



# KING OF the grapes

An impressive cast of judges convened for the Global Cabernet Sauvignon Masters to put 200 wines through their paces. **Lucy Shaw** presents the results



# cabernet sauvignon masters

**HAVING RECENTLY** cemented its title as king of the grapes with the news that it has overtaken Spanish white variety Airén as the world's most widely planted grape, no serious wine competition would be complete that didn't put Cabernet Sauvignon under the microscope. According to a recent study from the University of Adelaide, since 1990, Cabernet Sauvignon has more than doubled its share of hectares under vine, though many may argue its heartland remains on Bordeaux's Left Bank, where some of the world's most highly prized wines are crafted from the grape, which is used to form the backbone of Bordeaux blends. However, this thick-skinned variety can thrive in an array of terroirs around the world, and can be found flourishing everywhere from Coonawarra and Margaret River in Australia to the Napa Valley in California and Chile's Maipo Valley.

The 17th century lovechild of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon is appreciated by grape growers for its naturally low-yielding, late-ripening nature and ability to add structure, colour and power to blends. In addition, the grape's naturally high acidity and tannic structure mean wines made from Cabernet can be built to last. Given that it is planted in a plethora of pockets around the world, there is no cookie-cutter signature style for Cabernet, though many boast notes of blackcurrant, mint, eucalyptus, bell pepper and cedar, with cherry and olive notes present in cooler-climate Cabernets, and warmer Cabs often veering towards the jammier end of the flavour spectrum.

Building on from the success of both the Chardonnay Masters and the Pinot Noir Masters, around 200 wines from nine countries were submitted to our inaugural Cabernet Sauvignon Masters, with judging taking place on 8 May at Elysée restaurant in central London. Served blind and assessed without prejudice about their country of origin, the wines were arranged according to

their price band as well as style, from low price to high, and unoaked to oaked, in order to make the competition as fair as possible. Judged by a stellar panel of Masters of Wine, including Sebastian Payne MW of The Wine Society, Demetri Walters MW of Berry Bros & Rudd and Justin Knock MW of Encirc, the wines were scored out of 100, with those gaining more than 95 points being awarded the top title of Master. Those earning more than 90 points were given a gold, those more than 85 points a silver, and those more than 80 points a bronze.

## NEW ORDER

The majority of entries for our Cabernet Sauvignon Masters came from the New World, with just one wine from Bordeaux taking part in the competition. While two-thirds of the wines were single-varietal Cabernet, the remainder were blends crafted from at least 75% Cabernet Sauvignon. During the tasting, the judges looked for balance, fine tannic structure, a bright fruit profile and a complex character, as well as a long finish.

So how did the wines fare? Of the 200 wines that entered, 141 were medal-winners, with 83 walking away with a bronze, 41 awarded silver, 14 impressing enough for a gold and just three scooping the top accolade of a Master medal. "Cabernet is one of the great grapes of the world and you can see why it's planted everywhere as it delivers on many different levels. We haven't had too many

**Cabernet Sauvignon proved that it is able to deliver value for money. Producers across the world are stepping up their game**

## About the competition

In a crowded wine competition arena, *the drinks business* Global Cabernet Sauvignon Masters stands out for its assessment of wines purely by grape variety rather than region. Divided only by price bracket and, for ease of judging, whether the style was oaked or unoaked, the blind tasting format allowed wines to be assessed without prejudice about their country of origin. The wines were scored out of 100, with those gaining more than 95 points being awarded the top title of Master. Those earning more than 90 points were given a gold, those more than 85 points a silver, and those more than 80 points a bronze. The wines were judged by a stellar group of Masters of Wine on 8 May at Elysée restaurant in London's Goodge Street.

howlers, thankfully," quipped Payne. "Cabernet Sauvignon proved that it is able to deliver value for money. Producers across the world are stepping up their game and the hit rate in the competition was very good," added Hugo Rose MW of the Wine Investment Association.

In terms of individual countries, judges praised Chile for its ability to deliver reliable and consistently high-quality Cabernet at an affordable price point. "You can find fantastic value in Chile, which has a lot to recommend it," said Payne. "The consistency of the Chilean Cabs was a big surprise for me - the wines offered dark fruit and a creamy texture," commented Vanessa Cinti, head sommelier of Wolfgang Puck's debut London restaurant Cut at 45 Park Lane.

While the US put in a consistent performance, it was Australia, and most notably Coonawarra, that got our judges' pulses racing, with the inherent elegance of the wines from the Southern Australian region setting them apart. Australia also led the way in the gold medal tally, scooping five golds and a ▶



# cabernet sauvignon masters

## Medal winners: blends

Company	Wine	Vintage	Country	Medal
<b>Unoaked blends under £10</b>				
Viña Canepa	Novisimo Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
<b>Oaked blends under £10</b>				
Constellation Brands Canada	Clos du Bois North Coast Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	USA	Silver
Viña Maipo	Vitral Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
Concha y Toro	Casillero del Diablo Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
Viña Luis Felipe Edwards	Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
Constellation Brands Canada	The Dreaming Tree Cabernet Sauvignon North Coast	2012	USA	Bronze
Viña Canepa	Finisimo Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
De Bortoli wines	DB Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Bronze
<b>Oaked blends £10-£20</b>				
Santa Rita Estates	Santa Rita Medalla Real	2010	Chile	Gold
Chamlija Wines	Chamlija Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Turkey	Bronze
Bisquertt	Ecos de Rulo, Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
Viña Cobos	Felino Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Bronze
Banfi	Aska, Bolgheri Rosso DOC	2012	Italy	Bronze
Concha y Toro	Marques de Casa Concha Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Bronze
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Columbia Crest Grand Estates Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Bronze
Jackson Family Wines	Kendall Jackson Vintner's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Bronze
Viña Maipo	Gran Devoción Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah	2011	Chile	Bronze
Constellation Brands Canada	Robert Mondavi Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Bronze

Master for Katnook Founder's Block Cabernet Sauvignon 2010. "Both Australia and Argentina are doing a very good job with Cabernet Sauvignon and are offering decent-quality examples for under £10. You can see the evolution the countries have undergone in recent years. The Australian wines were lovely and fresh with herbal and menthol notes," said Cinti.

Hot on Australia's heels was Chile, which won four golds, followed by Argentina, which scooped two golds and a Master for Pascual Toso Reserve

Cabernet Sauvignon 2009, with Spain picking up the third and final Master for Torres' Mas La Plana 2010, which has been made from a 29-hectare vineyard in the northern Spanish region of Penedès since 1970. South Africa delivered a solid performance, earning two gold and three silver medals, while, somewhat surprisingly given its strong links to Cabernet, the US picked up only one gold medal for Jackson Family Wines Stonestreet Monument Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon 2010.

### QUESTION OF STYLE

A debate arose around oak, with a number of judges lamenting the inability on the part of many producers to handle it properly. "While Cabernet has a natural affinity for oak, a lot of the wines were smothered and it wasn't used judiciously, meaning the oak owned the wine rather than the other way around," commented Berry Bros & Rudd's Walters. Payne of The Wine Society concurred. "At the end of ▶

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# cabernet sauvignon masters

## Medal winners: blends (continued)

Company	Wine	Vintage	Country	Medal
<b>Oaked blends £20-£30</b>				
Bodegas La Rosa	Cientoquince CXV	2011	Argentina	Gold
MontGras Properties	Montgras Ninquén	2010	Chile	Silver
Thompson Estate	Thompson Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Silver
Castello di Amorosa	Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Silver
Jackson Family Wines	Kendall Jackson Grand Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Silver
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Chateau Ste Michelle Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley	2012	USA	Bronze
Thompson Estate	Thompson Estate Andrea	2010	Australia	Bronze
Treasury Wine Estates	Beringer Knights Valley Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Bronze
<b>Oaked blends £30+</b>				
Voyager Estate	Voyager Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot	2009	Australia	Gold
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Artemis Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Silver
Viña Canepa	Magnificvm	2011	Chile	Silver
Errázuriz	Don Maximiano	2011	Chile	Silver
Jackson Family Wines	Freemark Abbey Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Silver
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Col Solare	2010	USA	Silver
Constellation Brands Canada	Robert Mondavi Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve	2008	USA	Silver
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Chateau Ste Michelle Indian Well Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	USA	Bronze
Cono Sur	20 Barrels Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Bronze
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Château Ste Michelle Cold Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Bronze
Jackson Family Wines	Atalon Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Bronze
Viña Maipo	Protegido	2010	Chile	Bronze
Errázuriz	Don Maximiano	2010	Chile	Bronze
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Columbia Crest Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Bronze
Jackson Family Wines	La Jota Vineyard Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Bronze
Cobblestone Vineyards	Cobblestone Vineyards Reserve Atlas Peak, Napa Valley	2009	USA	Bronze

## Medal winners: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon (under £10)

Company	Wine	Vintage	Country	Medal
<b>Unoaked 100% Cabernet Sauvignon under £10</b>				
Rock N Roll Wines AB	Kiss Monster Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Bronze
Blends Wine Estates UK	Tomero Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Bronze
<b>Oaked 100% Cabernet Sauvignon under £10</b>				
Bodegas La Rosa	Finca La Escondida Reserve	2013	Argentina	Gold
Wakefield/Taylor's Wines	Promised Land Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Australia	Gold
Vina Terranoble	Terranoble Reserva Terroir Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Gold
MP Wines	Killka Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Argentina	Silver
Blaxland Wine Group	Barton Steer Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Australia	Silver
Viña Mistamar	Vistamar Sepia Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Silver
Barton & Guestier	B&G Réserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	France	Bronze
MontGras Properties	MontGras Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Chile	Bronze
Viña Luis Felipe Edwards	Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Chile	Bronze
Trincherro Family Estates	Sutter Home Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	USA	Bronze
RPB	El Supremo Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Bronze
Bodegas Pascual Toso	Pascual Toso Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Argentina	Bronze
Doolhof Wine Estate	Signature Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	South Africa	Bronze
Rietvallei Wine Estate	Rietvallei Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	South Africa	Bronze

# cabernet sauvignon masters

## Medal winners: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon (£10-£20)

Company	Wine	Vintage	Country	Medal
Katnook Coonawarra	Katnook Founder's Block Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Master
Bodegas Pascual Toso	Pascual Toso Selected/Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2009	Argentina	Master
Spier Wines	Savanha Naledi Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	South Africa	Gold
Viña Terramater	Terramater Altum Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Chile	Gold
Bodegas Pascual Toso	Pascual Toso Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Argentina	Silver
KWV	KWV The Mentors Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	South Africa	Silver
Hedges Family Estate	House of Independent Producers, Sagemoor Vineyard, Columbia Valley	2012	USA	Silver
Angove Family Winemakers	Vineyard Select Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Australia	Silver
Viña Siegel	Single Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Colchagua Valley	2012	Chile	Silver
Viña Valdivieso	Valdivieso Single Valley Lot Cabernet Sauvignon, Rapel	2012	Chile	Silver
McManis FV	McManis Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Silver
Pernod Ricard	Jacob's Creek Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Coonawarra	2012	Australia	Silver
Carolina Wine Brands	Casablanca Nimbus Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Silver
Carolina Wine Brands	Santa Carolina Reserva de Familia Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Silver
Viña Morandé	Morandé Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Silver
Santa Rita Estates	Nativa Gran Reserva 2011	2011	Chile	Silver
Miguel Torres Chile	Cordillera Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Silver
Finca Monteflores	Finca Monteflores Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Argentina	Silver
Viña Terramater	Terramater Limited Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Chile	Silver
Namaqua Wines	Spencer Bay Cabernet Sauvignon	2009	South Africa	Silver
Viña Los Boldos	Momentos Reserve, Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Chile	Bronze
Viña Los Boldos	Chateau Los Boldos, Cuvée Tradition, Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	Chile	Bronze
Distell	First Cape Special Cuvée Cabernet Sauvignon	2013	South Africa	Bronze
Santa Rita Estates	Doña Paula Estate	2012	Argentina	Bronze
Wakefield/Taylors Wines	Jaraman Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Australia	Bronze
Viña Pérez Cruz	Perez Cruz Limited Edition Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
MP Wines	Salentein Primus Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Bronze
El Esteco	Serie Finca Notables Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Bronze
Trincherio Family Estates	Menage a Trois Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	USA	Bronze
Wakefield/Taylors Wines	Wakefield/Taylors Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Australia	Bronze
Trincherio Family Estates	Napa Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	USA	Bronze
Woodstock Wine Estate	Woodstock Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Australia	Bronze
El Esteco	El Esteco Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Bronze
Trincherio Family Estates	Joel Gott Cabernet Sauvignon 815	2012	USA	Bronze
Spier Wines	Spier 21 Gables Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	South Africa	Bronze
Bodega Norton	Norton Winemaker Selection Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Argentina	Bronze
Trincherio Family Estates	Folie a Deux Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Bronze
Carolina Wine Brands	Santa Carolina Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Bronze
Viña Pérez Cruz	Pircas de Liguai Cabernet Sauvignon Single Collection	2011	Chile	Bronze
La Motte Wine Estate	La Motte Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Bronze
Viña Valdivieso	Valdivieso Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo	2011	Chile	Bronze
Diemersfontein	Woolworths Founder's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	South Africa	Bronze
Casarena	Casarena Bodega y Viñedos	2011	Argentina	Bronze
Viña Terranoble	Terranoble Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Bronze
Domingo Hermanos	Finca De Domingo Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Argentina	Bronze
Langmeil Winery	Langmeil Blacksmith Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Bronze
Cederberg	Cederberg Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	South Africa	Bronze
Domaine Denois	Cabernet Sauvignon La Bourdette	2010	France	Bronze
Casa Altamira	SonVida Cabernet Sauvignon	2008	Argentina	Bronze

**Spain picked up a Master for the Torres Mas La Plana 2010,  
which has been made from a 29-hectare vineyard in the northern  
Spanish region of Penedès since 1970**

# cabernet sauvignon masters

## Medal winners: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon (£20-£30 & £30+)

Company	Wine	Vintage	Country	Medal
<b>Oaked 100% Cabernet Sauvignon £20-£30</b>				
Cono Sur	Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Chile	Gold
Cederberg	Cederberg Five Generations Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	South Africa	Gold
Bird in Hand	Bird in Hand Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Gold
Treasury Wine Estates	Wynns "Black Label" Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon	2008	Australia	Gold
Peirano Estate Vineyards	Peirano Estate Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	USA	Silver
Bodegas Pascual Toso	Pascual Toso Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Silver
Villa Saletta	Villa Saletta Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Italy	Silver
Viña Apaltagua	Apaltagua Signature	2011	Chile	Silver
Le Riche Wines	Le Riche Reserve	2010	South Africa	Silver
Trincherero Family Estates	Trincherero Napa Valley Mario's Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Silver
Pernod Ricard	St Hugo Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Silver
Bird in Hand	Bird in Hand Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Australia	Bronze
El Porvenir de Cafayate	Laborum Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Argentina	Bronze
Ernie Els Wines	Ernie Els Proprietor's Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	South Africa	Bronze
Viña Cobos	Bramare Lujan de Cuyo Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	Argentina	Bronze
Miguel Torres Chile	Manso de Velasco	2010	Chile	Bronze
Gatt Wines	Gatt Cabernet Sauvignon	2009	Australia	Bronze
Gatt Wines	Gatt High Eden Cabernet Sauvignon	2008	Australia	Bronze
<b>Oaked 100% Cabernet Sauvignon £30+</b>				
Miguel Torres	Mas la Plana	2010	Spain	Master
Jackson Family Wines	Stonestreet Monument Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Gold
Treasury Wine Estates	Wynns John Riddoch Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Gold
Santa Rita Estates	Santa Rita Casa Real	2010	Chile	Silver
Wakefield/Taylor's Wines	St Andrews Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Silver
Bird in Hand	Nest Egg Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Silver
Wirra Wirra	Wirra Wirra Dead Ringer Cabernet Sauvignon	2009	Australia	Silver
Viña Los Boldos	Chateau Los Boldos, Vieilles Vignes, Cabernet Sauvignon	2012	Chile	Bronze
Hedges Family Estate	Red Mountain, La Haute Cuvée	2012	USA	Bronze
South Coast Winery	South Coast Winery Cabernet Sauvignon	2011	USA	Bronze
Wakefield/Taylor's Wines	The Visionary Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	Australia	Bronze
Katnook Estate	Katnook Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	2009	Australia	Bronze
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Conn Creek Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	2010	USA	Bronze
Santa Rita Estates	Carmen Gold Reserva	2010	Chile	Bronze
Bird in Hand	Nest Egg Cabernet Sauvignon	2009	Australia	Bronze
Cobblestone Vineyards	Cobblestone Vineyards Reserve Atlas Peak, Napa Valley	2007	USA	Bronze

the day, you want to be able to drink the whole bottle, not just one glass, and some of the wines messed around with the oak a little too much and the alcohol levels were too high, but there is a market for those styles of wine," he said.

As to whether Cabernet performs better in a blend or as a solo act, the judges were unanimous on the former. "I'm not certain that Cabernet Sauvignon delivers varietal character under £10. What you tend to get is a lot of structure without the fruit balance. A few of the under-£10 wines worked, but the tannin often smothered the fruit. The blends were

**When made well,  
Cabernet can more  
than hold its own as a  
single-varietal wine**

more rounded and balanced with better palate weight and structure than the single varietals," said Walters, to which Payne added: "As a single varietal, Cabernet Sauvignon rarely hits the high spots – it works better in blends. As a grape it does fantastically commercially and is hugely successful; the trick is to keep the freshness locked in."

Cinti, meanwhile, was more forgiving of the single varietals. "Some of them worked well – I think there is a space for them in the market. When made well, Cabernet can more than hold its own as a single-varietal wine," she said. db



# cabernet sauvignon masters

## The judges

(L-R): Patrick Schmitt, editor of *the drinks business*, Hugo Rose MW of the Wine Investment Association, Vanessa Cinti of Cut at 45 Park Lane, Sebastian Payne MW of The Wine Society, Rebecca Palmer of Corney & Barrow, Mark Savage MW of Savage Selection, Lucy Shaw, deputy editor of *the drinks business*, Justin Knock MW of Encirc and Demetri Walters MW of Berry Bros & Rudd.



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& **TOP 10**  
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