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Decanter



WORLD
WINE
AWARDS
2017
THE WINNERS



Canada



'Undoubtedly, the most successful flights were the sparkling wines in a variety of styles, dry and off-dry Riesling, and the white Icewines'

Tony Aspler, Regional Chair

For Tony Aspler's full profile and a list of the panel judges, see p12

For tasting notes of all wines, plus prices and international stockists, see Decanter.com/dwwa

What should we buy from here?

Four days of tasting wines from British Columbia and Ontario, with the odd sortie into Québec and Nova Scotia, proved just how vintage-sensitive Canadian wines are. The complete portfolio of popular European varieties are planted in the two major regions, along with winter-hardy hybrids like Vidal (mainly for Icewine) and Baco Noir – and they were all on show, including Tempranillo, Aglianico, Sangiovese and Zinfandel. Undoubtedly, the most successful flights were the sparkling wines in a variety of styles, dry and off-dry Riesling, and the white Icewines.

What should we leave on the shelf?

The biggest disappointment was Gewurztraminer (one judge summed up the flight of five Okanagan Gewurz wines with a single expletive). Another was the lacklustre performance of Sauvignon Blanc, a grape that just doesn't suit Canadian soil. Nor was there much enthusiasm for Okanagan Pinot Gris/Pinot Grigio, some of which were acetic, just plain simple, or both. Chardonnay from 2015 saw over-ripeness causing clumsiness; and the red Icewine flight provoked the comment: 'Why buy these when there are better quality sweet reds around the world for less?'

While last year we applauded the overall restraint in the use of oak for both reds and whites, this year the memo seems to have gotten lost. Judges were also critical of the level of residual sugar in the reds, especially in Merlot from both BC and Ontario, and the harsh tannins in Bordeaux blends. Over-ripeness in warm vintages like 2015 caused some problems with balance and lack of elegance. And where were the rosés and Pinot Blancs in which Canadian vintners excel? Finally, never have we had so many corked wines; go screwcap, please!

What should we keep an eye on?

Prince Edward County is giving the Niagara Peninsula a run for its money in both the Chardonnay and Pinot Noir departments – even though PEC producers have to protect their vines from winter damage by 'hilling' up in the autumn and uncovering them in the spring, a costly process. Syrah from Ontario's Niagara Peninsula (produced in a northern Rhône style) and BC's Okanagan Valley (in a southern Rhône style) are creating a lot of fans, whether as varietal wines or blended with Bordeaux grapes. Watch out for more oak-aged Gamay and the Pinot Noirs: as the vines age, they are beginning to produce a uniquely local style in both BC and Ontario.

Canada won

1 Platinum Best in Show (see p26)

4 Platinum Best in Category (see p78)

Read all about these Gold-medal winning wines that went on to win our top awards

Gold sparkling white

● 95 Summerhill Pyramid, Cipes Blanc de Blanc, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2010 (12.4%)
Toasty and fresh on the nose with crisp, clean apple and lemon notes. White flower and tart crab apple on the palate with a touch of yeasty autolysis.

Gold sweet sparkling white

● 96 Inniskillin Niagara, Sparkling Icewine, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2014 (9.5%)
£54.99 Liberty Wines
Enchanting aromas of ripe apricot, mango and Seville orange complemented by Turkish Delight, toffee apple, nuts and honey. Rich, ripe and expansive flavours of dried stone fruit brightened by delicious fresh acidity and bubbles.

Gold sweet white

● 96 Strewn, Riesling Icewine, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (11.7%)
Ripe peach, apricot, pie crust and tropical fruits abound on the nose. Full bodied with spice, mango and honey flavours backed by balancing acidity.

● 95 Mission Hill, Reserve Riesling Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (8%)
\$49.99/37.5cl The Winebow Group
Lush and expansive floral notes and orchard fruit as well as a savoury side. Softness to the palate but still great concentration and richness.

● 95 Peller Estates, Signature Series Oak Aged Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)
Aromatic dried yellow fruit and almond blossom with apple pie and honey. Mouthfilling flavours of apricot and tangy tropical fruit. Delicious and long.

● 95 Reif Estate, Grand Reserve Icewine, Niagara River, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)
Intense aromas of honey, caramel and baked apricot. Rich and full spiced peach flavours lingering on the palate lifted by subtle rose petal, almond and Turkish Delight.

● 95 Wayne Gretzky Estates, No99 Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)
Tropical fruit, toffee and spice aromas plus finer notes of baked yellow apple, pear and white flowers. Pretty flavours of dried peach and honeyed grapefruit backed by a fresh citrus finish. ➤



Silver sparkling white

- 90 Big Head, Big Bang Brut, St David's Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario NV (12.6%)
- 90 Blomidon, Cuvée L'Acadie Brut, Nova Scotia 2012 (11.5%)
- 90 Blomidon, Late Pick Chardonnay Extra Brut, Nova Scotia 2011 (11.8%)



Silver sparkling rosé

- 92 Henry of Pelham, Cuvée Catharine Brut, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario NV (12%)



Silver white

- 91 Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Grand Reserve Chardonnay, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (13%)
- 90 50th Parallel, Riesling, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2016 (12%)
- 90 Church and State, Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.2%)
- 90 Church and State, Trebella, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.3%)
- 90 Flat Rock Cellars, Nadja's, Twenty Mile Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)
- 90 Jackson-Triggs Okanagan Estate, Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2016 (11.6%)
- 90 MacIntyre, Heritage Reserve Astra, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 90 The View Winery & Vineyard, Riesling 2014, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (12.6%)
- 90 Thirty Bench, Small Lot Wild Cask Riesling, Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (10.6%)
- 90 Thirty Bench, Small Lot Wood Post Vineyard Riesling, Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (10.2%)
- 90 Thirty Bench, Winemaker's Blend Riesling, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (10.8%)
- 90 Wayne Gretzky Okanagan, No99 Signature Series Riesling, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (12%)



Silver red

- 93 See Ya Later Ranch, Rover Shiraz-Viognier, Okanagan

- Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.8%)
- 92 50th Parallel, Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.5%)
- 92 CedarCreek, Platinum Block 4 Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.6%)
- 92 Domaine Queylus, Réserve du Domaine Pinot Noir, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (13%)
- 92 JoieFarm, En Famille Reserve Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.1%)
- 91 50th Parallel, Unparalleled Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.5%)
- 91 Adamo, Lowrey Vineyard Pinot Noir, St David's Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2014 (12.8%)
- 91 Clos du Soleil, Signature, Similkameen Valley, British Columbia 2013 (13.8%)
- 91 Kacaba, Reserve Syrah, Niagara Escarpment, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2012 (13.5%)
- 91 Mission Hill, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 91 Sandhill, One Phantom Creek Vineyard, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 91 See Ya Later Ranch, Ping-Meritage, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 90 50th Parallel, Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.5%)
- 90 CedarCreek, Platinum Block 2 Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.6%)
- 90 Château Helena, Gracious Cabernet-Merlot, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.7%)
- 90 Flat Rock Cellars, Gravity Pinot Noir, Twenty Mile Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2014 (13%)
- 90 Hidden Bench, Locust Lane Pinot Noir, Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (12.7%)
- 90 Inniskillin, Dark Horse Vineyard Cabernet Franc, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.2%)
- 90 Liquidity, Estate Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.7%)
- 90 Mission Hill Family Estate, Reserve Shiraz, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 90 Mission Hill, Quatrain, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 90 Mission Hill, Terroir Collection No.23 Crosswinds Syrah, Okanagan Valley,



Behind the scoresheet

Sarah Knowles MW

(Judged Australia, Canada)

Knowles is a buyer at The Wine Society, responsible for North America, Australia, New Zealand, Austria, sparkling wines and spirits. She qualified as a Master of Wine in 2015, also winning the award for her dissertation, and was previously head of buying at Amathus Drinks.

- British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 90 Moon Curser, Dead of Night, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.6%)
- 90 Nk'mip, Merriym, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.7%)
- 90 Sandhill, Two Sandhill Estate Vineyard, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.3%)
- 90 Stanners, Barrel Select Pinot Noir, Prince Edward County, Ontario 2014 (12%)



Silver sweet sparkling white

- 91 Inniskillin Niagara, Sparkling Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)



Silver sweet white

- 94 Peller Estates, Private Reserve Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)
- 92 Inniskillin Niagara Estate, Oak Aged Vidal Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)

- 92 Inniskillin Niagara Estate, Riesling Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)
- 92 Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Grand Reserve Vidal Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)
- 92 Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Reserve Riesling Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)
- 92 Reif Estate, Icewine, Niagara River, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)
- 91 Inniskillin Okanagan Estate, Riesling Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (8.5%)
- 91 Trius, Showcase Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)
- 90 Inniskillin Okanagan Estate, Riesling Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2016 (8.5%)
- 90 Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Reserve Vidal Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)
- 90 Strewn, Chimo Icewine, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (12.3%)

**Bronze**
sparkling white

- 89 Noble Ridge, The One Brut, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2012 (12%)
- 89 Summerhill Pyramid, Cipes Brut, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia NV (12.4%)
- 88 Henry of Pelham, Cuvée Catharine Brut, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario NV (12%)
- 88 Jackson-Triggs, Entourage Grand Reserve Brut, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (12.5%)
- 88 Steller's Jay, Pinnacle Extra Brut, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2008 (12.2%)
- 88 Vieni, Momenti Extra Dry, Ontario NV (11%)
- 86 Blomidon, Crémant, Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia 2013 (10.4%)
- 86 Peller Estates, Ice Cuvée Classic Dry, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario NV (12%)

**Bronze**
sparkling rosé

- 86 Peller Estates, Ice Cuvée, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario NV (12%)
- 86 Summerhill Pyramid, Cipes Brut, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia NV (11.7%)

**Bronze**
white

- 89 Adamo, Wismer Foxcroft Wild Ferment Chardonnay, Twenty Mile Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (13.2%)
- 89 JoieFarm, En Famille Reserve Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.6%)
- 89 Tinhorn Creek, Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14%)
- 88 Culmina, Decora, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.5%)
- 88 Fort Berens, Riesling, British Columbia 2016 (12.5%)
- 88 Kacaba, Barrel Fermented Chardonnay, Niagara Escarpment, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (13%)
- 88 Legends Estates, Reserve Chardonnay, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (12.5%)
- 88 Liquidity, Estate Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.5%)
- 88 Mission Hill Family Estate, Reserve Riesling, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (12.5%)
- 88 Quails' Gate, Rosemary's Block Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.5%)
- 88 Quails' Gate, Stewart Family Reserve Chardonnay, Okanagan

Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.5%)

- 88 Township 7, Reserve Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.1%)
- 87 Burrowing Owl, Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14%)
- 87 CC Jentsch Cellars, Small Lot Series Barrel Fermented Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (12.7%)
- 87 Dirty Laundry, Riesling, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (12%)
- 87 Flat Rock Cellars, The Rusty Shed, Twenty Mile Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2014 (13%)
- 87 Mission Hill, Bluebird Passage Viognier, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.5%)
- 86 Henry of Pelham, Speck Family Reserve Chardonnay, Short Hills Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (13.5%)
- 86 Hidden Bench, Chardonnay, Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2014 (13%)
- 86 Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Grand Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (13%)
- 86 Jackson-Triggs Okanagan Estate, Grande Reserve CSV White, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.9%)
- 86 Mission Hill Family Estate, Reserve Pinot Gris, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.6%)
- 86 Monster Vineyards, Riesling, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2016 (12.9%)
- 86 Sandhill, Howard Soon Single Block Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.5%)
- 86 Sumac Ridge, Sauvignon Blanc, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2016 (13.1%)
- 86 Vieni, Private Reserve Chardonnay, Vinemount Ridge, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2012 (14.5%)

**Bronze**
rosé

- 86 50th Parallel Estate, Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2016 (13.5%)
- 86 The View Winery & Vineyard, Pinotage, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2016 (13.1%)

**Bronze**
red

- 89 Bench 1775, Cabernet Sauvignon-Merlot, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (12.7%)
- 89 Burrowing Owl, Cabernet Sauvignon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.7%)
- 89 CedarCreek, Platinum The Last Word, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (14.5%)
- 89 Church and State, Cabernet Sauvignon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.8%)
- 89 Moon Curser, Cabernet Sauvignon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 89 Painted Rock, Red Icon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.3%)
- 89 Red Rooster, Reserve Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.5%)
- 88 Backyard Vineyards, Reserve Cabernet Franc, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 88 Burrowing Owl, Meritage, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (14.5%)
- 88 CC Jentsch Cellars, Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.3%)
- 88 Church and State, Coup d'Etat, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 88 Dirty Laundry, Kay Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 88 Inniskillin, Discovery Series Tempranillo, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.3%)
- 88 Joie Farm, Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.3%)
- 88 Moon Curser, Border Vines, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 88 Moon Curser, Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.6%)
- 88 Nk'mip, Qwam Qwmt Cabernet Sauvignon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.7%)
- 88 Noble Ridge, Reserve Meritage, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2012 (13.9%)
- 88 Red Rooster, Reserve Malbec, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.9%)
- 88 Red Rooster, Reserve Meritage, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 88 Summerhill Pyramid, Keter, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2012 (13.6%)
- 88 Tinhorn Creek, Oldfield Reserve Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 88 Township 7, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, British Columbia 2014 (14.7%)
- 88 Wayne Gretzky Okanagan, No99 Signature Series Cabernet-Merlot, British Columbia 2014 (14.6%)
- 87 Adamo, Barrel Select Artist Series Gamay, St. David's Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2014 (13.5%)
- 87 Backyard Vineyards, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, British Columbia 2014 (14.2%)
- 87 Black Sage Vineyard, Cabernet Franc, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 87 Burrowing Owl, Cabernet Franc, Okanagan Valley,

British Columbia 2014 (14.7%)

- 87 Burrowing Owl, Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 87 CC Jentsch Cellars, Small Lot Series Cabernet Sauvignon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.7%)
- 87 Château Helena, Grand Vin, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (15%)
- 87 Church and State, Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.2%)
- 87 Henry of Pelham, Speck Family Reserve Baco Noir, Ontario 2015 (13.5%)
- 87 Hidden Bench, Felseck Vineyard Pinot Noir, Beamsville Bench, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (12.7%)
- 87 Jackson-Triggs Niagara Estate, Grand Reserve Meritage, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2014 (13.5%)
- 87 Mission Hill, Compendium, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (14.5%)
- 87 Nagging Doubt, The Pull, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 87 Poplar Grove, Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 87 Poplar Grove, The Legacy, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (13.5%)
- 87 Quails' Gate, Stewart Family Reserve Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14%)
- 87 Summerhill Pyramid, Spadefoot Toad Sangiovese, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (14.3%)
- 86 Backyard Vineyards, Reserve Syrah, British Columbia 2014 (14.2%)
- 86 Black Sage, Cabernet Sauvignon, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 86 CC Jentsch Cellars, Cabernet-Merlot, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.4%)
- 86 CC Jentsch Cellars, Small Lots Cabernet Franc, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.6%)
- 86 CC Jentsch Cellars, The Chase, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.1%)
- 86 CC Jentsch Cellars, The Chase, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.5%)
- 86 Church and State, Merlot, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (13.8%)
- 86 Culmina, Hypothesis, Golden Mile Bench, British Columbia 2013 (14%)
- 86 Fort Berens, Meritage Reserve, British Columbia 2015 (14.5%)
- 86 Inniskillin, Dark Horse Vineyard Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (14.8%)
- 86 Intersection, Alluvia Unfiltered Merlot, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (14.8%)

- 86 Mission Hill, Compendium, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 86 Mission Hill, Quatrain, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2013 (14.5%)
- 86 Mission Hill, Reserve Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.9%)
- 86 Pillitteri, Exclamation Cabernet Franc, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (14.5%)
- 86 Quails' Gate, The Boswell Syrah, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14%)
- 86 See Ya Later Ranch, Pinot Noir, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (13.8%)

- 86 Sumac Ridge, Black Sage Vineyard Merlot, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.3%)
- 86 Sunrock, Shiraz, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (14.5%)
- 86 Vinedressers, Meritage, Ontario 2012 (13%)



- 89 Inniskillin Niagara Estate, Chardonnay Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (9.5%)
- 89 Jackson-Triggs Okanagan Estate, Reserve Riesling Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (8.5%)
- 89 NK'mip, Qwam Qwmt Riesling Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (8.8%)
- 89 Peller Estates, Signature Series Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)
- 89 Trius, Showcase Riesling Icewine, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (10.5%)
- 88 Domaine de la Côte Mont-Rigaud, Icewine, Montérégie, Québec 2011 (8.2%)
- 88 Inniskillin Okanagan Estate, Vidal Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (8.7%)
- 88 Red Rooster, Riesling Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2014 (9.5%)
- 88 Strewn, Select Late Harvest, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2013 (13.8%)
- 86 Bench 1775, Whistler Late Harvest Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2015 (11.6%)
- 86 Pillitteri, Reserve Vidal Icewine, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario 2015 (11%)

- 86 Inniskillin Okanagan Estate, Discovery Series Tempranillo Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2012 (9.5%)



- 86 Inniskillin Okanagan Estate, Discovery Series Tempranillo Icewine, Okanagan Valley, British Columbia 2012 (9.5%)

Champagne



'The big Champagne brands are improving. Why? They have started to use a higher percentage of reserve wine and are maturing the wines for longer before release'

Richard Juhlin, Regional Chair

For Richard Juhlin's full profile and a list of the panel judges, see p12

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What should we buy from here?

The entry-level price category for Champagne has been reliable for a long time, but this year the lowest scorers have achieved lower scores than previously. However, the higher-quality tiers have more personality, and the diversity of styles is greater than ever. As a consequence of growing competition from independent growers, the big Champagne brands are improving, and there are a few that have performed extremely well. Why is that? They have started to use a higher percentage of reserve wine and are maturing the wines for longer before release, which helps to soften them. The vintage and prestige rosés have shown better than ever before, with more Burgundy-esque Pinot Noir notes popping up. The top scorers were the more mature wines – the 1995 and 2002 oenothèque-styles are really recommended. For non-vintage wines, blanc de blancs and classic blends impressed, and we liked the lightly oaked NV wines too, which mainly scored well. It's not that Champagne gets better with oak, but the expense of the wood shows the producer is serious, probably maintaining high quality at each stage of the process. We find that at higher-quality levels, stainless steel gives the best wines, showcasing the art of blending and allowing the terroir to shine.

What should we leave on the shelf?

The thing that struck us this year was the number of non-vintage blends in the highest price category (£60+) – three times as

many as in 2016, even in categories where wines shouldn't be that expensive. The most expensive vintage wines are worth it, but many NVs were extremely disappointing in terms of price versus performance. There were some top examples of low- and zero-dosage wines, but many others were harsh and hollow.

What should we keep an eye on?

There's a growing trend for the top one or two producers in lesser-known villages to follow biodynamic or organic methods, and they are generally the best wines in the village. But when you get to premier or grand cru villages, I think this is a mistake. Contrary to popular belief, you don't get more terroir, you get more fruit, and the richness and ripeness hides the minerality of the terroir. Expect more producers to embrace ecological farming methods, but let's hope it's not at the expense of terroir.

Champagne won

1 **Platinum Best in Show**
(see p23)

2 **Platinum Best in Category**
(see p80)

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- 95 De Saint Gall, Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Premier Cru NV (12.5%)

£52.26 Tannico UK

Lovely classical nose of brioche, butter and nuts. The palate is expansive and toasty with real