

The best Pinot Noirs in the world (outside Burgundy)

It's the grape that stars in some of the world's most expensive and rarest red wines when grown in its home territory of Burgundy. But how is it performing elsewhere? Our expert panel tasted the best of the rest to find out. Stephen Brook appraises the results

AFTER THE EXCITING 'World's best Chardonnay outside Burgundy' tasting (March 2015 issue), it seemed logical to apply the same principle to the region's other great grape, Pinot Noir. Based on the recommendations of our international experts (*see p35*), more than 80 wines were selected. But the tasting yielded fewer spectacular scores than the Chardonnay tasting.

It's quite clear that Pinot Noir can thrive throughout the world, as our tasting rewarded wines from around the globe. Climate, as much as terroir, accounts for this, and there are sweet spots as remote from each other as the Ahr Valley in Germany, Central Otago in New Zealand and the cool coastal areas of South Africa. Here the combination of ideal microclimates and impassioned winemakers seemed to deliver the most exciting wines.

Australia and New Zealand were the most successful regions overall, with Australia dominating the Top 10. Germany also performed strongly – it took the top place, and with one exception all the other German wines also scored highly. Ten years ago most German Pinots were overoaked, but this is not the case today. Canada, which did so well in

the earlier Chardonnay tasting, fared less well here, although there were no wines among the lowest third.

Delicate balance

Perhaps it is unsurprising that the Pinot Noir tasting was less impressive than the Chardonnay one that preceded it. Chardonnay is a forgiving variety, which thrives in a wide range of climates and soils around the world. Pinot Noir is more fussy: a notoriously tricky grape to grow and vinify. A touch of botrytis won't wreck a Chardonnay harvest, but must be avoided strenuously with Pinot, a variety that reacts dramatically to adverse conditions, such as heat spikes.

Raw material matters: the wrong clone in a great spot can result in a disappointing wine. Harvest dates are crucial too. There were some Port-like wines in this tasting that had clearly been picked too late and too ripe, whether by accident or design.

Pinot Noir must also be vinified with care. The wrong choices about, for example, the retention of stems, the use of indigenous yeasts, the type and frequency of extraction,

'Raw material matters: the wrong Pinot Noir clone in a great spot can result in a disappointing wine'

and the use of new oak can all have a dramatic effect on the final wine. Consequently, truly great Pinot Noirs outside Burgundy, where it has been grown with confidence for centuries, are found rarely.

Xavier Rousset MS was disappointed and not inclined to be forgiving. He found in many wines excessive sweetness, vegetal characters and poorly handled oak. He thought many wines lacked complexity, though he accepted that vine age may partly account for it. Alex Hunt MW also detected vegetal aromas, but found that over-extraction was rare and that tannins were not generally obtrusive, nor was oak use problematic. Yet there was some lack of typicity, even allowing for the range of Pinot styles. As for myself, I found fewer vegetal characters and thought most wines were well made, though some were either jammy and/or overworked and lacked purity of flavour.

Personal preference

Indeed, personal tastes tend to be particularly pronounced when assessing Pinot Noir: one taster's 'delicate' or 'refined' may be another taster's 'stringy' or 'vegetal'. In this tasting, diverging tastes probably affected Canada most as a category.

Although Pinot lovers understandably complain about the prices for fine Burgundy, some of these alternatives don't come cheap either. Our top wine, from Stodden, retails at more than £100. Bottles in excess of £40 are frequently found in this line-up, and while some are outstanding, others certainly don't justify their price-tag.

Clearly there is a wider gap between Burgundy and 'the rest' in the case of Pinot than there is for Chardonnay. Over centuries, Burgundian growers have distilled the >



'Setting aside the Burgundian model, there are wines from the world over to reward Pinot fanciers'

experience of generations of monks and lay farmers. The combination of well-drained soils over limestone, perfectly exposed slopes, old vines, sensible yields and (over the last 15 years at least) meticulous farming, often results in Pinot of unmatched quality, complexity and longevity. It's too much to expect international Pinot to attain a comparable level in just a few decades. I know an Australian winemaker who has often worked in Burgundy. His own Pinots are very good but for a decade or more weren't remotely Burgundian. Burgundy's Côte d'Or and its wines can't simply be transplanted by copying winemaking techniques.

Yet setting aside the Burgundian model, there are wines from the world over to reward Pinot fanciers. More time, more experience, better clonal or massal selections, greater vine age and a lighter touch in the winery will doubtless lead to impressive results.

New World and other winemakers are quick to learn, and were this tasting to be replicated in 10 years' time, I suspect the results would be more exciting.

Best-value wines tasted

- Crystallum, Cuvée Cinéma, Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge, South Africa 2014** Alcohol 14%
 £29.95-£35.99 Carruthers & Kent, Hawkshead, Highbury Vintners, Liberty Wines, SA Wines Online, Slurp, Swig, The Secret Cellar, The Wine Reserve, The Wine Society, Vin Cognito
- Phelps Creek, Cuvée Alexandrine, Columbia Gorge, Oregon, USA 2012** Alc 13.6%
 £33.30 OW Loeb
- Garcia + Schwaderer, Sofia, Casablanca, Chile 2013** Alc 13.5%
 £18.99 Naked Wines
- Phi, Single Vineyard, Yarra Valley, Australia 2013** Alc 13%
 £30 (2012) Exel Wines
- Gottardi, Mazzon Riserva, Blauburgunder, Alto Adige, Italy 2012** Alc 14%
 £32-£35 Les Caves de Pyrène
- Quartz Reef, Central Otago, New Zealand 2012** Alc 14%
 £25 Majestic, Sommelier Wine Co
- Moorooduc Estate, McIntyre, Mornington Peninsula, Australia 2013** Alc 14%
 £25-£35 Coe Vintners
- Storm, Moya's, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, South Africa 2013** Alc 13.5%
 £34 Atlas Fine Wine, Indigo Wine, Swig, The Sampler
- Newton Johnson, Family Vineyards, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, South Africa 2013** Alc 14%
 £25 Cru World Wines, SA Wines Online, Slurp, Vin Cognito, Vincisive, Wine Direct
- Te Whare Ra, Single Vineyard, Marlborough, New Zealand 2013** Alc 13.5%
 £29.50-£29.90 Swig, The New Zealand Cellar
- Vincent Pinard, Vendanges Entières, Sancerre, Loire, France 2012** Alc 13%
 £35.46 Justerini & Brooks

The judges

Stephen Brook



Brook has been a contributing editor to *Decanter* since 1996 and has won a clutch of awards for his writing on wine. The author of more than 30 books, his works include *The*

Complete Bordeaux, now the definitive study of the region.

Brooks' top three:

- Jean Stodden, Spätburgunder Alte Reben, Ahr, Germany 2010 (see p27)
- Felton Road, Block 5, Bannockburn, Central Otago, New Zealand 2012 (p30)
- Tolpuddle Vineyard, Coal River Valley, Tasmania, Australia 2014 (p31)

Alex Hunt MW



Purchasing director at Berkman Wine Cellars, Hunt became a Master of Wine in 2010. His dissertation was on ripeness trends in California, and he won the medal for

excellence in the tasting exam. He now writes a column on taste and tasting for *JancisRobinson.com*, and is a judge at the Decanter World Wine Awards.

Hunt's top three:

- Jean Stodden, Spätburgunder Alte Reben, Ahr, Germany 2010 (see p27)
- Newton Johnson, Family Vineyards, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, South Africa 2013 (p28)
- Failla, Hirsch Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, California, USA 2013 (p32)

Xavier Rousset MS



Rousset became a Master Sommelier in 2002. Head sommelier at Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons from 2004, he and head chef Agnar Sverrisson launched Texture in

London in 2007, then 28°-50° Wine Workshop and Kitchen in 2010. Rousset is working on new projects for 2016.

Rousset's top three:

- Jean Stodden, Spätburgunder Alte Reben, Ahr, Germany 2010 (see p27)
- Yabby Lake Vineyard, Single Block Release, Block 2, Mornington Peninsula, Australia 2013 (p31)
- Egly-Ouriet, Cuvée des Grands Côtés, Ambonnay Rouge, Coteaux Champenois, France 2012 (p32)

TOP WINE OF THE TASTING

Jean Stodden, Spätburgunder Alte Reben, Ahr, Germany 2010

£115 ABS Wine Agencies

Smoky undergrowth nose, evolved but quite seductive. Silky in the mouth, long, with a confidently acid-led structure balanced by delicate summer fruit. Shows considerable density for Pinot without being too extracted; a true delight. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 13.5%

THE AHR VALLEY is a most unexpected region. Of its 560ha (hectares) of vineyards, well over half are planted with Pinot Noir (or Spätburgunder in German). But what is more surprising is the location of the Ahr, well to the north of the Mosel Valley and not far from the city of Bonn. Most German Pinot Noir is grown in warmer locations such as the Pfalz or Baden, but it has long thrived in this cool northern enclave. It does so thanks to the valley's soils, which are of basalt and slate, rock types that absorb sunshine and then reflect it back onto the vines after sundown. The vines climb up these rocky cliff faces, and the narrowness of the valley as a whole creates a most singular microclimate.

That the Ahr Pinots have long been highly regarded in Germany is partly due to the gifted winemakers who have worked here for decades. As well as Stodden, other revered estates include Meyer-Näkel, Adeneuer and Deutzerhof. But for many years Weingut Jean Stodden has been regarded by many as the leading property. Whereas most other estates also produce wines from varieties such as Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling and Frühburgunder,

Stodden's 6.5ha are almost exclusively planted with Pinot Noir. The average annual production is around 45,000 bottles.

It's an estate that traces its history back to the 16th century. This 2010 Pinot was vinified by Gerhard Stodden, who had run the estate since 1975, but who unfortunately died, aged 64, in 2013. He has been succeeded by his son Alexander, who for some years had been working alongside him. As is often the case in Germany, even a small estate produces a large range of bottlings. The style had long been modelled on Burgundies from the Côte de Nuits, and Stodden sought to produce wines with structure and depth, aged for at least 16 months in medium-toast French oak.

At Stodden there are no fewer than three grosses gewächs bottlings from outstanding sites, as well as lighter styles for early drinking. The finest selection is always the Alte Reben (old vines), which triumphed in this tasting. It's interesting to note that 2010 was not generally regarded as an outstanding vintage here, and Ahr wines from 2009, 2011 and 2012 are more highly rated.



Above: Pinot Noir harvest at the Jean Stodden vineyards, overlooking the Ahr river



RUNNERS-UP

Moorooduc Estate, McIntyre, Mornington Peninsula, Australia 2013

£35 **Coe Vintners**

Ripe, oaky raspberry nose that has panache. Good attack, lean and precise, and has clarity of fruit. Not a weighty style but has an almost racy structure. Not yet hugely complex, but it is balanced and will age quite well. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Alc** 14%



Richard and Jill McIntyre with daughter Kate (left)

DR RICHARD MCINTYRE'S property in the Mornington Peninsula south of Melbourne is best known for its Chardonnay, but also enjoys a high reputation for its Pinot Noir. The winery was established in 1982, when the surgeon met Mornington Peninsula pioneers such as Gary Crittenden, who

encouraged him to establish a vineyard. He initially planted 2ha of vines. Today there are 10ha of vineyards. Production is limited to around 2,500 cases and much of it is sold from the cellar door – the estate is easily accessible from Melbourne, an hour's drive away.

The McIntyre vineyard was planted in 1983.

A gently sloping site, facing north and northwest, it has soils of sand over clay. Yields rarely exceed 30hl/ha. Like many Pinot producers, McIntyre favours a non-interventionist approach, though the grapes are all destemmed. After fermentation in open-top steel vats with indigenous yeasts and manual punchdowns, the wine goes through its malolactic fermentation in barrels, and is then aged for 15 months on 25% new French oak with just one racking. It is bottled without fining or filtration.

2013 was a warm vintage, especially during the weeks just before the harvest, and McIntyre describes the wines as more 'flamboyant' than those from 2012. This was also the first vintage when he was able to use fruit from vines that had been grafted over from the Cabernet Sauvignon planted in 1983 to a variety of top Pinot clones. McIntyre has experimented with whole-bunch fermentation, but decided that this wine had sufficient texture and structure to allow it to be vinified without any stems. He was clearly right.



Newton Johnson, Family Vineyards, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, South Africa 2013

£25 **Cru World Wines, SA Wines Online, Slurp, Vin Cognito, Vincisive, Wine Direct**

Sweet cranberry nose, quite intense; smoky bacon and toasted oak. Real drive and persistence on the palate. Fine backbone of acidity, giving some tension and bite. Silky, dynamic, nuanced, long. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Alc** 14%



Gordon and Nadia Newton Johnson

THIS COASTAL PROPERTY, in the Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley near Hermanus, was founded by Dave and Felicity Johnson in 1996, when they planted their first vines, and their first vintage followed a year later. Since 2001 the winemakers have been drawn from the next generation in the form of their son Gordon

and his wife Nadia, who also comes from a winemaking family in Robertson. There are 18ha under vine and production is divided equally between red and white wines. Pinot Noir from here is highly regarded, but so are their Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Rhône-style reds. Wines are made not just from Hemel-en-Aarde fruit but from vineyards in nearby Elgin and Walker Bay. The grapes are picked by hand.

The Family Vineyards range features wines made from grapes grown on the best parcels. In the case of the Pinot Noir, this is the mid-slope sector in the Upper Hemel-en-Aarde, where there is a balance of gravel and shallow clay soils. The vines, planted to moderate density, were up to nine years old in 2013; yields were modest at about 32hl/ha. The growing season saw moderate temperatures and above-average rainfall, delivering bright, supple-fruited wines.

Gordon Newton Johnson favours non-interventionist winemaking: the winery is gravity-operated on four levels. After the grapes are thoroughly sorted, they are fermented in steel tanks with indigenous yeasts and only punchdowns are used to extract the fruit and tannins. After racking, the wine went through its malolactic fermentation in one-third new barrels, in which the wine remained for 12 months.



OUTSTANDING WINES (in alphabetical order)

Ceritas, Hellenthal Vineyard, Old Shop Block, Sonoma Coast, California, USA 2013

N/A UK www.ceritaswines.com

Quite dark, brooding aromas with a raspberry coulis twist. Fresh and appetising in the mouth, certainly quite dry and lean, but nicely balanced in its own right with cherry, redcurrant fruit and bold, ripe tannins. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Aic** 12.5%

JOHN RAYTEK LEARNED his winemaking skills in Australia and New Zealand before arriving in the Sonoma Coast to work at Flowers winery. In 2005 he teamed up with Phoebe Bass, now his wife, to create the Ceritas label. She looks after the farming, while he is more focused on cellar work. Her parents own the Porter-Bass vineyards in Sonoma Coast. Planted in 1980, the dry-farmed Hellenthal vineyard is located in the high coastal ridges of the Sonoma Coast, close to the better-known Hirsch and Marcassin vineyards. The grapes are fermented with natural yeasts and a varying proportion of whole clusters, ranging from none to around 60%. New oak rarely exceeds 25%. The wines are much sought-after and are sold swiftly to favoured restaurants and to the winery's mailing list.



Coldstream Hills, Deer Farm Vineyard, Yarra Valley, Australia 2013

POA **Treasury Wine Estates**

Attractive redcurrant jelly nose, though a touch shy. Ripe attack, quite sweet but not jammy; intense thanks to fine acidity, has tension and spice, is pungent and vibrant. Long and very neatly balanced, with lovely grip. **Drink** 2016-2026 **Aic** 13.5%

THE YARRA VALLEY, which lies an hour's drive east of Melbourne, has diverse terroirs and microclimates, making it capable of producing a wide range of varieties. That has always been the approach at Coldstream Hills, a hillside property established in 1985 by lawyer and wine writer James Halliday. In 1996 the estate was acquired by Southcorp, although Halliday stayed on in an advisory capacity. The property had grown to over 100ha, and the standard range of varietal and reserve wines was supplemented by a few single-vineyard wines, including this one. Coldstream produces three single-vineyard Pinots: Roslyn from Tasmania, Esplanade from the Lower Yarra, and Deer Farm from the cooler Upper Yarra. Deer Farm was planted in 1994 on north-facing clay-loam soils. The wine was aged for nine months in 38% new French oak.



Domaine Donatsch, Unique, Malans, Graubünden, Switzerland 2013

£70 **Alpine Wines**

Rich and powerful cherry-pie nose, with the oak well integrated. Deliciously chewy from fruit and extract rather than tannin. Shows matching brightness to just the right amount of depth. Shows considerable potential. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Aic** 13.5%

PINOT NOIR IS grown successfully in the Valais, but there is another sweet spot for the variety in the German-speaking Graubünden canton. Here, some 70 miles southeast of Zurich, lies the village of Malans, home to Donatsch and other growers. Donatsch gained a high profile early, when it became the first producer in the region to age wines in barriques, in the 1970s.

The domaine has been in existence for about 100 years, and is now run by Thomas Donatsch and his son Martin. Although only 4.5ha of vines are planted, a number of varieties are grown. The mid-range Pinot Noir Passion is aged in one-third new oak, while this, the most exclusive bottling, is aged entirely in new Burgundian barrels. Donatsch has twice won the Mondial des Pinots competition in Switzerland.



Felton Road, Block 5, Bannockburn, Central Otago, New Zealand 2012

£45 **Farr Vintners, Jeroboams, Laithwaites, Reid Wines, The Secret Cellar, The Wine Society**

Lush, meaty nose, but has some bright cherry fruit too. Lots of energy on the palate; the structure is acid-led, with tannins in the supporting role as they should be for Pinot, and there is an unwavering persistence of fruit. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 14%

THIS IS ONE of New Zealand's most admired Pinot producers, thanks to the brilliance and consistency of its long-term winemaker Blair Walter, and the marketing flair of globe-trotting founder Nigel Greening. The vineyards, farmed biodynamically, are mostly in Bannockburn. Since 2001, Dijon clones of Pinot have been planted. Grapes are hand-picked, then given a five-day cold soak before fermentation begins with indigenous yeasts. Walter likes to use about one-third whole clusters. The wines are aged for up to 18 months in French oak, with classical music piped into the barrel room. There are two single-block releases, Block 3 and Block 5, and these are aged in a higher proportion of new oak – about 45%. The wines are neither racked, fined, nor filtered.



OUTSTANDING WINES (continued)

Mount Edward, Morrison Vineyard, Central Otago, New Zealand 2011

£45 **Cambridge Wine Merchants, The Fine Wine Co, Z&B Vintners**

Smoky, bacony nose, with the raspberry fruit somewhat subdued. Palate structure is attractive: juicy, fresh, just a lick of tannin. As an aromatic Pinot that retains its classic structure, this is a resounding success. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Aic** 13.5%

THIS IMPORTANT PROPERTY near Gibbston was founded by Alan Brady in 1994 (first vintage 1998). In 2004 it was bought by John Buchanan, and the wines are made by Duncan Forsyth. The farming is organic. Grapes are sourced from a number of single vineyards, including Morrison. Although much of the production is of Pinot Noir, Mount Edward also makes others such as Riesling and Albarino. The 7.5ha Morrison vineyard, with its schist subsoils, was planted with Pinot Noir in 1997, and is Mount Edward's oldest source for the variety. The grapes are hand-picked, destemmed but not crushed, and then vinified in small, open-top fermenters with indigenous yeasts, with manual punchdowns. A significant proportion of whole bunches is used for this wine, which is aged for 15 months in one-third new barriques. It is bottled without fining or filtration.



Pegasus Bay, Prima Donna, Waipara Valley, New Zealand 2012

£41.50 (2011) **Field & Fawcett, Fortnum & Mason, Harvey Nichols, Must Wines, Wine Ways**

Delicious, combining blackberry flavour with peach texture. Sweet attack but not jammy; has some purity of fruit and poise, fine acidity that lifts the palate, and an intensity that gives persistence. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 13.5%

PEGASUS BAY WAS founded by neurosurgeon Ivan Donaldson, and today the property is run by his gifted winemaker son Matt. The vineyards lie on well-drained, north-facing terraces planted from 1986 about 35 miles north of Christchurch on the South Island. The Waipara Valley sub-region is sheltered from the cold ocean by a range of hills: days are warm but nights are cool, with 2012 being an exceptionally cool year. Pegasus Bay became known for its Riesling, Gewurztraminer and other varieties, but also produces excellent Pinot Noir, all of which is fermented with some whole bunches in open-top vats with manual punchdowns. The wine is aged for 18 months in 40% new Burgundian barrels. A selection is made for the top Prima Donna bottling, which generally comes from the oldest vines.



Tolpuddle Vineyard, Coal River Valley, Tasmania, Australia 2014

£42.95-£49.99 **Harrods, Hawkshead Wines, Liberty Wines, Selfridges, Slurp, Sommelier Wine Co**

Lean, delicate raspberry nose with alluring purity of fruit allied to a light herbaceous tone. Plenty of body and mid-palate richness for a relatively slender wine. Cool-climate style with considerable elegance. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 12.5%

IN ANY CONTEST for cool-climate status, Tasmania would be a strong contender. Much of the fruit leaves for the mainland, for use in top sparkling wines or blends. Planted in Coal River Valley in 1988, Tolpuddle was no exception. Owned by sparkling wine wizard Dr Tony Jordan, its 20ha supplied blends such as Domaine Chandon, Eileen Hardy and Penfold's Yattarna Chardonnay. Then in 2011 the property was bought by Michael Hill-Smith and Martin Shaw of Shaw & Smith in the Adelaide Hills. Some vines were grafted over to new clones. The soil is very thin, sandy topsoil over sandstone and clay. Vinified by lauded winemaker Adam Wadewitz, the Pinot Noir is aged in one-third new oak. 2014 was a cool year with low yields. This wine is expensive, but the quality is evident.



Yabby Lake Vineyard, Single Block Release, Block 2, Mornington Peninsula, Australia 2013

£65 **Swig**

Lots of spicy oak and smoky reduction on the nose; Medium-bodied, delicate, stylish; light, integrated tannins; concentrated and fresh with a lovely intensity on the finish. Well handled and very pleasant to drink. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 13.5%

FOUNDED IN 1998 by landowners Robert and Mem Kirby, the principal varieties they planted were Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris. The property always had a good reputation, but it was further enhanced when in 2008 Tom Carson, previously at Yering Station winery in the Yarra Valley, came on board as chief winemaker. When he arrived at Yabby Lake he began to produce single-block bottlings of both Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, which proved mostly of thrilling quality. The idea behind the programme is to focus on the specificity of individual blocks in terms of their terroir and clonal selections. No particular wizardry is employed at the winery: oak use is cautious, with ageing in French, 500-litre barrels, about 25% new.



HIGHLY RECOMMENDED WINES (in alphabetical order)



Alphonse Mellot, En Grands Champs, Sancerre, France 2012
 £70 H2Vin, House of Hallgarten
 Appetisingly tart apple and elderberry aromas with dark cherry and liquorice. Rich and suave, concentrated yet sleek, and backed by firm acidity. Finishes on a chocolate note. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Aic** 13%



Antica Terra, Antikythera, Eola-Amity Hills, Oregon, USA 2012
 £66 The Wine Treasury
 Rich, ripe cherry nose, with a good dose of oak. Rich, full-bodied, generous, an upfront style that's super-ripe. Has little finesse but abundant fruit and a lightly tannic finish. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 14.2%



Ata Rangi, Martinborough, New Zealand 2013
 £39.75-£47.99 Widely available via UK agent Liberty Wines
 Smoky raspberry coulis nose with gentle summer berry fruit. Good crunchy Pinot fruit, fresh acidity, integrated tannins and a spicy finish. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 13.5%



Ashton Hills Vineyard, Reserve, Adelaide Hills, Australia 2014
 N/A UK www.wirrawirra.com
 Juicy raspberry and cranberry nose, ripe and bracing. Lovely balance and precision on the palate, although the alcohol sticks out a little. Carefully made but could use a bit more fruit. **Drink** 2016-2023 **Aic** 14%



August Kessler, Assmannshausen Höllenberg, Rheingau, Germany 2012
 £77.46 Justerini & Brooks
 Ripe, oaky nose, with ample charm and finesse. Medium-bodied, silky, and has precision and concentration. Oak and youthful: clearly needs time to develop nuances. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Aic** 14%



Bergström, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon, USA 2013
 £65 Roberson Wines
 Dense cherry and bacon nose; quite meaty. Vibrant, pure fruit on the palate with good acidity; a style that is easy to enjoy thanks to its subtle use of oak and nuance. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 13.3%



Bernhard Huber, Wildenstein R Grosses Gewächs, Malterdinger Bienenberg, Baden, Germany 2012
 POA Justerini & Brooks
 Lush raspberry nose. Juicy, upfront palate, rounded, concentrated, with good acidity; in a Burgundian style. Long and vibrant. **Drink** 2016-2023 **Aic** 13.5%



Craggy Range, Aroha Te Muna, Martinborough, New Zealand 2013
 £55 Widely available via UK agent Louis Latour
 Juicy, robust nose full of summer berry fruit. The palate is rich, hedonistic, on the simple side, but plenty of fun and nicely balanced for an early-drinking style. **Drink** 2016-2023 **Aic** 13.5%



Cristom, Marjorie Vineyard, Eola-Amity Hills, Oregon, USA 2013
 £55 Stannary Street Wine Co
 Lovely aromas of dark cherries and raspberries with undergrowth. Good intensity and fruit on the palate. Juicy, soft texture. Very drinkable, may surprise in a few years. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 13.5%



Crystallum, Cuvée Cinéma, Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge, South Africa 2014
 £30-£36 Widely available via UK agent Liberty Wines
 Lush, red-fruits nose, with an iron-like tone. Rich, spicy and a touch hot, but the fruit is good. Sweet, robust, more force than finesse. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Aic** 14%



Egly-Ouriet, Cuvée des Grands Côtés, Ambonnay Rouge, Coteaux Champenois, France 2012
 £85 (2011) Lea & Sandeman
 Discreet cherry nose with fresh lift and drive. Plenty of red fruit and a green edge, with very well handled oak leading to an elegant finish. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Aic** 12.5%



Ellero, Pisa Terrace, Central Otago, New Zealand 2012
 N/A UK www.ellerowine.com
 Appetising sour cherry and blackberry aromas. Plump, juicy, full-bodied, has good weight of fruit without heaviness. Firm tannins. Still rather primary but great potential. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Aic** 13.9%



Failla, Hirsch Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, California, USA 2013
 £50 Stannary St Wine Co
 Very pretty, complex nose of cherry, raspberry, flowers, spice. Broad and rich, quite opulent but assertive mid-palate. Given time, it will be a lovely and ample expression. **Drink** 2017-2023 **Aic** 13.4%



Fancrest Estate, Waipara Valley, New Zealand 2010
 N/A UK www.fancrest.com
 Rich and juicy, quite tannic but less toasty than the nose. Bold and forthright, with the tannins trying to balance the ripeness of fruit. Finishes dry and mineral; a wine of some intrigue. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Aic** 14%



Friedrich Becker, Kammerberg Grosses Gewächs, Pflaz, Germany 2012
 £71.99 The Wine Barn
 Nicely centred nose, with enticing tension between ripe strawberry and smoky wood. Medium-bodied, discreet and delicate style. Very fresh, with limpidity and poise. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Aic** 14% ➤

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED WINES (continued)



Fürst, Hundsrück Grosses Gewächs, Franken, Germany 2009
 £85 Lay & Wheeler
 Muted oaky nose, cherries and red fruits, with a light savoury tone. Plump and rounded, a broad, fleshy style with a welcome spicy oak finish that is quite long. **Drink** 2016-2022 **A/c** 13%



Gottardi, Mazzon Riserva, Blauburgunder, Alto Adige, Italy 2012
 £35 Les Caves de Pyrène
 Leafy red-fruits nose, has finesse and delicacy. The palate is well balanced and has more vigour than the nose, though the fruit is a touch confectioned. Delivers a lot of fruit. **Drink** 2016-2024 **A/c** 14%



Meyer Family Vineyards, McLean Creek Road Vineyard, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, Canada 2013
 £34 Ellis of Richmond
 Deep brick colour, quite evolved. Smoky, leafy nose, ripe cherry. Fresh and limpid, sleek and pure. Subtle oak and bracing acidity. **Drink** 2016-2024 **A/c** 13.5%



Phi, Single Vineyard, Yarra Valley, Australia 2013
 £30 (2012) Exel Wines
 Subtle, closed nose with the promise of classical red berry fruit. Bright acidity and fresh berries on the palate make this an appetising, typical, if not particularly complex Pinot. **Drink** 2016-2022 **A/c** 13%



Storm, Moya's, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley, South Africa 2013
 £34 Atlas Fine Wine, Indigo Wine, Swig, The Sampler
 Earthy, brown-sugar nose, sort of Morey-St-Denis style. Bold and ripe, sweet but not jammy with oak giving some grip. **Drink** 2016-2024 **A/c** 13.5%



Gantenbein, Graubünden, Switzerland 2013
 £72.46 Howard Ripley
 Young, toasty-oak dominated nose for now, with impressive depth of forest fruit waiting in the wings. Rich and forceful, quite tannic. Quite long and persistent. Impressive. **Drink** 2018-2024 **A/c** 13%



Kooyong, Haven, Mornington Peninsula, Australia 2012
 £36-£40 Widely available via UK agent Great Western Wine
 Delicate, leafy nose, has charm, sweet oak and alluring red fruits. Silky attack, very refined. Well-integrated oak and ample, fresh acidity. **Drink** 2016-2024 **A/c** 13.5%



Paul Cluver, Seven Flags, Elgin, South Africa 2013
 £38.50 Frontier Fine Wine
 Oaky nose with raspberries and almond paste. There are lovely autumnal fruit notes on the palate with enough acidity to bring freshness and clarity. **Drink** 2016-2025 **A/c** 13.5%



Quartz Reef, Central Otago, New Zealand 2012
 £25 Majestic, Sommelier Wine Co
 Pretty redcurrant aromas with a slight vegetal note. The palate is attractively austere, assimilating the alcohol and structuring the flavours into a refreshing whole. **Drink** 2016-2022 **A/c** 14%



Te Whare Ra, Single Vineyard, Marlborough, New Zealand 2013
 £29.50-£29.90 Swig, The New Zealand Cellar
 Fresh, vibrant cherry nose, ample upfront fruit. Sleek attack, a pretty rather than powerful wine, quite concentrated but limpid too. Easy-going with immediate appeal. **Drink** 2016-2020 **A/c** 13.5%



Garcia + Schwaderer, Sofia, Casablanca, Chile 2013
 £18.99 Naked Wines
 Sweet toasty nose, just on the right side of jammy. Medium-bodied, has some freshness and limpidity, quite concentrated, light tannins but the fruit shines through. Quite harmonious. **Drink** 2016-2024 **A/c** 13.5%



Littorai, The Haven Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, California, USA 2013
 £78.99 Liberty Wines
 Delicate leafy nose with ripe fruit and smoky bacon. Sleek, a touch sweet but has intensity and acidity to cut the fruit. A little one-dimensional, but attractive and long. **Drink** 2016-2022 **A/c** 12.6%



Phelps Creek, Cuvée Alexandrine, Columbia Gorge, Oregon, USA 2012
 £33.30 OW Loeb
 Pretty strawberry jam elements on a fairly savoury nose. Rich, spicy and powerful, with good acidity. Very rich and sumptuous in a hefty style: considerable power. **Drink** 2016-2025 **A/c** 13.6%



Schnaitmann, Simonroth Spätburgunder, Würtemberg, Germany 2013
 £60 ABS Wine Agencies
 Cherry nose with a whiff of vanilla. Sweet attack, ripe and intense with good weight and balance. Needs a bit more structure and complexity. **Drink** 2016-2022 **A/c** 13%



Vincent Pinard, Vendanges Entières, Sancerre, France 2012
 £35.46 Justerini & Brooks
 Quite ripe, darker berry fruit style with flashes of sloe and undergrowth. Glossy and bright in the mouth, modern and just a bit extracted, though it finishes with elegance. **Drink** 2016-2024 **A/c** 13%

And the nominees were...

Argentina (nominations by Patricio Tapia & Peter Richards MW)
 ■ Zorzal, Eggo, Filoso, Tupungato, Mendoza 2015 PT
 ■ Chacra, Treinta y Dos, Mainqué, Patagonia, Argentina 2012 PT & PR

Australia (Huon Hooke & Tyson Stelzer)
 ■ Bass Phillip, Reserve, Gippsland 2013 HH
 ■ Coldstream Hills, Deer Farm Vineyard, Yarra Valley 2013 HH
 ■ Farr, Farside by Farr, Geelong 2013 HH
 ■ Giant Steps, Applejack Vineyard, Yarra Valley 2014 HH
 ■ Moorooduc Estate, McIntyre, Mornington Peninsula 2013 HH
 ■ Mount Mary Vineyard, Yarra Valley 2013 HH
 ■ Tolpuddle Vineyard, Coal River Valley, Tasmania 2014 HH
 ■ Ashton Hills Vineyard, Reserve, Adelaide Hills, Australia 2014 TS
 ■ Bass Phillip, Premium, Gippsland 2013 TS
 ■ Bindi, Original Vineyard, Macedon Ranges 2013 TS
 ■ Freycinet Vineyard, Tasmania 2014 TS
 ■ Grosset, Adelaide Hills 2013 TS
 ■ Kooyong, Haven, Mornington Peninsula 2012 TS
 ■ Phi, Single Vineyard, Yarra Valley 2013 TS
 ■ William Downie, Mornington Peninsula 2014 TS
 ■ Yabby Lake Vineyard, Single Block Release, Block 2, Mornington Peninsula 2013 TS

Canada (Ian D'Agata)
 ■ Bachelder, Lowrey Vineyard, St David's Bench, Ontario 2013
 ■ Flat Rock Cellars, Gravity, Twenty Mile Bench, Ontario 2012
 ■ Meyer Family Vineyards, McLean Creek Road Vineyard, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013
 ■ Norman Hardie, Cuvée L, Ontario 2012
 ■ Tantalus, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2012

Chile (Patricio Tapia & Peter Richards MW)
 ■ Ventisquero, Tara, Atacama 2014 PT
 ■ Errazuriz, Las Pizarras, Aconcagua Costa 2014 PT & PR
 ■ Tabalí, Talinay, Coastal Limestone Vineyard, Limarí Valley 2014 PT & PR
 ■ Alto de Casablanca, Ritual Monster, Casablanca 2014 PR
 ■ Garcia + Schwaderer, Sofia, Casablanca 2013 PR
 ■ Montsecano, Casablanca 2013 PR

France (Jim Budd & Christelle Guibert)
 ■ Egly-Ouriel, Cuvée des Grands Côtés, Ambonnay Rouge, Coteaux Champenois 2012 CG
 ■ Vincent Pinard, Vendanges Entières, Sancerre 2012 CG
 ■ Alphonse Mellot, En Grands Champs, Sancerre 2012 JB

Germany (Anne Kriebel MW)
 ■ Bernhard Huber, Wildenstein R Grosses Gewächs, Malterdinger Bienenberg, Baden 2012
 ■ Dautel, Kalkschuppen Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs, Bönningheimer Sonnenberg, Würtemberg 2010
 ■ Friedrich Becker, Kammerberg Grosses Gewächs, Pfalz 2012
 ■ Fürst, Hundsrück Grosses Gewächs, Franken 2009
 ■ Jean Stodden, Spätburgunder Alte Reben, Ahr 2010
 ■ Schnaitmann, Simonroth Spätburgunder, Würtemberg 2013
 ■ August Kessler, Assmannshausen Höllenberg, Rheingau 2012

Italy (Ian D'Agata)
 ■ Gottardi, Mazzon Riserva, Blauburgunder, Alto Adige 2012

New Zealand (Bob Campbell MW & Cameron Douglas MS)
 ■ Bell Hill, Canterbury 2012 BC
 ■ Craggy Range, Aroha Te Muna, Martinborough 2013 BC
 ■ Escarpment, Kupe, Martinborough 2014 BC
 ■ Felton Road, Block 5, Bannockburn, Central Otago 2012 BC
 ■ Fromm, Clayvin Vineyard, Marlborough 2014 BC
 ■ Pegasus Bay, Prima Donna, Waipara Valley 2012 BC
 ■ Ata Rangī, Martinborough 2013 BC & CD
 ■ Clos de Ste Anne, Naboth's Vineyard, Gisborne 2013 CD
 ■ Ellero, Pisa Terrace, Central Otago 2012 CD
 ■ Fancrest Estate, Waipara Valley 2010 CD
 ■ Mount Edward, Morrison Vineyard, Central Otago 2011 CD
 ■ Quartz Reef, Central Otago 2012 CD
 ■ Te Whare Ra, Single Vineyard, Marlborough 2013 CD
 ■ Tongue in Groove, Cabal Vineyard, Waipara Valley 2014 CD
 ■ Akarua, The Siren, Bannockburn, Central Otago 2013 CD

South Africa (Tim Atkin MW)
 ■ Chamonix, Reserve, Franschhoek 2014
 ■ Crystallum, Cuvée Cinéma, Hemel-en-

Aarde Ridge 2014
 ■ JH Meyer Wines, Cradock Peak, Outeniqua 2014
 ■ Newton Johnson, Family Vineyards, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley 2013
 ■ Paul Cluver, Seven Flags, Elgin 2013
 ■ Storm, Moya's, Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley 2013

Switzerland (Paolo Basso)
 ■ Domaine Donatsch, Unique, Malans, Graubünden 2013
 ■ Gantenbein, Graubünden 2013

USA (Jon Bonné & Stephen Brook)
 ■ Anthill Farms, Comptche Ridge Vineyard, Mendocino County, California 2013 JB
 ■ Calera, Mills Vineyard, Mt Harlan, California 2012 JB
 ■ Ceritas, Hellenthal Vineyard, Old Shop Block, Sonoma Coast, California 2013 JB
 ■ Domaine de la Côte, La Côte, Santa Rita Hills, California 2013 JB
 ■ Drew, The Fog-Eater, Anderson Valley, California 2014 JB
 ■ Failla, Hirsch Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, California 2013 JB
 ■ Hirsch Vineyards, East Ridge, Sonoma Coast, California 2012 JB
 ■ Littorai, The Haven Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, California 2013 JB
 ■ Mount Eden Vineyards, Santa Cruz Mountains, California 2013 JB
 ■ Rhys, Alpine Hillside, Santa Cruz Mountains, California 2013 JB
 ■ Adelsheim, Elizabeth's Reserve, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2012 JB & SB
 ■ Antica Terra, Antikythera, Eola-Amity Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2012 JB & SB
 ■ Beaux Frères, The Beaux Frères Vineyard, Ribbon Ridge, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2013 JB & SB
 ■ Bergström, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2013 JB & SB
 ■ Bethel Heights, Aeolian, Eola-Amity Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2013 JB & SB
 ■ Brick House, Evelyn's, Ribbon Ridge, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2012 JB & SB
 ■ Chehalem, Reserve, Ribbon Ridge, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2013 JB & SB
 ■ Cristom, Marjorie Vineyard, Eola-Amity Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2013 JB & SB
 ■ Phelps Creek, Cuvée Alexandrine, Columbia Gorge, Oregon 2012 JB & SB
 ■ WillaKenzie Estate, Alette, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, Oregon 2013 JB & SB