



4 made it to the TOP 50 (5th one sold out before submission)

Italian wines are popular with CEOs, asserts Clinton Ang, managing director of Hock Tong Bee, Singapore's oldest wine merchant. "Being a CEO myself, I always put myself in the judging and demographic shoes. Firstly, CEOs look for recognised names with credible ratings. Secondly, they want wines with intrinsic value that stretches the mileage – impressive quality at a good price. We have noticed this trend away from the big producers towards family owned wineries." Hock Tong Bee submitted five wines for this inaugural challenge, and Mr Ang seems to have correctly gauged his peers, as four have made it into the final 50.

Tenuta Sette Ponti Oreno Toscana 2009

Price: \$116.63
Retail: Cornerstone
Wines, #01-00
Cornerstone Building,
61 Lorong 17 Geylang.
Tel: 6732 0555



A SUPER Tuscan with a Bordelais accent and no Sangiovese? Then again, the history of Tenuta Sette Ponti is filled with twists and turns.

The picturesque property was first purchased in 1957 as a hunting retreat by Alberto Moretti. Sangiovese grapes had been planted since 1935, on soils of well-combined clay, sand, limestone and marl typical of Chianti. As far back as the 1716, this area of Valdarno di Sopra (Upper Arno Valley) had been deemed one of prime winemaking potential.

The grapes grown on the estate was sold, until current owner Antonio Moretti decided to create his own winery in 1997. The luxury goods specialist – whose son now designs stunning footwear for celebrities such as Lady Gaga – engaged a top viticultural team to transform the vineyard, paving the way for the creation of Oreno in 2000. It's been winning awards since, landing fifth place in Wine Spectator's Top Hundred Wines in 2006.

The Oreno, named for a river that runs through the vineyard, started off as a classic powerhouse blend of Sangiovese, Merlot and a little Cabernet Sauvignon. Since 2008, its composition has been 45 per cent Merlot, 40 per cent Cabernet and 15 per cent Petit Verdot, making for a more fruit-forward, international style. Careful work in the vineyard and winery ensures the kind of "Made in Italy" high quality that Moretti espouses.

Tasting notes: This new-generation Oreno is ruby red, with violet reflections and spicy oakdriven aromas of blackberry and plum. Raspberry, licorice and spice flavours are married with clean acidity and firm tannic structure, leading to a long, seamless finish.

Brigaldara Amarone Case Vecie 2008

Price: \$96.30
Retail: Cornerstone
Wines, #01-00
Cornerstone
Building, 61 Lorong
17 Geylang.
Tel: 6732 0555



The mighty Amarone della Valpolicella is traditionally made from grapes that are sent to a fruit drying loft or left on straw mats for several months, losing up to 60 per cent of their water before fermentation. In this appassimento process, the resulting style of red wine is rich, high alcohol and dry – amarone in Italian means "the great bitter".

Modern Amarone is more likely to be made in technologically assisted drying chambers these days, with other changes that have transformed it from austere to immediately accessible. Brigaldara winemaker and owner Stefano Cesari champions lowered yields, careful clonal selection and the Corvina grape in his historic and striking patch of the Valpolicella Classica district.

The property can be traced back to the 13th century, and since 1929 it has belonged to the Cesari family. Olives, grapes, grain and fruit were farmed until 1979 when Mr Cesari began producing his own wines. Since then, the estate has expanded to 50 hectares, with 15 hectares given over to vineyards, and some production of olive oil and summer truffle. This particular Amarone comes from the smaller and slower-ripening Case Vecie vineyard, producing just 15,000 bottles annually.

Tasting notes: High alcohol at 17.5 per cent is balanced by the wine's density and textural richness. Alluring cherries, dried fruit, spices and tobacco on the nose is echoed in the palate. Minerality and savoury notes envelope the long, lush finish.

Gunderloch Rothenberg Spätlese 2010

Price: \$80.25
Retail: Cornerstone Wines, #01-00 Cornerstone Building,
61 Lorong 17 Geylang. Tel: 6732 0555



WINEMAKER Fritz Hasselbach has wrested 100 points from Robert Parker's Wine Advocate not once, but thrice for his Trockenbeereauslese (TBA) – in 1992, 1996 and 2001.

The "300-point man" didn't start out wanting to be a winemaker, although he studied winemaking at the prestigious Geisenheim University in Rheingau, and worked for the government in viticulture. In 1979, his wife Agnes Hasselbach-USinger inherited her family's Gunderloch Estate in Nackenheim along the banks of the Rhine River, which had been established by her great-great-grandfather in 1890 and was almost bankrupt.

Mr Hasselbach implemented reduction of yield, selective harvesting – making multiple passes to harvest grapes at different ripeness levels, and introduced temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks for fermentation. But the greatest advantage was the terroir: part of his estate lies where a vein of ancient red slate soil runs along the well-exposed vineyard slopes, imbuing his Rieslings with the finesse of minerals and peach flavours. Of his small parcel of 12 hectares, eight hectares lie in the outstanding Rothenberg vineyard parcel, which is considered one of the three Grand Cru A vineyards in the Rheinhessen region. Gunderloch wines are never deacidified; high-acid vintages wait in bottling for the wines to harmonise and soften. The winery's portfolio includes an entry-level Riesling simply called Fritz's Riesling, niftily packaged for the American market.

Tasting notes: Poised and lush, inviting with citrus, stone fruit and honeysuckle on the nose. The expressive fruit is weaved with filigree acidity and savoury minerality all the way to a mouthwatering finish. Enjoy now or keep for next two decades, according to Wine Advocate.

Xavier Gigondas 2010

Price: \$59.92
Retail: Cornerstone Wines, #01-00 Cornerstone Building, 61
Lorong 17 Geylang
☎ 6732 0555

HE'S the "master of Châteauneuf", the oenologist with star-studded clients all over the Rhone. After 15 years of helping top domains make their best known wines, Xavier Vignon decided to try his hand at making his own wines in 2002. He buys small lots of wines from his clients, especially grapes that he knows are the best – including those from 90-year-old Grenache vines and Syrah grown on the best soils. In return for oenology consultations, some clients even pay him in grapes.

The result is a private label with varied offerings of Côtes du Rhone rouge and blanc, as well as cru appellations including Gigondas and the lauded Châteauneuf-du-Pape Anonyme. Vignon's skills as a master blender since his Champagne days stands him in good stead with his own wines, where he not only blends wines from many parcels, but also across vintages.

Tasting notes: While weighing in heavy on alcohol, this 100 per cent Grenache enjoys a floral elegance and spice notes that carry through the big, rich body. Pure black fruit and fine texture reveals the elegance and complexity of old vines.



Rousing finish to debut of BT Wine Challenge



Top choices: Alvin Tay (fifth from left), editor of The Business Times with the 10 judges of the CEOs' Choice Wines - (from left) Dr Alvin Hong of Alvin Hong Neurosurgery; Patrick Chong, CEO, The Luxasia Group; Susan Sim, deputy CEO, ARA Trust Management (Suntec) Limited; Esmond Choo, senior executive director, UOB Kay Hian Private Limited; Alfred S H Wong, MD, Noel Gifts International Ltd; Edmund Koh, country head, UBS Singapore and CEO, UBS Wealth Management, SE Asia and Asia-Pacific Hub; Patrick Daniel, editor-in-chief, EMND, SPH; Maximilien Fedkiw, founder/sommelier of Bistro du Sommelier; Timothy Goh, director of Wines, Les Amis; Lim Hwee Peng, international wine specialist, WineCraft Marketing and Services.

- PHOTO: YEN MENG JIIN

'There have been many wine awards over the years but none of them really reflect the palate of business leaders.'

- Alvin Tay, BT editor

'Competition breeds the best... we focused on the best drinkable vintage wines.'

[SINGAPORE] Fine wine distributors and more than 200 top executives toasted the conclusion of the inaugural BT Wine Challenge 2013 CEOs' Choice in partnership with UBS on Friday night. Ten CEOs' Choice winners were unveiled at an awards ceremony at Command House, home of the UBS Business University.

The ceremony recognised not just the distributors of the CEOs' Choice Wines, but also the 10 CEO judges and panel of three of wine experts that have helped to guide the Wine Challenge.

The guests enjoyed the exclusive opportunity to taste not just the CEOs' Choice labels, but all 50 wines shortlisted from 150 initial submissions. And they were the first to be offered BT-exclusive discounts on the CEOs' Choice winners via the BTInvest website, BTInvest.com.sg (A month-long public promotion, till Oct 27, that is open to all who order through BTInvest).

Edmund Koh, UBS Singapore country head and CEO for UBS Wealth Management, South-east Asia & Asia-Pacific Hub, welcomed guests during the ceremony's welcome speech, while BT editor Alvin Tay explained the aims of the competition. And head judge Lim Hwee Peng, from Wine-Craft Marketing, shared some the technical aspects of the judging process before Mr Tay unveiled the winners.

"There have been many wine awards over the years but none of them really reflect the palate of business leaders," said Mr Tay. "With the CEOs' Choice awards in the BT Wine Challenge, we hope we've been able to suss out what top executives would actually like to drink, rather than what might be technically impressive or a good investment."

The top 10 CEOs' Choice wines and their distributors, in no order of precedence, are:

- * Domaine Thibault Liger-Belair, Vosne-Romanee aux Reas 2010 And Bodegas Alion 2008, both by Vinum Fine Wines
- * Chateau de la Font du Loup, Chateaufeuf du Pape 2010 and Domenico Clerico, Ciabot Menti Ginestra Barolo DOCG 2004, both by J&D Burleigh
- * Domaine Francois Carillon, Puligny Montrachet 2010, Corney & Barrow
- * Domaine Georges Vernay, Blonde du Seigneur 2009, ewineasia.com
- * Huber Pinot Noir 2010, Wein & Vin
- * Pierro Chardonnay 2011, Hai Choo Wines & Spirits
- * Sette Ponti Oreno 2009, Hock Tong Bee
- * Silverado Cabernet Sauvignon 2009, Vinicole Asia

Mr Koh, who also served on the judging panel, said: "My congratulations to the top 10 winning wines this year. The range reflects wines which are enjoyable, easy on the palate but with a range of flavours and characteristics to make it interesting. We hope the BT Wine Challenge will grow over the years to encompass the views of more of our top executives and be a point of discussion and debate to discern the wines most enjoyed by the business community here."

Boon Heng, Wein & Vin's director, expressed pleasant surprise at Huber Pinot Noir 2010's (retail price, \$55) win. "It's a basic wine, but I picked it as a good example of a wine that is showing its best now at an affordable price."

Brigitte Bouchayer, Marketing Manager of Vinicole Asia, had especially good reason to celebrate as Vinicole had been appointed Silverado's distributor just earlier this year. "We didn't have a Napa wine before this, but after tasting the Silverado, we found the wine very good and we also liked the Miller family very much. It's a mid to high-range label that works very well for our restaurant clients," she said.

Clinton Ang, Hock Tong Bee managing director and distributor of Sette Ponti Oreno 2009, had this take on the awards: "Assessing the winners, I can only but safely say that the wines chosen will suit every CEO hosting occasion. The wines truly personify each region and winemaking style that they come from, and with the quality in the bottle, I can also say that the best is yet to be."

Mr Lim, in his speech, said: "Competition breeds the best, and in this competition, we focused on the best drinkable vintage wines, assessed objectively."

Wine judge Timothy Goh and Les Amis Group wine director agreed.

Maximilien Fedkiw, founder of Sommelier of Le Bistro du Sommelier, and the third member of the panel responsible for the shortlisting round, said: "The whole process emphasises integrity and selection, for wines that will be enjoyed by all wine lovers."

The BT Wine Challenge has its roots in the first BT Wine Night in 2005, which was established for CEOs to network and appreciate wine. After 30 quarterly events, it has evolved into BT Luxe to showcase premium products beyond wine.

The 50 wines shortlisted in the BT Wine Challenge 2013 have been featured in BT in the eight weeks leading to the awards ceremony, and will be compiled into a wine guide.

Visit BTInvest.com.sg to purchase CEOs' Choice wines at exclusive discounts, until Oct 27 or while stocks last.