

Southeastern European reds

From a breadth of origins, touching the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Black seas, and a plethora of less-familiar grapes and local styles, this tasting offered much to discover

REPORT CAROLINE GILBY MW

With 12 Outstanding wines across five countries, involving seven local grapes, this was a fascinating, diverse and high-scoring tasting. It also provided a strong signal that the whole region of 10 nations – under the broad umbrella of ‘southeastern Europe’ – is coming of age and offers lots of exciting options for adventurous wine drinkers.

The results gave a clear message that indigenous varieties, once written off as plodding workhorses, can deliver both global quality and wines with real personality and distinct differences that reflect each country. It should give producers a boost, showing they can have real confidence in native varieties and don’t have to rely on adding Merlot or Cabernet.

Ana Jackson MW was impressed by the high quality across the board. ‘It was great to see the versatility of grapes and to see real freshness in

some of the Outstanding wines. And where there is oak, it’s good oak, unlike a few years ago,’ she said. ‘Teran was a highlight among the top-scoring wines, and the Kabola amphora wine (see p96) deserves a special mention. The Probus grape was a real discovery, too.’

Igor Luković agreed. ‘I was impressed with the consistency of the wines – fewer mistakes and the traditional, rustic, over-oaked styles are disappearing in favour of far more modern and precise winemaking,’ he said. ‘I expected Teran to shine, and it delivered. But I also admired Prokupac, and I think that Frankovka (or Blaufränkisch) has a great future in southeastern Europe and should be planted more widely.’

The judges agreed that the next challenge is how to promote these unfamiliar wines, though the results showed that this region is a treasure trove of exciting and delicious discoveries.

THE SCORES 128 wines tasted

Exceptional 0 Outstanding 12 Highly recommended 30 Recommended 63 Commended 23

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their current-release, still, dry red wines made from 100% indigenous grapes and/or traditional regional grapes, including blends, from specified countries in the southeast of Europe

WHAT TO EAT by Fiona Beckett

The combination of what are likely to be unfamiliar grape varieties with the unfamiliar cuisines of their home countries might sound daunting but could prompt some exciting experiments. Certainly there’s no lack of quality among these wines, particularly Croatia’s Teran, which is traditionally paired with wild boar, venison and other game, rich fatty meats and Paški sir, a salty sheep’s cheese from the island of Pag. So it should equally work with more familiar, slow-cooked Greek, Turkish and Lebanese meat dishes and salty Greek cheeses such as feta. Vranac should work with similar dishes, especially braises and stews, while Prokupac lends itself to roasts and grills, being a particularly good pairing, according to Serbian sommelier Vuk Vučetić, for the local čevapi (skinless minced-meat sausages), served with an ajvar (red pepper) sauce. Emboldened by that touch of spice, I would be inclined to try Georgian and other Central Asian dishes, and even Indian roasted or grilled meats. These robust reds would pair well with foods cooked over coals.



THE JUDGES



CAROLINE GILBY MW
is an awarded author, speaker and consultant with a passion for the wines of the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe and the Black Sea. She is DWWA joint Regional Chair across several categories



ANA JACKSON MW
is head of wine business development for Amathus Drinks and was formerly head buyer at Oddbins for more than 12 years. She is keen to promote less-familiar wine categories and is a DWWA judge for the Southern & Eastern Mediterranean category



IGOR LUKOVIĆ
is editor in chief at *Vino & Fino* magazine in Serbia. A wine writer, consultant, judge and events manager, he is a DWWA judge and president of The Balkans International Wine Competition jury

PHOTOGRAPH: JUERFRTEAM/GETTY IMAGES

Outstanding 95-97pts



Bertoša, Berba Teran, Istria, Croatia 2021

Caroline Gilby MW 96

Ana Jackson MW 96

Igor Luković 95

bertosawines.com

A small family winery established in 2006, now run by the founder’s son Robi. Its 7ha are situated in the ‘grand cru’ area for Teran, on limestone-rich white soil near the medieval hilltop town of Motovun. This historic grape, first mentioned in the 14th century, prefers sunny locations and this interpretation comes from a plot at 350m – above the fog zone that arises from the nearby Mirna river. The wine has been matured in 1,000L French oak casks for 18 months.

Caroline Gilby MW Juicy blackberry and mulberry, hints of violet and vanilla. Intense, vibrant but quite linear. Good length and a refined finish. Juicy, vibrant and pure.

Ana Jackson MW Some herbaceous and black leather aromas. A floral, plummy, sour cherry palate, balanced oak, lovely harmony and nice evolution of fruit.

Igor Luković Oaky but classy, with good varietal character. Youthful, juicy and vibrant, with nice structure with some spicy undertones on the persistent aftertaste. **Drink** 2026-2035 **Alcohol** 13%



Aleksić, Amanet Vranac, Vranje, Nišava, Serbia 2019 £

CG 95 **AJ** 95 **IL** 95

£22.50 **Niko Preston**

When they founded Aleksić in 2006 in Vranje, southern Serbia, sisters Dragana, Maja and

aged for 15 months in Serbian oak – ‘power meets freshness’ is the sisters’ concept.

CG Sweet oak and dried cherry. Polished and supple, with quite a chunky backbone of tannins and acidity. Very typical of the variety – does everything it should; nicely complete.

AJ Dense, concentrated nose, smoky, some maturity of fruit, leather and tobacco. Still some fruit concentration, harmonious.

IL Lively, fruity with nicely integrated oak. Nicely aged, with a touch of elegance, blackberries and red fruits. Vibrant, long-lasting, precise.

Drink 2026-2032 **Alc** 14%



Clai, Baracija Refošk, Buje, Istria, Croatia 2022 £

CG 95 **AJ** 94 **IL** 95

£21.59 (2021) Ripley Wines

Founder Giorgio Clai was a restaurateur who inherited vineyards in northern Istria and discovered a passion for wine. A pioneer of organic wine in the region, Clai has always pursued low yields from dense plantations. The winery’s 10ha are on flysch and white soil near the Slovenian border, cooled by salty breezes from the Adriatic, which is just 10km away. Clai’s motto is ‘nature in your glass’ and winemaking, now guided by South African Tim Whitfield,

is all about spontaneous fermentations and ageing for one year in large oak casks before bottling unfiltered.

CG Vibrant, bright bilberry and Morello cherry. Very pure, juicy and precise. Good tannins and length. Young; lots of promise.

AJ Sanguine, rich, bold, the palate ripe but with lifted freshness. Tannins are chalky.

IL Intensely fruity, with earthy complexity. Nice vibrancy and well-managed tannins. Lively, red and dark cherries, slightly spicy. A fresh, lingering finish.

Drink 2026-2036 **Alc** 13.5%



Deklić, Teran, Vižinada, Istria, Croatia 2022

CG 95 **AJ** 95 **IL** 95

vina-deklic.com

Three generations of the Deklić family are rightly proud of their new winery in the highly regarded wine village of Vižinada. Their 25ha of vines grow on deep, rusty-red soils

spontaneous fermentation and 12-15 months in a mix of barriques and 500L casks.

CG Opaque. Liquorice, sloe and vanilla nose. Rich and full to taste, with cooked black fruit, grainy but big tannin backbone and harmonious acidity.

AJ Rich, dense nose: vanilla, evolving spiced fruit. Palate is full, with bold tannins, savoury herbs, mocha and black fruits.

IL Ripe fruits, a little jammy, dark chocolate and minty notes. Nice structure. Juicy with sweet spices, ripe berries. Smoky finish.

Drink 2026-2032 **Alc** 13.5% ▶



Đurđić, Probus, Fruška Gora, Srem, Serbia 2022

CG 95 AJ 95 IL 95
djurđić.rs
 Not from a winemaking background, owner Dražen Đurđić brought a fresh approach when he took over from his father at this winery, which was founded in 2005 near Sremski Karlovci (where he's also the town's mayor). Vineyards now cover 15ha on the slopes of the Fruška Gora mountain, part close to the winery and part by the Danube at Matej, considered to be a 'grand cru' location. The focus is on local grapes such as Probus – a Serbian cross of Kadarka and Cabernet Sauvignon that produces dark, dense but juicy wines, here



Enoist, III, Istria, Croatia 2022

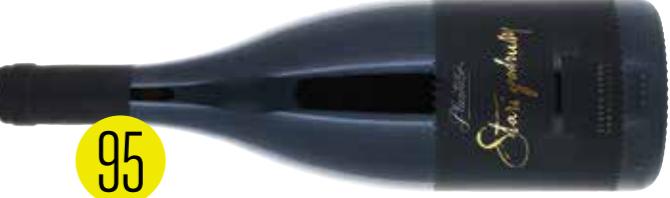
CG 95 AJ 95 IL 95
enoist.com
 refined by 18 months of ageing in barrique.
CG Black mulberry, bilberry, a hint of good-quality oak. Plush crushed black fruit, blackberry juice and more bilberry. Very typical and a nice example.
AJ Deep and bold, with rich blueberry fruit and floral aromas. Chalky tannins on a velvety palate, with violet notes and a long, fresh finish.
IL Cassis and mulberry, a toasty and spicy nose. Well structured, with a lot of fruity freshness. Full and persistent. Finishes with sweet, juicy berry notes.
Drink 2026-2033 **Alc** 14.5%

in a mixture of French and Croatian oak.
CG Serious, complex bouquet: vanilla, clove, violet and raspberry. Clean, with great varietal expression of Teran, polished tannins and a slatey mineral undertone. Very smart.
AJ Rich on the nose, with notes of vanilla oak and spice. Savoury development, but there are pure floral and blueberry notes and a persistent finish.
IL Roasted coffee and toast nose with ripe blueberries, plum and cherry lurking underneath. The tannins are a touch rustic, but the wine is well balanced.
Drink 2026-2035 **Alc** 13.5%



Matalj, Bukovski Cuvée, Negotin, Serbia 2021

CG 96 AJ 93 IL 95
f25 nikopreston
 Owner Nikola Mladenović Matalj trained as a chemical engineer but turned to winemaking soon after graduation when he returned home jobless and wanted to do something that was close to the land. In Serbia's far east, Negotin is historically renowned for wines so thick that they could be carried in a napkin. In 2007, Matalj set about finding out what people used to grow, reviving almost extinct varieties such as Bagrina and Začinak, 22% of which adds spice and colour to local Prokupac (75%) in this elegant blend, with subtle aromatics from a little Kadarka, too.
CG Complex and spicy nose, dried summer berries, cranberry and tea leaf. Nice harmony and good length on the palate.
AJ Bright, sour cherry fruit. While showing modest concentration this is pleasantly well made and enjoyable.
IL Dark and red berries, cherry and blackberry, and integrated oaky spiciness. Nice moderate structure, with a juicy freshness. A long, spicy, fruit-driven finish.
Drink 2026-2036 **Alc** 12.5%



Plantaže, Stari Podrum Vranac, Podgorica, Montenegro 2018

CG 95 AJ 95 IL 94
plantaze.com
 One of southeastern Europe's largest producers, which also lays claim to Europe's biggest single-location vineyard, at 2,300ha. It lies 30km from the Adriatic and close to lake Skadar, planted on chalky, pebbly, well-drained soils. Traditional in a good way, with some very positive maturation.
CG Dark and complex, with spicy roast coffee and black fruit. A big, bold flavourful wine, the tannins nicely tamed.
AJ Deep, rich, oaky nose. The palate is rich, too, but with some good freshness on the finish. A lot of oak but it's in balance.
IL Leathery and fruity. A little straightforward, with plum and red fruits. Somewhat dry on the finish, but there's nice vibrancy.
Drink 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.5%



Kabola, Amfora Teran, Momjan, Istria, Croatia 2020

CG 96 AJ 94 IL 94
f25.99 novelwines
 A stunning family winery that has featured as a major movie backdrop, Kabola bears the nickname of the owning family, which traces its winemaking history back to 1891. Today, the Markežić family grows 20ha of vines that have been certified organic since 2009. Kabola was one of Istria's first modern wineries and has pioneered using amphorae imported from Georgia. This Teran comes from its best hilltop plot, known as Stancija, planted on white clay/marl soils and cooled by Adriatic breezes. The wine is fermented and macerated with the skins until spring, then finished with a further 12 months in oak.
CG Complex nose, with bramble, black mulberry and thyme. Lovely, vivid berry fruit. Incredibly juicy, backed up by great texture, wet stone notes and vibrant acidity.
AJ Vibrant, with sweet fruit and mocha. A ripe if rather baked palate, mid- to full-bodied, creamy but lively.
IL An intensely fruity nose. Slightly warming alcohol, but this is juicy, with grippy tannins and retains nice freshness.
Drink 2026-2035 **Alc** 14.5%



Klet Krško, Turn Premium Modra Frankinja, Bizejško-Sremič, Posavje, Slovenia 2021

CG 95 AJ 95 IL 95
klet-krsko.si
 From a cooperative founded almost a century ago in eastern Slovenia, at the meeting point of the Dolenjska and Bizejško-Sremič regions, with a sunny continental climate. It works with 200ha and 200 families, and Turn is its premium line from the best sites, launched in 2020 and named for the nearby 18th-century castle. The region's most important grape is Modra Frankinja (aka Blafränkisch), which is thought to have originated in Slovenia. This bottling is a selection from a vineyard located at 400m on weathered limestone bedrock, aged for 24 months in second-use 1,000L French oak casks.
CG A dense, dark wine. Damson and sloe, cassis, oak and a slight earthy note. Bold and intense, with blackberry and mulberry, juicy acidity and firm tannins. Very authentic.
AJ Mocha coffee richness on the nose, sour cherry and some maturity. Palate is herbaceous, with black fruit, minerality and some evolution.
IL Black peppery spice aromas, then come the cherries. Really typical for the variety. Vibrant and fresh with a spicy finish.
Drink 2026-2030 **Alc** 13%



SERVE, Terra Romana Fetească Neagră, Dealu Mare, Romania 2023

CG 95 AJ 95 IL 95
serve.ro
 Société Euro-Roumaine des Vins d'Exception was the first private winery in Romania's new era, beginning in 1994 when Corsican Count Guy de Poix fell in love with the country, his wife Mihaela and Fetească Neagră. He died in 2011, but his wife and daughter Silviana are continuing his vision. This will be one of the last wines made by Aurel Rotarescu, winemaker from the beginning, who sadly passed away in late 2025. SERVE helped recover the fortunes of Fetească Neagră, a flagship in its 68ha of vineyards in the Dealu Mare region.
CG Clean and inviting, with bramble, clove and smart oak. Velvety, and a great varietal expression of cherry and violet, with fine-grained tannins. This has lots of potential.
AJ Plummy black fruit with cherry aromas. Youthful, with more plum and a touch of violet on the mid-palate. Persistent.
IL Juicy, with earthy varietal notes, blackthorn and a slightly herbal edge. Nice structure, with firm tannins and a fruity, spicy finish.
Drink 2026-2033 **Alc** 14.5%



Tarpoš, Prokupac, Oplenac, Šumadija, Serbia 2023

CG 96 AJ 95 IL 95
tarpos.rs
 A small winery and restaurant with 10ha of vines at up to 360m on a hillside that overlooks the mineral-spa town of Arandjelovac, south of Belgrade. The vines are dry-farmed in the warm continental climate where night temperatures can drop 20°C – great for freshness and varietal precision. Winemaker Jelena Živanović has been here for three years and is now stamping her own elegant take on the wines. This is her first harvest of Prokupac, with tiny yields of 500g per vine, and aged for just nine months in third-fill, 225L light-toast French oak barrels.
CG Cherry, strawberry, red plum, just a touch of coffee and well-handled oak. Fresh, light, herby red berry notes, refined tannins. Elegant and charming.
AJ Morello cherry, middling intensity of fruit. Fresh, rounded and well made, showing mid-level complexity.
IL Atractive aromas. Intensely fruity, with some classy, well-integrated oak. Dark cherries, blackberries and some eucalyptus. Juicy, with lingering fruitiness.
Drink 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.5% ▶

Highly recommended 90-94pts



94
Bizio Estate, Organic Agiorgitiko, Nemea, Greece 2022

CG 95 AJ 94 IL 92
£28.50 **Maltby & Greek**
Inviting bramble and bilberry lift; ripe dark berry, plum and prune richness. Mocha, coffee bean and warm spice; sleek, plush yet vibrant. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 14.5%



94
Kozlović, Santa Lucia Teran, Istria, Croatia 2017

CG 95 AJ 93 IL 94
kozlović.hr
Youthful, vivid. Mulberry and bilberry, hints of liquorice, cocoa nib and sandalwood. Rich depth and rounded oak meet meaty, smoky tones and bold fruit. Impressive harmony for its age. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 14.5%



94
Valenta, Terre di Paradiso, Istria, Croatia 2022

CG 95 AJ 94 IL 93
valentawines.com
Mulberry, mulberry and black cherry with violet lift and well-integrated oak. Red berry brightness adds nuance to a deep, velvety core. Good weight, with lively tannins and a spicy edge. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14%



93
Bruno Ferenac, Teran, Vižinada, Istria, Croatia 2022

CG 93 AJ 92 IL 95
@wines_ferenac_bruno
Complex and harmonious. Dark chocolate, dried cherry and sweet spice over sour and ripe cherry tones. Crunchy acidity and a peppery lift. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 13.5%



93
Vina Dobravac, Fuga Teran, Rovinj, Istria, Croatia 2020

CG 93 AJ 93 IL 94
villa-dobravac.com
Intense, vibrant. Black cherry, loganberry, chocolate, vanilla, clove and earth and herb notes. Crunchy acidity, integrated oak and varietal purity. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 14.5%



92
Doja, Breg Prokupac, Toplica, Serbia 2020

CG 93 AJ 91 IL 93
£42 Hic, Niko Preston
Dark, generous, layering black cherry, aronia and blackberry with chocolate, coffee, black tea and floral lift, a touch of tar and green pepper adding nuance. Ripe, juicy and concentrated. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 14.5%



92
Fakin, Il Primo Teran, Istria, Croatia 2020

CG 92 AJ 95 IL 90
fakinwines.com
Generous and evolved, showing dark raspberry, red mulberry and prune with touches of leather, spice and earth. Juicy and vibrant with light, supple tannins and a rounded, concentrated core. Effortless drinking. **Drink** 2026-2033 **Alc** 14.5%



92
Pervino, Classic Teran, Novigrad, Istria, Croatia 2022

CG 92 AJ 94 IL 90
pervino.eu
Chocolate-tinged cherry and blueberry, lifted by smoke, sweet spice and savoury evolution. Lively fruit over grainy, bold tannins. Integrated vanilla oak. Long and confident. **Drink** 2026-2035 **Alc** 13%



92
Rajković, Nobile Prokupac, Župa, Tri Morave, Serbia 2023

CG 93 AJ 90 IL 92
vinarjarajkovic.com
Bramble, dried strawberry and black fruit, with mocha, coffee and sweet spice tones. Full-bodied yet fresh, creamy oak framing bold tannins. A slightly chalky edge and a persistent finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 15%



92
Škegro, Carsus Trnjak, Ljubuški, West Herzegovina, Bosnia & Herzegovina 2023

CG 94 AJ 92 IL 91
£28.25 **Golborne Deli**
Bright and vivid with bilberry, bramble and herbal lift, and cocoa and vanilla warmth. Smooth, with dense tannins and a fruit-sweet finish. **Drink** 2026-2033 **Alc** 14%



92
Tvrdoš Monastery, Grande Reserve Vranac, South Herzegovina, Bosnia & Herzegovina 2016

CG 90 AJ 95 IL 91
tvrdos.com
Fully mature. Cherry-jam fruit with mocha, chocolate and rich vanilla oak. Ripe, evolved fruit remains vibrant. A coconut-tinged finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 15%



92
Vinčić, Grand Fru Blu, Srem, Vojvodina, Serbia 2024

CG 93 AJ 90 IL 92
vinarjavincic.com
Fresh bilberry, Morello cherry, raspberry and loganberry lifted by violet and spice. Juicy and structured, with a vibrant, fruity finish. **Drink** 2026-2034 **Alc** 15%



91
Aleksandrović, Prokupac, Oplenac, Sumadija, Serbia 2021

CG 92 AJ 88 IL 92
vinarjaaleksandrovic.rs
Bright and gently aromatic with strawberry, cranberry and red cherry touched by tea leaf, herbs and a hint of peppery spice. Smartly integrated oak supports a moderately concentrated palate, finishing fresh. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 14%



91
Korten, Natura Mavrud & Rubin, Thracian Lowlands, Bulgaria 2022

CG 93 AJ 90 IL 89
£15-£16.50 **Cellar Door Wines, The Jolly Merchants, The Old Cellar, The Oxford Wine Co, Village Wines Bexley**
Black fruit and well-judged oak. Generous, concentrated; plum and damson. Fresh, with clear varietal character and a structured finish. **Drink** 2026-2035 **Alc** 14%



91
Merga Victa, Plavac Mali, Korčula, Dalmatia, Croatia 2020

CG 93 AJ 90 IL 91
£18.99 **Novel Wines**
A light, fresh expression with strawberry, red cherry and blueberry framed by sage, some savoury lift and subtle iodine notes. Crunchy and appealing, with good acidity, fine chalky tannins and a gently mineral line. **Drink** 2026-2030 **Alc** 13.5%



91
Pirg, Vranac, Šumadija, Serbia 2022

CG 90 AJ 95 IL 88
@vinarija.pirg
Black cherry jam, blueberry and floral cherry notes wrapped up in vanilla-spiced oak. Youthful acidity keeps things lively, the ripe tannins providing shape, leaving a simple, coconut-tinged and slightly drying finish. **Drink** 2026-2033 **Alc** 12.5%



91
Vina Prelac, Refošk, Momjan, Istria, Croatia 2023

CG 90 AJ 94 IL 89
prelac.hr
Youthful red plum, rosehip and a lifted herbaceous note. Dark cherry and blackberry depth with subtle leathery spice. Firm structure with balance. Clean and juicy, finishing a little astringent yet appealing. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14%



91
Vinarija Radovan, Prokupac, Župa, Tri Morave, Serbia 2023

CG 92 AJ 89 IL 91
vinarjaradovan@gmail.com
Damson, mulberry and dark cherry with black tea, tobacco leaf and earthy tones. Generously fruited yet fresh and lightly mineral. Grainy tannins give structure to the fruit-led finish. **Drink** 2026-2033 **Alc** 14%



90
Athanasiou, Thronos Agiorgitiko, Nemea, Greece 2021

CG 90 AJ 88 IL 91
£13.25-£16.50 **D'Arcy Wines, Kenricks, Oboe Fine Wine of Eydon, Peter Graham, The Somerset Wine Co**
Bright, lively. Sour cherry, spice and mocha. Firm tannins, freshness and a hint of bitterness. **Drink** 2026-2030 **Alc** 13.5%



90
Damjanić, Duro Istriano, Istria, Croatia 2020

CG 92 AJ 88 IL 90
damjanic.eu
Spicy and toasty with vanilla and a cigar-box lift over chocolate, fig, raisin and sour cherry. Still fruity, showing smooth texture and lively freshness. Maturing but balanced and composed, with a gently evolving finish. **Drink** 2026-2030 **Alc** 13%



90
Emporia Winery, Limited Edition Blatina, Mostar, Middle Neretva, Bosnia & Herzegovina 2019

CG 92 AJ 88 IL 90
£22.99 **Lunation Wines**
Red and dark cherry, herbaceous and earthy tones. Sleek, silky with chalky tannins and supple acidity. Soft structure yet balanced, with gentle sweetness and harmonious fruit. **Drink** 2026-2027 **Alc** 14%



90
Makarounas Vineyards, Giannoudi, Letymbou, Pafos, Cyprus 2022

CG 90 AJ 90 IL 90
£41.99 **Gusto Wines**
Spiced cranberry and redcurrant. Juicy and savoury with black fruit, well-integrated oak, ripe tannins and a modest yet vibrant and clean finish. **Drink** 2026-2030 **Alc** 13.5%



90
MasVin, Special Edition Crjenak, Dalmatia, Croatia 2021

CG 90 AJ 88 IL 92
masvin-polaca.hr
Warm and spicy with black cherry, dried-fruit, blackberry, tea leaf and vanilla. Vibrant and lively despite its riper, oak-sweetened style. **Drink** 2026-2030 **Alc** 15%



90
Medea, Teran, Istria, Croatia 2024

CG 90 AJ 89 IL 92
medea.hr
Crunchy cherry, cranberry and blueberry backed by black cherry depth. Light-bodied and refreshing with pure varietal character. Modest but vibrant, showing spice and an easy finish. **Drink** 2026-2029 **Alc** 12.5% ▶



90 Mikro Ktima Titos, Xinomavro-Negoska, Goumenissa, Macedonia, Greece 2021

CG 88 AJ 90 IL 91

£25.50 Cava Spiliadis

Leather, dried fig, tea and espresso sit beside bright sour cherry and strawberry. Precisely made with modern clarity, sweet oak nuances, a touch of salinity and an elegant finish. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 13%



90 Milan Budinski, OMO Refošk, Istria, Croatia 2022

CG 93 AJ 87 IL 90

info@wineacademycroatia.com

Dark cherry and baked fruit, with smoky, toasty oak and sweet spice. Sleek, with good acidity. Fruit is juicy and balanced despite an evolved, oak-forward profile. **Drink** 2026-2030 **Alc** 14.5%



90 Vinakoper, Capris Refošk, Istra, Primorska, Slovenia 2022

CG 91 AJ 89 IL 91

vinakoper.si

Vibrant blackberry and mulberry. Sour-cherry lift, framed by sweet, coconut-tinged oak and floral notes. Bold, robust and firmly structured with high acidity. Needs time to integrate. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 13%



90 Vinarija Šijački, Seduša, Fruška Gora, Srem, Serbia 2022

CG 92 AJ 89 IL 90

[@vinarijasjacki](http://vinarijasjacki)

Clean and juicy, with black cherry and berries lifted by light vanilla, clove and gentle smoky spice. Smooth and balanced, with ripe tannins and hints of plum, green pepper and herbs. Lightly spiced and a poised finish. **Drink** 2026-2028 **Alc** 15%



90 Vini Noüe Marinič, Erigone Gaugnac 1er Cru Refosco, Goriška Brda, Primorska, Slovenia 2020

CG 90 AJ 88 IL 92

£36.72-£39.95 Armit, [Dunell's](http://Dunell)

Mature and complex, with chocolate, bramble, cedar and crushed green pepper alongside a sour-cherry lift. The palate is a touch dry yet it's concentrated and still fresh. Persistent, with spice and assured definition. **Drink** 2026-2028 **Alc** 12.5%



90 Zemsil, Monteko Vranec, Tikvesh, North Macedonia 2023

CG 91 AJ 87 IL 91

monteko.mk

Fresh and youthful, with cassis, blackberry, bilberry and a gentle iris lift. Juicy and clean with a touch of sweet oak. Not complex but appealing and vibrant, the fruit slightly evolved yet still generous. Easy and unfussy. **Drink** 2026-2033 **Alc** 15%



Our buying guide provides you with trusted, independent, expert recommendations on what to buy, drink and cellar.

Each panel tasting is judged by three experienced tasters chosen for their authority in the category of wine being rated. All wines are tasted blind and are pre-poured for judges in flights of 8-10 wines. Our experts taste and score wines individually but then discuss their scores together at the end of each flight. Any wines for which scores are markedly different are retasted; however, judges are under no obligation to amend their scores.

Judges are encouraged to look for typicity in wines, rewarding those that are true to their region. When judging, experts are aware of wine price bands – under £15, £15-£30 and above £30 – with the aim of recognising and rewarding quality and value.

The tastings are held in the controlled environment of *Decanter's* tasting suite: a quiet, purposely designed room, with natural light. We limit the number of wines tasted to a manageable level – a maximum of 85 per day – allowing judges to taste more thoroughly and avoid palate fatigue.

Drink-by dates indicated are based on how long it is prudent to keep the wine in question. However, some wines will have a longer ageing capacity if stored in pristine conditions throughout their lifespan.

£ A **Value wine** symbol is shown next to wines priced at £15 or below, or those deemed by the Regional Editor who organised the tasting to offer particularly good value for money within their category. Inevitably the exact price bands that apply will vary from tasting to tasting, depending on the category being appraised.

SCORING SYSTEM

Tasters rate the wines using the 100-point scoring system. The overall *Decanter* rating is the average of all three judges' scores. The ratings are as follows:

- 98-100 **Exceptional** A great, exceptional and profound wine
- 95-97 **Outstanding** An excellent wine of great complexity and character
- 90-94 **Highly recommended** A very accomplished wine, with impressive complexity
- 86-89 **Recommended** A well-made, straightforward and enjoyable wine
- 83-85 **Commended** An acceptable, simple wine with limited personality

For wines rated Exceptional, Outstanding and Highly recommended, *Decanter* judges' individual scores and tasting notes are listed in addition to the average score. To see details of wines scoring 86-89pts, Recommended, please see decanter.com/panel-tastings



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* Ex-UK stockists: for UK consumers purchasing from outside the UK, please note that bottle prices shown include stockists' shipping fees, duty and taxes where known at time of writing. Goods could still be subject to additional charges on delivery or T&Cs – check with the retailer concerned before purchasing.