



MOST ADMIRED WINES DRINKSINT.COM

## RIDGE

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: US  
OWNER: OTSUKA PHARMACEUTICAL CO

# 7



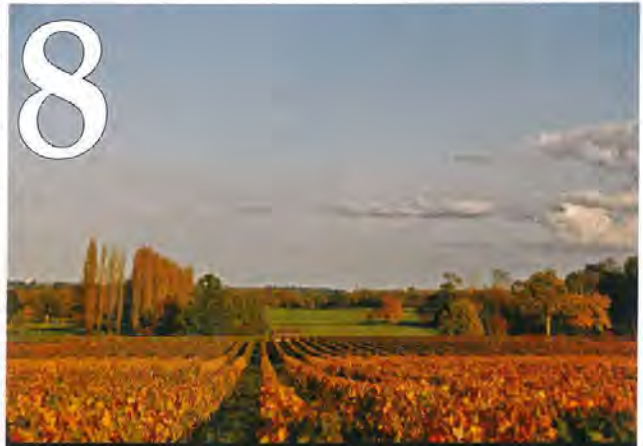
Nearly 40 years on from the now famous blind wine-tasting dubbed the Judgement of Paris – in which English wine merchant Steven Spurrier pitted top French wines against Californian ones and California won – Ridge Vineyards is still an industry leader racking up accolades. In 2006's rejudgment of that fateful day the highest scoring wine after 30 years was the Ridge 1971 Cabernet Sauvignon. The Californian wine topped the Californian and UK judges' lists to take the top spot after securing a combined total of 137 points. The top five wines selected by the panelists in the re-enactment were Californian. In the 1976 tasting Ridge Vintage Monte Bello ranked fifth out of 15 as the 1973 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars SLV Cabernet Sauvignon was judged best, ahead of four top-ranked Bordeaux, including first-growths Château Mouton-Rothschild and Château-Haut Brion.

The recognition keeps on coming as, in the past year, Ridge was named the Best Winery in the US by the Daily Meal website. A member of the judging panel said: "Ridge Vineyards was founded in 1959. Its long track record of consistently making one of the best Cabernets in America is the equivalent of the New York Yankees dynasty. Owner Paul Draper is Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, and Mickey Mantle all rolled into one."



**RIDGE VINEYARDS IS STILL RACKING UP ACCOLADES**

# 8



## CHÂTEAU MARGAUX

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHILE  
OWNER: CORINNE MENTZELOPOULOS

In the past year Château Margaux released the world's most expensive wine. Oenophiles flocked to Dubai wine merchant Le Clos to ogle the six 12-litre Balthazars retailing for US\$195,000 each. Perhaps the halo effect gained by this high-publicity sale has helped Margaux surge ahead of the other big five Bordeaux first growth chateaux in our list, and end up a full 34 places ahead of the more lauded Château Lafite. But it probably has as much to do with the stunning quality of its 2005 vintage, which is arguably the best first growth offering from the most praised vintage in recent times. It scored 100 points with *Wine Spectator* and 98 Parker points, while esteemed London wine merchant Berry Bros & Rudd, which boasts in its ranks eight of only 312 Masters of Wine in the world, said of it: "Words can't convey how good this is. It is an extraordinary Margaux, with a perfume to die for and an astonishing level of concentration and complexity. The tannin levels are the highest ever here but you would never know; they are like velvet on the tongue cloaked with rich, suave and voluptuous forest fruits and crushed raspberries. The finish goes on forever with coffee, mocha and bitter chocolate hints enhancing the intense pure, creamy cassis." The last few vintages have failed to match the wonderful 2009 and 2010, but Margaux is upbeat about the 2014 crop. It said the yields are "largely superior to those of last year" and "the quality looks magnificent, as good for the Merlots as for the Cabernet Sauvignons". The 19th-century Margaux estate, featuring the grandest, most imposing buildings among the Médoc châteaux, is being overhauled by Lord Norman Foster to ensure Margaux can pursue its perpetual search for excellence and quality with cutting-edge winemaking facilities, and retain its place as the best of the best in Bordeaux for years to come.







## GUIGAL

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: FRANCE  
OWNER: GUIGAL FAMILY

"Because today's wine market is international and consumers have access to an incredibly wide range of new, modern, traditional or historical wines, I assume brands can be perceived as signs of reliability. Therefore, I would say that brands are very important for consumers' trust," says Philippe Guigal, general manager and winemaker at Guigal in northern Rhône.

"We are definitely a traditional brand and feel comfortable in this image. In the meantime, we belong to a wine region that is dynamic and 'trendy' in a way. We are constantly investing in the technical side of our business in order to grow our skills and expertise to increase the quality of our wines." Looking to the future, Guigal believes the brand can develop, evolve or stay strong, "as long as it is expressed by reliable products in accordance with the reputation of this brand".

The winemaker says 2014 was surprisingly good. "The whites should be astonishing and even outstanding in Condrieu, for example," Guigal says. The reds were challenging for viticultural reasons. "If vintners handled the difficult summer season, the outstanding harvest's weather allowed us to produce good to very good wines. We are truly satisfied in northern Rhône and stay optimistic for the southern part."

Guigal says he is privileged that his wines are highly considered by the world of gastronomy. "We wish our wines to transcend all levels of hierarchy, from simple Côtes du Rhône to the single vineyard Côte-Rôtie. It is important to be fair with pricing of wines according to their conditions of production and final consumers recognise this quality in our brand."

## CONO SUR

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: CHILE  
OWNER: CONCHA Y TORO

A partnership with the Tour de France in 2014 saw sales of Cono Sur double to £14.3m in the UK off-trade, catapulting it to the position of fourth largest Chilean brand in total UK off trade. Sales of its Bicicleta brand soared thanks to 12,000 wine samplings. "In today's highly competitive wine industry, brand image is extremely important as it represents how consumers will view our wines. A strong brand image is a powerful asset," says Adolfo Hurtado, Cono Sur executive director and chief winemaker.

Presence in the Village du Tour and a number of in-store events with major customers all gave the brand great exposure and helped to boost worldwide case sales to more than 2m. "We also saw an increase in interest for our more premium wines in 2014. We are finally becoming more known for

producing quality wines and having immense diversity. In fact, Chile is now fourth among the world's top wine exporters, coming after France, Italy and Spain," Hurtado says.

Concha y Toro hopes to continue to grow Cono Sur as the next global brand from Chile, with a goal of achieving 3m cases sold by 2017.

"Fortunately we are already present in the world's most important markets, as Cono Sur began as an export vineyard," Hurtado says. "We had previously not put much focus on our own country but, in just a few years of our 21-year existence, we have become the third largest winery in Chile. The country has become a huge target for us. To see the reaction of Chilean consumers on trying our wines has given us a lot of momentum in trying to grow the brand."

The Cono Sur portfolio contains

more than 40 wines within nine product ranges. Pinot Noir is its most representative variety, present in seven of the ranges. "Pinot Noir was our greatest challenge, having enthusiastically spent a lot of time and energy in search of the best terroirs and vinification methods. In fact, we have even developed two bodegas specifically for the variety, striving to achieve maximum quality. We love Pinot Noir," Hurtado says.

The bottle and label designs are important to Cono Sur. "The packaging no longer serves as just a way to deliver wine information, rather it is the first connection we have with a consumer. Designs not only need to be attractive, they must communicate the brand's story. It is often the only opportunity a vineyard has to differentiate itself among the masses."






**E. GUIGAL**

# FAMILY VALUES

When you arrive at the Guigal cellars to taste with Philippe or Marcel Guigal, the first red wine served is the Guigal Côtes du Rhône. You will spend more time discussing this wine than their legendary Côte-Rôties from La Mouline, La Landonne and La Turque vineyards, the 'LaLas', which have garnered an astonishing 29 perfect 100 point scores from Robert Parker.

Philippe Guigal explains: "It's very simple. We are fortunate to own a vineyard like La Mouline, but it has been recognized as an ideal spot for growing grapes in Côte-Rôtie for over 2,400 years. There is no secret to making a great wine from this vineyard. But to make a Côtes du Rhône at the quality level we strive to produce demands a huge effort."

Philippe Guigal is typically modest in his description of La Mouline, La Turque and La Landonne as well as his family's other extraordinary estate wines, such as their Côte-Rôtie 'Château d'Ampuis', Condrieu 'La Doriane', Ermitage 'Ex-Voto' and Saint-Joseph 'Vignes de l'Hospice'.

You won't find their office covered in framed magazine covers, accolades or 100-point advertisements, but these wines represent one side of the



extraordinary ascension of Guigal over nearly 70 years and three generations, and in turn Guigal's importance in bringing appellations like Côte-Rôtie and Condrieu back from the brink of extinction.

While the top wines from Guigal brought attention to the Northern Rhône as one of the world's truly distinct and great winegrowing regions, the family's Côtes du Rhône Rouge, Blanc and Rosé tell the other side of the story. It is not just collectors, but also everyday consumers that have embraced Guigal and make it today one of the world's most admired brands.

From Guigal's Tavel, Gigondas and Châteauneuf-du-Pape (Wine Spectator Wine of the Year in 2003), it is clear to see the family's affinity for old-vine Grenache. Over the years, however, they have concluded that for their Côtes du Rhône Rouge, using strong proportions of the Syrah grape brings aromatics, structure and complexity to the wine, as well as a distinctly Northern Rhône accent.

The same path emerged for their Côtes du Rhône Blanc, in which they relished the aromatics and texture of the Viognier. The Guigals also continue their relentless tasting and strict selection criteria: Marcel Guigal still arrives at the winery by 5am every day of the week, and will often have tasted over 200 wines by breakfast.

The Guigal's uncompromising attention to detail also shows in how they age their wines, a hallmark of the estate. They recently built modern aging facilities to allow for better integration of their Côtes du Rhône wines over time. Earlier, in 2003, the Guigals created their own cooperage in Ampuis that allows them to purchase wood directly from top forests, and today these barrels store their entire production – utterly unique in the Rhône and for all but a few wineries in the world. Philippe Guigal comments: "We feel strongly that age is absolutely essential for a wine to develop complexity and



harmony, and that when we release a wine, we want it to offer pleasure to consumers. It is extremely expensive to hold three vintages of Côtes du Rhône in our cellars, four vintages of Côte-Rôtie, four vintages of Hermitage and four vintages of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. For us, there is no other way".

The deeper you dive into the Guigal story, the more you understand why they have a devoted following that few wineries can claim, with a bottle of Guigal Côtes du Rhône on the bistro table delivering as much satisfaction as the reverent opening of one of their 'LaLas' in a Michelin 3-star establishment. Many factors go into the success of a brand, but over time the foundation of quality is paramount.

The Guigal family's exceptional standards have few peers.





# THE LIST

1	TORRES	SAME	26	OYSTER BAY	UP 2
2	VEGA SICILIA	UP 8	27	BRANCOTT ESTATE	RE-ENTRY
3	PENFOLDS	UP 2	28	CHÂTEAU STE MICHELLE	UP 10
4	VILLA MARIA	RE-ENTRY	29	ROBERT MONDAVI	DOWN 12
5	CHÂTEAU D'YQUEM	UP 1	30	BAREFOOT	UP 16
6	CASILLERO DEL DIABLO	DOWN 4	31	ROYAL TOKAJI	DOWN 6
7	RIDGE	UP 4	32	LOUIS LATOUR	DOWN 20
8	CHÂTEAU MARGAUX	DOWN 1	33	KWV	DOWN 1
9	GUIGAL	SAME	34	CHEVAL BLANC	DOWN 5
10	CONO SUR	UP 6	35	DUBOEUF	RE-ENTRY
11	MICHEL CHAPOUTIER	UP 3	36	LINDEMANS	RE-ENTRY
12	TIGNANELLO	DOWN 8	37	TRAPICHE	DOWN 6
13	CHÂTEAU LATOUR	DOWN 10	38	MATEUS	DOWN 1
14	CLOUDY BAY	DOWN 6	39	MARQUÉS DE RISCAL	DOWN 21
15	CHÂTEAU HAUT-BRION	DOWN 2	40	PÉTRUS	DOWN 21
16	PAUL MAS	UP 14	41	INNISKILLIN	DOWN 19
17	CHÂTEAU MOUTON ROTHSCHILD	UP 4	42	LAFITE	DOWN 8
18	ZONIN	UP 22	43	MCGUIGAN	DOWN 20
19	CAMPO VIEJO	UP 20	44	ABADAL	DOWN 20
20	SANTA RITA	UP 27	45	LEYDA	DOWN 10
21	KENDALL-JACKSON	UP 15	46	UNDURRAGA	DOWN 3
22	YELLOW TAIL	UP 11	47	FÉLIX SOLIS	RE-ENTRY
23	CHÂTEAU MUSAR	UP 4	48	WOODBRIDGE	RE-ENTRY
24	YALUMBA	DOWN 9	49	LE PIN	DOWN 8
25	JACOB'S CREEK	DOWN 5	50	FETZER	RE-ENTRY