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YEAR'S BEST AUSTRIAN WINES

Our blind panels tasted **242** new-release Austrian wines for this issue. Our critic for Austria, **Tara Q. Thomas,** rated **56** as exceptional (90+) and **38** as Best Buys. *Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at wineandspiritsmagazine.com.*

AUSTRIA SPARKLING

92 | Bründlmayer $46

2007 Kamptal Brut One of the best iterations ever of Willi Bründlmayer's Sekt, this is a serious sparkler, rich in toasty, brothy, golden flavors, yet light as brioche in texture. Reliant less on grüner, this vintage is focused on chardonnay and pinots blanc, gris and noir. The wine feels particularly creamy, from its ripe golden pear and mirabelle tones to its marzipan richness, with fine, tiny bubbles that keep it aloft. *Terry Theise Selections/ Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

88 | Szigeti $25

2009 Burgenland Brut Blanc de Blancs (Best Buy) The Szigeti brothers have been making sparkling wines in Gols since 1990. This chardonnay is crisp and bright, fermented entirely in stainless steel without any malolactic fermentation. Its light almond notes have a hint of yeast from the year it spent on the lees. It's a little foamy, but that's a small complaint at the price. *Winebow, NY*

87 | Markus Huber $15

Neiderosterreich Hugo Rosé Sparkling (Best Buy) A blend of zweigelt and pinot noir macerated for six hours on the skins, this has the heft for the dark meat of a turkey, with a slight sweetness and spice to its cranberry fruit. *Circo Vino, Tucson, AZ*

87 | Langmann $25

Weststeiermark Schilcher Sekt Blauer Wildbacher (Best Buy) Blauer wildbacher is capable of making dense reds, but it's more prized in its native western Styria for rosé, or *schilcher*. Stefan Langmann, the third generation of his family to focus on the style, makes a fun Sekt with it, full of juicy, wild berry flavor with a little herbal spice. A terrific turkey dinner wine. *Massanois Imports, Washington, DC*

AUSTRIA WHITE

GELBER MUSKATELLER

90 | Heidi Schröck $25

2011 Rust Gelber Muskateller (Best Buy) This is lushly fragrant, its rosewater and litchi scents balanced by sappier notes of licorice and pine. An herbal note as feathery as chervil gives it a pleasantly bitter cut. It sent one taster on a reverie about the smoked trout at *Gramercy Tavern;* it'd also add class to a Sunday morning spread of smoked sable, bagels and scrambled eggs. *Terry Theise Selections/ Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

GRAUBURGUNDER

90 | Neumeister $23

2011 Südoststeiermark Steirische Klassik Grauburgunder (Best Buy) The Neumeisters cultivate 74 acres of vines in the volcanic soils of southern Styria, and contract-farm another six. Christoph Neumeister takes a gentle approach with his grapes, harvesting by hand and letting them macerate on the skins. In his 2011 grauburgunder, he's coaxed out an impressive amount of fragrance, from pink peppercorn to orange, peach and litchi. It's kept in check by a saline minerality, giving the wine an elegance and cut to complement braised pork belly. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

GRUNER VELTLINER

93 | Schloss Gobelsburg $27

2011 Kamptal Steinsetz Reserve Grüner Veltliner The best grüner veltliners of 2011 translate the ripeness of the vintage into a warm vibrancy of flavor, like this one, which Michael Moosbrugger pulled from 25-year-old vines on gravelly loess not far from his winery. It has a plump yellow-peach succulence but it's the spice—a rooty, earthy, gingery note—that drives through the wine like bass notes through a woofer. It holds its vibrant freshness for days, delicious with a hunk of pork belly. *Terry Theise Selections/ Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

93 | Franz Hirtzberger $63

2009 Wachau Axpoint Grüner Veltliner Smaragd This is as huge as the deep yellow color predicts, a succulent mouthful of golden peach and pineapple flavor. All that fruit wraps around a cool, stony center, the acidity refreshing it like the breezes that fan this vineyard, a site in the cooler Spitz end of the Wachau. Together with the pink peppercorn and radish-like spice, it feels dynamic, balanced at the rich end of the scale. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

93 | Salomon-Undhof $55

2010 Kremstal Berglagen Reserve Von Stein Grüner Veltliner From wines at least half a century old in Stein, this is opulent and exotic, a Baroque beauty. The scents recall wild spices and toasted papadums; the flavors hold to the earth, circulating around smoke, stones and humus richness. It takes nearly a week opened for the fruit to move toward the center, a stone-fruit note that gives the wine its succulence. It should age well with another decade in the cellar. *Fruit of the Vine, Long Island City, NY*

92 | Schloss Gobelsburg $62

2011 Kamptal Reserve Lamm Grüner Veltliner From a vineyard of deep loam and loess below Heiligenstein, this is big and brothy. It starts with the rich savor of chicken fat and Marcona almonds, then takes on an earthy resonance highlighted by ginger and ginseng spice. The finish hints at earthy florals, suggesting this will have more detail to show in another five to eight years. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

92 | Domäne Wachau $26

2009 Wachau Terrassen Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Best Buy) This is elegant and reserved, with crisp pear and violet notes playing alongside a lightly petrol-tinged

minerality. At the very beginning of its life as a mature wine, it's delicious now with lake trout, or will develop more opulence with another five years of age. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

91 | Prager $35

2011 Wachau Hinter Der Burg Grüner Veltliner Federspiel From a seven-acre vineyard in Weissenkirchen with vines up to 50 years old, this is a big, ripe Federspeil, the fruit fully in a tropical mode. For all its richness, it's remarkably buoyant, the acidity translating all that guava and passionfruit into pure, clean fragrance. *Winebow, NY*

91 | Domäne Wachau $18

2011 Wachau Terrassen Grüner Veltliner Smaragd (Best Buy) Impressively restrained for the generous vintage, this has a lovely lemon-lime bite, an acidity that gives its juicy flavor a firm, crisp line and a sense of clarity. Underneath, saline minerality adds an umami tone that brings to mind a match with Asian dishes, like the grilled fresh bamboo shoot at *SakaMai* in NYC. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

90 | Biohof Pratsch $20

2010 Niederosterreich Rotenpüllen Grüner Veltliner This comes off a 12-acre vineyard of alluvial soil left by the last glaciers that moved through the Weinviertel. Stefan Pratsch has handled winemaking here since 2000, when he was 15. His grüner is immediately inviting, with a juicy pear sweetness and mineral crunch. It feels rich yet expresses itself with crystalline clarity, a grüner veltliner for striped bass or pike-perch. *Winesellers, Niles, IL*

90 | Laurenz V. $30

2011 Kamptal Charming Reserve Grüner Veltliner Lenz Moser launched this brand in 2004 to focus solely on grüner veltliner. As cheesy as the name is, the wine lives up to it, with bright, citrusy acidity charging through an herb garden of flavors. A saline minerality drives it home, firm and mouthwatering. *Folio Fine Wine Partners, Napa, CA*

90 | Leth $16

2011 Wagram Lagenreserve Steinagrund Grüner Veltliner This is quiet but commanding, with rich, airy lemon curd flavors built on a firm foundation of savory earth and stone. It comes off a fully south-facing site that's unusually stony in this loess-dominant region. *Domaine Select Wine Estates, NY*

90 | Fred Loimer $16

2011 Niederosterreich Lois Grüner Veltliner This is what you might hope for in an inexpensive grüner, but rarely find: A wine as crisp as lettuce and simultaneously broad and rich, with a wild mix of spice, fruit and vegetal notes. For schnitzel or *tonkatsu*. *Winebow, NY*

90 | Neumayer $35

2011 Traisental Erste Lage Reserve Zwirch Grüner Veltliner Extremely rich, this is destined for roast pork belly and other intense foods. It's the acidity that clinches it, a crisp apple crunch that ties the sweet stone-fruit flavors to a mineral backbone and throws the satin texture into opulent relief. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

90 | Rudi Pichler $31

2011 Wachau Grüner Veltliner Federspiel A rich Federspiel, this is lush yet elegant, filling its broad texture with savory flavor. Grüner's green tones feel as fleshy as aloe; the acidity is ripe and orange-citrusy. For citrus-glazed game birds. *Winebow, NY*

90 | Weingut Der Pollerhof $20

2011 Weinviertel Ried Phelling Grüner Veltliner Erwin Poller makes this wine from a granite-and-loess site in the western end of the Weinviertel. It's tight and focused, with floral white peach and crisp pear fruit. The structure is more reminiscent of riesling than grüner in its fine, firm line. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

90 | Domäne Wachau $28

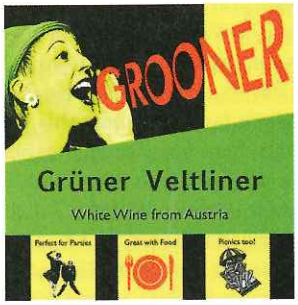
2010 Wachau Achleiten Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Domäne Wachau took full advantage of the Achleiten's warmth in 2010 to pull off a wine that's pineapple-ripe and round with an almost golden-raisin concentration. Notes of dried grasses and lemon verbena lend it detail and balance. It would be delicious with the tender *baccala gnudi* at *The Marrow* in NYC. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

89 | Hiedler $24

2011 Kamptal Thal Grüner Veltliner (Best Buy) This has a sweetness of fruit that brings to mind white peaches as well as a vegetal note that recalls spring's first peas. The acidity gives it a clean edge, the cut to handle the bacon you might add to a bowl of those peas. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

88 | Bründlmayer $24

2011 Kamptal Kamptaler Terrassen Grüner Veltliner (Best Buy) Sweet-fruited and spicy with clove-like tones, this is ripe and inviting, with the body to match roast goose or duck. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*



88 | Grooner by Forstreiter $12

2011 Niederösterreich Grüner Veltliner (Best Buy) Like the playful label suggests, this is easy and inviting, with an engaging spritz to start and a long, spicy finish. It has plenty of savory grüner veltliner flavor to meet a pork chop. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

88 | Högl $20

2011 Wachau Wauchauer Weingarten Grüner Veltliner Federspiel (Best Buy) Subtle and lemony, this is gentle and round, with smooth pear flavors. An inviting aperitif. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

88 | Loimer $22

2011 Kamptal Grüner Veltliner (Best Buy) This is a gulpable grüner, with a quartz-like clarity and a water chestnut crunch. The flavors bring to mind edamame seasoned with salt and pepper, with which it'd make an addictive pairing. *Winebow, NY*

85 | Mo-Velt $12

2011 Burgenland Grüner Veltliner (Best Buy) This is fat, fruity grüner with banana overtones for party pouring. *Wein-Bauer, Franklin Park, IL*

85 | Domäne Wachau $11

2011 Wachau Terrassen Grüner Veltliner Federspiel (Best Buy) This is ripe and sweet, with a lemon-curd thickness. Chill it for Sunday brunch. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

RIESLING

96 | Salomon-Undhof $55

2009 Kremstal Erste Lage Reserve Steiner Kögl Riesling This comes from some of the oldest vines Bert Salomon farms, planted on the area's ancient urgestein rock mixed with crystalline schist. The vineyard tends to produce very savory wines, and this is no exception. It recalls really great ramen stock in its flavor, a deeply umami mix of kombu and pork broth, the meatiness underlined by earth and lebkuchen spice. While muscular, there's nothing showy or pushed about it; in fact, it feels more like it was unearthed than vinified, the flavors that well to the surface as ancient as the soil they come from, as fresh as the moment they see light. *Fruit of the Vine, Long Island City, NY*

94 | Hirsch $57

2011 Kamptal Zöbing Reserve Heiligenstein Riesling Even in the friendly 2011 vintage Hirsch's wines need time; this one took six days to come around. It's worth the wait: What begins as a bland sesame richness blossomed into tropical fruit tones, while the acidity weaves its way through to reveal a mineral clarity that shines like a beam of light. It's fabulously structured for 2011, a wine that ought to age well for another decade or more. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

94 | Proidl $39

2011 Kremstal Reserve Ehrenfels Riesling Franz Proidl farms 49 acres in Seftenberg, at Kremstal's western end. This wine, off 2.5 acres of 25-year-old vines on primary rock, is admittedly flamboyant, but with such structure and control it's hard to turn away. The sweetness of the orange-toned fruit is matched by meaty depth; the warm cardamom spice finds a contrast with a cucumber-snap. It feels all of a piece, more like food than wine. As one taster put it, "You don't need a lot of it, but you might find yourself wanting a lot of it." *A.I. Selections, Long Island City, NY*

94 | Salomon-Undhof $55

2009 Kremstal Metternich & Salomon Erste Lage Reserve Pfaffenberg Riesling The old vines in this granite-and-gneiss vineyard regularly put out some of Salomon's classiest wines. This is expansive and fine, with salty lemon and crisp pineapple fruit tones riding on a wave of smoky minerality. It feels perfectly *en pointe*, notes of green tea, petrol and cashew brittle a teasing hint of the complexity that should come with another decade in the cellar. *Fruit of the Vine, Long Island City, NY*

94 | Domäne Wachau $30

2009 Wachau Achleiten Riesling Smaragd (Best Buy) This is endlessly drinkable, a wine that showcases both Wachau's sleek, powerful style and Achleiten's mineral crunch. It feels perfectly ripe, bottle age taking the herbal elements toward roasted tea and the minerality toward petrol while the fruit stays fresh and bright. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

92 | Bründlmayer $37

2011 Kamptal Zöbinger Heiligenstein Riesling This is classic Heiligenstein, expansive and firm. The flavors ricochet from orange to herbs, from bitter roots to broad stone fruit, everything brought together by the wine's leesy corn-silk texture. It's a baby yet, built to age well over the next 10 to 15 years. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

92 | Holzapfel $50

2011 Wachau Vorderseiber Riesling Smaragd New to the States, Holzapfel is a 35-acre estate in Joching. In 2009, Karl Holzapfel waited until the first week of November to pick this vineyard, and left the wine on the fine lees through April. The result is a wine that's both delicate and full-bodied, with fragrant florals and a crisp celery snap complementing its golden fruit. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

92 | Domäne Wachau $18

2009 Wachau Terrassen Riesling Federspiel (Best Buy) This wine makes a compelling case for aging good Federspiel. It balances mature, toasty pear and marzipan flavors with brisk, fleet-footed weight and lightly spicy acidity. Consider it for a roasted mushroom salad, or smoked trout on a bed of greens. It's terrifically versatile, in fact, and still fresh in feel. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

91 | Fritsch $18

2011 Wagram Riesling (Best Buy) This has uncanny clarity for Austrian riesling, a crystalline structure that feels firm and pointed. The flavors radiate from it like moonbeams, white and bright, a grapefruit-pith grip holding them to the palate. It's fresh, dynamic and poised, ready for just about anything you might throw at it. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

91 | Schloss Gobelsburg $51

2010 Kamptal Reserve Tradition Riesling Sturdy and golden, there's something about this wine that brings up visions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—an opulence that's not of this century. Tradition is Michael Moosbrugger's attempt to make wine the way it was pre-WWI, pressed gently and fermented without temperature control in Austrian oak. The acidity of 2010 keeps it fresh despite the almost honeyed richness, the flavors ranging from pleasantly vegetal artichoke through to orange and sesame. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

91 | Hirsch $57

2011 Kamptal Zöbing Reserve Gaisberg Riesling This feels mountainous, a wine of high peaks and shady valleys. The fruit soars, ripe and floral; the earth reverberates below it, dark and solid. It's a little reductive, but it clearly has the structure to age. Give it another five to eight years, or a long stay in a decanter before serving. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

91 | Rudi Pichler $75

2011 Wachau Wösendorfer Kirchweg Riesling Smaragd This is lean and clean, the lemon-scented fruit supported by firm, savory stoniness. Over top, there's a filigree of mineral spice, the stamp of this vineyard at the foot of the Hochrain. It's mouthwatering and mouthfilling at once. *Winebow, NY*

90 | Bründlmayer $32

2011 Kamptal Steinmassel Riesling This is long and willowy, notes of orange blossom and rose imbuing the savory mineral flavor with surprising grace and delicacy. It lasts long, feeling stately in its steadfast hold. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

90 | Högl $28

2011 Wachau Steinterrassen Riesling Federspiel (Best Buy) This is textbook Wachau, as clear as a bell tone in its crisp, quartz-like mineral tones, supple in its lively citrus flavors. The light spritz makes it all the more mouthwatering, a taste of spring in a glass. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

90 | Salomon-Undhof $30

2011 Kremstal Erste Lage Undhof Kögl Riesling Even in a riper vintage like 2011, Kögl takes time to show itself. Right now, the ripeness reads in its viscous texture and a flavor that combines the sweetness and vegetal flavor of spring peas; the violet scents hint at the detail to come. Put this straight into the cellar for another five to ten years. *Fruit of the Vine, Long Island City, NY*

88 | Schloss Gobelsburg $19

2011 Kamptal Gobelsburger Riesling (Best Buy) Crisp, lemony acidity flits through this wine's sweet rose-scented fruit, a brisk, charming riesling to gulp down all summer long. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

88 | Holzapfel $25

2011 Wachau Zehenthof Riesling Federspiel (Best Buy) This is light, with a rosewater delicacy and a crunchy, saline minerality. It ends succulent, a palate-whetting aperitif. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

88 | Leth $18

2011 Wagram Lagenreserve Felser Weinberge Riesling (Best Buy) Zippy, crunchy and spicy, this is fragrant riesling with a clean, refreshing cut and dynamic feel. It would make an excellent companion at the sushi bar. *Domaine Select Wine Estates, NY*

87 | Markus Huber $16

2011 Traisental Terrassen Riesling (Best Buy) This is savory and stony, the acidity well padded with creamy pear flavor. *Circo Vino, Tucson, AZ*

87 | Domäne Wachau $13

2011 Wachau Terrassen Riesling Federspiel (Best Buy) This is bright and snappy, with a light sweetness to its citrus flavors. For hamachi sushi. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

ROTGIPFLER

90 | Stadlmann $30

2011 Thermenregion Tagelsteiner Rotgipfler This is wild wine, an organically grown, whole-bunch-pressed rotgipfler off a 43-year-old vineyard planted on a layer of muschelkalk. It's pretty, in an off-kilter sort of way, with a fruitiness reminiscent of pineapple and sweet pears playing over a lush creaminess that brings to mind foie gras, goat butter and coffee. It's a little like an *amuse bouche* in a glass, a powerful, complex mouthful of flavor. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

WEISSBURGUNDER

96 | Kirchmayr $84

1999 Wachau Klostersatz Solist Weissburgunder When our tasting panel encountered this wine, we sent our pourer back to the kitchen to double-check the label. At 14 years old, this weissburgunder is impossibly fresh, with elderflower scents and a racy acidity that whisks through the wine like an alpine breeze. It comes from Andreas Kirchmayr, who developed the Solist label to showcase the ageability of his Austrian whites, all of which he lets ferment spontaneously and ages in large oak barrels. The wine was still going strong a week after opening, when the last drops were drained with a duck schnitzel. *Domaine Select Wine Estates, NY*

WHITE BLEND

87 | Neumeister $17

2011 Südoststeiermark Gemischter Satz (Best Buy) A traditional kitchen-sink blend of local varieties, this is spicy and sweet with rosewater scents and quince-like fruit, a good anytime pour. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

ZIERFANDLER

90 | Stadlmann $35

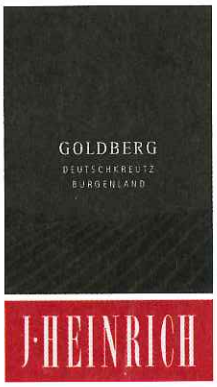
2011 Thermenregion Mandel-Höh Zierfandler Johann Stadlmann is the king of zierfandler, a grape indigenous to Austria's Thermenregion. Mandel-Höh, off a single patch of 40-year-old vines, is zierfandler magnified, dense and exotic, its ripeness reading in its swarthy, solid frame and a wild woodruff-like spice. With its breadth, it conjured up matches with almond-based gazpachos and game pâtés among our panel members, but it could also take fried chicken in a whole new direction. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

87 | Stadlmann $17

2011 Thermenregion Anninger Zierfandler (Best Buy) Stadlmann's Anninger, named for the wooded hillside that rises behind his 29.6 acres of vineyards, is his intro zierfandler, a light white with citrus notes edged in a bitter spice. Open it this spring for the season's first asparagus, or for fish on a bed of seared ramps. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

AUSTRIA RED

BLAUFRANKISCH



94 | J. Heinrich $25

2009 Burgenland Goldberg Silvia Heinrich is a blaufränkisch specialist, heading up an estate that's been in her family for 300 years. Eighty percent of her nearly 100 acres of vineyards are planted to the grape, the ones for this wine planted by Heinrich's grandparents in 1947. It's a wine of Hapsburgian grandeur, opulent in its berry fruit, endlessly filigreed with vibrant notes of flowers, herbs and spice. And yet it doesn't feel "made" at all. It feels fresh, vibrant, alive, reaching out with a warm, welcoming embrace. *Blue Danube Wine Co., Los Altos Hills, CA*

94 | Moric $132

2009 Burgenland Lutzmannsburg Alte Reben Blaufrankisch Lutzmannsburg is a plot of seriously old vines—up to 110 years old—planted in tight rows on a volcanic plateau with a heat-retaining layer of loam and loess. That warmth is reflected in the ripeness of the wine, a lush, deep juiciness with a touch of white-pepper heat. What comes off as plump and easy at first turns darker and more savory as it takes on air over the course of two days. The pepper turns toward foresty herbal scents; the earthy notes move past warm soil to cool stone, all the while never giving up that silken texture. (*W&S* 10/12) *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

93 | Moric $135

2009 Burgenland Neckenmarkt Alte Reben Blaufrankisch Neckenmarkt cascades down the side of the Odenburger Mountains, a slope of schist, loam and calcar-

eous stone. The vines, 40 to 85 years old, put out a vibrantly purple wine in 2009, flamboyant in its intensity. With air, out comes spice, a wild mix of notes that recall the more esoteric corners of an Indian grocer—fenugreek, asafetida. It feels cool, bright and youthful, a red that will last long in the cellar but will also juice up a pork rib roast. (*W&S* 10/12) *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

92 | Moric $55

2009 Burgenland Reserve Blaufrankisch A blend from Lutzmannsburg and Neckenmarkt, this is generous and silky, a wash of blue fruit. For all its flavor, it has a translucence, a window to the spice and earth that makes it as complex as it is delicious. (*W&S* 10/12) *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

92 | Prieler $65

2009 Leithaberg Blaufränkisch Polished and firm, this is a big, showy blaufränkisch with bright violet fruit. That fruit unfurls with air to show an array of spice—some oaky, from a 20-month stay in a combination of barriques and big barrels; some foresty, as if absorbed from the Leitha Mountains themselves. A breezy acidity keeps the wine feeling fresh and supple. Give it another few years in the cellar to absorb some of that oak; then pull it out for something showy, like a crown roast of pork. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

92 | Weingut Wallner $23

2009 Eisenberg Blaufränkisch (Best Buy) This is fresh and tight, with savory spice and firm red-berry fruit. The driving acidity keeps it so buoyant the flavors feels transparent, even while the fine tannins hold it to the palate with a lasting grip. Gerhard Wallner took over from his father at this 17-acre Südburgenland estate in 2002; he is clearly a winemaker to watch. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

91 | Anita & Hans Nittnaus $90

2009 Burgenland Tannenberg Blaufränkisch This is a blend of old-vine parcels, one a schisty, limestone-pocked vineyard in a warm pocket of Burgenland; the other a cool, windy, north-facing slope of quartz and schist. Even after 20 months in 500-liter oak and another couple years in bottle, it feels barely tamed, with wild purple fruit and incense-like spice wrapped in stony, hard tannins. Two days of air did nothing to move it, although a roast boar may have helped. A surer bet would be to tuck it into the cellar for another six to ten years. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

91 | Prieler $22

2009 Burgenland Johanneshöhe Blaufränkisch (Best Buy) This is a sleeper of a wine, a quiet growl of earth, cocoa and licorice tones that grows fuller and firmer by the hour. There's no readily identifiable fruit to speak of, just a broad, warm expanse of firm, ferrous flavor, as if the Prielers bottled this vineyard's ruddy loam. It would be delicious with juniper-braised pork chops. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

90 | Moric $30

2010 Burgenland Blaufrankisch This may be Moric's basic cuvee, but it's exceptional. It's long, lean, savory and cool, with a stony base that underlines the fine, translucent blue fruit. It's also intensely peppery, and every bit as mouthwatering as the scent of a steak *au poivre*. (*W&S* 10/12) *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

90 | Moric $30

2011 Burgenland Blaufränkisch Just as in 2010, Roland Velich's basic blaufränkisch is a joy, bright and juicy with a nervosity that makes it particularly mouthwatering. It's fruity with plenty of the spice and herb notes that bring to mind Burgenland's forests, and a suppleness that makes it as easy to sip on its own as it is with dinner. *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

90 | Anita & Hans Nittnaus $20

2009 Burgenland Kalk und Schiefer Blaufränkisch (Best Buy) Named for the two soil types found in the Leitha Mountains—limestone and schist—this is classy blaufränkisch, bright and smoky at once. The few years of age are just beginning to show in the wine's earthy base notes, but the lasting feeling is one of bright, clean fruit, lively in its spice and acidity, refreshing now but fully capable of taking on more complexity with a few more years of bottle age. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

88 | Zantho $15

2010 Burgenland Blaufränkisch (Best Buy) This has a brisk, cool feel, with a foresty green note to its sweet black-currant fruit. For sliced steak sandwiches—or a bacon-marmalade sandwich *à la Prune* in NYC. *Vin Divino, Chicago, IL*

86 | Glatzer $18

2011 Carnuntum Blaufränkisch (Best Buy) Blue-fruited and spicy, this is light and peppery, the right weight for a seared salmon steak. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

MERLOT

92 | Strehn $32

2009 Austria Goldberg Merlot The Strehns farm 121 acres in Mittelburgenland, where blaufränkisch has been their focus since Joseph Strehn started bottling wines in 1961. His daughter, Monica, planted an array of international varieties and her children, Pia and Patrick, made this wine from her merlot vines, now 25 years old. They let is spontaneously ferment in stainless steel, moved it into old 500-liter casks, and let it mellow into a very sexy red. It's lush with black cherry flavor, the tannins gentle but firm, just present enough to catch on the tongue for a long, lingering while. Notes of tobacco, cedar and vanilla warm the fruit with a delicate touch. A balanced red to savor late into the evening. *A.I. Selections, Long Island City, NY*

RED BLEND

93 | Nittnaus $32

2009 Burgenland Nit'ana This is as herbal and spicy as an apothecary's shop, as finely woven as Thai silk. The blend includes zweigelt and merlot, but blaufränkisch is what it reads, with the variety's bright acidity and translucent violet flavors. Oak adds a warming spice and a touch of astringency that suggests it will benefit from another few years in the cellar. *Wein-Bauer, Franklin Park, IL*

ST. LAURENT

91 | Forstreiter $24

2008 Niederosterreich Reserve Krems St. Laurent (Best Buy) St. Laurent portrayed as the feral cousin of Burgundy: This is earthy, smoky and spicy yet with the weight of Old World pinot noir. Paved in clove and bacon aromas, it will take duck confit in an Austrian direction. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

88 | Johanneshof Reinisch $20
2009 Thermenregion St. Laurent (Best Buy) This is elegant , with light, gamey, sour berry fruit and juniper aromas. Ready for seared duck breast. *Circo Vino, Tucson, AZ*

ZWEIGELT

88 | Glatzer $18
2011 Carnuntum Riedencuvée Zweigelt (Best Buy) This is purple and spicy with a black-pepper kick, bright acidity keeping the fruit taut and fresh. For sausages off the grill. *Terry Theise Selections/Michael Skurnik Wines, Syosset, NY*

87 | Markus Huber $16
2011 Neiderosterreich Zweigelt (Best Buy) This is fun and fruity, with cheery cherry juiciness combined with a dark plum note. Give it a chill for burgers. *Circo Vino, Tucson, AZ*

87 | Anita & Hans Nittnaus $17
2010 Burgenland Blauer Zweigelt (Best Buy) A nimble red with dusty violet tones, this is weighted for vegetable dishes or a rabbit terrine. *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

86 | Iby $18
2011 Burgenland Classic Zweigelt (Best Buy) This is skating close to the edge, its violet fruit spicy in a pickle-juice way, a whiff of sweat on the back end. But if you don't mind the funk, give it a light chill and bring out the dried sausages: It's peppery and bright, with great lift. *Domaine Select Wine Estates, NY*

AUSTRIA DESSERT

96 | Kracher $105/375ml
2010 Burgenland Zwischen den Seen Nummer 11 Welschriesling TBA This is gorgeous from the very first whiff, heady with gingery spice. It washes over the tongue in a luxurious blanket of flavor, as buoyant as a feather comforter. Those flavors range from pineapple to roses and green tea, all subtle and sweet without being overpowering. It feels masterful, perfectly poised, and eminently drinkable. A tour de force from Gerhard Kracher. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

94 | Kracher $95/375ml
2009 Burgenland Zwischen den Seen Nummer 10 Scheurebe TBA This feels pristine, its floral notes and stone fruit flavors caught and preserved at the height of ripeness, the sugar acting as if it were amber. It's not actually all that sweet in flavor; with all the savory notes—chamomile, green tea, pistachios—it could make an intriguing pairing with citrus-glazed game birds or other sweet-edged savory dishes. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

93 | Kracher $90/375ml
2009 Burgenland Zwischen den Seen Kollektion Nummer 8 A cuvée of the rare rosenmuskateller, this pink-gold wine is wildly fragrant, its notes of hibiscus and rosehips combining with cinnamon and roiboos tea. The vibrant acidity gives it lift and keeps the accent on the aromas, the effect like drinking in the scent of a souk. Pour a glass in place of Turkish delight, or with a triangle of pistachio baklava. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

91 | Kracher $105/375ml
2010 Burgenland Zwischen den Seen Nummer 10 Scheurebe TBA A veil of smoke and spice colors this wine's satiny fruit flavors, a range of red-blushed stone fruit with lime highlights. Vinified entirely in stainless steel, it's a lovely interpretation of scheurebe, balanced, elegant and true. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

90 | Kracher $95/375ml
2009 Burgenland Nouvelle Vague Nummer 11 Chardonnay TBA Perhaps the bustiest of Kracher's cuvees, this smells like wildflower honey and feels like Karo syrup. (In fact, it weighs in at 362.3 grams per liter of sugar, and fermented only to 5.5 percent alcohol.) It feels meaty, with a pumpkin-like fruitiness, botrytis contributing both smoke and a lightly bitter spice. Pour it with fresh ricotta, in place of honey. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

90 | Kracher $90/375ml
2009 Burgenland Nouvelle Vague Nummer 9 Chardonnay TBA Like the Chardonnay Nummer 11, this feels plump and rich, but the flavor expression is entirely different. Although it has 125 grams per liter less sugar, it actually feels sweeter, with golden raisin, maple sugar and piecrust flavors that bring sugar tarts to mind. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL*

88 | Kracher $23/375ml
2010 Burgenland Auslese Cuvée (Best Buy) A bright, shining yellow, this blend of welschriesling (70 percent) and chardonnay (30 percent) is floral and pretty in scent, pineapple-ripe in flavor. That intense sweetness is fleeting, whisked away by a salty green-olive element—a relief to some, a disappointment to others, but either way an element that will make it a flexible partner to a cheese plate. *Terlato Wines Int'l., Lake Bluff, IL* ■