



# SPURRIER'S WORLD

See off the last grey winter days with warming vintage ports from 1977 and 1986, and a remarkable-value sparkling wine from Languedoc-Roussillon



### BEST OLD WORLD WHITE LAMY-PILLOT, CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET LES MORGEOTS, FRANCE 2006

From the best Chassagne premier cru terroir after Les Caillerets, this is both full and minerally on the palate; a very fine example of pure vineyard expression showing elegance and length. A great white Burgundy. **£28; Wai**



### BEST NEW WORLD WHITE AMISFIELD, PINOT GRIS, NEW ZEALAND 2006

Better known for its stunning Central Otago Pinot Noirs, this is Amisfield's fifth vintage with Pinot Gris: pale limey-yellow, very attractive floral, almost scented nose, fleshy fruit yet dry finish, lovely length and balance, excellent work in the vineyard and cellar. Expensive but worth it. **£18.25; BBR**



### BEST FORTIFIED WINE QUINTA DO NOVAL, COLHEITA, PORTUGAL 1986

Better than all the 1977s (see below), this oak-aged, single-vintage tawny shows lovely ripe fruit. Even more vibrant than Noval's excellent 1995, it's a wonderfully rich wine that has captured the heat of the Douro's best vineyards – a magical blend of freshness and maturity. **£39.16; Evy**



### BEST OLD WORLD RED CONTINO, VINA DEL OLIVO, RIOJA, SPAIN 2004

Contino (under the ownership of CVNE) is a 62ha estate created in 1973 in the Rioja Alavesa. Viña del Olivo comes from older vines on a 6ha block: 85% Tempranillo, 15% Graciano. It has 18 months in new oak, and is full of energy and depth with a sumptuously smooth finish; good for 10 years. **£42; WSo**



### BEST NEW WORLD RED CLAYVIN VINEYARD, PINOT NOIR, NEW ZEALAND 2005

For my European palate, this wine from Marlborough stood out among the 55 Pinots at the recent NZ new release tasting: spicy Gevrey-Chambertin nose, great vineyard depth, amazing purity of fruit and excellent use of oak all blend for a top-quality wine. 2008–15. **£26; L&W**



### BEST SPARKLER ROCHE LACOUR, CREMANT DE LIMOUX, FRANCE 2003

Sparkling wines from Limoux predate those from Champagne by 100 years. This 60% Chardonnay/20% Mauzac/20% Chenin Blanc blend was supervised by Denis Dubourdieu: lively colour, discreetly sparkling with soft, creamy fruit, lifted acidity and a delicious dry finish. **£9.99; Lai**



## 1977 VINTAGE PORTS

1977 was the most prized port vintage of the 1970s, a decade when only three vintages were widely declared: 1970, 1975 (light, but the market needed a vintage) and 1977 itself. The first few months of the year were cold and rainy, the flowering was late, and maturation was slowed due to the coolness of the summer, the vintage being saved by a very hot September. Despite lower natural sugars than normal, the finished wines were richly fruity with tannins to give them long ageing capacity.

In my view, a certain rawness of fruit became apparent after the fleshiness of youth had passed away, but they are holding up well and at 30 years are, perhaps in most cases, getting past their best. Outstanding was **GRAHAM**, whose plummy style shone through; then a long and masculine **TAYLOR**, ripe and spicy **FONSECA** and a youthful plumcake **GOULD CAMPBELL**; next were a vanilla **SMITH WOODHOUSE** and a mature **WARRE**, with **DOW**, **QUARLES HARRIS**, **DELAFORCE** and **CROFT** good but not great.



## CLARE VALLEY 2007 RIESLINGS

The Clare Valley is now as much associated with Riesling as the Barossa with Shiraz, and 2007 was one of its warmest and driest growing seasons, ending in a memorable vintage that began and finished early, with reduced yields the only negative factor. The Clare Valley style is fully fermented, alcohols of 12–13.5%, showing a limey intensity of aroma, and generosity of flavour with good acidity to balance the clean, dry finish. The wines are striking when young and age superbly for a decade at least.

All 12 2007s tasted were under Stelvin. My favourites in descending order from a successfully homogenous range were: the floral and stony **GROSSET POLISH HILL**, polished and spicy **PETALUMA HANLIN HILL**, both only rivalled by vineyard expressive **JIM BARRY THE FLORITA 2005**; then **PIKES TRADITIONALE**, **JIM BARRY THE LODGE HILL** and **GROSSET WATERVALE**, just ahead of **TIM ADAMS**, **MITCHELL WATERVALE**, **KILIKANOON MORTS BLOCK**, **WAKEFIELD** and **CLAYMORE JOSHUA TREE**.

PHOTOGRAPH: DEBBIE ROWE

For a full list of UK stockists turn to p91