



**The Wine Gang is five of the UK's most respected wine critics. From left to right: Olly Smith of BBC1's Saturday Kitchen, Tom Cannavan of www.wine-pages.com, Anthony Rose of The Independent, Joanna Simon of House and Garden and Tim Atkin MW of The Observer.**

"We reviewed white wines from this tasting in October, so now it's the turn of the reds – with one exception which we had to omit in October because it was still on the water. Selecting just over 20 reds from over 200 wasn't easy, so we decided to focus on Italy because, although Liberty now covers the world (extremely well), it is particularly renowned for the extent and quality of its Italian portfolio. We've thrown in a few exciting Australians and a trio of French, including a Cahors property which we think would convert any Cahors detractor."



**Greywacke Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2009**

Debut vintage of Kevin Judd's own wine: Judd made all 25 vintage of the iconic Cloudy Bay Sauvignon until he left last year to concentrate on Greywacke, his project named after the stones in his original vineyard. Judd is a man of few words, but his wine is wonderfully expressive – aromatic and zesty, with a flavour of gooseberries, herbs and minerals, a hint of spice and a fine chalky texture. A small portion is barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts.

**91 points**



**Allegrini Amarone della Valpolicella Classico 2005**

**One of February's Bunch of Five Greatest Wines + February's Top-Scoring Wine with 95 points**

Concentrated, rich and dry, with the complexity of a great vintage port. We found dark chocolate, dried figs, exotic spices, aromatic herbs, smoky oak and much more. But what sets this above so many Amarones is polish and purity: for all its density and weight, it has a lightness of touch. Drink it with hard cheese, bitter chocolate, casseroled game or after dinner anytime over the next eight years. And don't worry that 2005 wasn't a particularly good vintage for Amarone. It was for this one. Grapes? Corvina and Rondinella (80:15) and 5% of the obscure Oseleta. This is from Majestic's fine wine range, so may need to be ordered in.

**95 points**



**Isole e Olena Cepparello 2005**

Dark, concentrated 100% Sangiovese from the best parts of Paolo de Marchi's Chianti Classico estate. It has a heady perfume, rich, spicy, red-berry fruit, flavours of oak, firm tannins and a freshening note of acidity. You can drink it now, although the optimum would be 2012–2018.

**94 points**



**Château de Chambert Cahors Grand Vin 2007**

**One of February's Bunch of Five Wines to lay down**

Very deep, youthful purple, with a dense perfume of smoke, licorice and damsons and mouthfilling flavours of damsons, black-fruit, dark chocolate and minerals, set against a backdrop of lightly toasty oak. With ripe tannins, a balance of acidity and great length, this is a Cahors with a long and polished future. Drink over the next 12 years.

**93 points**



**Wild Earth Central Otago Pinot Noir 2007**

**One of February's Bunch of Five Romantic Wines**

We loved the 2006 vintage and this looks just as promising, with its succulent cherry and berry fruit, silky texture, soft oak, supple tannins and long, sleek finish. Seductive and soothing – the perfect wine to have at the ready if you're thinking of popping the question.

**93 points**



### **Isole e Olena Chianti Classico 2006**

There's 3% Syrah in this, along with the Sangiovese (85%) and Canaiolo. We're not saying the Syrah is responsible for the particularly alluring sweet and savoury aromas, but it's not there for nothing. The palate is intense, dry and spicy with soft, sweet plum and cherry fruit and finely balanced tannins. Drink over the next five years.

**93 points**



### **Allegrini Palazzo della Torre 2006**

A mini-Amarone style of 'Valpolicella' with rich nut-chocolate and kirsch-cherry flavours and a lovely feeling of depth and power. It comes from the Palazzo del Torre vineyard and is made using a combination of Ripasso and Amarone techniques; there's also an unconventional 5% Sangiovese blended into the Corvina (70%) and Rondinella – hence the Rosso Veronese designation, rather than DOC Valpolicella.

**93 points**



### **John Duval Wines Plexus 2006**

From John Duval, the man who for many years made Penfolds Grange, comes this plush, harmonious blend of Shiraz, Grenache and Mourvèdre (50:34:16), one of two wines he's making under his own label (the other, equally impressive, is called Entity and is all Shiraz). Plexus is full and concentrated with flavours of ripe blueberries, cracked black pepper and delicate oak and a backbone of fine, ripe tannins.

**92 points**



### **Fontodi Chianti Classico 2006**

This is a 100% Sangiovese Classico from an estate that could hardly be better sited and is one of the best and most consistent of all. It is always ripe, concentrated and powerful, but the 2006 seems even more so. It's a gorgeous wine, but we wouldn't want to see the ripeness and alcohol go any higher. Drink over the next five years. Also available from Harvey Nichols.

**92 points**



### **Clonakilla Hilltops Shiraz 2008**

Fragrant, northern Rhône-style Shiraz (with a tiny smidgen of Viognier) from the Hilltops district just north of Canberra. Intense raspberry/blackberry fruit with an aromatic bay-leaf note; full, but elegant, beautifully modulated and long. Pretty irresistible now, but will become more complex over the next eight years.

**92 points**



### **Tenuta di Capezzana Barco Reale di Carmignano 2007**

This is Capezzana's second wine – its everyday red – and while it may not be quite an everyday price, it is very good value. It combines seductive aromas of strawberry and crème de cassis with a more obviously Italian cherry-and-spice flavour and a texture that combines suppleness with softly chewy tannins. Capezzana wines have included Cabernet Sauvignon since 1945: Barco Reale has 20%, with Sangiovese making up most of the rest.

**92 points**



### **Felsina Chianti Classico 2007**

Felsina, in the warmer southern part of the Classico area, is renowned for its more powerful style, but we were impressed by this wine's fragrance, elegance and fine, silky texture, as well as by its fullness and spicy, Sangiovese-based complexity. Drink over the next five to six years. Also available from Ballantynes Direct.

**91 points**



### **G.D.Vajra Langhe Nebbiolo 2007**

It's worth swirling this round your glass, or decanting it, because it has a Nebbiolo perfume of great purity, but relatively understated. The palate is similarly pure in feel, with dark plum and prune fruit, touches of licorice and minerals and a silky, almost Pinot Noir-like texture. A good introduction to Aldo Vajra's Barolo. Drink over the next six years.

**90 points**



### **Château de Chambert Cahors Malbec 2007**

An exotic, ripe fruit nose with dense plum and blackberry flavours and gentle toasty oak; full and dry with velvety tannins and a smooth, fresh finish. This is a blend of 85% Malbec with 15% Merlot which, though designed to be more approachable than the Grand Vin (93-points) could see in its tenth birthday.

**90 points**



### **Cortegiara Valpolicella Ripasso 2007**

A very impressive Ripasso from the negociant arm of Allegrini. It has an intense, spiced-cherry perfume and a mouthfilling palate with chocolate, dried fruit and cherry flavours, gently chewy tannins and a sustained finish. The grape varieties are Corvina and Rondinella (70:30).

**90 points**



### **Paul Jaboulet Aîné Crozes Hermitage 'Les Jalets' 2006**

Textbook Crozes; textbook Syrah: aromas and flavours of raspberries and freshly ground black pepper with a touch of tar and iodine; mid-palate smoothness; and fine-grained tannins and some acidity to give it good underlying grip. Also available from The Wine Society and Majestic.

**89 points**



### **Alpha Zeta 'R' Valpolicella Superiore Ripasso 2007**

Beguiling, sweet, spicy, cherry aromas and flavours with a hint of oak giving roundness and depth to the streamlined purity. New Zealander Matt Thomson manages to make this Valpolicella Ripasso modern in feel, but utterly true to its origins – no mean feat when dealing with co-operatives.

**89 points**



### **Greenstone Vineyard Heathcote Sangiovese 2007**

Winemaker: Alberto Antonini, famous Tuscan producer and global consultant. Part-owner: Alberto Antonini. If that isn't a vote of confidence for Sangiovese (clones selected by Antonini in Tuscany) in this part of Australia, we don't know what is. There's a lot about this wine that makes it one of the most convincing Sangioveses we've seen outside Tuscany – concentrated cherry fruit with an underpinning of spicy, savoury chewiness – but the vanilla flavour from new oak is a jarring note. A bit less of that in future vintages and we'll be giving this a score that justifies its price.

**88 points**



### **Donnafugata Sherazade 2008**

A medium-bodied, supple blend of 50:50 Syrah and Nero d'Avola, made without oak to give a wine with sweet red-berry fruit (from the Syrah), nutty, chocolaty flavours and hints of herbs (from the Nero d'Avola) and soft tannins. All in all, an unusual and interesting wine – and very much better than the 2007 vintage we tried earlier last year and which may have been a poor bottle.

**88 points**



### **Selvapiana Chianti Rufina 2007**

A typically linear, elegant, steely Chianti from Selvapiana, the top name in the Rufina zone of Chianti. There is an immediacy to the sweet Sangiovese perfume, but it's worth swirling the wine around your glass to let the palate expand a bit. Drink any time over the next five years. Good with roast lamb and chops.

**88 points**



### **Allegrini Valpolicella 2008**

Ripe, juicy and cherryish with a hint of almond; medium-bodied, dry, smooth and fresh. Textbook young, early-drinking Valpol – and, as it happens, Classico in all but name. This is from the Valpolicella heartland – the Classico area – but, because Franco and Marilisa (Allegrini brother and sister) have opted for screwcaps to preserve the juicy freshness of the wine, they've had to opt out of the Classico designation. The law is an... (you choose).

**87 points**



### **Poggiotondo Cerro del Masso Chianti 2007**

Dark-coloured, stylish, modern Chianti aged in French oak, but truly, deeply Chianti all the same. Medium-bodied with soft, chewy, cherry fruit and a spicy, almond-pastry flavour. Good value, all-seasons, versatile food-wine.

**87 points**