

**Y**es, you read correctly. That's Austrian wines. Not the ones with kangaroos and wallabies on the label. Interestingly, Austrian wines are so unknown to most consumers that many may label them as New World and not Old World where they rightfully belong.

Truth is they've been making wines in Austria forever. However, it is only now that Austrian wines are being noticed and they really make a big bang for such a small country. Wine lists can only be considered really serious these days if there are at least a few Austrian labels listed.

One of the problems for Austria is the names of the mostly local grape varieties used to make the wines such as Grüner Veltliner, Weissburgunder, Blaufränkisch and Zweigelt. But if you think about it, is Grüner Veltliner really anymore foreign than say Cabernet Sauvignon?

Make the bold step and move beyond your comfort zone and order a bottle of Austrian wine when you next see it listed. Do this in the knowledge that wine critics throughout the world have been excited about Austrian wines for at least the past decade. Robert Parker's Wine Advocate for example recently tasted 900 Austrian wines and listed 640 of these with 16 (11 whites, four dessert wines and one red) receiving the rating of 'extraordinary' and attaining 95 or more out of a possible 100. For the first time a Blaufränkisch (red) received 95 (Moric Blaufränkisch Neckenmarkt Alte Reben).

It's not that the Austrians have a lot of wine to export. Managing Director of the Austrian Wine Marketing Board (AWMB), Willi Klinger explains: "75 percent of our total production is consumed locally but for the remaining 25 percent, it's important that Austria be seen as a small but exceptional wine producer."

### Austrian Wines, Asian Food

Nobody needs to be reminded that the real test of a wine is its matching with food. At the inaugural International Congress of Chinese Cuisine and Wine held in Beijing in May 2008, Grüner Veltliner (white) was put through its taste paces and proved a great match for many Chinese dishes. It was found to be one of the most acceptable, versatile and accomplished matches of all wines tasted. The conclusion was: "Grüner Veltliner is clearly the universal food companion with its full balanced body and its power and finesse."



*Clockwise from the top left: Jost Hopler of Hopler Wines, Burgenland; Vines and terraces, The Wachau; Terraced vines old church, Danube River Spitz; Hopler Cellars, Burgenland*

# Austria's 'New' Old World Wines

By David Bowden

