SPECIAL ISSUE

Wine & Spirits

100 BEST WINES

100 BEST BUYS

TOP 100 WINERIES of 2011
If you’re looking for reference points in the great winemaking regions of the world, here are 60 of the best. From Champagne to Sherry, Barolo to the Hunter Valley, these wineries performed at the top of their regions. We selected these wineries from the results of our tastings of 6,457 wines over the past year. These 60 had the strongest overall showing, having at least three highly recommended wines—and often many more—as well as the highest average scores. You’ll find more exemplary wines from estates that release only one or two wines a vintage in our 100 Best Wines of the Year. In the following pages, W&S editors Carson Demmond, Joshua Greene, Chris Hallowell, Peter Liem, Patricio Tapia and Tara Q. Thomas detail what makes each of these wineries a standout. You can find the full range of wines tasted for our Imported Wineries of the Year at wineandspiritsmagazine.com.
The Gobelsburg castle has been the winemaking facility for the Zwettl monastery since 1786, although the order’s monks have been tending vines in the Kamptal vineyards of Heiligenstein and Gaissberg since 1171. The estate’s contemporary history dates from 1996, when the monastery leased the castle and its vineyards to a young, ambitious wine connoisseur from eastern Austria, Michael Moosbrugger.

Since then, Moosbrugger has turned Schloss Gobelsburg into one of Austria’s finest wineries, creating rieslings and grüner veltliners of rare expression and detail. While he makes an entry-level range of wines under the Gobelsburger label that include some purchased fruit, all of the wines labeled as Schloss Gobelsburg are single-vineyard wines from estate-owned vineyards. These are vatted in large oak casks with indigenous yeasts, and although they tend to be more robust than the Gobelsburger wines, they do not typically finish at more than 13.5 percent alcohol: Moosbrugger believes that a certain amount of ripeness is necessary to fully express terroir, but he is not aiming for a blockbuster style.

The 2009 Renner Gruner Veltliner is a perfect example of Moosbrugger’s style, showing delicately sleek fruit aromas infused by the spicy, earthy minerality of this loam and loess site. It’s a clearly defined contrast to the ’09 Gruner Veltliner from Lamm, where the deep soils and southern exposure result in a more concentrated wine with a more powerful structure. The star of our tastings was the 2009 riesling from Heiligenstein, the Kamptal’s most renowned vineyard. A warm, south-facing slope of weathered sandstone and volcanic elements, Heiligenstein creates wines that combine ripeness with complexity and finesse, and this example shows all the class and character of the site. As with the grüner veltliners, this dry riesling will show its best after a decade or so in the cellar, when it reveals its complete array of aromas. —P.L.

**TOP-SCORING WINES**

| 94 | ’09 Kamptal Reserve Zöbing Heiligenstein Riesling | $55 (4/11) |
| 93 | ’09 Kamptal Reserve Kammerner Lamm Grüner Veltliner | $55 (4/11) |
| 93 | ’09 Kamptal Reserve Kammerner Renner Grüner Veltliner | $36 (4/11) |

Following stints at Weincastel Schilling in Germany’s Nahe region and Schug Winery in the Napa Valley, Fred Loimer returned home to Langenlois in 1997 to take over the management of his family’s wine estate. A year later, he purchased a beautiful 19th-century vaulted brick cellar, formerly the property of the Schloss Haindorf, and while he sought to preserve the classical aesthetic of the traditional cellar, he also constructed an ultra-modern, dramatically minimalist structure above it that has become something of an icon in the region.

Loimer’s 148 acres of vineyards include holdings in many of the Kamptal’s top sites, such as Heiligenstein, Spiegel, Steinmassl and Räferberg. While the Loimers had always farmed their vineyards conscientiously, eschewing herbicides and using a minimal amount of pesticides, Fred decided to convert the estate to biodynamics in 2005. Beginning with the 2009 vintage, Loimer’s wines are certified biodynamic.

Marked by precise balance and clearly defined terroir signatures, Loimer’s wines are now among the finest in the region. The Grüner Veltliner Terrassen is blended from six vineyards, all classified as Erste Lage, or first-class sites. In the 2009, this blend seems to impart an unusually complex minerality to the wine, demonstrating the character of both loess soils and stony ones. A more singular expression of place can be found in the 2009 Räferberg Grüner Veltliner, which derives an ample, spicy richness from the heavy loam and sand in this parcel. It combines its power with a terrific sense of harmony and finesse, and should be even more vivid and complex with another ten to 15 years in the cellar. Loimer’s finest riesling comes from Steinmassl, a high, rocky vineyard of gneiss and mica that creates racy, mineral-driven wines. Showing a remarkable sense of grace, refinement and completeness, the 2009 is an excellent example of this great site, and a fine demonstration of Loimer’s ability to express the essence of each of his terroirs.—P.L.

**TOP-SCORING WINES**

| 93 | ’09 Kamptal Reserve Langenlois Steinmassl Riesling | $64 (4/11) |
| 92 | ’09 Kamptal Reserve Langenlois Räferberg Grüner Veltliner | $60 (4/11) |
| 92 | ’09 Kamptal Reserve Langenlois Terrassen Grüner Veltliner | $34 (4/11) |
is one of the most successful Yattarnas to date, a clean, savory white that matches flavor intensity with freshness. This is serious wine. Yes, there’s expensive oak involved, but that quickly yields to the kind of mineral-tinged pear and apple crispness that completely subsumes the wood. It’s tense, balanced and mouthwatering, a wine to watch and enjoy as it evolves in the cellar. Treasury Wine Estates, Napa, CA

BEST RIESLING

92 | Kilikanoon $35
2010 Clare Valley Mort’s Reserve Watervale Riesling Kilikanoon’s top selection from Mort’s Block and Kihiley Vineyard, this is tight and intense in its youth, packing a lot of energy into a complete and balanced riesling. The floral lime flavors deepen toward minerality through a long finish. Delicious to drink now with a shellfish stew, this will gain complexity and richness with bottle age. Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA

BEST SHIRAZ

96 | Penfolds $500
2006 South Australia Grange Bin 95 As chief winemaker, Peter Gago has made his mark on several of the newer Penfolds wines, including RWT and Yattarna. The style of Grange, with one of the longest track records of any South Australian red, is slower to evolve—but it does change, and

95 | Chambers Rosewood Vineyards $300/375ml
Rutheglen Rare Muscat From a solera of wines over 100 years old, this wine’s potent complexity starts off in dark scents of treacle, then explodes on the palate in a heady rush of flavor that lasts for minutes. Age is one of the specters that rushes past, the wine’s antiquity revealed in barrel scents of coffee beans and earth. Lively fruit rises over the warmth of the wine, feeding a fire that might be contained with a bite of pound cake. Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA

AUSTRIA

BEST GRUNER VELTLINER

93 | Schloss Gobelsburg $36
2009 Kamptal Reserve Kammerner Renner Gruner Veltliner This is marked by the story, earthy minerality typical of the site, feeling vibrant and energetic. The flavors of white peach, Asian pear and pithy citrus emerge further with air, yet this remains intensely soil driven, its mineral notes persisting even longer than the sleekly vivid fruit aromas. Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

93 | Hermann Moser $20
2009 Kremsal Gebeling Gruner Veltliner The floral flavors of apple and pear are richly textured yet supported by brisk acidity, acquiring a subtle, loess-driven complexity on the palate. It finishes with excellent length, emphasizing balance and finesse. Boutique Wine Collection, Philadelphia, PA

BEST RIESLING

94 | Schloss Gobelsburg $55
2009 Kamptal Zöbling Heiligenstein Riesling From the Kamptal’s greatest vineyard site, this is lithe and detailed, its ripe notes of Asian pear, apple blossom and tangerine anchored by firm, energetic minerality. It builds with quiet intensity, focused, crystalline and impeccably balanced, and persists with terrific length. As compelling as the wine is now, it deserves another decade in the cellar to show its full potential. Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY

BEST BLAUFRANKISCH

94 | Moric $125
2008 Burgenland Neckenmarkt Alte Reben Blaufränkisch Made from vines that are 40 to 80 years old, this comes largely from parcels on schist, giving it an elegant, graceful harmony and energetic structure. There’s a wild, dark edge to the black cherry and raspberry fruit flavors, yet the stylish texture and exquisite balance make this feel refined and aristocratic. It’s intensely expressive of place, dominated by that schist minerality. winemonger.com, Los Angeles, CA
PINOT NOIR

90 | Yering Station
2008 Yarra Valley Pinot Noir Light and transparent in color, this is lean and fragrant with delicate raspberry flavor. It’s vinosus, balanced between fruit and earthy mushroom scents. A super value to buy by the case. Rathbone Wine Group, Napa, CA

SHIRAZ

90 | Mount Langi Ghiran
2007 Victoria Billi Billi Shiraz There’s no one else around making shiraz like Mount Langi Ghiran. Here, for a mere $16, you get a wine that’s as untamed as the Wild West, packed with scents of blueberries, saddle leather and gunshot. There’s a sweet crush of strawberries against all that earthy tension. A bit of the outback to serve with tripe or kangaroo. Rathbone Wine Group, Napa, CA

DESSERT

90 | Chambers Rosewood Vineyards
Rutherford Muscat Here’s a steal: a half bottle of rich, stylish muscat for $16. This is filled with luscious, plump peach flavor, perfumed tart cherry notes with a summery, sugarcane sweetness in the finish. Pour a glass with hazelnut ice cream. Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA

AUSTRALIA

RIESLING

91 | Wakefield
2009 Clare Valley Riesling This wine’s tight lemon flavor has accents of green tea and red fruit, hinting at watermelon. The fruit flavors have staying power, balanced in a forward style, the structure hidden underneath. A fragrant riesling, this will bring out the briny sweetness of poached prawns. American Wine Distributors, San Francisco, CA

GRENACHE

90 | Hesketh
2009 South Australia Wild at Heart Grenache Transparent in color and light on the attack, this fragrant grenache is all about brightness and simplicity. There’s an herbal scent of bay, eucalyptus and thyme over the light ping of strawberry flavor. The tannins have a fine raspy edge, to take to any sausage sizzle in Adelaide. The Sorting Table, Napa, CA

TEMPRANILLO

91 | Running with Bulls
2009 Barossa Tempranillo A vibrant, red-fruited wine, this has an intriguing, warm spice character that lasts. With air, the fruit turns darker, toward pomegranate, its richness and freshness balancing the spice. Decant it for mushroom stew. Negotiants USA, Napa, CA

AUSTRALIA

GRUNER VELTLINER

89 | Fred Loimer
2009 Niederösterreich Lois Gruner Veltliner Fresh, lively and delicious, this is nevertheless a serious wine at this price point, its brisk flavors of apple, lemon zest and sage leaf accented by a subtly complex minerality. Winebox, NY

89 | Forstreiter
2009 Kremszial Krems Kögl Gruner Veltliner This contrasts bright apricot and pink grapefruit flavors with notes of lentil and sweet herbs, finishing with zesty acidity. It’s an excellent value at this price, showing a lot of personality. Monika Caha Selections/Fredrick Wildman and Sons, NY

RIESLING

90 | Leth
2009 Wagram Lagenreserve Felser Weinberge Riesling This is silky and delicate, its flavors of tangerine and white peach persisting in a lithe, floral fragrance. The gravelly soils of the area are expressed in both the underlying minerality and the way the elegant structure shapes the fruit. Domaine Select Wine Estates, NY
Handmade in San Francisco

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Chardonnay

Usa. America. CA.

Les Cheneaux Vineyards

Champagne

France

Champagne

Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, France

Chardonnay Blanc de Blanc

Chile

Sauvignon Blanc

Zweigelt

Carménère

Argentina

Blaufränkisch

100 Best Buys of 2021