

# Eastern & Southeastern Europe

Dr Caroline Gilby MW

The big story is the expansion of the EU in May 2004 to include the wine-producing nations of Hungary, Cyprus, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.



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The wine industries of these countries have distinctly mixed feelings about the future, as they face loss of subsidies, removal of tariff barriers, and increased competition in their home markets.

In Hungary, Dr George Rasko, president of Royal Tokaji and adviser to the Minister for Agriculture, reckons that Hungary will lose 20–30 per cent of its vineyards in the next 10 years, as the market has to face up to competition from cheap imports from Spain and France. The vineyards on the Great Plain making basic table wines will be unable to compete and many producers are expected to give up. The Hungarian state has been subsidizing new vineyards and replanting until now. Officially these rebates cover 50 per cent of a project's costs, though sources reckon that this can be as much as 80 per cent due to ineffective financial controls. Under the EU support system, subsidies will fall to around 30 per cent and are expected to be more rigorously policed. Hungary has now agreed on the registered vineyard area and quotas for planting rights. No overall expansion will be allowed. The government also has to implement a new wine law by May 2004 to meet EU requirements. Drafts are in circulation for consultation, but the current proposal is reported to be very

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paternalistic, retaining considerable state control instead of devolving this to regional wine associations.

In Cyprus, the future in the EU looks bleak according to Akis Zambartas, MD of Keo, the largest wine company. Subsidies of €300 per hectare (ha) (rising to €550 in poor years) have been paid, along with fixed minimum grape prices (including a 25 per cent margin paid by the government). Producers have also been earning significant subsidies on exported wines, mainly low-cost bulk wine destined for the EU. These subsidies will be abolished from May 2004, though a little support from the EU may be available on a diminishing scale until 2007. The end result will probably be a significant loss of vineyards.

Slovenia sees EU membership as a challenge for its big-volume producers, who produce bulk and variable-quality wine for local consumption. On the positive side, restrictions on bringing in planting materials should be eased.

For Bulgaria and Romania, Europe is the big story too, since in December 2003 the EU confirmed their joining date as January 2007, provided they are ready. The race is on to identify and register vineyards, benefit from EU funding programmes, and bring wine regulations into line.

## Grapevine

- **The world's oldest wine** has been found in Georgia, according to Prof Patrick McGovern of the University of Pennsylvania in his book *Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viniculture* (2003). Analysis of wine residues found in ancient pottery shows that Neolithic humans were making wine 8,000 years ago and deliberately adding antibacterial tree resins to preserve it.

- **Cricova-Acorex in Moldova** has received certification from Swiss company SGS for its organic vineyards from 2003. It has also invested over €700,000 in updated winery equipment and has established two joint ventures with grape-growing cooperatives.

- **Privatization in Crimea** has been abandoned, since wine is the second-largest foreign-currency generator for the regional government.

- **In Ukraine**, the legendary Massandra Winery is expected to open its cellars for another sale from its library collection in spring 2004. The collection

contains more than one million bottles dating back to 1775 and its current value is estimated at \$150 million.

- **Renowned Bulgarian** winemaking partnership Dimitar Panov and Kapka Georgieva moved from Stork Nest Estates to Boyar Estates' premium Kortzen Winery for the 2003 vintage.

- **Romania's Recea winery** hired David Lockley, winemaker at Yonder Hill in Stellenbosch, to help with vinification of red wines in 2003. Substantial investment has also gone into additional cooling capacity, nitrogen blanketing, and tourist facilities.

- **Carl Reh (Romania)** is spending €1 million on new winery equipment in 2004. It will also plant new areas of Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Grigio to meet booming demand.

- **Dobogó Winery in Tokaj** will make its first dry wine in 2003. The final blend is yet to be decided, but will probably include Furmint, Hárslevelű, and Muscat.

## DOLLARS TO RESTORE TOKAJI GLORY

Across Eastern Europe, foreign money and foreign know-how are the driving forces in improving wines and vineyard management. Hungary's Tokaj region has been the main recipient of high-profile foreign cash. This trend has continued with the grand opening of a new state-of-the-art winery by Árvay in October 2003. Connecticut-based expats Christian and Andrea Sauska have invested US\$4 million as part of their aim to "bring back the glory days of Tokaji". They chose to work with Janos Árvay both for his forward-thinking attitudes and the parcels of over 100 ha of vines he has accumulated. Severe crop selection and thinning down to just 700 g (1 lb 9 oz) per vine are key parts of Árvay's approach and are the inspiration behind the brand name Hétfürtös, meaning 'seven clusters'.

## FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN BULGARIA CATCHES UP

In May 2003, a multimillion-dollar deal to buy Vinprom Svishtov was announced by a group of private investors led by outspoken Aussie Lou Ghirardello, head of foreign exchange at Deutsche Bank. Now renamed Stork Nest Estates, it is the only winery in Bulgaria with a sizable vineyard holding. There are 428 ha already under vine, with another 300 ready to be planted.

Stork Nest is one of the few Bulgarian wineries that understands the term 'canopy management'. Ghirardello's plan is to produce a wine that will "stop people dead in their tracks". Aussie winemakers Linda Domas and Trevor Tucker have been signed up for the 2003 vintage and have completely scrubbed down the old concrete winery. Early tastings show a

## Grapevine

- **The Royal Tokaji Wine Company** has made its first late-harvest wine after years of refusing to consider this type of product. It will be called Áts Cuvée, after the winemaker Karoly Áts, and there will be around 3,000 cases of 2003. Peter Vinding-Diers has not had his contract renewed and is no longer involved with the company.

- **Slovak Tokai?** The EU is ready to consider Slovakia's request for the recognition of the Slovak Tokai trademark. Slovakia has around 900 ha of Tokai vineyards, but Hungary is prepared to recognize only one-ninth of this and has raised objections on the grounds of quality.

- **Viticulture is in a state of crisis** in the province of Kosovo, and the UN has put a support plan in place with the aim of developing a private sector of growers and producers to clear current wine stocks and to improve future quality.

- **Fanagoria winery**, the largest winery within Russia's grape-growing regions, produced its first wine in 2003 from vines imported from France (planted in 1998).

- **Privatization in Moldova continues** with the sale, in September 2003, of Nis-Struguras winery to Russian company Parom Moscow for \$1.5 million. In October it was reported that only one offer from an unnamed bidder had been received for the Vinuri-laloveni Winery.

welcome improvement in fruit quality and tannin ripeness.

Other deals include the sale of Vini Sliven to Cypriot company Greenlane Consulting (though rumours suggest this may not be the ultimate owner). Boyar Estates sold the assets and wine stocks of Rousse winery to Russian MMVZ (Moscow Inter-Republican Winery) in November 2003 for an unconfirmed €4.6 million (which follows their earlier sale of Vinis Iambol to spirits and rakia producers Peshtera). French group Belvedere, which bought Domain Menada, Oriachovitza, and Domain Sakar in early 2003, recently acquired the export agency Vinimpex from the state for 2.7 million leva. Vinimpex will act as trade agent in a number of export markets for several leading wineries, and it also owns Sophia, the leading Bulgarian brand in Scandinavia. On a much smaller scale, German-based wine importer Ivo Genowski has bought 40 ha

near Nessebar on the Black Sea coast for his Santa Sarah 'garage' wines.

## MOLDOVA ATTRACTS AMERICANS

Moldova, currently Europe's poorest country, has recently been the recipient of American money. Napoli Enterprises acquired Lion-Gri, one of Moldova's largest producers, in July 2003 and has set about a complete renovation of its wineries and is planting extensive new vineyards. Lion-Gri crushed 30,000 tonnes in 2003 and the Australian consultant Jon Worontshak has been brought in to oversee winemaking. In general, Moldova is finding it hard to attract much-needed foreign investment. Wine accounts for 25 per cent of its export revenues, but, with neo-communists in power, along with allegedly high levels of fraud and bribery, Moldova is a difficult investment environment.

harvested in September 2004. A red is due to follow in 2006.

- **Cypriot vineyards are shrinking.** The total vineyard area fell from 16,605 ha in 2002 to 15,854 ha in 2003, despite new plantations of 506 ha.
- **British-owned Halewood Romania** has sold its Ceptura winery to a Moldovan company, Vinaria Bostavan.
- **Hungary's famous red-wine area** of Villány plans to introduce an appellation-type system to be called Villányi Eredetvédelmi Rendszer. This is a two-tier system that will be stricter than national law in specifying density of vineyards, varieties, yields, and bottling within the region.

## Grapevine

- **Russian mining-to-metals** conglomerate Ariant has purchased control of Russia's most famous winery, the Krasnodar sparkling-wine producer Abrau Durso. It is rumoured that Ariant has also tied up grape supplies covering 50–80 per cent of the region's production. It has also picked up Kuban Vino, which bottles imported bulk wine for the local market, and Mirny winery, a former state wine farm with 600 ha.
- **Turkish wine is to feature** in a new three-nation blend. Chris Cameron of Peppertree Wines in the Hunter Valley will launch his Anzac brand in April 2005, blending Sauvignon Blanc from the 2004 vintage in Australia and New Zealand with Turkish Sauvignon Blanc

# Opinion:

## Communicate the message

The countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe must learn to communicate clear, positive messages about their identities and their wines. Few wine drinkers in the West know where these countries are, let alone what their wines are all about. This all comes down to lack of communication.

### Stop the bickering

Each country needs to encourage its producers to work together and support each other in the way Australia and New Zealand have done so successfully.

### Embrace the future

Looking backwards and inwards is a major failing in most of Eastern and Southeastern Europe and must be addressed. Many Bulgarians, particularly those over 40, still feel life was better under communism. The old industrial grape-processing mentality still comes over strongly in wineries that want to show off their latest heavy machinery. Unlike most wine nations, which whisk visitors straight to the vineyards, international wine judges visiting in June 2003 had to ask to visit a vineyard. In Slovenia, young producers complain that vested interests make it very difficult to join the official tasting-commission panels. Prospective new tasters are required to pass an exam and attend 40 weekly sessions for experience before they can join. In Romania, the Bucharest International Wine Competition in November 2003 caused uproar by awarding the only double gold to a 1974 Furmint, very few bottles of which remain. Several other old wines were also given awards, prompting Vinarte to send back its diploma in protest at a competition that rewards wines that are ancient history for Romania.

### Free the wineries

The requirement to impose wine laws in line with the EU brings a real danger of crystallizing winemaking practices as they are now. The wine industries in the former communist bloc are barely a decade old in their current form, and the change from churning out vast quantities of so-so wine to pour down thirsty Soviet throats is still recent. Hungary is still discovering its potential for local varieties like Kadarka, and producers

are working with Pinot Noir, Syrah, and Cabernet Franc to identify the country's red strengths. Yet the proposed new wine law seems likely to tie producers in knots. Romania's recently revised DOC laws control minimum sugar levels, permitted varieties, and so on in very specific detail, yet are useful only in selling to the German market. They restrict high-quality varieties like Syrah (which is not an approved grape for Romania) but allow local growers to replant poor-quality hybrids. Steve Donnelly at the English-owned Carpathian Winery finds dealing with regulations and inspections a nightmare.

### Divided they fall

Fragmented land holdings and lack of integration remain enormous problems across the region. Privatization in Bulgaria has been disastrous for agriculture and the vines are in a shockingly poor state. Even the area of vineyards is in dispute, with estimates varying wildly from around 90,000 ha to 140,000 ha. Privatization handed back vines in tiny plots to pre-communist-era owners. These are too small to provide a living and often remote from the owners' homes. Lack of know-how, no economies of scale or commercial interest, along with a 'something for nothing' culture result in little attention being paid to fruit quality – and it shows in the wines.

### Hope for the future?

The countries in Eastern and Southeastern Europe have an enormous job in front of them. Quality and consistency must be put right, not just by a few icon producers, but across the board. Wineries must learn to work together to promote, educate, and raise awareness of their wines, while government and state regulators need to support go-ahead producers, not tie them up in regulations. The first step is to introduce decent records and encourage vineyard consolidation to allow producers the chance either to control their own fruit or at least to work with growers who are big enough to be professional.

### Grapevine

- **An aerial survey** of Slovenian vineyards has been commissioned to get to the bottom of the country's missing vineyards. Official figures suggest 25,000 ha exist, but only 15,500 have been registered.

- **In Croatia**, official statistics claim 59,000 ha of vines, but only 13,000 are reckoned to be in active production, with black-market wines and home consumption accounting for the discrepancy.

# Vintage Report

## Advance report on the latest harvest

### 2003

A year marked by the hot, dry summer across Europe, with most countries reporting particularly good results for reds and a very early start to the harvest.

In Bulgaria, severe cold spells in April hit harvest volumes in the north of the country; yields in the south were high, so overall yields were average. Quality is reported as very good, with high levels of sugar and polyphenols at harvest, but with unusually high acidity levels. Over the border, in Romania, most of the country was hit by extreme winter cold and April frosts, damaging many vines. Young vines in the western areas of Banat and Mehedinti-Vranju Mare suffered from drought, but the quality is very good. Dealul Mare was badly hit by drought at flowering, causing very poor fruit set on top of frost damage, with hailstorms and heavy rain in the second week of August adding to the problems. Average yields across the country, although some growers were down by 90 per cent in Dealul Mare, with Merlot particularly hard hit.

In Russia, Charles Borden reports that the harvest in Krasnodar is the best in years. The Taman subdistrict harvested almost double last year's total. In Moldova, the 2003 harvest is 25 per cent higher than last year. A good fruit set was followed by a mostly warm summer with some rain in June. Warm days in August were balanced by cool nights, giving very concentrated flavours. Quality is reported as excellent; the vintage is the best in five years.

Slovenia felt the effect of the drought and is generally 5 per cent down on the already-small 2002 vintage, although producers in Brda are 20 per cent down. It was a very early vintage with extremely high-quality reds (the best ever, some say), though some whites suffered from low acidity.

Tokaj in Hungary also suffered from some April frosts, followed by a warm dry season with drought affecting vines on free-draining soils. It was a long picking season, with a lower *aszú* yield than expected, possibly due to a lack of foggy mornings. Generally regarded as a good to very good year, but without the balancing acidity of 1999 and not as rich in sugar as 2000. Very good to outstanding results are reported for dry and late-harvest wines. The rest of Hungary reports excellent reds and intense fruit flavours in whites, though low acidity in some varieties. In Croatia, the harvest was the earliest in the last 100 years. Extreme heat and low rainfall reduced

vigour and gave small concentrated berries. Overall, 2003 here is a year with lots of extract, alcohol, and excellent quality.

Cyprus also reports one of the best vintages in recent years and good quantities. In Slovakia, careful canopy management was required to prevent white varieties suffering from sunburn and the drought in August stopped assimilation and delayed ripening. Picking of Riesling in the south of the country was delayed until October, when grapes were in perfect condition. Reports from Ukraine are of a generally poor summer, though western growing areas had a good vintage in both quantity and quality.

## Updates on the previous five vintages

### 2002

**Vintage rating:** 80 (except Bulgaria, SE Romania)  
(Red: 75, White: 80, Sweet: 85)

A mixed year, ranging from outstanding in Romania's Transylvanian region to below average in areas such as northern Bulgaria and southeastern Romania, which were hit by heavy rains. In Hungary, wines are very concentrated, with whites especially good and reds above average, but Tokaj hopes for a great *aszú* vintage were dashed by rain, although early-harvested wines are very good. In Romania, most wines are very good, although up to 60 per cent of the crop around Murfatlar was rot damaged.

In Bulgaria, the whites are average and reds generally difficult. The vintage in neighbouring Macedonia is also described as difficult and will require careful selection. In Cyprus, quality is good, though down in volume. Unusually, Turkey was hit by rain around harvest, with wines affected by rot. Ukraine has produced promising reds, with good colour and sugar levels around Odessa. In Moldova, 2002 is a very good vintage showing good varietal character. Slovenian production is down, but sugar levels are good and quality high, although there was some rot in early whites.

### 2001

**Vintage rating:** 77 (Red: 80, White: 75, Sweet: 75)

Mould development and poor flavours affected Tokaji wines, although some decent *aszú* wines have been made with ultra-careful selection. Elsewhere in Hungary, early-picked whites and late-picked reds were of sound quality. In Romania it was a good ripe year, while Bulgaria suffered from a second year of drought, reducing crops by as much as 50 per cent. Some producers report good wines, but vines in poor condition shut down and failed to ripen.

### 2000

**Vintage rating:** 85 (Red: 85–90, White: 80, Sweet: 90)

A very good vintage across Hungary, although the wines are maturing quickly due to low acidity levels. In Tokaj, the grapes were blessed with huge sugar levels and great flavours. One of the finest recent vintages in Romania, showing ripe, healthy fruit, balanced acidity, and good keeping potential. A very good year in Bulgaria too, with disease-free fruit and high sugars, though dependent on vineyard management.

### 1999

**Vintage rating:** 90 (Red: 85–90, White: 80, Sweet: 95)

Another classic Tokaji year of excellent quality, with really concentrated *aszú* berries and intense fruit acids giving superb balance, elegance, and keeping potential. Also a very good year for reds in Hungary. Romanian reds are also very good, uniformly ripe with high sugars and good acidity. International red varieties in Bulgaria (especially Cabernet and Merlot) did best in this high-quality vintage.

### 1998

**Vintage rating:** 75 (Red: 75, White: 75, Sweet: 75)

In Tokaj, the *aszú* wines are light in body and quick developing. Not an easy vintage across the rest of Hungary, and difficult also in Bulgaria. In Romania, an extended drought resulted in very tannic, high-acid reds and small quantities.

## Grapevine

- **Sixty per cent of wine** imported by Russia is Moldovan, yet random tests in Moscow have revealed that 7 per cent of the wines sampled were not up to Russian state standards and one wine contained artificial colouring E122.
- **Renowned German producer** Egon Müller has released his second vintage of Château Belá Riesling from Slovakia. He says that this is the style of wine he always intended to make – much drier, full-bodied, and intense.
- **Vylyan Winery** reports its first harvest of Syrah from plantings in 2001. The wine is “very beautiful”, according to Monika Debreczeni.
- **In Bulgaria, Marc Dworkin** reports that he has made the first vintage from his Bessa Valley project at Ogianovo, near Plovdiv. The vineyard has been planted with Merlot, Petit Verdot, Malbec, and Syrah. Only 6,000 bottles of the 2003 were made.

## GREATEST WINE PRODUCERS

### Tokaji

- 1 Szepsy
- 2 Királyudvar
- 3 Domaine de Disznókő
- 4 Royal Tokaji Wine Company

### Other wines

- 1 Edi Simčič (Slovenia)
- 2 Marjan Simčič (Slovenia)
- 3 Movia (Slovenia)
- 4 Atila Gere (Hungary)
- 5 Château Belá (Slovakia)
- 6 Vinarte (Romania)

## FASTEST-IMPROVING PRODUCERS

- 1 Stork Nest Estates (Bulgaria)
- 2 Carl Reh Winery (Romania)
- 3 Receaș Winery (Romania)
- 4 Domaine Szeremley (whites only, Hungary)
- 5 Cricova-Acorex (Moldova)
- 6 SERVE (Romania)
- 7 Prahova Wine Cellars (reds only, Romania)
- 8 Georgian Wines and Spirits Company (Georgia)
- 9 Keo (Cyprus)
- 10 Sodap (Cyprus)

## NEW UP-AND-COMING PRODUCERS

- 1 Santa Sarah (Bulgaria)
- 2 Árvay & Co (Tokaji, Hungary)
- 3 Tilia (Slovenia)
- 4 Dobogó (Tokaji, Hungary)
- 5 Maxxima (Bulgaria)
- 6 SERVE (Romania)
- 7 GIA (Hungary)
- 8 Sutor (Slovenia)
- 9 Damianitza (Bulgaria)
- 10 Assenovgrad (Swedish Project Wines, Bulgaria)

## BEST-VALUE PRODUCERS

- 1 Chateau Vincent (Hungary)
- 2 Vinarium Szekszárdi (Hungary)
- 3 Nyakas Winery (Budai) (Hungary)
- 4 Hilltop Neszmély Winery (Hungary)
- 5 Carl Reh Winery (Romania)
- 6 Prahova Wine Cellars (reds only, Romania)
- 7 Receaș (Romania)
- 8 Nagyréde Winery (Hungary)
- 9 Carpathian Winery (Romania)
- 10 Chapel Hill (Balaton-Boglar Winery, Hungary)

## GREATEST-QUALITY WINES

### Tokaji

- 1 **Tokaji 6 Puttonyos 1999** Szepsy (16,800 forints, not released)
- 2 **Tokaji Cuvée 2000** Szepsy (12,600 forints, not released)
- 3 **Aszú Essencia 1995** Royal Tokaji Wine Company (42,000 forints)
- 4 **Tokaji Aszú 6 Puttonyos 1999** Domaine de Disznókő (12,000 forints)

### Other wines

- 1 **Duet Riserva 2000** Edi Simčič (Slovenia, SIT 8,500)
- 2 **Chardonnay Riserva 2000** Marjan Simčič (Slovenia, SIT 2,640)
- 3 **Pinot Noir 1998** Movia (Slovenia, SIT 6,000)
- 4 **Cabernet Franc 2000** Bela Vincze (Hungary, 5,000 forints)
- 5 **Merlot 1999** Tilia (Slovenia, SIT 3,099)
- 6 **Pinot Gris 2002** Edi Simčič (Slovenia, SIT 3,800)

## BEST BARGAINS

- 1 **Cabernet Sauvignon Sinai Hill 2000** St Donatus (Hungary, 2,500–2,700 forints)
- 2 **Tokaji Szamorodni 1999** Domaine de Disznókő (Hungary, 3,200 forints)
- 3 **Merlot 2000** La Cetate (Romania, 160,000–200,000 lei)
- 4 **Extra Brut 2000** Chateau Vincent (Hungary, 2,100–2,300 forints)
- 5 **Chardonnay 2002** Budai (Hungary, 960–1,100 forints)
- 6 **Pinot Noir Reserve 2000** Prahova Wine Cellars (Romania, 135,000–150,000 lei)
- 7 **Pinot Noir 2003** Receaș Winery (Romania, 90,000–100,000 lei)
- 8 **Barrel Fermented Chardonnay 2002** Chapel Hill (Hungary, 800–1,000 forints)
- 9 **Merlot 2000** Cherry Tree Hill (Romania, 635,000–700,000 lei)
- 10 **Cabernet Rosé 2002** Nagyréde (Hungary, 750–800 forints)

## MOST EXCITING OR UNUSUAL FINDS

- 1 **Cabernet Sauvignon Bin 40 2002** Santa Sarah (Bulgaria, 50 leva) *German-based wine importer Ivo Genowski has set up his own winery in a rented garage. The Bin 40 is supple and appealing, a world away from the harsh green tannins of so many Bulgarian reds.*
- 2 **Swallowtail Fetească Neagră Gran Riserva 2001** Vinarte (Romania, 380,000 lei) *The Romanians have high hopes of their local Fetească Neagră or 'Black Maiden' grape. Italian-backed Vinarte produces the best example so far.*
- 3 **Ententa 2001** Assenovgrad (Bulgaria, 25 leva) *Swedish winemaker Lars Torstenson (of Domaine Rabiega in Provence)*
- 4 **Redark Merlot 2001** Damianitza (Bulgaria, 30 leva) *Dramatic, intense Merlot made by Marc Dworkin of Château Bellefont-Belcier in St-Emilion. One of Bulgaria's finest.*
- 5 **Leonardo Passito 1999** Marjan Simčič (Slovenia, SIT 9,600) *A real labour of love, just 380 half-bottles from 1 ha of Ribolla vines. The grapes are dried for six months and then vinified into this luscious, figgy, complex, sweet wine.*
- 6 **Kéknyelű 2002** Domaine Szeremley (Hungary, 2,290 forints) *The almost-extinct 'blue stem' grape shows its potential for quality from one of Hungary's most promising white-wine producers.*
- 7 **Pinot Noir 2001** Tibor Gal (Hungary, 3,500 forints) *Pinot Noir should have great potential in Hungary, and this fragrant, silky, elegant example shows real promise.*
- 8 **Ryzlink Vlašský Ice Wine 2001** Mikros-Vin (Czech Republic, 813 korunas) *Laski Rizling as never experienced before. Not generally regarded as a grape of much class, but here it shows real intensity.*
- 9 **Uniqato Rubin 2002** Damianitza (Bulgaria, 20 leva) *A unique Bulgarian cross of Nebbiolo and Syrah, only recently grown commercially. The Bulgarians believe it could be their Pinotage, and this wine shows that it can produce attractive, dark-fruited, velvety wines.*
- 10 **Pinot Blanc Late Harvest 2002** Kolby (Czech Republic, 210 korunas) *A Pinot Blanc with surprising depth and intensity.*

has been making wines with Bulgarian native grapes since 2001 in a purpose-built micro-winery. This is an impressive, big, but stylish blend of Cabernet, Mavrud, and Rubin.