

Wine Spectator Weekly

Internet Only

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GET WINE SPECTATOR RATINGS HERE FIRST—EVERY THURSDAY

Most wine lovers agree that great wines are made in great vineyards, which require special combinations of soil and climate. The logical conclusion is that the global supply of great vineyards is finite. Yet our tastings indicate that the wine world is expanding.

This issue, managing editor Kim Marcus alerts you to some outstanding red wines from the Languedoc, formerly known for inexpensive plonk. These are more costly, but deliver ripe fruit, big structures and a clear sense of *terroir*.

We also bring you delicious and distinctive wines from Austria. And who said Pinot Noir could only grow in Burgundy? Oregon and California are delivering excellent examples, too. If there are physical limits to the origins of great wines, human skill and determination are pushing them farther and farther into the unknown.

France

The Languedoc is one of the world's hotbeds for value-priced reds. Many of its best wines, including those of Château Maris in the Minervois appellation, are based on the Syrah grape, the noble red of the Rhône Valley. Château Maris is part of the revitalized Comte Cathare group, whose winemaker and co-owner Robert Eden follows the organic principles of biodynamic viticulture in his vineyards. He also made an outstanding red from the underappreciated Carignane grape. Hecht & Bannier is a new producer off to a fast start; it has previously released high-quality reds from the Faugeres and Côtes du Roussillon districts. The Fitou from Château des Erles is the best Languedoc release yet from the globe-trotting Lurton brothers.—K.M.

Château Maris

Syrah Minervois La Livinière Les Vieilles Vignes 2001
92 points | \$25 | 330 cases made

Rich and ripe, with a beefy aroma and a deep array of blackberry, chocolate and dark plum flavors, which blend together seamlessly. Firm structure here as well, with loads of pepper and spice notes on the long finish. Drink now through 2007.—K.M.

Château Maris

Minervois La Livinière 2001
91 points | \$20 | 830 cases made

Silky, mouthcoating flavors of blackberry, dark plum and chocolate give this full-bodied red a hedonistic allure. Flavors are backed up by supple tannins and a lithe frame. Long finish is filled with spice and smoke. Drink now through 2007.—K.M.

Hecht & Bannier

Coteaux du Languedoc 2001
90 points | \$28 | 150 cases imported

Well-crafted red, with concentrated red plum, berry and dark chocolate flavors, and smoky notes as well. Big tannins and a clean, crisp finish filled with peppery and spicy elements. Drink now.—K.M.

J. & F. Lurton

Fitou Château des Erles 2001
90 points | \$40 | 165 cases imported

Ripe and concentrated, with rich dark plum and boysenberry flavors, and exotic spicy notes mixed in. Full-bodied, finishing with loads of dark chocolate and Bourbon notes. Drink now through 2007.—K.M.