



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.

OCTOBER 2009 NEWSLETTER 'LIBERTY WHITE WINES'

In little over a decade Liberty Wines has established itself as one of the UK's foremost wine importers. It started as an Italian specialist and is still an Italian specialist, but now has a portfolio which covers the world. What sets it above so many is that agencies aren't acquired just to fill gaps: they're taken when quality, or the potential, justifies it. We tasted a huge number of the 380-plus wines shown at this tasting and are bringing you whites this month and reds in a future report.



Mount Horrocks Watervale Riesling 2008

Bone-dry, concentrated and as tight as a coiled spring. This is Australian Riesling at its most piercingly apple-flavoured and mineral, with a tantalising suggestion of spice. If you want it to, this will easily see in its tenth birthday.

92 points



Shaw and Smith Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc 2009

House-keeping first: this is due in Waitrose next month; if you can't wait, it's available now from Liberty Wines. The important bit: it's the twentieth vintage of the wine that Michael Hill-Smith and Martin Shaw say has changed least in their 20-year history, which shows what a ground-breaking Sauvignon it originally was. It's still a gem of fresh aromatics and springy lemon, sweet apple and grass flavours, without the green pungency of many a new world Sauvignon. Great as an aperitif or with calamari and other seafood.

90 points



Shaw and Smith Adelaide Hills M3 Chardonnay 2008

This is Australian Chardonnay in the Burgundian mould, with low yields from a high proportion of Dijon clones, barrel fermentation with about 60% wild yeast, partial malolactic, lees stirring, etcetera, etcetera. What matters is that it works. This is young, but already it shows a complex, savoury, creamy side behind the sweet citrus fruit. There are several other stockists.

91 points



Innocent Bystander Yarra Valley Pinot Gris 2009

You never know what style you're going to get from Pinot Gris down under. This is taut, crunchy and mineral, rather than ripe and fleshy, and very successful it is, with mouth-watering apple flavours, minerality and a touch of spice. It'll probably fatten out a bit, but it'll always be elegant, rather than broad.

90 points



Cave de Hunawihr Alsace Pinot Gris Reserve 2007

Alsace Pinot Gris aromas at their most alluring – the overture to a palate full of scented white peach and apricot fruit and a lingeringly fresh, dry, delicately smoky finish. From the small and apparently perfectly formed Hunawihr co-op.

90 points



Domaine Pfister Alsace Pinot Gris Tradition 2007

By Alsace standards, this Pinot Gris has an understated bouquet, but you're certainly not short-changed by the palate. It's concentrated, silky and creamy with spicy, smoky apple and pear flavours and a long dry finish. Another triumph for Melanie Pfister.

92 points



Domaine Pfister Alsace Riesling Silberberg 2007

Petrolly, limey, long and bracingly fresh. This is poised and polished Riesling which has the structure and intensity to develop over many years. Melanie Pfister, the winemaker, is the eighth generation at the Pfister estate and she has also worked with Zind Humbrecht and at Craggy Range in New Zealand. Perhaps the traffic will soon start going the other way.

93 points



Paul Jaboulet Aîné Hermitage Le Chevalier de Sterimbourg 2005

Powerful and complex wine, with an opulent, dense nose of cream, earth, toffee and honey and a palate with layer upon layer of flavour around a spine of acidity. You'll find minerals, honey, straw, citrus peel, flowers and doubtless other things on the palate. This has a great future – as does Jaboulet under its new owners, the Frey family.

One of this month's Five Greatest Wines

94 points



Pieropan Soave 2008

No longer Soave Classico, just Soave. Nino Pieropan chose to bottle it with a screwcap which meant relinquishing the superior Classico designation. Daft, but that's how it is in Italy. The wine is delicious: crystal clear flavours of lemon and blossom with a touch of honey and almond macaroon. Do you feel a quiz question coming on? The blend is 90% Garganega and 10% Trebbiano di Soave. There are several other stockists.



Cantine Belisario Verdicchio di Matelica Terre di Valbona 2008

Verdicchio from the Matelica DOC doesn't have the profile of Castelli di Jesi, but it can be just as good, as this fresh, snappy example from the Belisario co-op shows. It has the characteristic nutty-straw Verdicchio flavours and herbal, mineral length.

Gran Sasso Pecorino 2008

Floral, white blossom perfume with zesty sweet orange and smooth nutty flavours - so that's Pecorino for you, an obscure but characterful white grape variety grown on a small scale in the Abruzzi and Marche. It got its name, so they say, from the way the bunches are the shape of a sheep's head (how cheesy is that?).

89 points



Poggio Al Tesoro SoloSole Vermentino 2007

Aromatic, freshly floral, fruity nose, with ripe, spicy fruit in the mouth and a rich texture which transforms itself, if not magically, then seamlessly, into a long, fresh, herbal, lime-juice finish. The estate in Tuscany's coastal region is owned by the Allegrini family of Valpolicella and the winemaker is the wand-waving (metaphorically speaking), globe-trotting Alberto Antonini.

One of this month's Five Magical Wines

92 points



Vesevo Sannio Falanghina 2008

As fans of Vesevo's Greco di Tufo, we're pleased to see this second white, with its rich, tangy citrus flavour and hints of pineapple and spice. Although we're talking Italy's deep south here, Vesevo's vineyards are high up on volcanic soils in the mountainous Avellino area (aka 'the Switzerland of the south'), which is why the Falanghina grapes don't even ripen until October.

Villa Tonino Inzolia 2008

Sappy and herby with citrus, peach and apple flavours and an appetising zesty finish. Inzolia is one of the Marsala grapes which, given modern technology and an accomplished winemaker (Alberto Antonini), can be turned into a worthwhile, distinctive dry white. There's also 10% of another Marsala grape, Grillo, in this.

Martín Códax Albariño 2008

Spain's answer to Viognier, or perhaps Viognier is the rest of the world's answer to northwest Spain's Albariño. Either way, this has vivid fresh apple, peach and apricot flavours, an underlying mineral note and bright acidity to off-set the hint of oiliness in Albariño's texture.

