

Wine & Spirits

23RD ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

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OF THE YEAR



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International wineries of the year

From Austria to Spain, Argentina to New Zealand, here are the 65 best international wineries we discovered in the last 12 months. Some are familiar names, like Penfolds, which has made the list 19 times in the last 23 years. Others may be new discoveries, such as Moric, a producer turning out exceptional reds from Austria's Burgenland.

Our critics selected these wineries on the basis of their performance in our blind tastings; all of them excelled in both the percentage of wines we recommended out of the total tasted, and in the average score of the recommended wines. Only wineries with three or more recommendations are eligible for the honor; you'll find plenty of other great producers—particularly Bordeaux châteaux—that release only one or two wines a vintage among our 100 Best Wines of the Year, starting on page 97.

On the following pages, *W&S* editors Joshua Greene, Chris Hallowell, Peter Liem, Patricio Tapia, Tara Q. Thomas and Wolfgang M. Weber provide insight into what makes these wineries stand out. With each profile, you'll find the producer's top three recommended wines (and the issue date in which our review first appeared). For a complete list of recommended wines from our International Wineries of the Year, go to wineandspiritsmagazine.com.

Moric

BURGENLAND



Roland Velich

Founded: 2001

Winemaker/Owner: Roland Velich

Acres owned: 32

Annual production: 4,100

Estate grown: 100%

Known for: Old-vine blaufränkisch of exceptional purity and elegance

Importer: winemonger.com

Website: moric.at

Moric is a relative newcomer to the Austrian wine scene, but its founder, Roland Velich, had previously gained renown with his family's winery: Under the Velich label, he and his brother, Heinz, crafted some of Burgenland's greatest white wines.

Like others in the region, Velich was convinced that Burgenland, with its moderate climate and cool autumn nights, had the potential to make exceptional red wines from blaufränkisch. But rather than the lavishly powerful style of wine that many other growers pursue, Velich sought to focus on elegance and delicacy, citing classic Burgundy as a guide.

The first step was to identify sources of old vines in top terroirs. In 2001, Velich, together with fellow winegrower Erich Krutzler, bottled the first vintage of Plateau Lutzmannsburg, made from blaufränkisch vines up to 100 years old in the village of Lutzmannsburg. The following year they found additional old-vine parcels in the village of Neckenmarkt, and established the Moric brand. Krutzler has since left to pursue a project in Slovenia, and Velich now focuses full-time on Moric, producing red wines of stunning expression and finesse.

Lutzmannsburg and Neckenmarkt still form the core of the Moric range, and Velich produces two wines from each village, from different vineyards. He ferments the wines in large wooden vats with natural yeasts, transfers them to large oak casks for the malolactic fermentation and then moves them to 500-liter French or Austrian oak barrels, very few of which are new.

The 2006 Neckenmarkt Alte Reben, made from vines up to 85 years old, derives detail and complexity from the schist and limestone soils and relatively high elevation of these parcels in the foothills of the Odenburger Mountains. Its cool, sleek energy contrasts the plusher tones of the Lutzmannsburg Alte Reben, where the plateau's warm loam and loess soils give the fruit a sappy depth. The blaufränkisch from the chalky hillsides of the village of Sankt Georgen offers yet another mineral signature, combining rich fruit with a fresh, tightly controlled structure. —P.L.



TOP-SCORING WINES

- 93** '06 Burgenland Neckenmarkt Alte Reben Blaufränkisch \$95 (4/09)
- 92** '06 Burgenland Lutzmannsburg Alte Reben Blaufränkisch \$95 (4/09)
- 91** '06 Burgenland Sankt Georgener Blaufränkisch \$53 (4/09)