozes-Hermitage, Saint-Joseph and Châteauneuf-du-Pape have all strongly increased. In that time, sales have in general also moved from 25% sold outside the domestic French market to 32%, with the export value rising from €296m to € 459m.

The region's triumphs driving this success – the fact the wines have such a welcoming face to their complexity, that they so distinctly display the characteristics of their sites, and that they have the ability to do the above at such high quality across a range of price points – is encapsulated by one family and producer: Guigal.



Rhône valley vineyards

Guigal's placement as the number one Most Admired French Wine Brand is testimony to this extraordinary family's work and wines, as well as a reflection of the entire Rhône Valley

The Guigal family has been recognised any number of times for its role in pushing forward the quality of Rhône Valley wines and then bringing that resulting quality to a

global audience. Its position as producer of the leading collectible wines of the Rhône Valley, the famous Côte-Rôtie La Mouline, La Turque, and La Landonne, is clear by any measure. But the family's presence is also far-reaching, as its Côtes du Rhône Rouge, Blanc and Rosé are the benchmark first Rhône wine experience for many consumers.

The Guigal's passion for the Rhône Valley cannot be contained. Talking to Marcel and Philippe Guigal about the history of plantings in Côte-Rôtie, the work they do to preserve the famously steep vineyards in the North, where Syrah grows best in the Southern Rhône Valley. great old vine Grenache in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the emerging interest they see in both Saint-Joseph and Crozes-Hermitage: each conversation is ardent and extensive.

Most gratifying to them has been the consumer appreciation, step by step and



year by year, of Rhône Valley wines. The unpretentious and sunny disposition of the wines cannot hide the interest and balance that makes wines from the entry level to the greatest rarities exciting for the most dyed in the wool wine lovers. Guigal's Côtes du Rhône Blanc on the bistro table, in its own way, delivers as much satisfaction as a vertical tasting of their Côte-Rôtie Château d'Ampuis.

The Guigal family is legendary for its quality standards and work ethic, and has been delighted to see that the quality of work and wines in the Rhône Valley has never been higher. As Philippe Guigal states: "For us as a producer and a region as a whole, the Rhône Valley has never been more exciting.

"It's important that wine drinkers have a wonderful and unique experience when they drink a bottle of Rhône wine. We know that if they do, they will take the time to learn about, explore and fall in love with many wines across the region. We see just that happening, bottle by bottle, every day, and it makes us very happy".



Phillippe and Marcel Guigal



### **ERRAZURIZ**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHILE Owner: Eduardo Chadwick & Family

Errazuriz came crashing into the World's Most Admired Wine Brands at number seven in 2016 and has proved that was no fluke by becoming the second Chilean brand to grab a place in the top five this year.

"Errazuriz embodies the best of Chile and continues to experiment", says one academy member. That thirst for innovation last year saw the producer launch the first vintages of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from its Aconcagua Costa vineyard under the name Las Pizarras (meaning schist) with their minerality, freshness and linear structure gaining each of them high-90 scores from top American critic James Suckling. He also gave a perfectly round 100 to last October's 2014 vintage release of Viñedo Chadwick, a Cabernet Sauvignon from the tiny Alto Maipo property.

Academy members are keen to give credit to winemaker Francisco Baettig. "He creatively combines the best from an Old World approach and New World challenges," said one. "The quality of basic lines stands out and the top icon wines show the potential of the ideal place for vine growing combined with careful winemaking."

Those qualities have made Errazuriz resilient to any turbulence in world wine markets, says Jon Stevens, Errazuriz regional director for the UK, Ireland & Scandinavia.

Global sales are around 650,000 cases with value topping US\$33m. "China and the US are the markets showing best growth for us," says Stevens. "For a number of years we have invested in China with a large team of people on the ground based out of Shanghai, and this, combined with the right distribution and brand building strategy really paid dividends in 2016."

The US was driven by sales of the Max Reserva and Don Maximiano tiers.

### **GUIGAL**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: GUIGAL FAMILY

The family-owned Rhône producer has seemingly mastered the art of subtle evolution while giving reassurance to its loyal followers that it has no intention of reinventing what has proved to be a perfectly efficient wheel.

"Guigal remains a stalwart of the Rhône, from the everyday right up to the luxury tier," notes one academy member.

It's a formula the company clearly recognises in itself, with marketer and family member Eve Guigal suggesting that "quality and regularity of the products" and "family values" are the attributes that secure it enough votes for repeated appearances in the World's Most Admired Top 10. And Guigal is even consistent in that, retaining the number six position that it held in last year's poll and now the top French wine on the list.

Born shortly after the end of World War II, Guigal has gone on to achieve annual global sales of 7.4m bottles, with France, the US, Canada, Japan, Germany, Sweden and the UK proving to be its most lucrative markets.

Sales in France grew
12% last year, according to
Guigal, with the rest of the
world contributing a 5%
uplift. "Asia is growing
for the Rhône category
in general and Guigal in
particular, with excellent
results in Japan, South
Korea and Singapore,"
says Eve Guigal.

Increased global demand will be catered for by increased ageing and storage capacity after investment in new cellars in Ampuis, which came on stream in 2016. On a smaller scale, the year also





#### RIDGE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: US OWNER: OTSUKA PHARMACEUTICALS CO

Last year was one of regime change at Ridge with the retirement at 80 years of age of chief executive and chief winemaker Paul Draper, so maybe it was apt that the producer's East Bench wine was selected to be served at the final state dinner hosted by Barack Obama in the White House.

Draper's technical prowess and commitment to producing wines that are the highest-quality expressions of their Californian land and climate helped build an international reputation for Ridge that has proved resistant to the vagaries of fashion that sometimes

plague the upper echelons of the region.

"Ridge again is displaying its leadership in its output of quintessentially Californian wines without succumbing to reviewer or consumer fads," says one member of our judging academy.

Though Draper may have stepped down after 47 years with the company, don't

expect the formula for success to be drastically altered with the newlook winemaking team of Eric Baugher, John Olney and David Gates already well-versed in the Ridge way of doing things – and the beneficiaries of a long handover period. Olney has the least experience with the company of the three, chalking up a mere 22 years in 2017.

It's now more than 40 years since Ridge and other Californian upstarts turned the world's red wine hierarchy upside down in the famous Judgement of Paris tasting. Its Cabernets outpointed some of the most illustrious reds that Bordeaux had to offer and remain the jewels in the Ridge crown, most notably the Monte Bello which takes its name from the original 'ridge' where San Francisco doctor Osea Perrone first established 180 acres of vineyards in 1885.

Perhaps it's the continuity of ownership and top personnel over the past several decades, and refusing to bend to the whims of a fast-changing market, that keep Ridge ahead of all of the French region's finest of fine wine châteaux in the Most Admired Wine Brands list for another year.



### MICHEL CHAPOUTIER

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: CHAPOUTIER FAMILY

Perhaps it's because the academy's Bordeaux vote gets split among the top châteaux, or maybe the Rhône valley really can lay claim to be home to the best that French winemaking has to offer the world. Either way, it's the Rhône that's the only region with two of the top 10, with both Guigal and Chapoutier securing a berth ahead of Bordeaux's leading contender, Château Margaux.

Chapoutier has slipped three places since last year, meaning it has to hand over the title of top Rhône to its regional rival, but it's still a great result for a producer that one academy member fetes for providing the market with "consistent high quality at all different price levels".

It was not always thus. Jancis Robinson's *Oxford Companion to Wine* noted that, back in the 1980s, Chapoutier's wines seemed "unexceptional by comparison" to re-energised offerings from rival big names in Rhône. That all changed when Michel Chapoutier and brother Marc took over the reins in 1990, dragging standards up at all stages of the production process and establishing the company's modern reputation, which serves it well to this day.

An historical presence in restaurants and wine shops makes France its most important market, but the US and Canada are both substantial and growing markets. Japan, Germany, the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, China and Norway make up its portfolio of highest-volume markets, a diverse set of markets that shows a truly global reach, with worldwide sales now topping €55m.

"We are always in development, always looking for highquality new terroirs," says marketing assistant Laurie Julien, and to this end Chapoutier has recently added to its empire with new estates at Roc Folassiere in Côtes du Rhône, Château des Ferrages in Provence and Dominio del Soto in Spain's Ribera del Duero.



#### Maison M. CHAPOUTIER has been producing the finest wines in the Rhône Valley for 200 years: Hermitage, Côte-Rôtie, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Condrieu, Saint-Joseph, Crozes-Hermitage... The family motto "Fac et Spera", do and hope, sums up all the patience and daring that the winemaker's art demands.

Respect for natural balances, biodynamic and organic growing... M. CHAPOUTIER seeks out the purest expression of each terroir.

Maison M. Chapoutier shares its philosophy through a wide array of wine tourism related activities: its Cellars, School and Gîtes.

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Maison M. CHAPOUTIER offers wine tastings and tours of the vineyards tailored to your requirements. Run by Chapoutier's sommeliers, these activities allow you to discover the values and the soul of Maison M. CHAPOUTIER. Extend your visit by popping in to our shop where you will find a selection of fine wines, rare vintages, gift packs and gift vouchers...

#### THE WINE SCHOOL

At the M. CHAPOUTIER Wine School you will learn about wine in an interesting way through a number of different events and activities including: scheduled and tailor-made workshops, business seminars and wine tourism breaks. You can even get active and explore the l'Hermitage vineyards on electric bikes.

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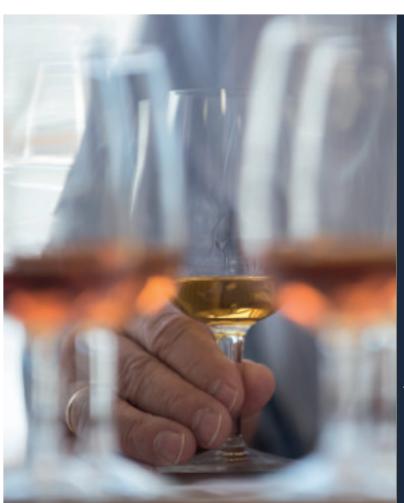






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### CHÂTEAU MARGAUX

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: CORINNE MENTZELOPOULOS

When you've got five centuries of tradition under your belt and your wines are coveted by some of the highest-spending wine buyers on the planet, it's understandable if you don't want to tinker with the recipe that's worked so well in the past.

After the death of general manager Paul Pontallier last spring, owner Corinne Mentzelopoulos turned to an old hand to take the Château Margaux reins, with Philippe Bascaules coming back from a five-year sojourn as managing director of Francis Ford Coppola's Inglenook in California.

Bascaules returns this month but the hiatus in the driver's seat has had little impact on Margaux's standing among its peers. It returns to the Most Admired's top 10 where it perched proudly in both 2014 and 2015, with a storming rise of 21 places on last year, correcting a slide that had threatened to take it outside of our top 30 for the first time.

No doubt the reputed quality of the estate's 2015 vintage played a part, with an industry poll by LivEx bestowing a "wine of the vintage" accolade on it for wines tasted en primeur, with Margaux appearing in the top fives of two-thirds of 440 voters.

Like the rest of the first growths, Margaux commands stratospheric prices on world fine wine markets and is a particularly hot favourite with the Chinese. It also holds what was claimed by Forbes magazine to be the record for the most expensive broken bottle of wine in history when, in 1989, New York wine merchant William Sokolin claimed \$225,000 on the insurance after a bottle of Margaux 1787 signed by Thomas Jefferson was damaged at a dinner in the city's Four Seasons restaurant.



### **GRAHAM'S**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: PORTUGAL OWNER: SYMINGTON FAMILY ESTATES

The highest-placed port on this year's list is making a mockery of any notions around the unfashionability of fortified wines, with sales on the rise in 70% of the 66 global markets where it has a presence, and the company claiming a 10% increase in volumes and value shipments around the world.

Marketing director Dominic Symington thinks growth has been driven by "a combination of factors, including its physical presence in the markets, the brand's creative approach and its contemporary look and feel".

Outside of Portugal, the traditionally big port markets of the UK and US rank among the brand's most friendly, along with Germany, the Netherlands, Canada and Belgium.

The port is approaching both its 200th anniversary and a half century under the stewardship of the Symington family – which also owns Dow's and Warre's – during which time it's proved itself equally at home in providing port for the masses through supermarkets and luxury for the great and the good.

It claims to have "reinvented" the aged tawny category with a range that covers every age ending in nought from 10 to 40 years.

Recent releases include 20cl bottles to expand the gift market, growing numbers of 4.5-litre bottles for the on-trade, a run of 500 bottles of a 90-year-old tawny for the UK Queen's birthday and a limited-edition crystal decanter of Ne Oublie, dating back to 1882.

Such sought after rarities have helped propel Graham's four places higher in this year's poll and into the top 10.





II TÍO PEPE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: GONZALEZ BYASS

Few drinks brands define their categories quite as much as Tío Pepe. In the mainstream global market, the name has become almost a byword for fino sherry in the same way that, say, Baileys has for cream liqueurs or Angostura for bitters.

The Gonzalez Byass-owned sherry made its debut in last year's list and has maintained a strong position, spurred by growth in casual dining and Tio Pepe's affinity with tapas.

The vote for it as the top sherry in the World's Most Admired reinforces *Drinks International*'s recent *Annual Bar Report*, where Tío Pepe topped a poll as the favourite brand of bartenders and the list of trending brands.

Spurred by this interest in top-end bars and restaurants, the sherry brand has been attempting to widen consumption occasions through such initiatives as the Tío Pepe Challenge, encouraging bartenders to create original sherry-based drinks.

In an industry where the professionals' favourites don't always chime with what consumers buy, this high ranking for the world's best-selling sherry, is a reminder that the biggest can sometimes be among the best.



12 vega sicilia

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: ÁLVAREZ FAMILY

One academy member likens the Ribera del Duero winery to Ridge in California, citing both as examples of producers that focus on wines which perfectly reflect their terroir and the winemaker's art, rather than bending to trends.

It's certainly a philosophy that has served well the producer that the *Oxford Companion to Wine* calls Spain's "undisputed equivalent of a First Growth".

The opportunity to taste Vega Sicilia wines is the kind of event

to send wine enthusiasts weak at the knees, though the chance to buy them is usually limited by the depths of one's pockets.

Food critic José Carlos Capel once related a story of how one Los Angeles restaurant had struggled to shift bottles for \$500, only to sell out at a stroke when it ramped the price up to \$3,000.

But to the Álvarez family, which has owned Vega Sicilia for the past 35 years, impressive market prices take second place to the liquid.

As chief executive Pablo Álvarez once said: "There are some big stars in the fine wine world but really stars should be kept in the sky. The work behind the wines and the effort people put into it is what we should be talking about."



14 CHÂTEAU PETRUS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: JP MOUEIX

There's a tendency from time to time for the big names in

Bordeaux to get a bit of stick, the annual circus of vintage tasting, points and their impact on already eye-watering prices not going down well with some in the industry who find it uncomfortable and elitist.

Others see intrinsic value in brands – which would probably never deign to call themselves brands – that preserve the idea of wine as an aspirational luxury in a world where so many others are prepared to sacrifice quality for volume.

With Petrus – like Château Margaux – surging up this year's list, from number 36 last year, it seems Bordeaux is enjoying something of an upswing in industry sympathies.

There's certainly plenty of love around for Petrus. "A revered brand that commands amazing prices and it is always brilliant," says one enthusiastic academy member. In fact, Petrus – annual production of which averages out at 30,000 bottles - almost routinely commands the highest prices of all the high-priced clarets, a position that shows little sign of slipping in the years ahead. Tim Atkin scored the 2015 vintage 99 points on first tasting in what he otherwise thought was a mixed year for the top châteaux.

### FELTON ROAD

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: NEW ZEALAND OWNER: NIGEL GREENING

Among the New World producers featured in this year's list, Felton Road may be the one punching most above its weight. The New Zealand firm produces just 12,000 cases a year and its high ranking on its debut in the Most Admired list is perhaps the biggest surprise of this year's poll.

It certainly was to owner Nigel Greening, who says: "Some might see us as more of an anti-brand. This is a winery that has a zero-growth policy and has held it for more than a decade. Its labels have never seen a design company, its bottles are the thinnest glass we can find. It has never had a marketing budget and it rarely puts its prices up."

Felton Road produces only Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Riesling out of the Bannockburn region of Central Otago, with no plans for other varieties or to increase production. All its wines are released on allocation, with importers frequently requesting more.





# CODORNÍU PRESENTS ITS MASTER WORK – ARS COLLECTA

The Ars Collecta Codorníu prestige collection is made up of 5 cavas: three estate cavas in addition to the insignia 456, plus Jaume Codorníu

he Codorníu house presents Ars Collecta Codorníu, its new premium cava collection, to commemorate the winery's 456 harvests, an ambitious project that the company which first created cava has been working on for a decade. The collection is made up of five cavas: Jaume Codorníu, three estate cavas -La Fideuera, El Tros Nou and La Pleta – and 456, the latter being the most select coupage from all three vineyards.

The winery has chosen the Latin name Ars Collecta in homage to the love of things done well with a touch of Mediterranean folly and genius. Ars Collecta has two meanings, intimately linked to the house's history: "the art of harvesting" and "art collecting".

The home of this collection is the Celler Jaume, located on the Cavas Codorniu premises. In addition to this collection it is also the scene of the research projects undertaken by Codorníu's Head Winemaker, Bruno Colomer and his team.

Ars Collecta 456 is the culmination of this new collection. Its vintage is 2007, the vintage that marked the



Codorníu's vineyards

commencement of the project. This jewel represents all the winemaking expertise of a fourcentury old winery. In fact, its name, 456, symbolises the number of Codorníu's harvests from 1551 to 2007. The number of bottles on sale is very limited at 1,000 and, at €175 a bottle, it is probably the most expensive cava ever. 456 is also unique because of its origins: three terroirs. Three soils. Three



exceptional vineyards. Three landscapes. From three different climate zones.

Finca La Pleat is a small vineyard of Chardonnay at 286m above sea level. It is south facing and located on one of the best terroirs of the Segrià region. The vines grow on shallow, limey clay soils, with very little organic matter.

Finca La Fideuera is a small jewel hidden away in the Alto Penedès, where the Xarel.lo variety displays all its expression, acidity and elegance. Its fully mature vine stock is more than 25 years old and its roots are deeply rooted in this noble limy soil which contributes structure and richness to this cava.

El Tros Nou is a singular vineyard of Pinot Noir located in one of the coldest zones of the cava appellation, Serrelada de Prades. Its most outstanding particularity are its 'llicorella' soils which give the Pinot Noir a characteristic mineral touch.

These three estate cavas, which will shortly be classified as 'Cava de Paraje', were brought out in a very limited edition of 300 bottles and their recommended price is €80.

Jaume Codorníu Gran reserva closes the collection. An insignia of the Codorníu house, for more than 30 years, a homage to its origins, a limited edition with a select blend from the same three varieties and locations.

The prestige Ars Collecta Codorníu collection forms part of a cross-company project that is being carried out in all the group's wineries.

**WEBSITE:** ARSCOLLECTA.COM



Cristina Forner;
THE FOURTH GENERATION
OF THE FORNER FAMILY



## Marqués de Cáceres

www.marquesdecaceres.com



#### SASSICAIA

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ITALY Owner: Incisa della rocchetta family

It may come as a surprise to some that the family-owned super-Tuscan has never before featured in the World's Most Admired Wine Brands.

Like many of the others that it now takes its place alongside, it's a brand that has challenged perceptions of what a particular country or region can produce.

Marchese Mario Incisa della Rochetta began experimenting with the Burgundy grape Pinot Noir in the 1930s, before eventually realising that the gravelly soil of the Tenuta San Guido property the family settled on after World War II was similar to Graves in Bordeaux and ideal terrain for growing Cabernet Sauvignon.

Initially the wine was kept for family consumption on special occasions, and it took until 1968 for the first Sassicaia – the name means 'stony place' – to be released commercially.

A turning point came when Sassicaia beat many leading Bordeaux houses in a *Decanter* magazine Cabernet competition in 1978. It has since gone on to become a globally-recognised fine wine brand that has upset a status quo that dictated that Tuscany should be all about Sangiovese.





COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA OWNER: ROBERT HILL SMITH

"It's a weird name if you think about it," Yalumba chairman Robert Hill-Smith told an Aussie wine website last year. That hasn't stopped the family-owned Australian wine producer earning plaudits from consumers and industry peers alike and becoming a regular fixture on the list.

The name was taken from an Aboriginal word for 'all the land around' and was bestowed by Hill Smith's great, great grandfather who moved to Barossa from Dorset in England in 1847.

It's back stories like this that wine brands and the people who sell them thrive on, but Yalumba's commercial success and recognition among its peers is as much about the consistency of the modern-day product as it is the 170 years of family ownership.

Industry love among our academy members is very much product-focused with comments admiring it for "providing a high quality liquid at an affordable price" and making "a very high standard throughout the range".



17 campo viejo

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: PERNOD RICARD

Campo Viejo has become a dominant force in the world Rioja market under Pernod Ricard ownership and its combination of commercial success, distinct branding and reliability of the liquid in the bottle has earned it enough fans to push it up 10 places on the list since a year ago.

Founded in 1959, it's now a 2.5m-case brand, with its main markets in the UK, US, Germany, Sweden and Ireland.

In the UK, Campo Viejo is a top-five brand and its 100% Tempranillo claims to be the best-selling single red wine of any type.

A Tempranillo Blanco was released in that market in 2016, the latest expression from the all-female winemaking team of Elena Adell and Clara Sotillo.

Of course, it helps to have the wind generated by a genuine global drinks player at your back and Campo Viejo receives strong marketing support.



18 CHATEAU MUSAR

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: LEBANON OWNER: HOCHAR FAMILY

Lebanon's premier wine producer has long been one of the wine

trade's favourite best-kept secrets and its 17-place rise in the list suggests affection for it has only grown since the death at the end of 2014 of Serge Hochar, the man responsible for turning it into the international force in premium wine that it is.

His son, Marc, says the Château Musar secret is now shared by wine lovers in close to 70 countries, arriving in Peru for the first time in 2016 and returning to Quebec after many years' absence. Outside of Lebanon, the main markets for its 600,000 annual sales are the UK, northern Europe and the US.

"We have continued to see an expansion of sales volumes internationally, mainly driven by Europe," says Hochar, who thinks the rest of the world is only just catching up with the Musar way of doing things.

"We have benefited from grassroots movements with a focus on natural, noninterventionist winemaking with organic viticulture, which is what we have always offered."

Hochar thinks Musar's distinct personality sets it apart for wine drinkers and professionals.





#### LOUIS LATOUR

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: LATOUR FAMILY

Innovation is a buzzword for modern wine marketing departments, but for the highest-ranking Burgundy producer on the Most Admired list innovation is, er, nothing new.

Louis Latour has been seeking new horizons since Jean Latour dug the holes for the roots of his first vines in Aloxe-Corton in 1768.

The company introduced Grand Pouilly – later known as Pouilly-Fuissé – into 1930s America soon after the end of <u>Prohibition</u>, and later put Mâcon-Lugny on the wine map.

Many landmark developments were the creation of the company's eponymous former boss, who died in 2016 at the age of 83, including the production of Chardonnay in Ardèche for the first time in the late 1970s and the introduction of Pinot Noir at Domaine de Valmoissine in the Var a decade later.

Last year it released its first Pinot Noir from Les Pierres Dorées in southern Beaujolais, from parcels of land bought just six years before.

The company is now run by Louis' son, Louis-Fabrice Latour, who is also the president of the Bourgogne Wine Board (BIVB), making him responsible for the industry's Plan Bourgogne 2020 to manage sustainable production in the region and reposition its wines in the face of tough global markets.



20 robert mondavi

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: US OWNER: CONSTELLATION BRANDS

When Constellation bought Robert Mondavi for \$1bn-plus in 2004 it sent shock waves across the global wine industry, both at the mega-bucks price and at the thought of one of the world's most famous family-owned producers slipping into the hands of a big corporation.

But they say time heals and the wine community certainly seems to have come to terms with the arrangement. Mondavi is a regular feature of this list and has gained enough admirers to move 17 places in an upwards direction since last year.

Constellation has certainly honoured the Mondavi legacy. Last year marked 50 years since the winery's eponymous founder set out on his mission to put Napa wines on a par with the best in the world, and the milestone was marked by the release of Maestro. The wine is a

Bordeaux blend inspired by the occasion in 2000 when Mondavi spontaneously took the baton to conduct the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra at the opening of its To Kalon cellar.

"Robert Mondavi had a banner year in 2016, with our global travel retail sales up 21%," says Randy Dufour, vicepresident for global travel retail. "We are seeing great growth in Asia and Latin America – notably South America – as well as the traditional markets of western Europe." Parker's six times-restated 100-point judgment on Haut-Brion's 1989 vintage is credited by the *Financial Times* in London as causing it to trade on the open market at a 40% premium over other vintages from the era.



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE

OWNER: LVMH

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE Owner: Domaine Clarence Dillon

21 château

**HAUT-BRION** 

Samuel Pepys didn't have access to Google, so we can forgive him for mis-recording the name of this most famous of Graves wine properties – the only non-Medoc in the original 1855 First Growth classification – as "Ho Bryen".

That was as early as 1663 and the château has picked up plenty of other famous admirers along the way. The philosopher John Locke gave it a 17th-century namecheck soon after Pepys and Thomas Jefferson was a visitor in 1787. US banker Clarence Dillon was so besotted with it that he bought it lock, stock and barrel in 1935. It remains in the hands of his descendants to this day.

Indeed, the US market has had a longer love affair with Haut-Brion than just about any other property in the Bordeaux wine-growing aristocracy, and it's perhaps fitting that the most influential American in the global fine wine market should be a fan. Robert Parker, it is alleged, has more bottles of La Mission-Haut Brion – a rival house until bought by Haut-Brion in 1983 – in his collection than any other.

Enter the basement of luxury
London retailer Hedonism Wines
– the self-styled 'best wine shop
in the world' – and along one
wall you'll find a back-lit glass
display case containing a single
bottle of every vintage of the
prestigious Sauternes wine it's
been able to lay its hands on.
You can see the colour changes
across vintages going back over a
century and even how the grades
of glass changed during wartime.

And there, in a nutshell, is everything you need to know about Château d'Yquem, a wine truly deserving of the overused adjective 'iconic', a totemic symbol of luxury living.

While sweet wine is generally considered by wine merchants and restaurants to be a tough sell, Château d'Yquem isn't, providing you're pitching to an audience of rock stars and hedge fund managers.

A single bottle of the legendary 1811 vintage fetched a record for a white wine when it sold 200 years later for £75,000.

Like any top-end fine wine, hype plays a big role in the price it commands, but so too does its scarcity. If you're looking for d'Yquem from 1964, 1972 or 2012 – or a whole bunch of other vintages – don't bother, because the crop just wasn't good enough to justify making any. And even when it is produced, it takes the fruit of a single vine to make just one glass of the wine.





COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: BODEGAS & VINEDOS CODORNÍU RAVENTOS

Cava has taken such a clobbering from Prosecco in many mature world markets in recently years that the Spanish sparkling wine's community of producers will take some comfort from the presence of two of their number in this year's list.

Codorníu has been here before and has improved significantly on last year's position when it scraped in at number 48.

The Codorníu Raventos group's roots go back to 1551 and today it enjoys global sales of some €235m, with the best performances in Spain, the US, Belgium, the UK and Japan.

Last year saw the launch of Ars Collecta Codorníu, a range of five premium cavas, including three single-estate wines.

Codorníu Raventos chief executive Javier Pagés says: "It is

very demanding to consistently maintain premium quality year after year. This requires estate vineyards and immense respect for the land and our origins."

The group has also relaunched its flagship Anna de Codorníu brand, adding Rosé and Dulce Anna to the range. "We are having a lot of success with it in the US, Japan and the UK, and in many other countries," says Pagés.



25 JACOB'S CREEK

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA OWNER: PERNOD RICARD

The story of how Johann Gramp planted the first commercial vineyard in Barossa is one of the most well worn in an industry that thrives on such tales. Gramp could never have foreseen that one day the wines which bear the name of the creek along whose banks he decided to plant his vines would be sold in 70 countries and total almost 75m bottles a year.

Jacob's Creek is the lead wine in Pernod Ricard's stable and claims to be the number one premium Australian wine brand in 17 of those markets.

Recent brand development has seen the launch into travel retail of Jacob's Creek Expedition, a range of premium reds that nods to the voyage made by Gramp to Australia. The launch led to a spike in Creek sales in Asia, particularly in Hong Kong, where they went up by a factor of 30 during February and March 2016.

Another innovation is Jacob's Creek Double Barrel, a wine finished in whisky barrels that kicked off with double its projected sales in its domestic market and has been introduced in other markets.



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: HUNGARY OWNER: THE ROYAL TOKAJI WINE CO

Eastern Europe's only entry in the Most Admired list is one

that truly stands alone in the world of wine, the most highly regarded producer of the classic Hungarian sweet wines that form part of its name.

Royal Tokaji's luxury positioning reflects its relatively low production, at around 300,000 bottles across all styles, of which the biggest quantities are snapped up by the UK, US, Taiwan and China. Managing director Charlie Mount says its mature markets are the ones that continue to provide the brand with growth.

"Along with sales of our Aszú wines, our Oddity dry Tokaji and Late Harvest wines are starting to gain traction," says Mount.

"Both are slightly more accessible while perfectly positioned to take advantage of trends towards less mainstream wines.

"They are beginning to sell in volumes that, while still tiny, are significantly larger than we are used to for our Aszú wines."

Back at the low-volume end, 2016 saw the release of Essencia 2008, only the sixth vintage to be made of a wine which Mount describes as a "must-have for serious collectors" and which is served by the spoon in top restaurants around the world.

### **CLOUDY BAY**

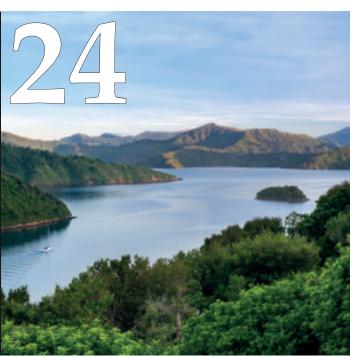
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: NEW ZEALAND OWNER: LVMH

The peak of new allocation hysteria around one of New Zealand's most recognisable labels may have long passed, but the brand is far from past its sell-by date as far as industry watchers are concerned, as a consistent presence in the Most Admired chart attests to.

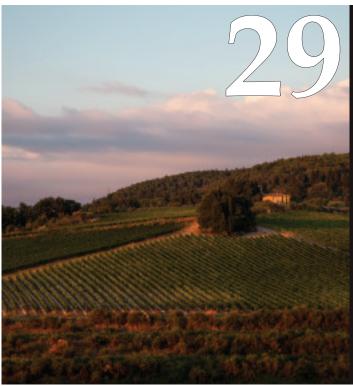
It was an Australian, David Hohnen of Cape Mentelle, who created the first superstar Kiwi Sauvignon when he launched Cloudy Bay in 1986, also helping to establish a blueprint for modern wine cults that cleared a path for the likes of Screaming Eagle and Pingus.

Now under global drinks supplier ownership, Cloudy Bay has been moving with the times, most noticeably with the first packaging overhaul since it appeared on the world stage and a new marketing platform on the theme Come Sail Away.

It's also aiming to become as famous for red as it is for white with a programme of Pinot Noir development including the launch of the 'ultra-premium' Te Wahi Pinot Noir 2014 from Central Otago.







#### TIGNANELLO

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ITALY OWNER: ANTINORI

Some classic wine brands achieve legendary status because they perfectly embody the heritage and tradition of the place in which they're made. Others get there as a result of ripping up the rule book and challenging the orthodoxy of what can and should be made in a particular region.

Tignanello sits firmly in the latter category. The arrival of Sassicaia in the upper reaches of the World's Most Admired sees Tignanello lose its exclusive status as the lead super-Tuscan in the eyes of our academy members, but that does nothing to dilute the impact it had on the market when launched by the Antinoris in the 1970s.

Tignanello is made in Tuscany's iconic Chianti Classico region, where introducing 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, excluding white grapes form the blend and introducing French barriques were considered by some to be revolutionary acts.

Given the brush-off by some quarters of the domestic market, the company was forced to hawk the wines in international markets, where their structure and intensity found favour and helped create something of cult following for Tuscan outlaw wines.



27 GEORGES DUBOEUF

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: DUBOEUF FAMILY

The Beaujolais Nouveau phenomenon is having a new lease of life in some markets, while in others it never really went away. The company established by Georges Duboeuf in 1964 enjoyed a "positive" Nouveau campaign in 2016, says his son, Franck, who now manages the business alongside its octogenarian founder.

Franck Duboeuf reports increased shipments to South America, Japan, Russia and many markets in the rest of Asia and Europe. With sales in North America breaking even too, it's perhaps no surprise that Beaujolais' most prestigious producer has gained increased recognition from the industry

professionals who make up the academy, surging up this year's list from number 45 in 2016.

It's apt that Duboeuf should be a beneficiary of Nouveau interest as Georges was an architect of the concept, pioneering stainless steel tanks and fermentation techniques that proved sympathetic to quality wines in a young and vibrant style.



28 faustino

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: GRUPO FAUSTINO

It was 1960 before the Rioja producer Faustino shipped its first wines for export, with Austria the lucky, but perhaps unlikely, recipient. Since then, the smoked glass bottle of Faustino I has become one of the most instantly recognisable wine packs on the world market.

By the time fashionable

members of Viennese society were sipping their first glasses of Tempranillo, Faustino already had almost a century of history behind it, with Eleuterio Martinez Arzok first growing grapes in 1861.

The company now has production facilities in Navarra, La Mancha and Ribera del Duero, and makes Faustino cava, but Rioja remains at its heart – and Faustino's.

New labels for Faustino V and VII reflect the portraiture style of Faustino I, claimed to be the best-selling Gran Reserva Rioja in the world.



30 MARQUÉS DE CÁCERES

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: FORNER FAMILY

Marqués de Cáceres is one of the best-known names in Spanish

wine and one academy member thinks the reassurance of the Rioja house's recognisable brand is worthy of acknowledgement, alongside the likes of Villa Maria and Concha y Toro, saying: "In times of uncertainty, people tend instinctively to put their faith in tradition, defaulting in their choices to the names that they've known and trusted for a long time."

Though the brand may now be a byword for dependability, previous generations of the Forner family that owns it are no strangers to troubled times. The family gathered expertise in wine viticulture and winemaking managing Bordeaux properties after taking exile from Franco's Spain in France in the 1930s.

It's now half a century since Enrique Forner returned to Spain to set up the winery in Rioja and began working with growers and using younger oak for shorter ageing periods to produce a fresher, more elegant style of wine.

The style resonated on international markets and Marqués de Cáceres is now in 130 territories and counting.





31 taylor's

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: PORTUGAL OWNER: THE FLADGATE PARTNERSHIP

If it sometimes seems hard to grasp just how long some wine producers have been around, consider that Taylor's was founded in 1692, the year of the Glencoe Massacre and the Salem witch trials.

With so much time under its belt you might imagine that it would have diversified beyond recognition, but remarkably it's stayed true to its roots, still making port and only port.

It's most famous for vintage port and its prowess in wood ageing – and gave the industry one of its most significant innovations of the 20th century when, in 1970, current chairman Alistair Robertson created Late Bottled Vintage, a more affordable alternative to vintage port. The style has become the most popular in the UK and Canadian

markets and Taylor's remains its leading exponent.

It was also the first major port house to take advantage of rules introduced in the early 1970s which allowed producers to make age statements on tawnies.

Under Robertson, Taylor's has carved out new territories in North America and Asia, reducing its dependence on the British market.



32 santa rita

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHILE OWNER: GRUPO CLARO

Chile's growing reputation for affordable high-quality wine is keenly illustrated by the rise up this year's countdown of Santa Rita, scraping in at number 50 in 2016, but featuring 18 places higher this year.

The brand – which comprises the top Casa Real along with an extensive portfolio of labels including 120, Secret Reserve, Reserva, Medalla Real, Floresta, Pehuen, Triple C and Bougainville – tops the sales charts in its domestic market but is increasingly a force further afield. The producer says exports hit 2.3m cases in 2016, an 18.6% rise on the previous year, with the fastest growth coming from Brazil, South Korea, Colombia, Japan and the UK. It's also the number one wine brand in Ireland, according to Nielsen figures.

The UK was one of two major markets to see new distribution arrangements last year, with Conviviality coming on board; COFCO took over responsibility for the brand in China.



33 château latour

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: GROUPE ARTÉMIS

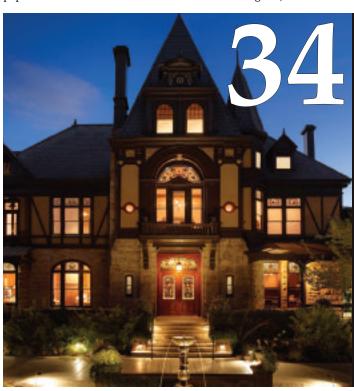
As part of the holding company owned by entrepreneur Francois

Pinault, the historic Medoc First Growth finds itself part of a collection of businesses that also includes the Christie's auction house, news magazine *Le Point* and top-tier French football club Rennes.

One academy member voted for it because of "unrivalled consistency in excellence", which is really just another way of saying that it makes great wines. Of course, it's not alone in that part of the world, but the château's heritage goes back further even than many of its neighbours, with vines on the land as early as the late 14th century.

The 21st-century estate covers some 89-plus ha, planted about three-to-one with Cabernet Sauvignon over Merlot, and small smatterings of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. It produces around 30,000 cases a year, with the top Le Grand Vin made only from grapes from old vines in the original 47ha in Enclos.

Second wine Les Forts de Latour dates to the 1960s, and the third, Pauillac de Château Latour arrived in 1973, but has only made a stuttering appearance.



### BERINGER

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: US OWNER: TREASURY WINE ESTATES

Beringer may be part of a many-branded global wine distributor these days but the Napa winemaker still has a strong connection with the heritage of its founding family.

Chief winemaker Mark Beringer is the great, great grandson of founder Jacob. Mark learned his trade elsewhere in Napa at Duckhorn and Artesa before returning to the Beringer fold in 2015, saying that there was "no greater thrill than having great vineyards to work with, and Beringer's are second to none – the diversity of microclimates, terroir and locations truly comprise the best of what Napa has to offer".

It's also got more of a back story with which to engage trade and consumers, with the oldest continuously operating winery in the Napa Valley, dating back to 1876, a heritage that has earned the site a place on the US federal government's National Register of Historic Places.

But all this history doesn't mean that Beringer isn't prepared to move with the times and its most recent campaign to support a premium image for the brand in the Americas is Better Beckons, for which it recruited one of the big noises in Instagram photography.



### CHÂTEAU CHEVAL BLANC

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE Owner: Bernard Arnault/Albert Frère

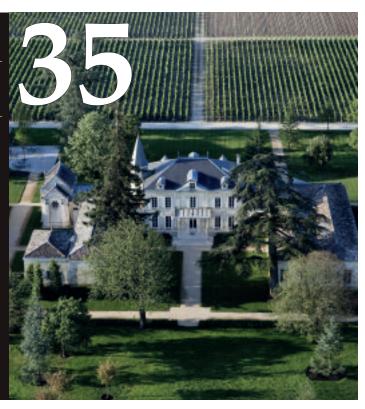
The St Emilion producer concedes to having "woken up" since Pierre Lurton became general manager in 2008. In that time, Cheval Blanc has beefed up its communications and distribution, but the biggest improvements have come in the vineyard.

It has redefined its technical strategy, focusing separately on each of 54 plots that it has across just 39ha of land, aiming to produce high-quality grapes in each that contribute to the final blend.

The policy has been so successful that the selection of the 2015 vintage that was made last year resulted in each plot's wine qualifying for the house's first wine, meaning that, for the first time, none of sufficient quality remained to produce its second label Le Petit Cheval.

But last year did see the first release of Le Petit Cheval Blanc. The white wine project had been in development since the year Lurton joined and the 3,000 bottles from the 2014 vintage sold out quickly.

Cheval Blanc sells around 67,000 bottles a year – based on an average for the past 10 years – and describes its market exposure as "balanced", with around a third of its sales each in Europe, Asia and the US.





COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SOUTH AFRICA OWNER: DISTELL

South Africa's only entrant on the list scraped in at number 49 in 2016, so this elevated position marks a very creditable showing.

The brand competes across a range of labels and price tiers in close to 80 countries, with strongholds in South Africa and Germany supplemented by significant sales in the Netherlands, UK, Denmark, Canada and parts of Asia and Africa outside its domestic market. US sales are building through a distribution agreement with Terlato Wine Group that began just over a year ago.

The expectation with big operators is that they'll stick to the crowd-pleasing varieties but the Nederburg cellar team, led

by Andrea Freeborough, is keen to explore new territories and less familiar grapes. It is the only South African producer working with Graciano, is vinifying Rhone and Portuguese varieties, making high-altitude Riesling and has launched the Beautiful Lady Gewürztraminer as part of its Heritage Heroes range.



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA OWNER: AUSTRALIAN VINTAGE

In the convivial and social world of wine, the personality of a charismatic leader acting as a global ambassador for a brand shouldn't be underestimated – and when the brand carries the family name of that person the effect is amplified.

Neil McGuigan is both chief executive and chief winemaker

for the McGuigan producer and brand, established as recently as 1992 and now making a re-entry into the World's Most Admired Wine Brands.

Julian Dyer, general manager for the UK and Europe at producer Australian Vintage, acknowledges that McGuigan "spends a lot of time in all our markets sharing our love of wine", but thinks the industry also recognises that the brand has the substance to back it up. "We hope our peers see us as proudly Australian brand, focused on the customer with a core purpose of over-delivering at every price point," says Dyer.



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: PORTUGAL OWNER: SOGRAPE

Sandeman's arrival on the list for the first time brings the

number of port brands featured in the top 50 to four.

The house was ahead of the pack on wine branding, its now-familiar cloaked Don figure becoming one of the industry's first significant logos when it made its debut on bottles and billboards back in 1928.

The company is still working on its looks, with 2016 seeing the repackaging of its aged tawny ports in luxury, flint glass embossed bottles, which it says have resulted in the 10, 20, 30 and 40 year-old products gaining a sales boost in the US.

Italy and Germany are also growing well, while it is aiming to rebuild its position in the UK, traditionally one of the world's best markets for port and the original home of the company founded by George Sandeman in 1790.

Sandeman is sold in 70 markets with Belgium, France and Portgual joining the US and Italy in its biggest five for sales. Ireland, Switzerland, Austria and Japan also provide a significant chunk of Sandman's business.





COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SPAIN OWNER: FERRER FAMILY

The second cava on this year's list is making its debut, though the distinctive black bottle of its Cordon Negro mark has made it one of the most instantly recognisable brands on the international wine market since it was launched in the 1970s.

Cordon Negro joined Freixenet's existing Carta Nevada label in a two-pronged assault on world fizz markets which has made the company as a whole cava's biggest exporter with sales in more than 100 countries.

Its most recent launch comes in a pack that looks like a photographic negative of the Cordon Negro pack. Freixenet Ice has been released across the EU with an ad campaign inspired by Pablo Picasso and the Cubist movement, offering a fresh take on cava, with a touch of Chardonnay alongside the traditional Macabeo, Xarel.lo and Parellada grapes in the blend.

Freixenet's famous friends include Liza Minnelli, Paul Newman, Raquel Welch, Kim Basinger and Pierce Brosnan, just a few of the celebrities who've appeared in its Christmas TV commercials over the years, while Freixenet.



40 CHÂTEAU LAFITE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: ROTHSCHILD

Lafite may be the lowest ranking of the original four First Growths on this year's list but, as the Oxford Companion to Wine notes, it's frequently been top of the pile for many collectors, particularly in the UK where it commanded the best auction prices when hard-up members of the aristocracy started selling off their cellars to raise cash in the years after Word War II.

More recently Asian interest in Lafite has seen it generate some of the more startling open market prices. It was the only First Growth name-checked as a familiar wine brand among Chinese consumers in a Wine Intelligence report in 2014, though academy members have in the past observed that, among its peer group clarets, it has been one of the most susceptible to the fickle vagaries of fashion as well.

The quick buck to be made on the investment market in China has also made it among the most likely to suffer at the hands of counterfeiters, which Lafite has taken steps to tackle with authentication seals. The genuine stuff currently goes for anything up to £850 a bottle for the acclaimed 2010 vintage in retail around the world, according to Wine Searcher.



42 BRANCOTT ESTATE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: NEW ZEALAND OWNER: PERNOD RICARD

Pernod Ricard's New Zealand wine brand is perhaps the one in its portfolio whose profile has benefited most from the company's push behind its premium brands in recent times.

The French-owned multinational abandoned the original brand name, Montana, in all markets in favour of Brancott in 2011, a move which raised a few industry eyebrows at the time but has been justified by the brand's upward trajectory.

Montana founder Frank Yukich claimed "wines from here will become world famous" when planting the first Sauvignon Blanc grapes in Marlborough in the early 1970s and he has been proved right.

Annual sales of Brancott Estate – now named after the vineyard where the pioneering Sauvignon vines were planted – have reached 2.5m cases, putting it on a par with stablemate Campo Viejo.

The Brancott portfolio has been spruced up recently with a new logo giving it fresh impetus in its main markets of the UK, US and Australia, in each of which it sells more than its domestic market.

It is claimed to be the second biggest wine brand by volume in the world and its Sauvignon Blanc is number two of that variety in the UK, a market where Kiwi Sauvignon has become arguably the most popular white wine style of the decade.



### CHÂTEAU MOUTON Rothschild

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: ROTHSCHILD

British artist David Hockney clearly isn't interested in class distinctions when considering private commissions. He recently redesigned a one-off logo for his home country's most notorious tabloid newspaper, *The Sun*, just a few months after becoming the latest artist to turn his hand to creating a label for Château Mouton Rothschild, to go on its 2014 vintage.

In doing so, he took up a challenge that had previously been accepted by such greats of the art world as Jeff Koons, Lucian Freud, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali and, er, Prince Charles.

Apart from the last name on that list, the auction prices of the Bordeaux property's wine aren't far off those of the works of the artists it befriends.

A Sotheby's sale in Hong Kong the year before last brought in HK\$32m, more than double the pre-sale estimate, with an Asian collector paying just short of HK\$3m for a flight from 1945 to 2012 that was missing a couple of vintages.

Perhaps it shouldn't be a surprise that there should be such a clamour for wines from a property that has long been among the best in Bordeaux, even though it only achieved First Growth status in 1973.



# TRAPICHE

### Forging The Path of Argentine Winemaking Since 1883

hey say success doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't. Yet, with more than 130 years of achievements, Trapiche has certainly earned a place in the heart of Argentine winemaking. Since its early days, Trapiche has stood tall in the wine world, making Argentine wine shine as an international flagship in more than 80 countries.

Four times voted as Argentine Producer of the Year at the renowned International Wine & Spirits Competition, Trapiche has paved the way for the development of the Argentine wine industry, both in terms of quality and innovation.

According to the competition officials: "Trapiche has set the standards of excellence for the rest of the industry and influenced the quality, variety, value and availability of educational information for the wine consumer."

In fact, Trapiche has been awarded by the Great Wine Capitals – Best of Wine Tourism, as the Winery with the Best Architecture and Landscape Experience.

And most recently, and for the third year (2014, 2015 & 2017), Trapiche has been honoured among the World's Top 50 Most Admired Wine Brands by *Drinks International*, a hallmark no other Argentinian winery has yet had the privilege to achieve.

#### **CELEBRATING A CENTURY**

Meet Trapiche Medalla, born in 1983 to celebrate Bodega



The Trapiche winery

Trapiche's first century.

Trapiche Medalla was a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Malbec and Merlot. It was produced from 45-year-old vineyards and selected grapes from Cruz de Piedra, Maipú, which is considered to be the first viticulture region of Mendoza.

Nowadays, Trapiche Medalla is produced with grapes from the most praised vine-growing areas of Argentina, including Uco Valley.

The whole range includes a Chardonnay, a Malbec, a Cabernet Sauvignon and a blend made of Malbec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

#### TRAPICHE MEDALLA MALBEC

This unique Malbec is produced with grapes sourced from vineyards located in the classic zones of Mendoza, Perdriel,

#### AWARDS

TRAPICHE MEDALLA CHARDONNAY

#### 2016

Tim Atkin | 90 points 2015

James Suckling | 92 points

Tim Atkin | 91 points

#### TRAPICHE MEDALLA MALBEC

#### 2014

Tim Atkin | 91 points Wine & Spirits | 90 points

James Suckling | 92 points Tim Atkin | 91 points Argentina Wine Awards | 91 points

Ugarteche, Agrelo, Vistalba and Lunlunta. Fresh and juicy, this classic Malbec is round and fleshy with polished tannins, due to the high content of clay in the soils. It is a very pleasant, clean and easy to drink wine.

Make room in your cellar for a true Argentine classic.





ARGENTINE WINE PRODUCER OF THE YEAR 2004 - 2006 - 2011 - 2012









43 WOLF BLASS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA OWNER: TREASURY WINE ESTATES

It's now 50 years since the founder of the Australian wine brand that still bears his name first put the words 'Wolf Blass' on a bottle of wine – for the record, a Grey Label Langhorne Creek blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz.

In the intervening years, the Wolf Blass colour-coding of labels has become one of the most familiar wine packages on the world stage and was driven to success by the charismatic German-born Wolf Blass himself, who opted to settle in Barossa in 1961 rather than take the opportunity to move to Venezuela because of political unrest in the South American country.

Now part of the Treasury Wine Estates portfolio, the brand is still bringing out new and exciting wines to engage consumers across the world, particularly in the UK and Australia, its two biggest markets.

Its most recent releases include a range of contemporary-styled wines, released under the name Blass and the 2017 Luxury Collection, proving that it can compete up the price scale as well as in mainstream sectors.

The collection includes what winemaker John Ashwell calls a "regionally expressive" White Label Chardonnay from Piccadilly Valley in the Adelaide Hills, and a Grey Label McLaren Vale Shiraz with ageing potential that winemaker Clare Dry bills as "rich, plush and powerful".

for two thirds of the brand's global sales – it's attempted to capitalise on the rebranding with a marketing campaign around this year's Superbowl, which Nielsen figures suggest led to a 26% surge in sales in January.

It also achieved double-digit growth last year in the UK [IRI] in a generally underwhelming Australian category.



46 OYSTER BAY



45 yellowtail

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA OWNER: CASELLA FAMILY BRANDS

The Aussie brand had dropped out of favour after previously featuring in the Most Admired run down but makes a re-entry this year on the back of positive growth in the US and UK, which together account for 80% of its sales.

Yellowtail's presence in this year's chart proves that you don't need to have been around for centuries and take wine oh-so-seriously to achieve recognition among your peers. The brand was founded in 2001 and has only just received its first packaging refresh.

European marketing director Kevin Chinn says the move came on the back of research which led it to a mission to establish itself as "the custodian of fun and dismantlers of 'serious' in peoples' lives and the category".

He adds: "We realised there was an opportunity in demystifying wine and offering an easy-to-drink, fruitdriven wine that is accessible, distinctive and appealing to everyone."

In the US - which accounts

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: NEW ZEALAND OWNER: DELEGAT'S WINE ESTATE

Industry fondness for Oyster Bay seems to be on the wane, with the brand falling more places since last year than any other wine on the list. Yet, despite tumbling from number 13 last year, it remains one of the few brands to be an ever-present since the World's Most Admired project first started.

An award-winner on its very first vintage in 1990, the brand was one of the first to capture the quintessentially Marlborough style of Sauvignon Blanc and export it on a grand scale to major export markets. The wine is now in the top five in the over \$10 bracket in the US.

Recent times have seen Oyster Bay expand its footprint into premium Chardonnay, which has taken a grip in its domestic market, the UK, Canada and Australia.

Pinot Noir, Merlot and a couple of fizzes also take their place in the contemporary Oyster Bay line-up and have prevented it becoming cast as a one-trick pony.

Brand owner Delegat's claims that the Pinot Noir is the best-seller of that grape variety over £9 in the UK, while its sparkling is the number one non-champagne fizz over £10 in the same market.



#### TRAPICHE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ARGENTINA OWNER: GRUPO PEÑAFLOR

Though Trapiche dates back more than 130 years, it's only since the 1970s that it's become a fixture in major export markets and it is now Argentina's biggest shipper of wine, selling to more than 80 other markets. Its latest innovation is Costa & Pampa, a range of coastal climate wines comprising Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling and Pinot Noir.

When industry research firm Wine Intelligence decided to take a closer look at the US wine market in 2015 only one Argentinian brand really resonated with consumers. Not only was there good awareness for Trapiche but it was, along with Hardys and Louis Latour, one of only three in the top 50 brands from anywhere in the world which saw its conversion rate – the propensity of shoppers to turn their awareness into an actual purchase – increase over the year. And the percentage of shoppers who'd bought the brand in the previous three months had tripled on the year before. Clearly, Trapiche is doing something right.

Grupo Peñaflor chief executive Martin Augusto Ramos has promised more premiumisation for the winery ahead with plans for higher-priced terroir-based Malbecs and Cabernets.



#### **CAVIT**

### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ITALY OWNER: CO-OPERATIVE

A new entrant, the Italian producer is self styled as a second-level co-operative, or a "co-operative of co-operatives", bringing together 10 Trentino cellars and 4,500 associate member growers. Together they cultivate around 5,500ha of vines and claim to represent 60% of all wine production in Trentino in the far north of the country.

Cavit – the name is an acronym of Cantina Viticoltori del Trentino – is cashing in on the world demand for affordable Italian fizz carved out by prosecco, and one academy voter is especially impressed by the "crisp styling of its sparkling wine programme in the Trento DOC". The company reports that its sparklers are in double-digit growth against a backdrop of a 6.6% rise in overall turnover for the company last year, putting its annual revenue at €177.9m. Cavit wines are now sold in more than 60 countries.

The company reports the US as one of its biggest success stories in recent years, largely thanks to the Roscato range. Germany, the UK, Canada and Asia provide the bulk of the rest of sales, along with the domestic Italian market.





#### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: PORTUGAL Owner: Symington Family Estates

The second Symington-owned port brand in the chart has been making particularly impressive sales gains in the US, Netherlands, Denmark and Russia – successes that marketing director Dominic Symington says were "largely driven by the recognition of our vintage ports leading to improvements in distribution", especially for its LBV and last year's release of the 2011.

The UK and Portugal are also major markets for Dow's, a port house built on the backbone of wines from Quinta do Bomfim, a property that has been in the Symington family for more than a century and which lays down the hallmarks of the brand's distinctively austere, elegant and dry style.

The Dow's name has become

synonymous with great vintage port, producing landmark wines in almost every great year for the region of the 19th and 20th centuries, with Symington singling out a number of vintages as "legends". If you're a buyer looking to pep up the higher tiers of a fine wine list, then 1896, 1927, 1945, 1955, 1963, 1966, 1970, 1980 and 1994 are the years to put on your auction shopping list.



49 HARDYS

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA OWNER: ACCOLADE WINES

Few brands in the list can claim to be in as many world markets as Hardys, which has 133 countries on its books. Its biggest is the UK and it ranks as the number five brand by value in its domestic Australian market.

The brand's latest marketing campaign is an exhortation to consumers to Aspire Higher, aimed at encouraging wine drinkers to explore Hardys' premium tiers and share their experiences on social media.

The campaign comes as the brand releases two ranges which give consumers more reasons to do exactly that. The Hardys Brave New World collection is a range that brings together unusual blends with different winemaking approaches and includes Shiraz Black, Shiraz Sangiovese and Grenache Shiraz Mourvedre wines, while the Hardys Geology range showcases the terroir of the McLaren Vale region.

Last year also saw the launch of the Hardys Rare Fortified range and the 30th anniversary of its Eileen Hardy Chardonnay.



COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE OWNER: CO-OPERATIVE

Few of the world's wine regions have had quite so much praise

heaped on them as Languedoc in recent times. The region's reputation has been transformed by the skill of its growers and winemakers from one of a mishmash of oddities and questionable quality to that of a forward-thinking producer of varied styles that consistently over-indexes on quality against price.

The Foncalieu co-operative is among the biggest and best of the thousands of producers spread across this vast part of southern France, formed in 1967 in the ancient walled city of Carcassone by the wineries Puichéric, Thézan les Corbières and Les Vignerons de la Cité. Today, the number of growers in the Foncalieu family alone runs to four figures and its wineries go into double digits, embracing Gascony and Rhône Valley as well as its Languedoc heartland.

The UK, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden and the US are among its biggest export markets.

Its wines have achieved 90-plus Wine Advocate points and numerous awards and its debut in the World's Most Admired Wines list pushes Languedoc a little bit further into the middle of the wine industry's world map.



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