

Introduction

Wine Report is the essential reference for the wine lover who has everything.

It is the only guide for the busy wine enthusiast who wants to keep up to speed. And it will be invaluable for members of the wine trade who want to keep abreast of what is going on beyond the wines they deal with on a daily basis, be they wine producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers, or sommeliers.

Each year, *Wine Report* provides a one-stop update to what has happened in the world of wine during the previous 12 months, full of inside information on every wine region.

One person could not possibly keep up with all of this on an annual basis. It takes me several years to update a single edition of *The New Sotheby's Wine Encyclopedia*. This is why I have assembled a team of specialists – and not just any specialists. These are the guys and girls I respect the most in their respective subjects – the ones I would turn to if I needed some inside help. So, it is nothing but the best: Clive Coates MW on Burgundy, David Peppercorn MW on Bordeaux, and Richard Mayson on Portugal, for example. But it is not just full of Brits. I have commissioned two top French experts: Thierry Desseauve on the Rhône and Antoine Gerbelle on the Loire. Thierry is the publisher of *La Revue du Vin de France*, the most influential wine magazine in France, and coauthor with Michel Bettane of the *Classement des Vins de France*, the world's most respected buyer's guide to the best French wines. And Antoine is the Loire contributor for *Classement*.

I have pulled in as many *in situ* experts as I could. Nobody knows more about South Africa than John Platter, for example, and I have Huon Hooke on Australia, Bob Campbell MW on New Zealand, Dan Berger on California, Nick Belfrage MW on Italy (although American, he lives in Italy), Chandra Kurt on Switzerland, Dr Philipp Blom on Austria, Tony Aspler on Canada, Nico Manassis on Greece, and Daniel Rogov on Israel. All these names will be well known to readers interested in the wines they cover, just as flying viticultural guru Dr Richard Smart will be, but some are the expert's experts and are known to relatively few outside their spheres of influence, such as Professor Ron Jackson. Ron is, for me, the James Burke of wine science. One of his books, called *Wine Science* funnily enough, is the only single-

volume reference to everything from the grape and viticulture, through wine and oenology (where most books start and stop), to wine tasting and health. It is not dummed down, but you do not need a science degree to understand it, merely a reasonable level of intelligence. It is the best single-volume book on the subject, making Ron my first choice as contributor, and I am so glad that he accepted.

Health matters

Beverley Blanning, a Master of Wine who specializes in health issues, has been tasked to keep readers up to date with all the latest research into how and why moderate wine consumption can be good for you, protect you against cancer and vascular disease, and extend your life-expectancy. This is a vital topic in a world where producers are forbidden to state proven health benefits on the label, while in the USA and a growing number of other places, they are forced to print health warnings, some of which are untrue or unproven. However, it is equally vital that *Wine Report* does not lay itself open to the charge of feeding consumers only good news, thus Beverley has been specifically briefed to highlight research that conflicts with or contradicts any health benefits and to give us the bad news in an unambiguous, unbiased fashion. She has even been asked to provide top 10s of the biggest health hypes and myths!

Wines of Antarctica

Where there are no real experts on an area, region, or country, I have commissioned a professional I respect to specialize in the wines. Take the Jura and Savoie, for example. I knew that Wink Lorch, chairman of AWE (Association of Wine Educators), had a home in the Haut-Savoie, and having worked successfully with Wink on various projects over the past eight years or so, I considered her ideally placed and well qualified to take on the task. Eventually she agreed! And she has dug out a lot of stuff that most of us had no idea about. Doug Frost, one of three people in the world to hold both Master Sommelier and Master of Wine titles, has gamely taken on everything between America's West Coast and the Atlantic Northeast – no fewer than 30 states, but he regularly judges in competitions covering these states and is thus uniquely suited to reveal all. Australian Denis Gastin is the only person I know who could possibly even think of covering Asia – one third of the planet!

Rough ride

Not that it has been plain sailing. I have almost 40 contributors and it is a dream team, but it would have been exactly 40 had I not had to sack a

couple of them! They just did not come up with the goods, and you have to be ruthless if you want the best. This first edition covers every well-known wine-producing region in world, all the lesser-known, and many of the most obscure. India, Japan, and China? Old hat. Denis Gastin has got them covered in detail, but he also has news on wines from Thailand and South Korea. Even Bali! Next year Chandra Kurt will be including Liechtenstein as an addendum to her Swiss wine report. By comparison, Luxembourg is far more important, but there are very few skilled tasters who know all the small growers, rather than just the few large merchants and cooperatives. Those who do were either not prepared to be critical of any wines (this is what has kept Luxembourg in the backwaters) or could not be relied upon. I have even tried the best local sommeliers. The search goes on, as it does for someone who knows Algiers, Morocco, Tunisia, and other lesser-known African wine-producing countries. I sacked a writer here, as I did the person who I had commissioned to research Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark (and I am not kidding). When I have those two reports covered, there will just be Ireland and Malta, and that will be it: every square inch of wine-growing in the world.

Contributor's by-line

The problem with annual wine guides that rely on a large number of contributors is that the reader never knows whether something was written by the person on the front cover or one of the plethora of names hidden away in the acknowledgments. In *Wine Report*, however, each contributor is there for all to see, quite literally, with his or her photo heading the report and a full by-line that even credits competing publications. It is about time that figurehead authors gave full credit where due, so hopefully this will set a trend.

Privileged information

Wine Report tells you about important events, incidents, and developments that have happened in each region or subject (in the case of Viticulture, Organic & Biodynamic Wines, Wine Science, Wine & Health, Wine on the Web, and Auctions & Investment). You will be privy to insider information. Some of these topics and news items have not even appeared in the wine trade press. Not only will you discover if, say, a new winemaker has taken over at a *cru classé* Bordeaux château or high-profile New World winery, or somebody has sold up, but you will also find out about new appellations, new wine laws, juicy legal cases, important changes to existing wines, wine launches, the truth behind the hype about the most recent vintage, and any back-peddalling of opinion on previous vintages. I have briefed contributors

not to pull any punches, so they will reveal anything currently practised (legally or not) that should not be, plus, of course, anything that should be happening and yet is not. Last, but not least, each contributor provides listings of producers (greatest, best-value, new, and fastest-improving) and wines (greatest, best bargains, and most exciting or unusual finds). Now you can get inside the head of Clive Coates et al and see what they think are the best producers and wines – this year and every year.

- China is now the eighth-largest viticultural country in the world.
- First Native winery opens in Canada.
- Every state in the USA has at least one winery.
- Washington wines beat top Napa and Bordeaux growths in two blind taste-offs.
- Frost destroys 80 per cent of Champagne harvest.
- Double-whammy fraud uncovered in Champagne.
- Gérard Depardieu succeeds where Robert Mondavi failed.
- Vandals flush a vat of Rémy Pannier down the drain.
- Corrine Mentzelopoulos buys the château everybody thought she owned: Margaux!
- Peppercorn on Parker.
- Horses replace tractors in Burgundy.
- French publication fined for describing Beaujolais as “shit”.
- Casa do Douro, Port's former regulatory body, put out to graze.
- All Madeira must now be bottled on the island.
- New vintage Madeira appellation established.
- Rumour that Brian Croser might buy Penfolds from Southcorp!
- Pirie kicked out of Pipers Brook.
- Australian wine in tinnies.
- Zinfandel emerging as a new varietal in southern France.
- Vin de Pays de France mooted.
- Primitivo (Zinfandel) identified in an ancient block of vines in Germany.
- Growers in a Swiss village called Champagne demand the right to their own name.
- Thirteen hybrids declared vinifera to circumvent EU wine law.
- First Greek Master of Wine.
- First Viognier from Israel.
- Soave Superiore, Bardolino Superiore, Greco di Tufo, and Fiano d'Avellino attain DOCG.
- Alleged Cabernetization of Chianti, Barolo, and Barbaresco.
- PRD – the greatest thing since tap water.