

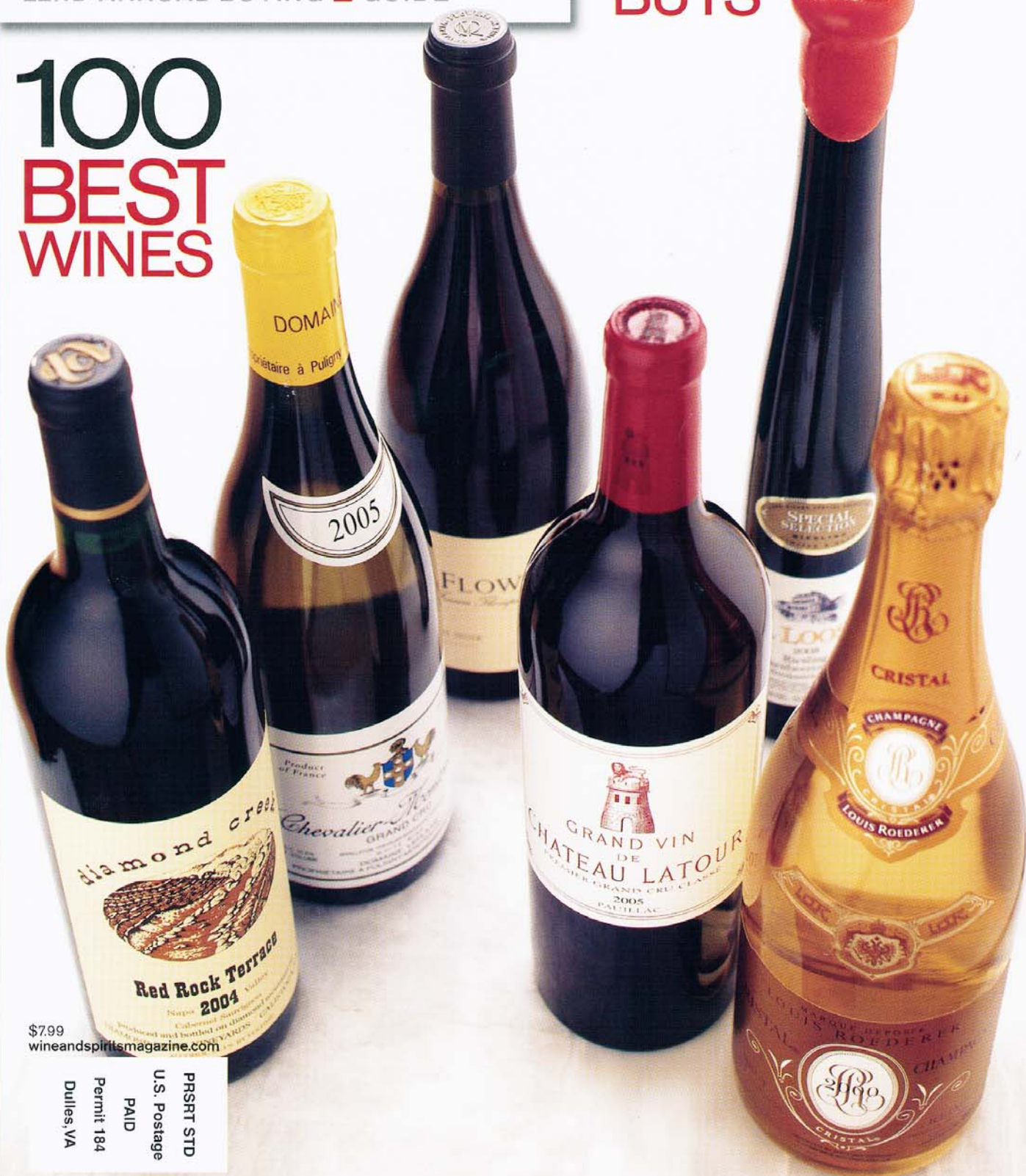
Wine & Spirits

22ND ANNUAL BUYING GUIDE

100 BEST BUYS

TOP 100 WINERIES OF THE YEAR

100 BEST WINES



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International wineries of the year

A great winery, in our estimation, should consistently turn out wines that are not only delicious, but also clearly express their particular regions. So we combed through our data—5,978 wines tasted over the past 12 months—to identify these 64 *International Wineries of the Year*. They range the world, from Burgundy and Barossa to Patagonia and Vinho Verde.

We based our selection on four criteria: the brand's highest score, how many of its wines scored 90 or better, the average score of its recommended wines and the percentage of its wines recommended in our tastings. Our selection is limited to wineries with three or more recommendations; we feature great producers—particularly Bordeaux châteaux—that release only one or two proprietary wines in a vintage, among our *100 Best Wines of the Year*, starting on page 109.

On the following pages, *W&S* editors **Nicole Drummer, Joshua Greene, Peter Liem, Patricio Tapia, Tara Q. Thomas** and **Wolfgang M. Weber** provide their insight into what makes these wineries great. With each profile, you'll find a list of the producer's top three recommended wines (and the issue date in which our review first appeared), plus a short list of facts. For a complete list of recommended wines from our *International Wineries of the Year*, log on to wineandspiritsmagazine.com.

Weninger



Franz Weninger

MITTELBURGENLAND

Founded: 1982

Winemaker/Owner:

Franz Weninger

Acres owned: 74

Annual production: 10,833 cases

Estate grown: 100%

Known for: Plush, sophisticated reds from blaufränkisch

Importer: Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY

Website: weninger.com



It's virtually impossible to discuss top Austrian red wine without mentioning the name Franz Weninger. Based in the village of Horitschon, in Middle Burgenland, Weninger makes luscious, complex wines from the indigenous blaufränkisch grape that rank among the country's best.

Weninger's father owned 12 acres of vines in Horitschon, and mostly sold off the grapes in bulk until Franz began making wine in 1982. He has since expanded the estate to 74 acres; in 1997 Weninger also purchased a 60-acre estate in Sopron, across the border in Hungary, which is now managed by his son, Franz Weninger, Jr. In addition, he has a joint venture with Hungarian winemaker Attila Gere in Villány, in south Hungary near the Croatian border.

Although Weninger has a reputation for being a perfectionist in the cellar, he believes that real quality depends on careful work with the vines. Towards this end, he has steadily increased his natural viticulture practices: Since 2004, he has worked completely organically, and since 2006, both the Horitschon and Sopron estates have been run biodynamically. "I've learned a lot from nature over the years," says Weninger. "In the past we did a lot of things that were completely unnecessary. My goal is to make terroir-typical wines, and that's only possible if you work with nature." He notes that in the two vintages since working with biodynamics, his wines have been noticeably livelier, with a purer fruit character.

Weninger's classic Blaufränkisch is fermented in stainless steel before being transferred to large wooden casks for aging. It's lively and fresh, packed with bold, juicy fruit. The plush, polished Blaufränkisch Reserve is fermented in wooden vats of between 3,000 and 7,000 liters, and like all of Weninger's wines, it's fermented with indigenous yeasts. Aging takes place in barrel, although today Weninger is beginning to work increasingly with 500-liter oak barrels rather than traditional 225-liter barriques. In the elegant 2005 vintage, the Hochäcker is particularly outstanding: Made from vines nearly 40 years of age, it shows a dark, gripping depth that feels both powerful and sophisticated. Keep an eye out as well for the single-vineyard Dürrau, a refined, deeply concentrated blaufränkisch from 50-year-old vines that is widely regarded as one of Austria's greatest red wines. —P.L.

TOP-SCORING WINES

93 '05 Mittelburgenland Hochäcker Blaufränkisch \$19 (4/08)

91 '06 Mittelburgenland Blaufränkisch \$15 (4/08)

88 '05 Mittelburgenland Reserve Blaufränkisch \$30 (4/08)