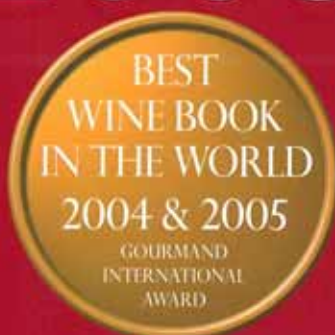


# WINE REPORT

## 2006



WINNER FOR TWO  
YEARS RUNNING

Groundbreaking new annual...  
"absolutely fascinating"  
JANCIS ROBINSON, MW

**Tom  
Stevenson**  
and a unique team of  
**regional specialists**

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andinavia are limited to Denmark, and mostly amateur. The quality of s are high and it is difficult to see ality. Because of the cold climate, re preferred. Surprisingly for a country than white. White would be more

ark is about 15 ha, mostly in Seeland, island of Bornholm. The government zwing, but it is supportive. wines and more are on the way, ntion to grow vines in the near lle Gadegaard, Bornholm; land; Domæne Aalsgaarde, Seeland; Seeland; and Per Tegtmeier, ent of the Danish Wine Growers sk VinCenter/Nordlund, is the re.

- **The Hotel School in Koksijde** near Ostend in Belgium produced its first harvest from its wine 'garden' – they judge that 'vineyard' is too ambitious a name for their 300 vines grown in sandy soil next to the school. Using primarily Chardonnay and Müller-Thurgau vines with a little bit of Dornfelder to make some red wines and some Siegerrebe to add aroma to the whites, the vineyard is set up as a training site for the sommelier students at the school.

- **Peter Colemont** at Clos d'Opleeuw is bringing a new dimension to the phrase 'made in Belgium' by ageing his wines in Belgian oak. He selects and ages the wood himself before sending it to Burgundy to be made into barrels.

# Opinion:

## Belgian wines fail to shine

Visiting several Belgian wine producers over the last year, I was struck by the minute size of winemaking operations. How is it possible to control fermentations and emphasize hygiene when making wine in demijohns? At the other end of the scale, two of the most successful Belgian wineries are Genoels-Elderen and Ten Kapittelberg – both with an extensive collection of wines and good visitors' centres. However, in blind tastings their wines were among the most disappointing this year. Having made a name for themselves, are they pushing yields higher and taking their eye off the ball to keep up with commercial demand?

Tasting the recent releases of Belgian wines at the end of 2004, it was surprising not to taste more sunshine in the wines due to the warmth of the 2003 harvest. The best wines for the most part are fresh and fragrant.

### Gentlemen v. players in the Netherlands

The 2003 Annual Report of the Productschap Wijn (Wine Produce Board) says: "Forty hectares in the Netherlands are used for vine growing to make wine. Of 96 vineyards, 36 are commercially exploited. Total wine production amounts to an estimated 1,800 hl... Dutch acreage is expected to triple in the next few years." Other sources talk about 600 wine producers and 120 ha of commercial vineyards. The truth will be anywhere in between. However, most winemakers are well-intentioned amateurs. Some are ambitious, perhaps growing vines in a small field – or the back garden, as did Huub Römer, silver medallist at the National Wine Competition.

There is little room for semiprofessionals, let alone real professionals, in Dutch viticulture because of the climate, even with global warming. Another constraint is that Dutch rules are stricter than those in Germany and Belgium. For these reasons it is very difficult to produce wine profitably.

Making wine as a hobby, on the other hand, is generally expected to cost a bit of money, so a subsidy is always very welcome. The Vereniging van Wijngaardeniers Mergelland (Mergelland Union of Wine Growers) in Limburg has received a grant of €120,000 from the county council and the EU for its vine-grower members. Three commercial wineries are based in the Limburg area – De Apostelhoeve, Hoeve Nekum, and Wijngoed Fromberg – but they are not members of Vereniging van Wijngaardeniers Mergelland and receive no subsidies or grants. Can it be right that the government supports the hobby of some amateur vine growers?



### NEW UP-AND-COMING PRODUCERS

- 1 Peter Colemont (Belgium)
- 2 Huub Römer, Agter d'Hege (Berg aan de Maas, Netherlands)
- 3 Math Gielkens, Wijngaard Annendaal (Maria Hoop, Netherlands)
- 4 Domein Sint-Odulphus (Belgium)
- 5 Wijngaard El Placer (Lelystad, Netherlands)
- 6 Wijngaard Hof van Twente (Bentelo, Netherlands)
- 7 Domaine de Chenoy (Belgium)
- 8 Monteberg (Belgium)
- 9 Beesterwijngaard (Middenbeemster, Netherlands)
- 10 Schorpion (Belgium)

### BEST-VALUE PRODUCERS

- 1 Boschberg (Scherpenheuvel, Belgium)
- 2 Hoeve Nekum (Maastricht, Netherlands)
- 3 Wijngoed Fromberg (Ubachsberg, Netherlands)
- 4 Wijnhoeve Elzenbosch (Assent, Belgium)
- 5 Wijngaard El Placer (Lelystad, Netherlands)
- 6 Wijnkelder Kluisberg (Bekkenvoort, Belgium)
- 7 Domaine Meerdael (Belgium)
- 8 Wijngaard De Linie (Made, Netherlands)
- 9 Wijngaard Karthuizerhof (Kortesseem, Belgium)
- 10 Château Neercanne (Maastricht, Netherlands)

### GREATEST-QUALITY WINES

- 1 **Chardonnay 2002** Peter Colemont, Belgium (€16)
- 2 **Kerner 2003** Boschberg, Belgium (€7)
- 3 **Pinot Gris 2003** De Apostelhoeve, Netherlands (€10)

- 4 **Dornfelder 2001** Wijngaard Annendaal, Netherlands (€12)
- 5 **Optima 2002** Wijnhoeve Elzenbosch, Belgium (€7)
- 6 **Chardonnay Goud 2003** Wijnkasteel Genoels-Elderen, Belgium (€21)
- 7 **Riesling 2003** De Apostelhoeve, Netherlands (€9)
- 8 **Würzer 2003** Wijngaard Karthuizerhof, Belgium (€6.50)
- 9 **Chardonnay Méthode Traditionnelle Sparkling Wine NV** Domaine Meerdael, Belgium (€12)
- 10 **Cuvée Wit 2003** Wijngaard De Linie, Made, Netherlands (€5.99)

### BEST BARGAINS

- 1 **Kerner 2003** Boschberg, Belgium (€7)
- 2 **Optima 2002** Wijnhoeve Elzenbosch, Belgium (€7)
- 3 **Würzer 2003** Wijngaard Karthuizerhof, Belgium (€6.50)

### MOST EXCITING OR UNUSUAL FINDS

- 1 **Chardonnay Elevé en Fûts de Chêne 2003** Domaine d'Heerstaayen, Netherlands (€20) *No deacidification, no chaptalization, 12.8 per cent natural alcohol: a Meursault from the Netherlands!*
- 2 **Pinot Gris 2003** De Apostelhoeve, Netherlands (€10) *An astonishing, rich, fat, vibrant Pinot Gris, due to the qualities of the variety, the beautiful weather, and the expertise of the grower.*
- 3 **Sunray 2003** Domein Sint-Odulphus, Belgium (€6) *On the banks of the Schelde river in the small Flemish town of Dendermonde, Dr Van Nimmen produces a tiny amount of wine from Riesling and Scheurebe*

*grapes. The wine is well made with aromatic notes of lychees and pears.*

- 4 **Auxerrois 2003** Hoeve Nekum, Netherlands (€10) *Fruity (apple, pear), rich, and powerful, with an excellent balance between sweetness and acidity.*
- 5 **Chardonnay 2002** Peter Colemont, Belgium (€16) *Arguably the best wine produced in Belgium, made by a dedicated professional wine grower in Limburg. It has become the darling of Belgian sommeliers: they love blind tasting this wine to clients, who doubt that its buttery texture and pure, clean fruit could come from Belgium.*

- 6 **Regent Rose 2003** Wijngaard Wageningse Berg, Netherlands (€11.50) *Everything that a good rosé needs: open raspberry fruit, fresh and juicy.*

- 7 **Vaders Trots Red 2003** Wijngaard El Placer, Netherlands (€6 per 50-cl bottle) *A well-made blend of Regent and Rondo with a lot of black fruit and spice.*

- 8 **Dornfelder 2001** Wijngaard Annendaal, Netherlands (€12) *Fruit and new wood – surprisingly well balanced.*

**Granat 1993** Schwegler, Württemberg (Germany, €39) *Enticing aromas of blackberry and hazelnuts, rich fruits of the forest on the palate, elegant structure, showing well now, but with plenty of reserve.* Michael Schmidt

*Big, spiced-oak bouquet of some maturity, but not showing its age at all on the palate. When tasting this blind, I had no idea what it was or where it was from – and I certainly would not have guessed its age. Not worth the money, but worth trying for anyone with deep enough pockets.* TS

**Cynthiana 2002** HolyField Vineyards, Kansas (Other US States, US\$15) *The intensity of Norton/Cynthiana is in full force, inky, chewy, red and black fruits cooked into a viscous compote of flavour.* Doug Frost MW

*I get the cooked compote, Doug, and I like the fresh acidity on the finish, but it would have been better without the juxtaposition of oxidative notes on the nose and estery aromas on mid-palate. An interesting wine nevertheless.* TS

**Chardonnay 2002** Peter Colemont, Belgium (Belgium, Netherlands & Denmark, €16) *Arguably the best wine produced in Belgium, this has become the darling of Belgian sommeliers: they love blind tasting this wine to clients who doubt that its buttery texture and pure, clean fruit could come from Belgium.* Fiona Morrison MW

*the UK in 2003 than Greece, so it must have been harvested far too early. Pity they didn't blend it with 15–20 per cent of Bacchus when it was fully ripe and exotic, with no cat's pee. Retained for cat lovers!* TS

**Oloroso Bailén** Osborne (Sherry, €9) *This is a classic oloroso that is mature but not old, a perfect apéritif on a cold winter's day, when one is looking for an elegant, warming wine but not a vast one.* Julian Jeffs QC

*Not as mellow as I remembered Bailén to be, so after the tasting I opened a bottle I have had a few years, from stock I have enjoyed. By comparison the current stock does not have the same body, leans closer to amantillado, and has a slightly herbaceous aftertaste.* TS

**Yellow Jail 2003** Red Newt, New York (Atlantic Northeast, US\$14.50) *This dry blend of Gewurztraminer, Riesling, and Pinot Gris is a noseful. All three components lend distinct varietal character that complement each other.* Sandra Silfven

*And acid-adjusted to hell and back! Would have been much better if the Gewurztraminer had been much riper, and the acidity totally natural.* TS

**Turriculae 2003** Mas Gallo Romain des Tourelles, Beaucaire, France (Grape Varieties, €8.50) *Dry white wine (12.5–13 per cent) from Villard Blanc, recalling traditional wines still made*