



Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s

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to access terrific vineyards and produce wines of extraordinary quality in all price ranges. The introduction of their new luxury cuvées from Hermitage (Ex-Voto) will only reinforce the legendary status of this producer, but they are as proud of the \$12 white and red Côtes du Rhône as any of the \$300+ single vineyard Côte Rôties, Condrieus, and Hermitages.

Jess Jackson, California - This ruggedly handsome visionary and revolutionary has consistently bucked the system, creating his own distribution system, and developing two extraordinary wine enterprises, his Jackson Family Farms, a collection of great vineyards producing world class wines, and of course, his beloved Kendall-Jackson, run by his wife Barbara, and still the finest producer in the world of Chardonnay priced under \$12 a bottle. Jackson has single-handedly changed the image of California wine ... for the better.

Domaine de la Janasse, Châteauneuf du Pape, France - One of France's leading estates, Domaine de la Janasse has become a reference point winery, largely because of the extraordinary efforts of the young Christophe Sabon. Under Sabon's supervision, Janasse's Châteauneuf du Papes just keep getting better and better. Moreover, this is also a terrific source for fabulous values from his bevy of *vin de pays* and Côtes du Rhône selections.

Château Latour, Bordeaux, France - Nothing can be underestimated when dealing with the likes of a perfectionist owner such as François Pinault and manager, Frédéric Engerer. Château Latour has moved to the forefront in the competitive first-growth sweepstakes with a bevy of extraordinary wines beginning in 2000, followed by what may be the finest first-growths of the vintages in 2001, 2002, and 2003. This is the benchmark/reference point Cabernet Sauvignon-based wine for nearly every high quality producer in the world.

Peter Michael Winery, California - This outstanding winery is run by Sir Peter Michael, and the wines are fashioned by brilliant Burgundian winemaker Luc Morlet. The belief in cool climate mountain vineyards as well as artisanal, non-interventionalistic winemaking has resulted in California's finest array of Chardonnays, a lustrous Bordeaux-styled red, and a terrific Sauvignon Blanc. Moreover, this estate is not done yet as evidenced by their newest superstar, the Pinot Noir.

Château Montrose, Bordeaux, France - This outstanding St-Estèphe has been on fire since the 1989 vintage, producing classics that beg comparison to such blockbuster, ageworthy wines as Château Latour (located 6-7 miles to the south). The much bally-hooped successes of recent vintages have culminated with the 2003, one of the estate's most prodigious offerings, and a wine that may both rival and eclipse the 1989 and 1990.

Domaine de la Mordorée, Châteauneuf du Pape, France - Tall, handsome, articulate, and a dedicated *terrorist*, Christophe Delorme has turned a once mediocre estate (135 acres located in Lirac) into one of the world's greatest wineries. Since the mid-eighties, Mordorée has produced profound whites, reds, and rosés, including such outstanding efforts as the Cuvée de la Reine de Bois and La Plume du Peintre. There are also marvelous inexpensive offerings from Lirac and the Côtes du Rhône, including Delorme's newly launched *négoçiant* line called the Spirit of the Woodcock.

Château Pavie, Bordeaux, France - Pavie's brilliant proprietor, Gérard Pavie, appears to be a lightning rod for controversy because he wants to produce wines reminiscent of such great vintages as 1929, 1947, 1959, and 1961 - wines of sublime

Once again, I cannot end the year without expressing my appreciation and thanks to all of this publication's subscribers. It is difficult to be objective, but I think 2004 was the most professionally satisfying year of my life, as well as the busiest. I hope my, as well as Pierre's and Daniel's continued enthusiasm and passion for the greatest beverage Mother Nature has given to mankind was evidenced throughout each issue. Moreover, like a fine wine, I hope to improve as well, as that long journey on the road less traveled has not yet ended.

concentration, richness, minerality, delineation, and nobility. Because he is too outspoken and too talented, as well as a Bordeaux outsider, he has been exoriated in reactionary wine circles. Nevertheless, Pavie is one of the world's great viticultural ferrets, and Perse has the knowledge, passion, money, and commitment to produce wines of extraordinary richness as well as longevity.

Shafer Vineyards, California - Shafer is the poster boy for impeccable wine quality year in and year out, offering examples of what a high quality, creative winery is capable of achieving even when vintage conditions are challenging. Since 1991, this has been the uncontested superstar of the Stag's Leap appellation, and readers are unlikely to find a better Cabernet Sauvignon than Shafer's Hillside Select, a better North Coast Syrah (with a little bit of Petite Sirah in the blend) than their Relentless, or a finer non-malolactic Chardonnay than their Red Shoulder Ranch. All of this is due to the extraordinary team of winemaker/vineyard manager Elias Fernandez and father and son, John and Doug Shafer.

Sine Qua Non, California - One of the most creative and multidimensional winemakers on Planet Earth, Manfred Krankl, ably assisted by his charming wife, Elaine, continues to fine tune the art and craft of winemaking. A maverick, individualist, sensualist, mountain climber, and genius, he has become the reference point for how extraordinary California's south/central coast whites and reds can be. Krankl fashions amazing white blends of Roussanne, Viognier, and Chardonnay, red wine blends of primarily Syrah with a dollop of Viognier, Grenache, and remarkable, decadent sweet wines that he co-produces with the well-known Austrian, Alois Kracher. Not only does Krankl make the wine, he designs and produces the quirky labels. Yep, he's a talented artist as well. Don't tell anybody, but there seems to be a conspiracy among the Austrians to take over California, with the governor, the state's most famous chef (Wolfgang Puck), and now one of the world's finest winemakers all of Austrian origin.

Torbreck Vintners, Australia - An exceptional success story, Torbreck Vintners was founded by David Powell in 1994. After working his way through a divorce and the ensuing financial difficulties that almost wrecked the winery, Powell, a brilliant winemaker as well as knowledgeable viticulturist who worked under Chris Ringland at Rockford, has sourced ancient vineyards and pays top dollar for the finest fruit he can find. The results are modern styled wines of extraordinary precision, intensity, richness, and complexity in all price ranges.

Two Hands, Australia - The finest *négoçiant* operation south of the equator, Two Hands is run by the dynamic Michael Twelftree. In a few short years, Twelftree, along with winemaker Matt Wenk, has built this exciting enterprise producing South Australian Shiraz, Grenache, and such curiosities as Riesling, dessert Serrillon, and low alcohol Moscato, into an extraordinary success. These fairly priced, brilliant offerings are full of character and personality. Twelftree is one smart guy, realizing what his country of origin does so well - produce full-flavored wines from ripe grapes.

Domaine Pierre Usseglio, Châteauneuf du Pape, France - Two dynamic, energetic brothers, Jean-Pierre and Thierry Usseglio, backed up by their wives and retired father, Pierre, continue to push the qualitative envelope to the extreme at this estate located north of the village of Châteauneuf du Pape. Their wines have never been better, which will be evidenced once their 2003s are released. However, they also excelled in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Their wines represent some of the most extraordinary and soulful expressions of Provence that money can buy.

"You Will Know"

Twenty-six years ago, when borrowing \$2000 from my mother to start *The Wine Advocate*, I asked her if it was the right decision, leaving the certainty of the legal profession for the risks of wine criticism. She answered, "You will know."

All the best in wine and life,

Alban Vineyards, California - The pioneer and catalyst for the burgeoning Rhône Ranger movement in California's Central Coast, John Alban and his raven-haired wife, Lorraine, produce reference point Rhône Rangers at their beautifully maintained vineyards in the Edna Valley. Alban considers himself first a grower and viticulturist rather than a winemaker, but one can not deny the results of his labors, in and outside the winery, ... some of the most ravishing and individualistic wines made in the world.

Artadi, Rioja, Spain - Proprietor Juan-Carlos Lopez de Lacalle has reconstituted a once floundering cooperative into a private enterprise producing wines that are redefining Rioja. A no compromise approach along with low yields, a ripe harvest, and a non-interventionalistic winemaking philosophy result in such beauties as Artadi's flagship offering, Grandes Anadas, the single vineyard El Pison, and the 75-year old Tempranillo cuvée, La Pags Viejos. There is also a terrific value, the Vinas de Gain. The quality of these wines, from an uncompromising revolutionary, are turning Rioja upside down. Lacalle will celebrate the tenth anniversary of estate-bottled Artadi wines in 2005, and it is clear he is just beginning to rewrite the future of Rioja.

Burge Family Winemakers, Australia - One of my favorite Barossa Valley winemakers, Rick Burge is increasingly moving toward creative blends that showcase the quality of his impeccable winemaking. His wines combine the best of Barossa Valley old vine fruit intensity with a rarely encountered degree of elegance and finesse. Moreover, Burge has unleashed some of the ancient fortifieds his family has been making for many years.

Robert Parker's Wine Personalities of the Year

This winemaker fashions some of the great Down Under versions of Châteauneuf du Pape, Gigondas, and Côte Rôtie.

Galardi's Terra di Lavoro, Campania, Italy - What can be written about this extraordinary wine? It conjures up the notion of ancient Rome because it is based on two indigenous grape varieties so important to southern Italy (Aglianico and Piedrosso). These two grapes create a wine of fabulous richness, compelling complexity, and amazing texture, as well as length. It is a tribute to Galardi's proprietors and their brilliant winemaker Riccardo Cotarella that an ancient vineyard and indigenous varietals can produce one of the world's greatest wines.

Greenock Creek, Australia - This South Australian superstar winery owned by Michael and Annabelle Waugh produces some of the world's finest Syrahs, Grenaches, and Cabernet Sauvignons, from absurdly low yields from their dry farmed vineyards. These somewhat old fashioned, to-die-for offerings see little new oak. They are uncompromised expressions of Mother Nature at work in the Barossa vineyards.

Marcel and Philippe Guigal, Côte Rôtie, France - The Rhône Valley's most influential and important producer, Guigal is almost an enigma. Although the father, Marcel, can be painfully shy and reclusive, over the last three or four years he has begun to emerge from his cellars and actually see the abundant joy his wines have created throughout the world. Moreover, he has one of the most talented young viticulteurs working by his side, his son Philippe. A dedicated *terrorist*, Marcel may be the most brilliant *éleveur* (upbringer) in the wine world. Guigal continues