

SLOVENIA



'The 2008 Chardonnays ruled the tasting, while the sweet wines proved their quality again. It is now time for Slovenia to establish itself as a quality European wine region'

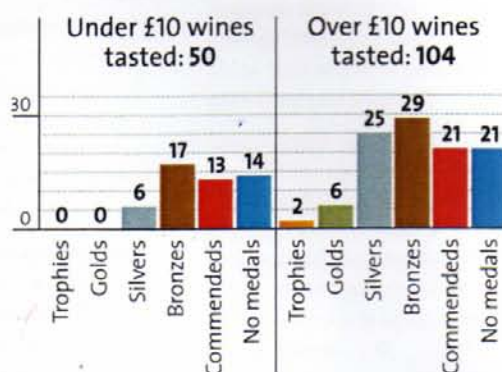
Robert Gorjak, Regional Chair

After tasting a full range of wines from Central and Eastern Europe (see p138), it was exciting to see that Slovenia is still the leading force in the region. I am delighted that the haul of one Regional Trophy and three Golds for sweet wines was equalled this year by the dry whites. Generally, we found very few samples that were not good enough to at least commend; the quality of winemaking has increased dramatically in the past five years, reds included.

What should we be buying from here? Ribolla and Furmint in any style; they provide freshness, drinkability and pleasure. Welschriesling in 2009 has never been so good, but it was 2008 Chardonnay that ruled the tasting, contributing one Regional Trophy and two Golds, with those from Podravje made in a Burgundian style. It is worth seeking out the best Sauvignon Blancs, too: they have delicacy and depth. The sweet wines proved their quality

DWWA GLOBAL TASTINGS

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again – if you don't mind paying the price (as a rule, Trockenbeerenauslese, icewines and *passito* styles are best). And wines from Primorska fared better than Podravje, especially with Pinot Gris.

What should we leave on the shelf? No category fared really badly, so it is more about where to be careful. It came as a surprise that the whites from Podravje, which are normally excellent, were not so good in 2009. A flight of 2009 Chardonnays were reliable but not very exciting, lacking depth and pleasure. We saw similar results with Pinot Gris and, to a lesser extent, with Sauvignon Blanc from the same vintage. Were these bottled too early? Malvasia showed some improvement, with one very good example, but there is still a way to go. Rieslings were also rather disappointing.

What should we keep an eye on? If Furmint and Ribolla have already established a reputation, this year we got at least one good example of Malvasia, Zelen and Vitovska. And the reds have improved too, especially Refosco-based ones. It is now time for Slovenia to show the character of its wines at an even higher level and establish itself as a quality European wine region – many of the wines we tasted are firmly leading the way.

TASTING WITH ROBERT GORJAK...

Caroline Gilby MW (also judged CEE) is a freelance wine writer who specialises in the wines of Central & Eastern Europe. For her full profile, see p291.

Erich Krutzler was a winemaker in Austria at Weingut Krutzler during the 1980s and 1990s, and a lecturer for the Austrian Wine academy (European MW course) and member of numerous tasting juries. Since 2001, he has been a winemaker in Slovenia.

Isabelle Legeron MW (also judged Hungary, Languedoc-Roussillon, Regional France) is France's first female MW. She also has her own TV show, *Journey into Wine*. For her full profile, see p188.

Igor Sotric (also judged CEE – Croatia) is head sommelier and wine buyer at China Tang at The Dorchester. For his full profile, see p146.

For Robert Gorjak's full profile, see p34

If your region was a celebrity, who would it be and why? 'Russell Crowe: unique, creative, fiery, smart, and always in the action'



Some wines are not available in the UK or US. Other wines were entered under a price band, but without an exact price and/or stockist details. In both cases, we have listed the price band in which they were judged. A = up to £4.99; B = £5–£6.99; C = £7–£9.99; D = £10–£14.99; E = £15–£19.99; F = £20–£29.99; G = £30–£39.99; H = above £40; £ = under-£10 wines