

Wine & Spirits

SPECIAL ISSUE

27th Annual BUYING GUIDE

100
Best Wines
of the year

Top 100 Wineries
of 2013



WINTER 2013

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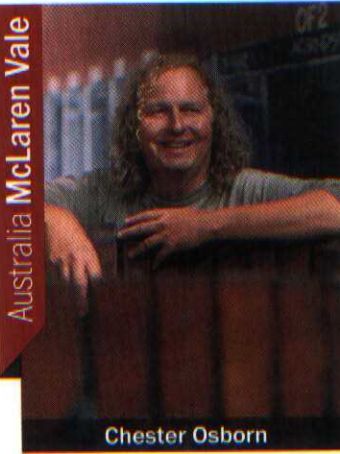
Display until December 31, 2013





Juan Pablo Michelini

Founded: 2008
Winemaker: Juan Pablo Michelini
Acres owned: None
Cases produced: 41,666
Owners: The Michelini brothers, plus Canadian investors
Known for: Pure, vibrant reds from Mendoza's highest altitudes.
Importer: Brazos, NY
Website: zorzalwines.com



Chester Osborn

Founded: 1912
Winemaker/Viticulturist: Chester Osborn
Acres owned: 450
Cases produced: 250,000
Estate grown: 65%
Owners: d'Arry & Chester Osborn
Known for: Traditional old-vine reds with non-traditional labels.
Importer: Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA
Website: darenberg.com.au

Zorzal

IN 2000, WHEN THE BOOM IN ARGENTINE MALBEC was just beginning, most of the focus was on traditional production areas like the old vineyards in Lujan de Cuyo, near Mendoza. Since then, the attention has shifted closer to the Andes, in the higher altitudes of the Uco Valley.

The Michelini brothers went even higher, to Gualtallary, an Andean wilderness of thorns and stony soils at an altitude of 3,300 feet. They established Zorzal in 2008, today one of the most dynamic wineries on the Argentine wine scene.

The four-level, gravity-flow winery, built in 2009, is an austere cement building in the desert. With a capacity to process 350,000 liters, it's the center of operations for the Michelinis: Gerardo works in administration, Juan Pablo makes the wines and Matias, a world renowned wine consultant, works as an advisor. It's also the place where they attempt to transform the cool breezes and calcareous soils of Gualtallary into wine.

It is that purity, and the idea of translating the terroir as clearly as possible, that makes Zorzal's wines so captivating. This is the second year in a row Zorzal has been named one of our Top 100 Wineries.

Zorzal's style may be best expressed in the Terroir Unico Malbec. Sourced from a vineyard planted in 2006, fermented in cement and bottled immediately, the 2011 version is fresh and radiant, with an acidity and tension that move through its red fruit like a breeze from the Andes.

The same wine in 2012, a warmer vintage, comes off as sweeter and more voluptuous, yet remains vibrant, backed as always by the chalky tannins that come from the soil of the area.

Something similar happens with Terroir Unico Pinot Noir 2012, a wine that seems simple at first in its freshly crushed strawberry flavor but then turns earthy and spicy, with a firm, tense structure framing the fruit. It's so clear, fresh and energetic that you'll want to take a case on holiday. And it's a good example of the varietal purity and personality of the wines coming from this young Gualtallary cellar.

—P.T.



d'Arenberg

JOSEPH ROWE OSBORN was a board member at Hardys when he invested in 62 acres of vines in the coastal hills south of Adelaide. He didn't drink, but his son, Frank, expressed some interest in growing grapes, eventually building a winery in 1928. Frank's health was fragile, and his wife, Helen d'Arenberg, had died giving birth to their third child, Francis d'Arenberg Osborn; d'Arry, as he was known, eventually left boarding school to help out at the winery. He took over completely in 1957 and launched a label named for his mother in 1959. From that single red-striped d'Arry's Original, fourth-generation Chester d'Arenberg Osborn has built the family's production to a crazy quilt of more than 60 wines.

The Osborns were among the leaders in battling the Great Vine Pull of the 1980s, developing strong relationships with growers who maintained their old-vine shiraz and grenache. Chester has been an advocate of dry farming and traditional viticultural practices to keep these old vines in production. His winemaking is also traditional, employing basket presses, foot treading, unassisted ferments and no fining or filtration. While Osborn released several terrific whites this year, including a fresh young Broken Fishplate Sauvignon Blanc, it's the old-vine reds that drive d'Arenberg.

The remarkable 2010 vintage led Osborn to release a new series of 12 single-vineyard shirazes. All are made exactly the same way, to show the differences in site, whether due to soil, altitude or direction of the vines. Our two favorites come from the Beautiful View sub-district. The Vociferate Dipsomaniac grows at the top of the hill on 50-million-year-old limestone with red-brown earth on top; the Swinging Malaysian grows on sandstone, half of it virtually bare on top. VD is all forest floor and herbs, with a precise tannic structure and a brightness of fruit. SM is more an old-fashioned McLaren Vale shiraz, packed with mineral tannins edged in red fruit. Both are wines to age. As are others in the series, including the 2010 JRO Afflatus, a supple, raspberry-scented shiraz from the original vines, now 112 years old, purchased by Chester's great-grandfather. —J.G.

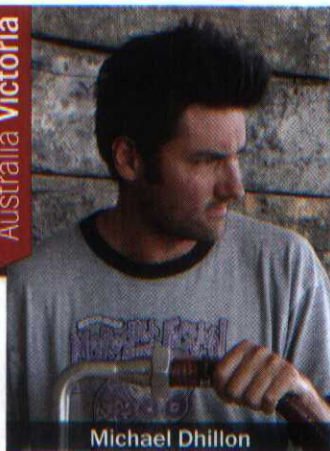


TOP-SCORING WINES

- 92 '11 Tupungato Terroir Unico Gualtallary Malbec \$14 (2/13)
- 90 '12 Tupungato Terroir Unico Gualtallary Sauvignon \$14 (2/13)
- 90 '12 Tupungato Terroir Unico Gualtallary Pinot Noir \$14 (2/13)

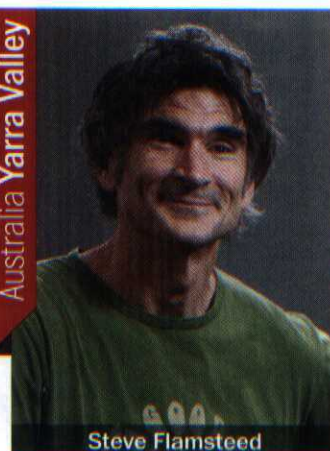
TOP-SCORING WINES

- 94 '10 The Vociferate Dipsomaniac Shiraz \$85 (10/13)
- 94 '10 The Swinging Malaysian Shiraz \$85 (10/13)
- 93 '10 The Garden of Extraordinary Delights Shiraz \$85 (10/13) (all McLaren Vale)



Michael Dhillon

Founded: 1988
Winemaker/viticulturist: Michael Dhillon
Acres owned: 420; 15 planted
Annual Production: 3,000 cases
Estate grown: 100%
Owner: The Dhillon family
Known for: Artisanally grown chardonnay and pinot noir from the Macedon Ranges.
Importer: Vine Street Imports, Philadelphia, PA
Website: bindiwines.com.au



Steve Flamsteed

Founded: 1996
Winemaker: Steve Flamsteed
Viticulturist: Stuart Marshall
Acres owned: 120
Annual Production: 6,000 cases
Estate grown: 100%
Owner: Phil Sexton
Known for: Cool-climate Burgundy varieties, produced with minimal handling.
Importer: Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA
Website: innocentbystander.com.au

Bindi

THE DHILLON FAMILY PURCHASED A 420-ACRE ranch in the 1950s, high up in the Macedon Ranges to the northwest of Melbourne. They intended to use it as grazing land, but have since preserved it in native grasslands and bush. Their farming is limited to 37 acres of timber, and to the vines the family first began planting in 1988. Since then, the chardonnay and pinot noir that have come off the vineyard's meager clay soils have developed a strong following in Australia, part of the new wave of delicate, cool-climate wines coming out of Victoria.

Today the winery is run by Michael Dhillon, who took over from his father in 2005. Since then, he's been focusing more of his energy on the vineyards and on lessening his intervention in the cellar. He studied the impact of permanent grasses in the vineyard, of aerating the soil and of the effects of biodynamic preparations on the vines and the grapes they produced. Dhillon looked to the work of Alex Podolinsky, a fellow Victorian, for guidance in applying biodynamic practices to his site. The Dhillons have fermented all of their pinots without added yeast or enzymes since the 1995 vintage; Michael Dhillon stopped adding yeast to his chardonnay fermentations four years ago. He doesn't fine his wines and does not filter his pinot noirs.

Dhillon's 2011 releases are exceptional across the board, starting with his Composition Chardonnay, from vines planted in 1988. It's a creamy, mineral-rich white, offering more than enough generous lemon-citrus fruit and depth to live beyond the initial scents of new oak. The Composition Pinot Noir also comes from that original 1988 planting, blended with fruit from Block K, planted in 2001. It's balanced and drinkable—lighter than the rich New World style of pinot noir you might expect—a tight, raspberry- and spice-scented red. The star this year is Block 5, from pinot noir planted in 2001 on quartz soils over clay. It's the most structured of Dhillon's pinots, the flavors hinting at raspberries and earthy woodland mushrooms, delivering layered complexity without weight. —J.G.



Giant Steps

JOHN COLTRANE, ON HIS 1960 ALBUM, edited down harmonies into his signature sheets of sound. Phil Sexton, with his winery named for that album, hopes to edit down the terroir of Victoria's Yarra Valley. Before Sexton made his fortune with the Matilda Bay Brewing Co., he had planted Devil's Lair Vineyard in Margaret River. Now in a position to finance his fascination with chardonnay, he's focused on the cool mountain vineyards of Yarra, releasing his first wines in 2001.

Sexton eventually built his Giant Steps winery in Healesville, as a creative outlet for his varied fermentation projects. Opened in 2006, the building houses a bustling network of eateries, a coffee roaster, bakery and cheese counter, in addition to the gravity-flow winery. Steve Flamsteed curates the cheeses and makes the wines. He got his start at Château du Bluizard in Côte de Brouilly, where he learned how to vinify Beaujolais; he later returned to France to study farmstead cheese making in the Haute-Savoie through a grant with the Queen's Trust Scholarship.

At Giant Steps, he crafted a supple 2011 chardonnay from the Sexton Vineyard, a steep, north-facing slope high in the Warramate Ranges. It yielded a wine of elegance, following a linear track of minerality. But it was his 2012 pinot noir releases that caught our attention this year. The Gladysdale Vineyard, built on a base of dark red volcanic loam, is located in the Upper Yarra, challenging the vines with its high annual rainfall and frequent threat of frost. We thrilled to the 2012's textured tannins, softened by time in the glass, and a tickle of acidity as you might find in a classic Pommard. More impressive, however, was the pinot from the Applejack Vineyard—owned and vinified by cold-climate viticulture authority Ray Guerin and son Mark. It's an Australian pinot with a delicate disposition, graceful and redolent of earth.

It's been said that it takes loads of beer to make a great wine, and in Sexton's case, this may literally be true. But these single-vineyard varietal bottlings also suggest the harmonious influence of Coltrane's seductive jazz. —C.G.



TOP-SCORING WINES

- 93 '11 Victoria Block 5 Pinot Noir \$140 (10/13)
- 92 '11 Victoria Composition Chardonnay \$70 (10/13)
- 91 '11 Victoria Composition Pinot Noir \$70 (10/13)

TOP-SCORING WINES

- 95 '12 Yarra Valley Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir \$40 (10/13)
- 94 '12 Yarra Valley Gladysdale Vineyard Pinot Noir \$40 (10/13)
- 88 '11 Yarra Valley Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay \$40 (2/13)

100 BEST WINES OF THE YEAR

detailing the woodland strawberry and peach pit flavors. It's Napa Valley luxury without excess—brisk and vinous, delicious now or in ten years. (400 cases) *Storybook Mountain Vineyards, Calistoga, CA*

ARGENTINA

BEST MALBEC



93 | Achaval Ferrer \$140
2010 Mendoza Finca Altamira Malbec The vines at Altamira, planted in 1925, grow near the Uco Valley's Río Tunuyán. The river leads cold winds down from the Andes, which had an impact on the fruit character of this harvest, overall a cooler year than 2009: This vintage has a singular nerve, crisp and vibrant red fruit and violet flavors. The wine's acidity might seem firm to those accustomed to riper styles of malbec, but it melds right into the juiciness of the wine, making it delicious to drink now. The old-vine concentration of flavor will build complexity over the next ten years. *TGIC Importers, Woodland Hills, CA*

AUSTRALIA

BEST MARSANNE

95 | Tahbilk \$47
2002 Nagambie Lakes 1927 Vines Marsanne Delicate floral energy drives this old-vine white, sustaining it across a decade of age and bringing up scents of wildflower honey and a tickle of green spice. The texture is rich and creamy, edged in a chalky acidity that makes it appetite inducing. Having established the potential of marsanne in their vineyards—first planted on site in the 1860s—the Purbrick family at Tahbilk has made this relatively rare Rhône variety one of their flagships. *Epic Wines, Aptos, CA*

BEST PINOT NOIR



95 | Giant Steps \$40
2012 Yarra Valley Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir Whole-cluster fermentation gives this pinot scents of juniper and woodland spice, along with delicate fruit and earth details that make the wine seductive. There's dense fruit concentration, but it's handled with a graceful touch, the tannins an essence of flavor. If you don't believe Australia can produce compelling pinot noir, prepare for this Yarra beauty to melt your resistance. *Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA*

BEST RED BLEND

93 | Some Young Punks \$35
2011 Barossa Valley The Squid's Fist The naming of South Australian wines reaches a new low in this awesome blend, one of the best expressions of sangiovese outside of Tuscany, here entangled with shiraz. The fragrant, vinous scent is the best kind of Aussie mash-up: rose, tomato leaf, red spice, red raspberry, Bing cherry. The crushed-mineral tannins are there in the scent as well, inky black and grippy. What any of it has to do with a squid's fist remains a mystery, but the wine is compelling and delicious, especially with pizza or anything topped with mushrooms. *Vine Street Imports, Philadelphia, PA*

BEST SHIRAZ

96 | Penfolds \$850
2008 South Australia Grange Bin 95 Shiraz Glistening with freshness, Grange shows none of the extreme heat that hit the Barossa in early March 2008. Peter Gago and his team harvested enough of their Grange-level fruit early and fully ripe to achieve this multidimensional wine, as deep in color, as dynamic in flavor and as luscious as any top vintage of Grange in its layers of silken red berries, satin-textured blueberries and crushed-rock tannins. It's not heavy, just powerful; you can breathe the flavors for minutes after each sip. Perfect ripeness will hold this fresh for decades. *Treasury Wine Estates, Napa, CA*

AUSTRIA

BEST RIESLING

96 | Salomon-Undhof \$55
2009 Kremstal Erste Lage Reserve Steiner Kögl Riesling This comes from some of the oldest vines Bert Salomon farms, planted on the area's ancient urgestein rock mixed with crystalline schist. The vineyard tends to produce very savory wines, and this is no exception. It recalls really great ramen stock in its flavor, a deeply umami mix of kombu and pork broth, the meatiness underlined by earth and lebkuchen spice. While muscular, there's nothing showy or pushed about it; in fact, it feels more like it was unearthed than vinified, the flavors that well to the surface as ancient as the soil they come from, as fresh as the moment they see light. *Fruit of the Vine, Long Island City, NY*

BEST WEISSBURGUNDER

96 | Kirchmayr \$84
1999 Wachau Klostersatz Solist Weissburgunder When our tasting panel encountered this wine, we sent our pourer back to the kitchen to double-check the label. At 14 years old, this is impossibly fresh, with elderflower scents and a racy acidity that whisks through the wine like an alpine breeze. It comes from Andreas Kirchmayr, who developed the Solist label to showcase the ageability of his whites, all of which he lets ferment spontaneously and ages in large oak barrels. The wine was still going strong a week after opening, when we drained the last drops with a duck schnitzel. *Domaine Select Wine Estates, NY*

BEST BURGENLAND



96 | Kracher \$105/375ml
2010 Burgenland Zwischen den Seen Nummer 11 Welschriesling TBA This is gorgeous from the very first whiff, heady with gingery spice. It washes over the tongue in a luxurious blanket of flavor, as buoyant

AUSTRALIA

RIESLING

90 | Chateau Tanunda \$16
2012 Barossa Valley Grand Barossa Dry Riesling Fragrant with peach, mint and lime, this is a tightly focused riesling that's accessible. The citrus-pith acidity is austere but the wine remains pliant, enjoyable now and suited to five years in the cellar. *Banfi Vintners, Old Brookville, NY*

SAUVIGNON BLANC



92 | d'Arenberg \$17
2012 Adelaide Hills The Broken Fishplate Sauvignon Blanc A refreshing sauvignon for a fish stew or roast barramundi, this brings the cool of the Adelaide Hills in its tangy scents of lime and parsley. It's smooth, with rich citrus flavors that last in a clean line. *Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA*

RED BLEND



92 | Wirra Wirra \$20
2010 McLaren Vale Church Block Striking a fine balance between the rustic, bright red spiciness of shiraz (32 percent of the blend) and cigar box scents of cabernet (50 percent, plus merlot), this is mouthwatering in its juicy freshness. The lasting finish comes off polished and refined, in an earthy McLaren Vale way. *Negociants USA, Napa, CA*

SHIRAZ



92 | Taltarni \$13
2009 Victoria T Series Shiraz Smooth and supple, this wine is polished on the surface

so there are no apparent edges, its black fruit and tannins feeling as long and curved as a Modigliani sculpture. There's tension underneath, a spice that keeps driving forward through the sleek surface, ready to lift the flavors of a steak. *Clos du Val Wine Co., Napa, CA*

92 | Domaine Terlato & Chapoutier \$18
2011 Victoria Shiraz-Viognier When is the last time you drank a refreshing Aussie shiraz? This one plays off the spicy black peppercorn character of the grape: Its crisp,

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