

Our concept

Wine behind the label was first conceived as an ambitious attempt to produce an authoritative single volume guide to producers of quality wines from around the world. We believe we are succeeding in what we set out to achieve but will always view it as a work in progress, continuing to respond to an ever expanding quality spectrum as well as looking for better ways to present our findings. We remain committed to providing both depth and criticism about quality wines whatever their provenance and from as many quality wine producers as possible. It is a guide for enthusiasts or would-be enthusiasts, not for those who can't detect any differences or don't care to, yet it is a reference that is accessible to the novice and learned alike. The 10th edition sees a further significant expansion in our reach, uncovering many more producers - both from the classic regions but also reflecting the quality being obtained in places that don't make the headlines. As ever, it is still far from exhaustive but hopefully there's plenty to sustain your interest.. For those new to Wine behind the label we have repeated below what you can expect to find as well as some of our thoughts about wine and winemaking.

Behind the label

The industrial mentality which has given us brilliant cars and computers doesn't have a place in high quality wine (or food) production. An essential difference between a high production brand and one produced on a more human scale is the personal effort and commitment that the family or individuals who make it have put into it. We therefore highlight individuality and character over more boring standardized production. We also attempt to bring the producer a little closer to whoever is drinking their wine so that some inkling of their philosophy and effort might enrich the enjoyment the wine brings. We lend our support particularly to small producers and talented winemakers, and wherever we see honesty and integrity but every quality wine is considered on its merits. A small producer, no matter how earnest or sincere, will not make good wine if he or she doesn't manage the vineyards well and employ sound winemaking practice. Equally, spending exorbitant sums on PR and marketing doesn't always mean the wine in the bottle is poor – though it is likely given the money spent that it could be better value.

Winemaking and a wine's origins

We've tried to provide information about where quality and character come from - the most relevant aspects of winemaking, viticulture and vineyard site that contribute to what's in your glass. There is also information on the extent of a wine's manipulation such as fining or filtration, and whether organic or biodynamic principles are employed. In the last decade we have witnessed the increasing acceptance of the importance of terroir in tandem with a continued trend to more vineyard specific wine production. Where great wine is a combination of several small parcels it is our hope that more producers will provide details of the individual plots that contribute to the wine's character. In some cases, celebrated labels are now no longer based on the top vineyard sites that brought early acclaim (whether a Bordeaux classed growth or elsewhere in Europe or the new world). We are also keeping tabs on some of the most famous names where the pursuit of profit, lacklustre direction or a change of ownership may have compromised quality. On the other hand we point out where a new, often more highly-trained, generation has made a positive impact or where outside investment has resulted in a new lease of life.

Really useful stuff

This guide does contain a lot of information about producers and their wines. In this edition over 3,950 producers are covered in depth, with over 250 new winery profiles. Furthermore over 26,000 wines are rated and price coded. While some of world's finest wines can be hard to get hold of in many instances there is a first point of contact that will sell direct by mail-order or over the Internet. In addition there are a number of features that will help you find the information you want more quickly. The lists of producers by appellation or region (at the end of each section's introduction) is an excellent way to find or familiarize yourself with producers from a favourite area. Where possible there are also single page map inserts for quick reference to regions or appellations. These have been given a major update in this 11th edition. For the many readers who only have time to dip in and out of the book we would encourage you to use the 'Author's Choice' lists at the end of each section. These contain at least one wine from most of a region's best producers and make a useful alternative starting point to discovering new wines. In particular the 'Value for money' lists highlight some of the best buys. Given that exciting new producers are emerging all the time we have included a 'Work in progress' list covering those we will be assessing in future editions.

Tasting, ratings and assessing producers

Our Quality Rating (see How to Use this guide) is intended to give a truer assessment of wine quality than a vintage dependent point score. It is nearly always based on scores from a minimum of two recent vintages. Wine shows and competitions encourage the production of wines of flattering first impressions but don't always reward those that show at their best with age. Nor do they address the implications of the vintage characteristics. Rather than a snapshot, consensual tasting mentality we believe in tasting wines again and again (both blind and non-blind) in order to gain a better understanding of a wine's style and when it should be drunk. A rating combined with an understanding of the style is the key to discovering the best wines, and that means those you will most enjoy. Before choosing a bottle for immediate consumption always ask yourself which wine works best now, reflects my mood, personality, or that of my friends or family? What flavours do I want? How much flavour? By buying wine for cellaring it will be possible to contrast different vintages of the same wine. Alternatively from a case of the same wine the gradual development and increasing maturity of a specific vintage can be assessed over a decade or more.

Conclusion

Think of this book as a catalogue to a vast array of vinous riches. Choose with the certainty of trying wines of dependable quality that our labours and experience provide through our rating system. If you haven't tasted Austrian Grüner Veltliner or Californian Syrah then try a three star example from at least two or three profiled producers. Buy the best new reds from the Languedoc-Roussillon, Southern Italy, Spain or Portugal. In the past five years Germany has made better Riesling than ever before but contrast these with those from Alsace, Austria or Australia. Discover a wealth of fine Pinot Noir from Central Otago, Victoria & Tasmania or North America. Alternatively seek out new names from the classic regions such as Burgundy, Bordeaux or the Rhône, Tuscany or Piedmont, Napa or South Australia. Most of all we implore you to sample and experiment more widely.

Winemaker awards for the 11th edition

For the 11th edition we would like to recognise some winemakers who are consistently producing wines which are value for money, sometimes not only in their own area but also on a global playing field. Not all of them have hit the headlines but must be applauded for the quality/price ratio for the wines they produce.

From nearly 7,000 wine producers in the guide, we could say that at least 20% are producing some wines to match a "rapport qualité/prix", as the French would have it, some of them because they are in an area or country where wines are generally better value, such as Spain, South Africa, Regional France and Southern Italy, South America and Eastern Europe, where one would head for when looking for value for money in any list, be it in a shop or a restaurant, rather than going for the Bordeaux, Burgundy or California wines for example. And of course there are the "cult, must have" wines which are certainly not going to be value for money. Yes, some of our producers awarded this year may produce one or two of these, but their bread and butter wines are made with the same care and attention as their top wine, with sometimes sensational drinking value results. And surprisingly, we make some awards to producers in some of those cult areas, not always noted for their value for money, but remembering that "value" does not necessarily mean "cheap". So, In no particular order:

Count Stefan von Niepperg

For the wines of Capaia (Philadelphia, South Africa)
Clos Marsalette (Péssac-Léognan Grand Cru, Bordeaux)
Ch. d'Aiguilhe (Côtes de Castillon, Bordeaux)

Rosolino, Antonino and Natale Alessandro

For the wines of Alessandro di Camporeale (Sicily)

Philippe Subra

For the wines of Carinae (Cuyo/Mendoza, Argentina)

Philippe Vatan

For the wines of Chateau du Hureau (Saumur-Champigny, Loire Valley)

Philippe Procheron

For the wines of Marojallia (Margaux, Bordeaux)

Bruno d'Alfonso and Kris Curran

For the wines of Di Bruno, Curran, DiBruno-Curran and the Badge (Santa Ynez Valley, California)

Michaela Ehn

For the wines of Ehn (Kamptal, Austria)

Colin Kay

For the wines of Kay Brothers Amery Vineyard (McLaren Vale, South Australia)

Fernando Garcia Alonso

For the wines of Bodega Marañones (Vinos de Madrid, Spain)

Isabelle and Laurent Coustal

For the wines of Château Sainte Eulalie (Minervois, Languedoc)

Jean Marot

For the wines of Domaine Vindemio (Ventoux, Rhône)

Wayne Gabb

For the wines of Lomond Wines, Cape Agulhas, South Africa)

Michael Brajkovich

For the wines of Kumeu River (Auckland, New Zealand)

Karl-Josef Loewen

For the wines of Carl Loewen (Mittel Mosel, Germany)

Stellar Cellars 11th edition

As well as the award winning winemakers of this edition, there are many producers that stand out for the quality of their current releases. We have opted again with this edition to amend our approach with many more producers having been awarded with rosettes to reflect the quality of their work. These are our choices of cellars that continue to produce compelling releases. From large or diverse areas we have chosen names offering contrasting styles or interpretations. Some are well-established stars, but there may be others challenging the established order or injecting new life into a region.

All Stellar Cellar award winners from both the 10th and 11th editions are evidenced by a single red rosette symbol preceding their entry in the guide. Those producers who received a Stellar Cellar award in previous editions have a mono rosette. Producers, who in our opinion, have been continuing to maintain exceptional standards or provide a regional benchmark over a number of years are evidenced by two green rosettes. All make wines that should be tried at least once.



Producers flagged up in the guide with two green rosettes have been selected as a Stellar Cellar and have also been consistently exceptional performers in their regions



Producers flagged up in the guide with this red rosette have been selected most recently as a Stellar Cellar for the 10th and 11th editions



Producers flagged up in the guide with this mono rosette have been selected as a Stellar Cellar in earlier editions and continue to excel

How to use

The major part of this guide is split into regional or country sections. Within each one you will find an Introduction including, where possible, Vintage information. This is followed by a list of the producers (by region or appellation) that have been profiled within the A-Z that makes up the bulk of the section. At the end of the A-Z of producers, other quality wines tasted from the region are included in Additional wineries and wines of note. The wines listed here are only those of sufficient quality that have been tasted - in some instances other good wines from the same producer exist. Work in Progress includes (often new) estates or producers that we will be assessing for the next edition. At the very end of each section under Author's Choice we have added lists of wines that are a personal selection but are also often themed by a shared style or grape variety and so should aid navigation. For Individual A-Z entries see the sample entry below. The use of CAPS (eg Louis JADOT) indicates the existence of a cross-referenced entry that can be found using the search function.

Navigation

There are various aids to readers to move around the guide. Wine behind the label is fully paginated and can be navigated from the contents page. In addition to this there are also direct links from the contents page. Readers will find the embedded navigation contents tree of particular use. Navigation is by continent, country and wine region. Each regional section has direct links to its background including trends and appellations as well as a link to lists of wine producers profiled by appellation and vintage details. The core of the guide are the wine producer profiles and these can be navigated from an A to Z of bookmarks in the navigation tree. At most you will have to scroll through a dozen or so pages often fewer to find what you are looking for. There are also links to the Additional wineries and wines of note in a region as well as the Author's choice. There is also the search function.

Vintages Charts

In those sections where vintages have the greatest significance, Vintage Charts are also provided (as is text on individual years for the classic wines of Bordeaux, Burgundy, Piedmont, Tuscany and Port). Specific styles of wine are given an overall vintage rating between one and five stars for individual years. In some instances it is not possible to provide a balanced judgement on the vintage until nearer the wines' release (with Brunello di Montalcino for example). These have been designated NYR (not yet rated). When to drink the wines of a given vintage is a largely subjective, personal judgement and can depend as much on mood or context but the letter (A-D) following the ratings gives a general indication of their likely development:

- A - wines to Anticipate, not ready for drinking
- B - wines that can be Broached, but with much more to give
- C - wines to Consume, at or near their best
- D - wines likely to be in Decline, past their best

A-Z Order & new profiles

The order of the A-Z entries is based on the name they are most commonly referred to and they appear as they are written but with priority to surnames. 'Domaine' is ignored but 'Château', 'Castello', 'Quinta' etc are respected as is the definite article when implicitly part of the name (eg Il Poggione appears under 'I'). The only exception to these principles is in Bordeaux where the name of the château or estate takes precedent.

Where a profile is preceded by this symbol >> this indicates a new profile for the 11th edition, for example:

>> [Morlet Family Vineyards \(St Helena\)](#)

Visiting & Ownership

We have listed in most entries telephone and fax numbers for those readers who wish to visit producers. It is always advisable to call ahead because in many cases appointments need to be booked. It is also worth noting that many small producers are not open to visitors. Ownership is also given throughout and wherever this appears in **bold** it refers to a corporate owner rather than an individual or individuals who have a number profiles that may be cross referenced throughout the guide. For example LVMH (LVMH Moët Hennessy • Louis Vuitton S.A.) are owners of a number of prestige wine brands including **Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Krug** and others. Corporate owners who only appear once in the guide are not in bold. Obviously contact with a corporate owner shouldn't be assumed to be possible via the winery's address that follows it.

Ratings

- ★ a wine of good quality, not just sound but of good fruit and with some character.
- ★★ a wine with more depth, interest and concentration, usually with some aging potential
- ★★★ a very good, even fine, wine. In the case of many reds repaying lengthy cellaring.
- ★★★★ a wine of very high quality, among the very best even in a top appellation or region.
- ★★★★★ outstanding quality, potentially a classic.
- ☆☆☆☆☆ super 5 stars, restricted to the true classics, out-and-out world class.
- ☆ white stars are used to show a superior wine at a given rating

We have rated as many of a producer's wines as possible, but in some instances the wines are too new or too scarce to have yet received a rating. Such wines are covered in the text only.

Tasting notes and scores

It is not in the style of this guide to provide tasting notes for individual vintages along with their scores. However this information will be provided by our website over the coming year and we intend to give readers the opportunity to receive the scores for currently available vintages by electronic means. Given that scores are vintage specific, they sometimes exceed or fall short of the rating that is based on repeated tastings. (also see 'Tasting, Ratings, and assessing producers' in the Introduction)

Prices

A code is provided which represents an estimated retail price bracket and it is based on the standard 75cl bottle size. Price codes for those wines produced only in 1.5 litre (magnums), 50 cl (half litre) or 37.5 cl (half bottle) formats have been given 75cl equivalents. A half bottle costing £12.00/\$15.00 for instance will have a price code of £D.

£A: less than £8 (\$10)	£E: £26 - 35 (\$32-\$45)
£B: £8 - 12 (\$10-\$15)	£F: £36 - 60 (\$45-\$77)
£C: £12 - 18 (\$15-\$23)	£G: £61 - 100 (\$77-\$130)
£D: £19 - 25 (\$23-\$32)	£H: £101 or more (\$130 or more)

Example profiles

This is an example profile from the Bordeaux section of the guide. With the interactive capabilities of a pdf readers can also link directly to a producers website.

The entries follow this simple 'all you need to know' format

<p>↓</p> <p>Producer</p> <p>↓</p>	<p>↓</p> <p>Wine region</p> <p>↓</p>	<p>Ch. Léoville-Barton (Saint-Julien 2ème CC) www.leoville-barton.com</p> <p><i>Anthony Barton 33250 Saint-Julien-Beychevelle</i> ← Owner's name and address</p> <p><i>Tel: 05 56 59 06 05 Fax: 05 56 59 14 29</i></p> <p>This marvellously consistent red has long been one of Bordeaux's great-value wines. It is produced from 48 ha of vineyards planted to a mix of Cabernet Sauvignon (70%), Merlot (22%) and Cabernet Franc (8%). It is vinified in the same winery as the Barton families other top Saint-Julien red LANGOIA-BARTON with the same attention to detail. The wine is a stylish, cedary, medium full claret with well-judged oak and a supple but youthfully firm texture that requires time to achieve balance and harmony. It is no blockbuster but very good, intense and long-lived nonetheless. It was seriously nudging ★★★★★ in 1996, 2000 and 2005 as well as 2010. The 89, 86 and 82 were also very fine. (DM)</p> <p>Recommended Reds: ← Red, white or rosé wine style</p> <p>Château Léoville-Barton Saint-Julien ★★★★★ £F</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Quality rating indicator</p>	<p>↑</p> <p>Individually researched entry</p>
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