Austria 2012
A Decanter guide to its wines, regions and styles
Produced in association with Austrian Wine Marketing Board
Sommeliers adore them, wine writers enthuse about them. What is it about Austrian wines that captures the imagination, and hearts, of those who make their living in wine? And when will these wines gain a higher profile beyond their borders?

Certainly, the country’s Grüner Veltliners have become a popular choice among wine lovers looking for an alternative to the usual Chardonnays and Sauvignon Blancs, and have become almost easy to find on restaurant lists and supermarket shelves. But what of the myriad other white, red and sweet styles? These are still unfamiliar territory for probably a fair proportion of Decanter readers, but we urge you to read more about them in this guide – and then to go out and try them. These are food-friendly wines with cool-climate elegance, bags of character, and a real sense of place. Enjoy!

Amy Wislocki, Managing Editor

Contents

2 What’s new in Austria
Darrel Joseph rounds up all the latest news from the Austrian wine industry

4 Winning over the world
Austrian winemakers have had their share of difficult times. Amy Wislocki charts the country’s incredible journey to international acclaim

6 Austria’s new age
Appellations are not popular everywhere, but Austrian winemakers are embracing their new DACs. Sarah Jane Evans MW investigates

12 National treasure
Traditional Ausbruch is on the wane but many producers are making their own style of Austria’s favourite sweet wine, says Stephen Brook

14 White knights
Join Darrel Joseph to discover the best Austrian whites on offer outside of the DACs

16 Shining through
Is it time for Austrian reds to step into the limelight? Darrel Joseph lines up some non-DAC contenders

18 Expert’s choice
Top sommelier Jan Konetzki rats out his personal favourites from Austria’s cellar

20 A fresh approach
The versatility of Austrian wines makes it a perfect match for Asian cuisine, says Ch’ng Poh Tiong

24 Vibrant Vienna
It’s always a good time to visit Austria’s bustling capital city. Jason Turner provides the lowdown

Cover photograph: Gabriele Croppi/SIME/4Corners Images.
Surveying the landscape near the winemaking town of Rust in Burgenland

Highlight area
What’s new in Austria
The latest news from the Austrian wine industry, compiled by Darrel Joseph

Neusiedlersee becomes latest DAC

This Burgenland region’s decision to implement the Austrian DAC system brings the total number of appellations to eight – the country’s eighth DAC wine-growing area has become Austria’s Neusiedlersee Districtus Austriae. The young, fresh, ‘And the tannins are velvety soft. These black and brown earth, and sandy sediments – give a full, ripe cherry-fruit expression to Pannonian air from the west, the plentiful warm influence from the lake and the complementary air from the east – give a high, pure floral and varietal character to the wine.’

Austria is continuing to expand its role as one of the world’s leading centres of wine education. On 28 June, a week-long Fine Wine Academy, Dr Josef Schuller MW, organised by the head of the Austrian Wine Academy offers specialist course for connoisseurs

Austrian wine Academy offers specialist course for connoisseurs

Austria continues to expand its role as one of the world’s leading centres of wine education. On 28 June, a week-long Fine Wine Specialist course for wine collectors, sommeliers and aficionados from across the globe will be held at Vienna’s Palais Coburg (pictured below), which houses one of the finest wine collections in Europe. The course is being organised by the head of the Austrian Wine Academy, Dr Josef Schuller MW, and Palais Coburg representative Frank Smulders MW. It will offer an in-depth exploration of how the world’s finest wines are made, aged and handled.

This course is the latest offering from the world’s leading wine education provider, with courses on offer from its headquarters in London, international wine and spirit education trust (WSET), and the Institute of Masters of Wine. Since the Austrian Wine Academy was founded in 1991, it has become one of Europe’s largest wine schools and has established close affiliations with major wine education bodies, including the WSET (Wine and Spirit Education Trust) and the Institute of Masters of Wine. International MW candidates can take their first-year European residency seminar in Austria, and the programmes are conducted in English.

Dr Schuller stated: “The education here gives validity to the world-class wine we make, and the wine gives validity to our world-class education.”

2011: winemakers report excellent quality and generous crop

Following two challenging, low-yield years, Austria’s 2011 vintage is stirring up great fervour – not only for its fine-quality crop, but also for its large quantity.

From Wachau to Neusiedlersee to Styria, 2011 delivered a vintage that has, despite some isolated but difficult weather conditions (sporadic frost, hail and dryness) proven excellent overall. Thanks to a hot, late summer that followed into a long, sunny autumn, there were plenty of healthy, fully ripened grapes on the vines. Altogether, approximately 2.8 million hectolitres of wine was extracted from Austria’s vineyards last year, up from 1.7 million in 2010 and 2.3 million in 2009.

‘In Wachau, the 2011s are showing opulent, round and juicy fruit, with lots of concentration,’ said Emmerich Knoll, a producer of fine, dry Grüner Veltliner and Riesling from terraced, single vineyards.

Red wines fared particularly well thanks to the ideal autumn weather. ‘2011 is one of the best red vintages, with ripe tannins and more structure,’ said winemaker Gerhard Markwitsch from Carnuntum, who specialises in Zweigelt and Pinot Noir, among other varieties. ‘From the end of August until well into September, it was sunny and warm, and the grapes ripened in balance – no overripeness.’

Some of the most prominent winemakers from Neusiedlersee are planning to produce a DAC wine, including the members of the well-known Pannonische association.

Austria’s other DAC appellations are in order of their formation: Weinviertel, Mittelburgenland, Traisental, Kremstal, Kamptal, Leithaberg and Eisenberg.

Grapes for sweet wines, especially in vineyards close to Lake Neusiedl – the Neusiedlersee – had a tougher time, however. This long, dry autumn did not allow much botrytis, or Noble rot, to develop, which means that Beerenauslese (BA) and Trockenbeerenauslese (TBA) wines will be in limited supply.

‘Winemakers needed strong nerves, and those who waited were able to pick good grapes into 2012,’ said winemaker Willi Opitz. ‘We managed to get some excellent Gewürztraminer and Muskat Ottonel for ice wine at the end of January.’

Austria’s Neusiedlersee wine-growing area has become the country’s eighth DAC (Districtus Austriae Controllatus, see p6) appellation – a move that establishes a clear identity for the region’s wine for the first time. Comprising 7,615 hectares (ha) of vineyard, Neusiedlersee is part of the Burgenland wine region and is home to a wide range of premium red, white and sweet wines. With the new appellation status, however, the focus of a Neusiedlersee DAC wine is the red Zweigelt grape – the most widely planted variety in the region and is home to a wide range of the country’s vineyards. Some 1,812 hectares are planted with this variety, making it the most widely planted in Austria – the most widely planted variety in the region’s wine for the first time.

Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB) has relaunched its website, www.austrianwine.com, which now is the world’s most comprehensive information base on Austrian wine.

Built around the AWMB’s theme, “Taste Culture”, and the Austrian wine logo, which replicates the red-and-white national flag emblem featured on all quality Austrian wine bottles, the website provides consumers and professionals alike with the finer points on virtually everything there is to know about Austrian wine.

Background information and statistics can be found on Austria’s four main wine regions, 16 wine-growing areas, eight DAC appellations, and 35 classified grape varieties. Austrian winemakers are listed, along with their importers in more than 50 countries, and details are given of the latest Austrian wine tastings and events across the world. Anyone wanting to know about the country’s approach to sustainable wine-growing, or the best food pairings for Austrian wine, will also find what they need.

‘Our website isn’t full of pop-ups and razzle dazzle,’ said Suzanne Stagg, marketing manager for the AWMB. ‘It is, however, clear, down to earth and comprehensive. It’s also in five languages – English and German, of course, plus Russian, Japanese and Chinese – especially important since Austrian wine is really taking off in those countries.

For those who may be intimidated by some of the German-language terminology around Austrian wines, there is an extensive wine glossary, as well as a section called “WineRap” – audio recordings of pronunciations of all terms, including translations and explanations.

AUS_p002-03 what’s new   2

Photographs: Simeone Giovanni/SIME-4Corners Images; Vario Images GmbH & Co.KG/Alamy; Toni Anzenberger

The latest news from the Austrian wine industry, compiled by Darrel Joseph

AUS_p002-03 what’s new   3

The Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB) has relaunched its website, www.austrianwine.com, which now is the world’s most comprehensive information base on Austrian wine.

Built around the AWMB’s theme, “Taste Culture”, and the Austrian wine logo, which replicates the red-and-white national flag emblem featured on all quality Austrian wine bottles, the website provides consumers and professionals alike with the finer points on virtually everything there is to know about Austrian wine.

Background information and statistics can be found on Austria’s four main wine regions, 16 wine-growing areas, eight DAC appellations, and 35 classified grape varieties. Austrian winemakers are listed, along with their importers in more than 50 countries, and details are given of the latest Austrian wine tastings and events across the world. Anyone wanting to know about the country’s approach to sustainable wine-growing, or the best food pairings for Austrian wine, will also find what they need.

‘Our website isn’t full of pop-ups and razzle dazzle,’ said Suzanne Stagg, marketing manager for the AWMB. ‘It is, however, clear, down to earth and comprehensive. It’s also in five languages – English and German, of course, plus Russian, Japanese and Chinese – especially important since Austrian wine is really taking off in those countries.

For those who may be intimidated by some of the German-language terminology around Austrian wines, there is an extensive wine glossary, as well as a section called “WineRap” – audio recordings of pronunciations of all terms, including translations and explanations.
When the Austrian wine industry set out to conquer export markets in the mid-1980s, its image was at rock bottom. Amy Wislocki charts its incredible journey.

Very article about Austrian wine begins with the scandal in 1985, says Willi Klinger, head of the Austrian Wine Marketing Board. ‘But we don’t mind – after all, it makes a great story, a real “phoenix from the ashes”’. Indeed it does. With the reputation of the country’s wine industry in tatters after certain wines were found to have been doctored with the chemical commonly known as antifreeze, producers had to rebuild consumer confidence from the ground up – hence the formation of the Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB) a year later.

Fast forward a quarter century to today, and Austrian wine is the darling of sommeliers worldwide, on wine lists in many of the world’s top restaurants. 2011 saw exports of quality wine reach an all-time high, and a new audience is discovering the appeal of wines that can offer local character and cool-climate elegance.

In a sense, the scandal helped to turn the wine industry around, says Giles MacDonogh, Decanter World Wine Awards Regional Chair for Austria. ‘It brought such opprobrium on Austria that many of the older generation of winemakers retired or resigned, and handed control to their sons. They were in their 20s or 30s at the time, and are still only in their 40s or 50s today.’

New confidence

This new generation, aided by EU subsidies which flooded in significantly in the early 2000s, brought new techniques into the vineyards and wineyard, and so helped transform not just the wines – but the image of the wines. This new pride is reflected in the striking architecture that can now be found across Austrian wine regions, such as in Kamptal at the Loimer winery and the Loisium hotel and restaurant, and at the Hillinger estate in Burgenland.

That family structure remains today, with Austria one of the few countries without any industrialised element to its wine industry. In the past, bulk wine and juice had accounted for a large proportion of exports, but slowly and surely, smaller, quality producers gained momentum and mass production decreased. There was also a shift to sustainable andorganic winemaking methods; 9% of vineyards today are organic, against 3% 15 years ago. A further 7% are farmed sustainably, a sign of the growing awareness that good fruit is a prerequisite for good wine.

International acclaim

Turning around the image of a country’s wines doesn’t happen overnight. The wines were getting better and better, but as Willi Klinger says, ‘it was an ongoing process of resurrection and progress’. And slow but sure doesn’t make a good headline.

If Austria’s new wines were to make an impact beyond its own borders, they had to win the hearts and minds of the international wine critics, sommeliers and merchants, who could spread the word to consumers globally. Luckily for Austria, both the reds and the whites have captivated the trade and media, with shock results at high profile tastings helping to spread awareness.

The reputation of its red wines was given a shot in the arm when the German-Swiss magazine Vinum awarded 18/20 points to a 1986 red from Rust in Burgenland, Ernst Triebauer’s Blaufrankisch Mariental. This was, in effect, ‘Every change in system takes a while to bed down,’ says Klinger, but everyone agrees that origin and representative wine styles are the way forward in educating consumers. Although there will obviously be some complexity – after all, there are 44,000 hectares of vineyard in Austria and we’re not selling a single product, like Coca-Cola – we intend to keep it as streamlined as possible, with a maximum of 16 DACs. ‘They are a great tool, helping consumers buy something predictable.’

By now its success so far, Klinger is optimistic that Austrian wines is still on an upward trajectory. ‘We have a wine style that people today love – fresh and cool-climate but with some body too. There’s a great interest at the moment in terroir, authenticity and local grapes, and we’re lucky enough to have all three.’

Landmarks in Austrian wine

1986 Foundation of the Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB). New Austrian Wine Law introduces, among other things, distinctive red and white capsules and quality analysis of wines. Austria joins the EU, and starts to benefit from EU subsidies.

1991 Foundation of the Austrian Wine Academy. First DAC (Weinviertel DAC) introduced.

1995 Austrian Wine Law introduces Regional Committees, to develop typical regional styles, and implements the legal basis for the introduction of DAC.

1998 Sommelier World Championship in Vienna, won by German Markus del Monoag MW (pictured), First ViVinum trade show in Vienna.

2002 London Tasting (see above), Master of Wine Symposium in Vienna.

2003 First DAC (Weinviertel DAC) introduced.

2009 Incredible red wine vintage.


2011 Exports reach their highest ever value.

Austrian first red icon wine and helped to show that the country was capable of competing on the international stage with its reds. At the time, red wine grapes accounted for just 15% of vineyard plantings – that has doubled. ‘Producer used to think that Cabernet and Merlot aged in barrique, would make their name,’ recalls Klinger. ‘But the route to success has turned out to be the native grapes – St Laurent, Blaufränkisch and Zweigelt.’

MacDonogh also points to the rise of Pinot Noir: ‘It’s probably the most exciting red grape for me in Austria right now, in terms of potential’. Austrian Pinot also showed well in a blind tasting in 2010 in Singapore, where examples trumped several famous red Burgenludes.

Another critic won over by the country’s reds was Jancis Robinson MW, with her highest acclaim reserved for Blaufränkisch. ‘It is the grape most likely to put Austrian reds on the map’, she wrote in UK broadsheet the Financial Times, praising its “fashionable medium rather than full body, refreshing aroma and ability to transmit subtle differences in terroir”.

The whites also hit the headlines in 2002, when at a blind tasting organised in London by fine wine dealer and collector Jan-Erik Paulson and hosted by Jancis Robinson MW and Tim Atkin MW, Austria’s Grüner Veltliner and Chardonnays were picked against top white Burgundies. Seven of the 10 top places at the tasting were taken by Austrian wines, with highest rankings awarded to a 1990 smaragd (full-bodied) Grüner Veltliner made by Knoll in the Wachau.

On trend

Ten years later and Grüner Veltliner, more than any other grape, has helped to keep Austria in the headlines. ‘It has become one of the great international grape varieties,’ says Klinger, ‘with producers in New Zealand, the US and even Austria planting it.’ Both Klinger and MacDonogh point out that the London tasting only highlighted the smaragd, or ‘reserve’ style. Since then, the lighter styles have also become very well established, promoted by sommeliers and retailers as versatile and characterful wines ideal for food matching (see pg20).

At the end of the day, it’s about getting glasses of Austrian wine in ‘normal’ people’s hands,” says Klinger. New marketing campaigns and the new DACs (see pg6) will help, along with a focus on education which has seen the Austrian Wine Academy hand out more WSET diplomas in continental Europe than any other wine school.

‘Every change in system takes a while to bed down’, recognises Klinger, ‘but everyone agrees that origin and representative wine styles are the way forward in educating consumers. Although there will obviously be some complexity – after all, there are 44,000 hectares of vineyard in Austria and we’re not selling a single product, like Coca-Cola – we intend to keep it as streamlined as possible, with a maximum of 16 DACs. They are a great tool, helping consumers buy something predictable.’

By now its success so far, Klinger is optimistic that Austrian wines is still on an upward trajectory. ‘We have a wine style that people today love – fresh and cool-climate but with some body too. There’s a great interest at the moment in terroir, authenticity and local grapes, and we’re lucky enough to have all three.’
Austria’s new age

Many European producers are increasingly pulling away from the rules imposed by appellations, yet Austria is embracing a growing number of DACs. Sarah Jane Evans MW finds out why.

At a time when many of Europe’s winemakers are breaking free of the straitjacket of appellation rules, who would think it was a good idea to introduce them? When the ‘SuperTuscans’, among others, have proved that it’s possible to enjoy a fine reputation outside the system, which country would want to set one up? The answer is Austria. In 2003, it introduced its first DAC (the Austrian version of AC and DOC) and, in the decade since then, it has created seven further DACs, with plans to double that number.

Why start now, when the significant producers in Europe started creating appellations more than 70 years ago? The reason for doing it is much the same: to protect the origin and guarantee a standard of quality for the wine. It’s helpful to start with a little history. There were two triggers to action. The first was in 1985, when it was revealed that certain wines had been adulterated with diethylene glycol. This ‘antifreeze’ scandal forced Austria’s wine industry to take rapid steps to renew itself, and part of this recovery resulted in lessening the focus on regionality, including removing town names.

So this more recent desire to create DACs, and to emphasise terroir and typicity, was an inevitable reaction. The second trigger was the realisation that...
Austria needed to take action to defend the origin of its wines. Christian Zeichmeister, marketing director for Burgenland wines, remembers, ‘cheap Grüner Veltlinsers being sold in supermarkets, made from Hungarian grapes’. Though not labelled as Austrian, many consumers would automatically associate Grüner with Austria.

The first step was to guarantee the national identity – hence the red-and-white capsule bottle top ( pictured opposite). The appellation was the second step in building defences. It was perhaps unfortunate that there was initially just one DAC region, Weinviertel, the large zone of Grüner Veltliner production north-west of Vienna. Until the Mittelburgenland DAC was created three years later, the concept of DAC was somehow misunderstood by many. Another difficulty was that the Weinviertel wines back then didn’t measure up in quality against the Grüners of other regions further west along the Danube. Vienna-based wine consultant Jason Turner puts it kindly when he says: ‘The DAC was probably the best thing to happen to Weinviertel’ – it increased the reputation, quality and consistency of style of the wines.

There was an added complication, though. At the outset, many producers chose not to show the grape variety on the label. Consumers were just supposed to know that Weinviertel DAC meant Grüner Veltliner. The requirement has, sensibly, now been relaxed. When international consumers are doing such good marketing for ‘Grooner’ and ‘Groovy’ wines, surely it is better to join them rather than insist on imposing ‘Weinviertel’.

Looking back on the decade since DACs were first introduced, the director of the Austrian Wine Marketing Board, Will Klinger, reflects that there was another way the situation could have been handled. With his tongue not entirely in his cheek, he says: ‘If I was Napoleon, I would have implemented the DACs at all once.

Then we could have twiddled the dials later to reflect developments in knowledge and changes in climate.’ Klinger, surely Europe’s most dynamic generic wine marketer, formerly worked for Angelo Gaja, that other wine-marketing star. He was able to observe the confusion of multiple DOCs and DOCGs in Italy, and is determined that Austria will follow a simpler path, with no more than 16 DACs.

Members of the newer DACs also have time to learn from their country’s early mistakes. Biochemist Silvia Prieler is one of the founders of Leithaberg DAC, which permits a number of varieties. She supports the DAC concept for democratic reasons. While Austria is famous for its number of top-quality growers and single vineyards, she believes that in the long term ‘our region must be famous, not just the winemaker’. Her colleague, Erwin Tinhof, adds that for smaller, lesser-known producers, another plus is that they receive advice on pricing DAC wines –

Above: Silvia Prieler, pictured here with her brother Georg, is one of the founders of Leithaberg DAC.

Left: Fred Loimer is one of the leading wine-industry figures in Kamptal and an active participant in DAC issues

encouraging the inexperienced grower to be ambitious. Over in Krems, in the city-centre winery of Stadt Kremstal, Franz Josef Gansbeger isn’t afraid to say he is a ‘fan’ of DACs. ‘Nobody used to put Krems on the front label, but now we’re there – between the big guns of Wachau and Kamptal’. Zeichmeister adds: ‘In the medium and long term, the DAC will be important internationally. For instance, sommeliers in the USA need to be able to tell a story about the wine and this way they can say, “this is a typical wine from this appellation”’. Zeichmeister’s remit at Burgenland is strongly focused on reds. Of the four DACs, there are for red varieties only. Blaualfrinsch features in all three; each clearly enables him to tell a different story of terroir and style. Eisenberg DAC, for instance, lies next to Mittelburgenland DAC, but the iron-rich soils of the Eisenberg (‘Iron mountain’) after which the district is named lend a mineral purity.

Despite his enthusiasm, the system has its critics. Take UK wine merchant Neil Young, who represents Fritz Wieninger, Kurt Angerer and the Kracher estate. He is blunt: ‘It may work in Austria, but turning Kamptal into Kamptal DAC does not make any difference in the UK.’ He also articulates the global concern about using tasting panels to enforce typicity: ‘Who is going to dictate a style? I don’t think that one way is the only way.’ Klinger is alert to the problems of regulations and inward-looking tasting panels. He uses Chablis as a reference: ‘Every Master of Wine student should be able to spot it in a blind tasting, but we celebrate the fact that some wines are fermented in stainless steel, others in oak, and we love the diversity.’

One of the leading figures in Kamptal, Fred Loimer, is actively involved in DAC issues, and one of his solutions for the tasting panels is to have more retasting of wines which fail first time or divide opinion. Yet he recognises that every system has rules which can trap even the best.

The DAC was probably the best thing to happen to the Weinviertel region.

Jason Turner

The DAC in a nutshell

What is DAC? Austria’s version of the appellation system, the equivalent of France’s AC/MPF. DAC stands for the Latin, Distinctus Austriae Controllatus.

How many DACs are there? Currently eight (see p13). There is the potential to grow the number to 16, but the intention is to keep the total eventual number no higher.

Are there any new DACs coming soon? A new DAC has, in fact, just been announced – Neusiedlsee (see ‘What’s New in Austria’, p2) – which includes the group of renowned red wine producers known as Pannonie. This DAC focuses on Zweigelt; 85% minimum for the classic (younger) wine, a minimum 60% blend for the reserve. There are no specific plans for further DACs, but Thermenregion and the Gemischter Satz wines of Vienna would be logical choices.

When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner. When did DACs start? In 2003, with Weinviertel, northwest of Vienna. This DAC is for Grüner Veltliner. If you buy Weinviertel DAC wine, you’re buying Grüner.

Does every grower make DAC wines? There are many wines made in Austria that fail outside the DAC geographical areas. There are also a number of top-quality growers working inside a DAC area who choose not to use the labels.

What if a producer wants to use a different variety from the ones allowed in the DAC? An Eisenberg, Mittelburgenland, Neusiedlersee or Leithaberg DAC producer would label the wine as Burgenland, a wine from Kamptal, Krems, Traisental or Weinviertel would still qualify as quality wine, but would take the more generic Niederösterreich label.

What about the sweet wines? All DAC wines are dry, under 6g/l residual sugar for the classic Weinviertel style, and up to 9g/l for reserve wines. There is a case for creating a DAC for the western part of Lake Neusiedl, for the Ruster Ausbruch wines, and another for the eastern part, around Ilmitz.

What is the benefit for the consumer? The DAC label guarantees a certain typicity from a specific region. The classic wines are fruit-driven and medium-bodied in style. The reserve wines are more full-bodied, with potential for ageing.

What is the benefit for the producers? In established regions, where individual producers are already known, it’s less important. Whereas for Eisenberg, which became a red-wine DAC in 2010, the difference was enormous. Many producers, especially of Blaualfrinsch, which has no international profile, see DAC as a shortcut to quality recognition.

Does every grower make DAC wines? There are many wines made in Austria that fail outside the DAC geographical areas. There are also a number of top-quality growers working inside a DAC area who choose not to use the labels.

What if a producer wants to use a different variety from the ones allowed in the DAC? An Eisenberg, Mittelburgenland, Neusiedlersee or Leithaberg DAC producer would label the wine as Burgenland, a wine from Kamptal, Krems, Traisental or Weinviertel would still qualify as quality wine, but would take the more generic Niederösterreich label.

What about the sweet wines? All DAC wines are dry, under 6g/l residual sugar for the classic Weinviertel style, and up to 9g/l for reserve wines. There is a case for creating a DAC for the western part of Lake Neusiedl, for the Ruster Ausbruch wines, and another for the eastern part, around Ilmitz.

What is the benefit for the consumer? The DAC label guarantees a certain typicity from a specific region. The classic wines are fruit-driven and medium-bodied in style. The reserve wines are more full-bodied, with potential for ageing.

What is the benefit for the producers? In established regions, where individual producers are already known, it’s less important. Whereas for Eisenberg, which became a red-wine DAC in 2010, the difference was enormous. Many producers, especially of Blaualfrinsch, which has no international profile, see DAC as a shortcut to quality recognition.
Austria’s most widely planted grape varieties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top six whites</th>
<th>Planted</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grüner Veltliner</td>
<td>13,514ha</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weißriesling</td>
<td>3,597ha</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Müller Thurgau</td>
<td>2,102ha</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weissburgunder</td>
<td>1,995ha</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riesling</td>
<td>1,863ha</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chardonnay</td>
<td>1,431ha</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top six reds</th>
<th>Planted</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zweigelt</td>
<td>6,412ha</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blauträubich</td>
<td>5,228ha</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blauer Portugieser</td>
<td>1,621ha</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaufränkisch</td>
<td>897ha</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Laurent</td>
<td>775ha</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinot Noir</td>
<td>646ha</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘In 25 years’ time, our children will order a Leithaberg DAC in the same way that we order a Brunello now’
Erwin Tinhof

His colleague, biodynamic producer Hannes Hirsch, the Falstaff Guide’s 2011 Winemaker of the Year, has a powerful Riesling with 9.5g/l residual sugar (0.5g/l above the permitted level for reserve wines). In many circumstances, 9.5g/l would taste sweet, but the level of acidity is so high in this wine that the overall effect is dry. Rules are rules, though, and this exceptional wine from a single vineyard doesn’t qualify for the DAC.

For the same reason, a top producer from, say, Kamptal who makes an exceptional sweet wine, such as an Eiswein or a Trockenbeerenauslese, can’t put DAC on the label – Kamptal DAC is for dry wines only, as this is what the region is famous for, and the DAC system is all about typicity. Instead the producer would have to rely on its own reputation to sell the wine.

A further issue for growers is that the DAC defines release dates, and growers believe this fuels consumer desire for the newest vintage. As Traisental’s Markus Huber observes: ‘Single-vineyard wines aren’t made to order a Brunello now.’

Naturally it will take time before a DAC wine is ordered last year’s vintage once the new vintage is out.’

In elegant, spicy wines. Reds must be aged in oak and in bottle for a minimum of two years before release.

Launching from 2005 vintage
Eisenberg DAC (498ha)
Blauträubich
For red wines only. While Mittelburgenland’s Blauträubich is spicy, round, and full-bodied, Eisenberg’s is structured and mineral, with more precise fruit. The reserve has depth from oak ageing. DAC classic from 2009 vintage, DAC reserve from 2008.

…and beyond
Niederösterreich (non DAC)
Wachau (1,350ha)
Wachau introduced its own quality categories for dry wines in the 1980s: Steinfeder (light), Federspiel (classic) and Smaragd (full, powerful), with the focus on Grüner Veltliner and Riesling.

Wagram (245ha)
Formerly known as Donauland, it focuses on Grüner Veltliner and Roter Veltliner.

Carnuntum (930ha)
Focuses on red grapes, Zweigelt and Blauträubich.

Thermenregion (2,196ha)
Produces whites in the north (Zierfandler, Rotgipfler) and reds in the south (St Laurent, Pinot Noir).

Steiermark (4,240ha) (non DAC)
Subject to sub-region, it focuses on Morillon (Chardonnay), Schilcher, Weissburgunder, Sauvignon Blanc and Muskateller.

Vienna (612ha) (non DAC)
Whites and reds. Wiener Gemischter Satz, meaning ‘field blend’ or ‘mixed planting’, is Vienna’s traditional white and is a blend of several varieties.

Above: Traisental’s Markus Huber grows 50% of the region’s Riesling
Left: Kamptal DAC is home to many renowned producers and single vineyards

The eight DACs... (Niederösterreich)

Kremstal DAC (2,243ha)
Grüner Veltliner, Riesling
Moving from west to east, primary rock gives way to loess (wind-blown soil). The former makes for intense, mineral wines, while the latter is ideal for opulent Grüners. DAC Reserve permits subtle botrytis and oak influences.

Launching from 2007 vintage
Kamptal DAC (3,802ha)
Grüner Veltliner, Riesling
There are so many renowned producers and single vineyards here, they hardly need a DAC to market them. Soils are mixed – from loess and gravel to volcanic, most famously Heiligenstein. DAC Reserve permits subtle botrytis and oak influences.

Launching from 2008 vintage
Traisental DAC (790ha)
Grüner Veltliner, Riesling
The chalk and gravel terraces of Traisental give a distinctly structured character, with brisk acidity, to the wines. Made for long ageing, no botrytis or oak influences are permitted.

Launching from 2006 vintage
Weinviertel DAC (13,356ha)
Grüner Veltliner
Austria’s first DAC. An extensive region with varied soils. In general, the Grüners are rounded, with peach fruit, and white and green pepper notes. Reserve styles are full-bodied and ripe, some with oak influence.

Launching from 2003 vintage

(Burgenland)
Neusiedlersee DAC (7,615ha)
Zweigelt, Blauträubich, St Laurent, Pinot Noir
The newest DAC, for reds only, grown on varied soils. Wines have red cherry notes with silky tannins. Two styles are made: young and fresh, or fuller and deeper.

Launching from 2011 vintage
Leithaberg DAC (3,576ha)
Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc), Chardonnay, Nauburger (Roter Veltliner x Sylvaner), Grüner Veltliner
Red: Blauträubich
Terroir profile of primary rock, chalk and limestone results in elegant, spicy wines. Reds must be aged in oak and released a minimum of two years after harvest.

Launching with reds from 2008 vintage, whites from 2009

Mittelburgenland DAC (2,117ha)
Blauträubich
For red wines only. DAC wines are bright and juicy, with red cherry fruit and spicy notes when young, grown on deep loamy soils. Reserve wines are bigger styles, often with oak influence.

Launching from 2005 vintage

Eisenberg DAC (498ha)
Blauträubich
For red wines only. While Mittelburgenland’s Blauträubich is spicy, round, and full-bodied, Eisenberg’s is structured and mineral, with more precise fruit. The reserve has depth from oak ageing. DAC classic from 2009 vintage, DAC reserve from 2008.
Ausbruch is a traditional style of Austrian sweet wine that producers have specialised in the production of Ausbruch wines since the mid-17th century. A variety cultivated back in Hungarian times, for Ausbruch wines. Both single-varietal and multi-varietal Ausbruchs are made. Traditional Ausbruch, however, is on the wane. Just as in Sauternes, the wines have been getting sweeter and sweeter – 20 years ago, 90g residual sugar would have been the norm, whereas today it is more likely to be 130g or 150g. There is a perception in Rust that powerful, dense, moderately sweet Ausbruch won’t find favour with modern consumers, who are thought to prefer the raciness of a BA or TBA. Moreover, TBA-style Ausbruchs have always been made – a 1973 Wolfschilzing Ausbruch from Schandl has 100g residual sugar. Some growers use the term ‘Essenz’ to indicate an intensely sweet style. A lightly oxidative tone used to be considered appropriate for Ausbruch, as it is for Tokaji, and not everyone finds that tone acceptable or attractive. The consequence is that many wines from Rust, even though labelled as Ausbruch, are hard to distinguish from BAs and TBAs from the other side of the lake. There’s no obligation to make Ausbruch in an oxidative style, and it was always considered a legitimate approach, even if it has now fallen from fashion somewhat. 

Heidi Schröck believes there is a discernible difference. “Our grapes for Ausbruch are grown on loamy sand with limestone and schist, and you can always taste the mineral character and saltiness. Maybe that’s the main difference compared to the sweet wines on the eastern side of the lake. Those wines tend to have more explosive tropical fruit flavours, as the grapes usually ripen considerably earlier.” Herbert Triebauer, of the Ernst Triebauer estate, agrees wholeheartedly: “You can still recognise Ausbruch, as it has a firmer character than a typical TBA.”

Above: Ausbruch wines can be cellared and preserved for a very long time due to a high natural acidity and sugar content.

National treasure

Ausbruch is a traditional style of Austrian sweet wine that producers have changed and adapted over the years. Stephen Brook journeys to Rust on Lake Neusiedl to find out more about the modern approach.
News of the new Austrian appellations might be grabbing all the headlines, but Darrel Joseph travels further afield to find some unclassified white wonders.

While the DAC appellation system continues to wind its way through Austria’s wine districts, there are still a number of regions that have not yet adopted one. Some winemakers are getting closer to the implementation stage; others are still carefully weighing up the pros and cons of a DAC.

Outside this debate, there are, of course, many wonderful wines coming from non-DAC vineyards that should not be missed. In fact, some of them are already world-renowned—particularly, the dry Grüner Veltliner and Rieslings from Wachau.

This small, but outstandingly beautiful, region in the state of Niederösterreich (Lower Austria) is planted with just 1,350 hectares of vineyards, some 75km west of Vienna. Its Grüner Veltliner and Riesling vineyard sites—such as Achleiten, Schütt, Kallenberg, Loibenberg, Honigögg, Singerriedel and Klaus—have been capturing the palates of the world’s top restaurateurs, sommeliers and wine lovers for several years.

What makes Wachau wines so exceptional is the perfect confluence of terrain, microclimates and talented winemakers. Woven into the steep hillsides overlooking the Danube, in soils of granite, gneiss and slate, are ancient stone terraces yielding mineral-rich Rieslings and mineral-and-spice Grüner Veltliners.

Whether you’re looking for young and light or full-bodied and aged, there are other varieties to seek out in Wachau. Some of the more unconventional grapes, such as Achleiten, Schütt, Kallenberg, Loibenberg, Honigögg, Singerriedel and Klaus—have been capturing the palates of the world’s top restaurateurs, sommeliers and wine lovers for several years.

In the specific wine-growing area of Südsteiermark, or Southern Styria, it is vintified to world-class greatness. That may be a hefty claim but, considering the growing conditions, it’s easy to see why. The vineyards are dramatically poised on hyper-steep slopes that soar some 600 metres and dip across the southern-most part of the country. Nutrients from the array of slate, limestone and sandstone soils, enhanced by the Mediterranean air, push the vines to produce a panoply of dry, aromatic wines: zippy, ready-to-drink ‘juniper;’ the medium-bodied ‘classic;’ and, most impressively, the deep, thrumming, mineral-rich wines from single vineyards such as Nussberg, Hochgrazamit, Cazimolberg, Obogg, Kranicheburg, Zieregg and Steinriegel.

The beautiful thing about single-vineyard wines is that the grape variety steps back in favour of the terroir,” says winemaker Gerhard Wohlmuth Jr from Knoll.

Microsoft Word Document Senator

**Joseph’s top six non-DAC whites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Wieninger, Nussberg Gemischter Satz Alte Reben, Wien 2010</strong></th>
<th>£20.95</th>
<th>Noël Young</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Wohlmuth, Edelschuh Elite Sauvignon Blanc, Südsteiermark 2009</strong></th>
<th>£28.85</th>
<th>Lay &amp; Wheeler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is a typical dry, fruit-driven wine with good structure and acidity.</td>
<td>Drink: 2012–2022. Alc: 12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|---|---|---|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Noel Young</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For UK stockist details, see p15 of the main issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Knoll, Niede Lobenstein Riesling Smaragd, Wachau 2010**

£31.57

Lay & Wheeler

An understatement of what’s yet to come. Whiffs of exotic peach, smoky minerality and lemon bavouyon. Sophisticated palate, with juicy minerality, vibrant acidity and a gentle spiciness. Still evolving!

Drink: 2013–2025. Alcohol: 13%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Thermenregion</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The region is passionate about its wines and their unique qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Above: Gerhard Wohlmuth Jr of Weingut Wohlmuth</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**World-class Sauvignon**

Although Sauvignon Blanc is not abundant in Austria, it is very much at home in Styria—the Steiermark. And in the southernmost part of the country, behind the famous lake in Graz, the Sauvignon Blanc is particularly well suited to the local conditions. The wines are delicate, with a herbaceous, citrus and fruity character. They are perfect for drinking young, with a wide variety of dishes, especially seafood. A great alternative to the more popular Chardonnay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Leth, Roter Veltliner Schleben, Wagram 2011</strong></th>
<th>£17.50</th>
<th>Lay &amp; Wheeler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High acidity, with a nutty finish. Of course, getting to this point isn’t always so simple.</td>
<td>Drink: 2012–2016. Alc: 14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wachau is very much at home in Welschriesling and Traminer. Whether you’re looking for young and light or full-bodied and aged, there are other varieties to seek out in Wachau. Some of the more unconventional grapes, such as Achleiten, Schütt, Kallenberg, Loibenberg, Honigögg, Singerriedel and Klaus—have been capturing the palates of the world’s top restaurateurs, sommeliers and wine lovers for several years.

| Above: Roter Veltliner is a challenging grape. | |

**White knights**

In the DAC appellation system continues to wind its way through Austria’s wine districts, there are still a number of regions that have not yet adopted one. Some winemakers are getting closer to the implementation stage; others are still carefully weighing up the pros and cons of a DAC.

While the DAC appellation system continues to wind its way through Austria’s wine districts, there are still a number of regions that have not yet adopted one. Some winemakers are getting closer to the implementation stage; others are still carefully weighing up the pros and cons of a DAC.
Austrain reds are on the up. The recent announcement that the Neusiedlersee region now has DAC status (see p12) brings the number of red-wine-only appellations to three, and that’s only half of the story. The fine-tuning of vineyards and winemaking prowess across the country has led to a whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover.

Non-DAC gems are particularly rife in the up-and-coming regions: work-in-progress territories that have otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. A whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to enchant today’s wine lover. Whole range of refined reds being produced, DAC and otherwise, to ent...
Best-value buys

Grüner Veltliner and Riesling may have been the grapes that first introduced Austrian wine to the world, but there’s a plethora of styles to tempt the tastebuds these days.

No more than a couple of years ago, thinking about Austrian wine brought only the flagship varietal wines made from Grüner Veltliner and Riesling to mind. Grüner Veltliner’s unique flavour profile accords in a range of different styles. The fruit-driven, spicy, tell-tale peppery flavours – without new oak – manage to fill a gap somewhere between the wines of Alsace and Burgundy. Grüner Veltliner is particularly useful as it provides a great match for many foods. Riesling, meanwhile, keeps its racy spirit in Austria.

For UK stockist details, see p135 in the main issue.

Jan Konetzki is head sommelier at Restaurant Gordon Ramsay in London.

And even if some of the wines have reached premium price levels, you can still find good value. Since these two standard-bearers have whetted the appetite for Austrian wine, other grapes and styles have started to appear in the marketplace, steadily climbing up in sommeliers’ estimations. Some are made from lesser-known varieties and many are single-vineyard wines. The diversity is exciting for wine lovers who are looking for new discoveries. Only time will tell if the international market is ready for these wines, or whether diversity will bring confusion. Personally, I’m full of excitement for the new niche wines of Austria.

If I were to look for my preferred adrenalin kicks, I would perhaps plump for a crunchy Blaufränkisch, a biodynamic white blend or one of the lesser-famed varietal wines, such as Rotgipfler. Don’t say goodbye to Grüner Veltliner and Riesling, though – just make space in your wine rack for a few more thrilling bottles sporting an Austrian flag on the capsule.

White

Bernhard Ott, Am Berg Grüner Veltliner, Niederösterreich 2011 ******* 19pts/20

£16.04 savvyselection


Gut Oggau, Theodora, Burgenland 2009 ******* 19

£17 (2011) Dynamic Vines


Sepp Moser, Breiter Rain Grüner Veltliner, Kremstal DAC 2010 ******* 18.5

£18–£19 macnab.co.uk, Cambridge Wine Merchants, 0 Byrne & Co, Good Glass of Wine, Slurp


Johanneshof Reinsch, Rotgipfler, Thermenregion 2010 ******* 18

£12.70 Astrum


Schloss Gobelsburg, Gaisberg Riesling, Kamptal DAC 2009 ******* 18

£19–£20 Clark Foyester, Slurp

Aromas of lemon peel, green peaches and elderflower. This is one of those wines with a little residual sugar to balance the racy acidity. Just to taste it makes me smile. Drink: 2012–2017. Alc: 13%.

Tement, Klassik Sauvignon Blanc, Steiermark 2010 ******* 18

N/A UK www.tement.at


Weingut Hirsch, Trinkvergnügen Grüner Veltliner, Niederösterreich 2011 ******* 18

N/A UK www.weingut-hirsch.at

“Trinkvergnügen” means ‘a pleasure to drink’. But this wine’s not as easy going and straightforward as one might expect. Green apple and nashi pear, with enough spice and bite to remember it for next time. Drink: 2012–2014. Alc: 12.5%.

Stadt Krems, Lösterrassen Grüner Veltliner, Niederösterreich 2011 ******* 17.5

£11.95–£12.20 Clark Foyester, Slurp


Weingut Erich & Walter Polz, Klassik Sauvignon Blanc, Steiermark 2010 ******* 17.5

£16.50–£17 Clark Foyester, Slurp

Gooseberries, lemon peel, herbs and grass on the nose; palate is pure stony minerality, fresh and well balanced. Drink: 2012–2014. Alc: 12%.

Gut Oggau, Atanasius, Burgenland 2009 ******* 19

N/A UK www.gutoggau.com

A blend of 60% Zweigelt and 40% Blaufränkisch. A perfume of black and red cherries, beetroot and some tar. The palate has a good grip and freshness, with cherry and roast red pepper flavours. Drink: 2012–2016. Alc: 12.5%.

Prießner, Johannehöhe Blaufränkisch, Burgenland 2010 ******* 19

£17–£19 Clark Foyester, Slurp

Nose of sour red cherries, black pepper, flowers and mint stone. Crunchy minerality, agile and focused palate. Remain seated though: this is just the entry-level wine. Drink: 2012–2017. Alc: 12.5%.

Prieler, Johanneshöhe Blaufränkisch, Burgenland 2010 ******* 18

£14.85 Clark Foyester, Slurp

Vibrant black plums, lavender and a touch of spice on the nose. Again, bright dark fruit on the palate, with firm tannins and a good structure. Drink: 2012–2016. Alc: 13%.

Weingut Schellmann, An der Südbahn, Thermenregion 2009 ******* 18

N/A UK www.weingut-schellmann.at

A blend of 40% Pinot Noir, 35% Zweigelt and 25% St.Laurent. A charmer, with raspberry and blueberry notes plus a little ground pepper. Lovely palate with a light structure. Drink: 2012–2014. Alc: 12.5%.

Red

Gerhard & Briglitta Pittnauer, Dorflagen Pinot Noir, Neusiedlersee 2008 ******* 19

£15 Clark Foyester, Slurp


Weingut Moric, Blaufränkisch, Burgenland 2010 ******* 19

£17–£19 Clark Foyester, Harvey Nichols, Slurp

Nose of sour red cherries, black pepper, flowers and mint stone. Crunchy minerality, agile and focused palate. Remain seated though: this is just the entry-level wine. Drink: 2012–2017. Alc: 12.5%.

Bacchanalia, Cambridge Wine Merchants, 0 Byrne & Co, Good Glass of Wine, Slurp


Gut Oggau, Atanasius, Burgenland 2009 ******* 19

N/A UK www.gutoggau.com

A blend of 60% Zweigelt and 40% Blaufränkisch. A perfume of black and red cherries, beetroot and some tar. The palate has a good grip and freshness, with cherry and roast red pepper flavours. Drink: 2012–2016. Alc: 12.5%.

Weingut Schellmann, An der Südbahn, Thermenregion 2009 ******* 18

N/A UK www.weingut-schellmann.at

A blend of 40% Pinot Noir, 35% Zweigelt and 25% St.Laurent. A charmer, with raspberry and blueberry notes plus a little ground pepper. Lovely palate with a light structure. Drink: 2012–2014. Alc: 12.5%.

Sweet

Hans Tschida, Muskat Ottonel Auslese, Burgenland 2010 ******* 19

£12.80 Astrum


Heiling, Strassenacker Scheurebe Spätlese, Burgenland 2010 ******* 18.5

£13.20 Merry Widows

A fresh approach

Austrian wine and Asian food is a match made in heaven, says Ch'ng Poh Tiong. Try Grüner Veltliner with scallops or Zweigelt with pork – just make sure you don’t drink a red wine with sea urchins...
is crisp, or softened by its own juices (and the seasoning). Goose or duck is just as delicious with a fresh, floral, fruity, red Zweigelt or one that is more ambitiously complex (as long as it’s not over-oaked or highly extracted). An elegant Blauburgunder (Pinot Noir) that’s reminiscent of the scents of autumn is also perfect. So too a St Laurent, where the sweetness of fruit makes this variety equally irresistible with food. Zweiglet, Blauburgunder, St. Laurent and Blafränkisch also pair very well with pork dishes, whether stir-fried, braised (where the sauce isn’t too sweetened) or roasted. Indeed, Sichuan’s famous ‘twice-cooked pork’ (one of that cuisine’s least spicy dishes) will happily lap them all up, particularly since there is very little sauce in the dish. Not to mention the legendary lamb specialties of predominantly Muslim Xinjiang Province, the most western reaches of the ancient Silk Road. Tandoori and biriyani, two of India’s most delicious andloat-spiced dishes, are similarly knee-jerk natural partners for these wines.

Whatever red you choose – Zweigelt, Blauburgunder, a St Laurent, Blafränkisch or a Bordeaux blend – the overwhelming consideration when matching wine with food (Chinese, Indian, French, or any other) is the tannins. If they are primary, fierce, raging and violent, forget about putting them in front of food. On the other hand, if all the components of the wine – fruit, acidity and structure – are harmonised, then it’s all systems go.

The world of food-and-wine pairing is your oyster. 

**Recommendations from our expert panel**

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW covers the wines of Australia and New Zealand for The Wine Advocate. She received her MW in 2008 and was awarded the Madame Bollinger Medal for outstanding performance in the practical (tasting) part of the qualification.

Perrotti-Brown was also the winner of the Tim Dovaut Award, for her excellent performance across the whole MW examination.

My top Austrian wine and Asian food pick has to be Japanese unagi (eel) paired with a Blafränkisch or Blauburgunder (Pinot Noir), depending on how the unagi is prepared. Kabayaki unagi is grilled eel with a sweetened soy-and-mirin-based marinade, left overnight before being skewered and cooked in a coal-fired oven, or tandoor. The resulting dish is softly spiced and so tender, it can be cut with a spoon. Gruner Veltliner is a great match here, especially as a result of the light peppery note resonating between wine and dish. Smaragd (full-bodied) or Fasserspiel (classic) styles from Wachau, rich and opulent, are a definite match. But even the lighter versions from Weinviertel could probably do the trick just as well.

Above: The food of Sichuan province is the most popular within China itself. Beyond China, it’s a Cantonese cuisine that dominates.

**Magandeep Singh**

Magandeep Singh is India’s first French-qualified sommelier and professional wine taster. He runs a beverage company in India, judges for the Decanter World Wine Awards and is a freelance writer and author.

While the aromatic and crisp whites make lovely aperitifs, they are equally adept at being paired with food. Take, for example, the very popular Indian dish, Mala chicken tikka – morsels of succulent chicken, coated with a spice and yogurt-based marinade, left overnight before being skewered and cooked in a coal-fired oven, or tandoor. The resulting dish is softly spiced and so tender, it can be cut with a spoon. Gruner Veltliner is a great match here, especially as a result of the light peppery note resonating between wine and dish. Smaragd (full-bodied) or Fasserspiel (classic) styles from Wachau, rich and opulent, are a definite match. But even the lighter versions from Weinviertel could probably do the trick just as well.

Jeannie Cho-Lee MW

Jeannie Cho-Lee MW is Asia’s first Master of Wine and a Decanter contributing editor. Author, critic, consultant and educator, she is also founder of Asian food and wine matching website, www.asianpalate.com

High-acid whites are great with deep-fried foods, such as aost shell crab, spring rolls, tempuras, and pakoras.

Not all white wines work with fish and shellfish. You often need something viscous, round and mid-to-full-bodied.

Red wines don’t work with shellfish such as oysters, scallops, sardines and, particularly, sea urchins.

Tannin, above all else, is the number one consideration when pairing red wine with food. Don’t pair raging, angry, violent tannins in front of food. Make sure they are tamed, softened and evolved.

Four cardinal rules

- High-acid whites are great with deep-fried foods, such as aost shell crab, spring rolls, tempuras, and pakoras.
- Not all white wines work with fish and shellfish. You often need something viscous, round and mid-to-full-bodied.
- Red wines don’t work with shellfish such as oysters, scallops, sardines and, particularly, sea urchins.
- Tannin, above all else, is the number one consideration when pairing red wine with food. Don’t pair raging, angry, violent tannins in front of food.
Vienna: a gourmet guide

From rustic heuriger taverns to Michelin-starred restaurants, bars, shops – and barges – Jason Turner recommends the best places to drink and dine in the capital.

Vienna is the only capital city with its own designated wine-growing region, encompassing an impressive 62 hectares of vineyards. The local white wine speciality is Gamlachter Satz, a field blend that can be made from up to 23 local and classic grape varieties.

Historically, Vienna has been known for its heuriger taverns that serve jov wines and white wine spritzers to politicians, celebrities and tourists alike, as recorded by poets and playwrights over the past two centuries. The birth of the heuriger came after Emperor Josef II passed a decree in 1784 to enable producers to sell their own food and wine to patrons. The cozy wine-tavern culture continues to flourish in many parts of Vienna, one being the Mayer am Pfarrplatz in Dobling. It is here, in 1817, that Ludwig von Beethoven is said to have composed part of his famous 9th Symphony. The building has changed little since then, and being seated beneath the vines in the spacious garden is the perfect place for a taste of Viennese wine culture.

Although it may be common to find an identical wine from the same producer on the wine list of both a leading gourmet restaurant and a rustic heuriger, you’ll also see a broad variety of all wines styles from the three other major wine-growing regions (each of which are easily accessible from Vienna): a wide selection of Grüner Veltliner and Riesling from Niederösterreich; Sauvignon Blanc and Welschriesling from Steiermark; and Blaufränkisch and Zweigelt reds from Burgenland. Sweet Austrian dessert wines are almost always found in fine-dining restaurants. Up until very recently, the trend was to drink Austrian wine very young, and restaurants and wine shops would discount older vintages as soon as the new wine arrived. Thankfully, this is starting to change, and sommeliers and retailers (supported by winemakers) are starting to store their Austrian wines alongside classified growth Bordeaux and Italian specialities, and listing them once they reach maturity. Leading by example are the two Michelin star restaurants Steirereck and Silvio Nickel in Palais Coburg, both boasting an enviable supply of some of Austria’s most prized wines. The six cellars beneath Palais Coburg are home to more than 6,000 bottles, with guests being able to choose from 5,500 different Austrian and international wines from the wine list. This is a great way to taste mature Grüner Veltliner and Riesling from the superb 1999 and 2001 vintages, and discover how gracefully Blaufränkisch can age.

Nearby, Holy Moly is a quirky destination to which to bring your own bottle. On these levels, this stationary riverside barge moored on the Danube canal offers a pool and relaxing sun deck, with a disco in the hull. Austrian chef Christian Petz runs his acclaimed restaurant on the main deck, just feet above the waterline. For a fixed service charge, guests can bring their own bottle and drink it.

The increased popularity of Austrian wine over the past 10 years has led to a surge in new wine shops – vinothek – such as Porta Dextra and Der Wein. Traditional merchants and delicatessens, such as Vinothek St-Stephan, Bibble and Meinl am Graben, are also offering customers to try before they buy. A growing number of restaurants and bars now have an integrated vinothek, enabling them to legally sell wine until midnight, thanks to the local hospitality regulations.

Wein & Co is one such example, and is a must-see wine shop, bar and restaurant concept. It is Austria’s largest wine retail chain, with a range of 2,000 wines, and sells about three million bottles a year, with eight shops in Vienna, of which four are a bar or restaurant. Here, customers can select any bottle from the adjacent shop, and enjoy it in either the casual wine bar or smart restaurant. With opening hours from 10am until 2am, this is the best chance to enjoy your favourite wine, or to try something new, after having visited all the sights and cultural attractions that Vienna has to offer.

Former marketing manager of Wein & Co, Jason Turner is a wine writer and educator based in Vienna, of which four are a bar or restaurant. Here, customers can select any bottle from the adjacent shop, and enjoy it in either the casual wine bar or smart restaurant. With opening hours from 10am until 2am, this is the best chance to enjoy your favourite wine, or to try something new, after having visited all the sights and cultural attractions that Vienna has to offer.

From rustic heuriger taverns to Michelin-starred restaurants, bars, shops – and barges – Jason Turner recommends the best places to drink and dine in the capital.