

# Wineries to Watch<sup>2016</sup>

At *W&S*, our tastings regularly turn up new talent, and we're always happy to stumble across a winery whose wines seem just as accomplished as the stalwarts we know and love. Here are a dozen up-and-coming producers that sparked our attention with their recent releases—wineries we'll be watching in the years to come.







## California

### Skinner

Mike and Carey Skinner were vacationing in the Sierra Foothills when they came across a reference to James Skinner's winery. It turns out he was an ancestor, and the two southern Californians decided they'd try to reclaim their family's forgotten winemaking legacy. They bought land in Fairplay, in El Dorado County, and brought in winemaker Chris Pittenger to oversee the project; he jumped at the opportunity to elevate a region with a long winemaking history and some fascinating vineyard sites, but little recognition for fine wine. He now works with fruit from the Skinner's home estate as well as other vineyards on El Dorado's sunny volcanic slopes. Keep an eye out for the 2013 El Dorado Mourvedre—it translates a warm Foothills summer into a sleek, stony and refreshing wine—and the 2013 Grenache, a floral red with a gripping, meaty red cherry flavor. —L.S.





## California

### Easkoot

Stephan and Emily Schindler jettisoned their LA television-production company soon after they launched Winemonger, their Austrian-focused wine import business, in 2003. They later moved north to Marin County, and made the first wine under their own Easkoot label in 2009, starting with a pinot noir from the cool, windy Chileno Valley Vineyard just 20 minutes away from their home in San Anselmo. The 2014 is their best vintage yet: The Chileno Valley Pinot Noir is trim and pretty as usual, but with just a bit more concentration—delicious, perfumed and graceful. The 2014 Suacci Vineyard Pinot Noir, from just over the Sonoma border, is similarly bright, with a refreshing, sumac-scented coastal vibrancy. A new addition: an addictively frisky rosé from some of the Chileno Valley fruit. —L.S.



Bill Sweat

## Oregon

### Winderlea

Former Bostonians Bill Sweat and Donna Morris bought the Goldschmidt Vineyard in 2006 and renamed it Winderlea. It's a 20-acre mid-slope parcel in the Dundee Hills planted mostly to old-clone pinot noir, some dating back to 1974. They've tapped Leigh Bartholomew, who managed Archery Summit's vineyards for 12 years, to farm their vines, and brought on consultant Philippe Armenier to help transition the estate to biodynamics. They also purchase fruit from other prized Dundee Hills sources, such as Maresh, Murto and Weber vineyards, as well as Shea, Hyland and Crawford Beck from farther afield in the Willamette Valley. In all, it's a robust portfolio of pinot blanc, chardonnay and about a half-dozen vineyard-designated pinot noirs. Robert Brittan, former winemaker for Stags' Leap Winery in Napa Valley, directs the winemaking; the 2013s we tasted this year stood out for their transparency and finesse, red-fruited purity of flavor. —P.J.C



Giles Cooke, MW

## Australia

### Thistledown/One Chain

Giles Cook and Fergal Tynan met 16 years ago at a bar while studying for their Master of Wine exams. Then they met again as MWs, when Cook, of Alliance Wines, and Peter Leske of Revenir, were working on a project to make house wines for high-end restaurants. Tynan joined Alliance, and the three started making One Chain (now about 8,000 cases), then added Thistledown as their top selections (about 2,000 cases). "The three of us have differing opinions about most things in life," Tynan says. "The only thing we agree on is wine—the old wines of Maurice O'Shea, or Wendouree, those are the bottles we used to gather and drink." They set out to make wines that emulate those classics, searching out old vines, ungrafted and unirrigated, focused on Barossa and Eden Valley south to McLaren Vale and Langhorne Creek. In addition to a delicious \$17 Shiraz from One Chain, the wine that caught our attention was the 2013 Thorny Devil Grenache. Fermented as mostly whole berries without added yeast, then aged in old oak barrels, it's the kind of fresh, powerfully structured red that defines what's great about Barossa. —J.G.

*Imported by Wine Dogs, Brooklyn, NY*



## Greece

### Domaine Karanika

In the 1980s, while at university, Laurens Hartman ran a small business with his fraternity brothers, selling wine they'd bought on trips to Burgundy and Champagne. Hartman went into publishing but continued to make pilgrimages to France for wine, until he decided he needed to make his own. He and his wife, Annette, looked to Greece, where his mother was born, and settled on Amyndeon, a plateau at 2,200 feet in the far northwest of the country. "I found everything we looked for: altitude, history, a sensational grape variety, snow, rains, enormous differential between day and night temperatures," he says. Searching out old, ungrafted xinomavro vines and farming them biodynamically, he began bottling light-bodied reds with spiced cherry scents, their bright acidity differentiating them from the richer examples grown in Naoussa. In 2009, he started to experiment with Champagne-method sparkling wine: His Brut Cuvée Speciale is lean and elegant, the fine bubbles accentuating its crisp, palate-whetting clarity. —T.Q.T.

*Imported by Verity Wine Partners, NY/ WineWise, Oakland, CA*



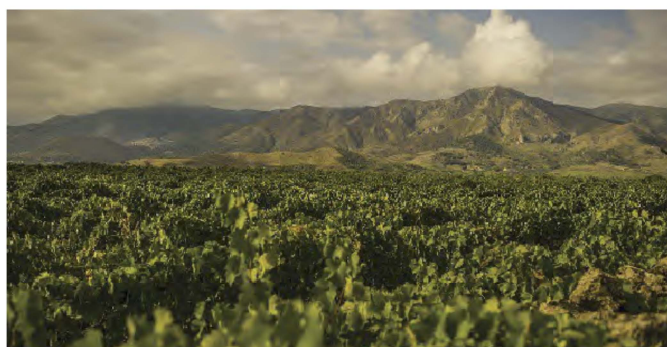
Laurens Hartman  
(right) & family

## Italy

### Girolamo Russo

Giuseppe Russo left a career as a pianist and music teacher in 2005 to take over his family's Passopisciaro estate after his father's death. Russo began bottling under the family name in 2006, and farms his 37 acres organically, including alberello-trained vines in the Feudo di Mezzo plot that are up to 100 years old. He culls fruit from several vineyards for 'a Rina, a fresh and vibrant Etna Rosso, and he ages his single-cru wines from the Feudo di Mezzo, Feudo and San Lorenzo vineyards in used barriques and tonneaux to showcase nerello mascalese's delicate red berry flavors. Russo has increased his production ten-fold since 2006, to 60,000 bottles a year, and recently planted five acres of carricante that will go into Nerina, a white wine named for his mother. —S.J.

*Imported by Panebianco, NY*



## South Africa

### Duncan Savage

Duncan Savage was the winemaker at Cape Point when he started his own label in 2011, focusing on small parcels of vines with strong coastal influence or from high-altitude sites. His Savage Red from 2013 caught our attention earlier this year. It's a blend of syrah (67 percent) with grenache, cinsaut and touriga nacional, a formidable wine that captures the distinctive savor of Cape grapes and transforms what is often presented as rusticity (or, sometimes, ashen bitterness) into elegant notes of saddle leather. The wine feels cool and fresh, bold, then tight, a refreshing take on the Cape. This spring, Savage left his day job with the goal to build his production; watch for more iterations of Cape fruit to come. —J.G.

*Imported by Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA*



Duncan Savage (left)

## Portugal

### Monte Xisto

João Nicolau de Almeida began his career planting Ervamoira, a vineyard in the Douro Superior near Foz Coa, for Ramos Pinto. He recently retired as CEO to dedicate time to a project with his sons, Mateus and João. They began assembling their 100 acres on a ridge above the Douro in 1993, taking 15 years to complete 20 land deals; they started planting the vines, cascading down from either side of the ridge, in 2003. The vines grow in the midst of a riot of spring flowers, encouraged by the Nicolau de Almeidas, who farm the site with biodynamic practices. Mateus is building an underground schist-walled cave for the wine production; for the first vintages, he fermented the wine in granite lagars without any additions, then aged it in 600-liter barrels. The 2013 is floral and purple-fruited, the structure firm, the tannins adding an almost delicate schisty edge to the velvet nap of the texture. It captures a remarkable vineyard with vibrant energy. —J.G.

*Imported by MundoVino/The Winebow Group, NY*

View from the vines  
at Monte Xisto





## Chile

### Rogue Vine

Leonardo Erazo is the winemaker at Alto Las Hormigas, in Mendoza, but his roots are in Chile's Itata Valley. In 2008, he began Rogue Vine, a quest to rescue old vines in this wild, little-explored southern region—especially those planted on granite slopes. “I like the effect of granite on Itata wines,” he explains. “It gives them a special salinity.” He’s referring to his old-vine cinsaut, país, muscat and semillon, all of which he vinifies without adding yeasts, in concrete eggs and old wood. Taste the rich and expansive Grand Itata 2014, based on very old vines of muscatel, to get a clear sense of Itata’s untamed terroir. —P.T.  
*Imported by Brazos, Brooklyn, NY*



Leonardo Erazo

## France

### Denis Jeandeau

As the cost of land in the Côte d'Or creates an increasingly tall barrier to entry for talented young vigneron, more are staking claims around the edges, particularly in Pouilly-Fuissé, a region whose *lieux-dits* are now under consideration for premier cru status. Denis Jeandeau is a young star of the region, with the kind of entrepreneurial energy that's rare in someone who borrows his neighbor's horses to plow the chalky clay between his old vines, allows spontaneous fermentations and focuses on old barrels. His 2012 Vieilles Vignes, from 52-year-old vines, tastes like an old-fashioned white Burgundy, but with delicate hints of chamomile and crème brûlée adding detail to the vanilla richness. His Secret Minéral, from a parcel of 45-year-old vines grown in marl and limestone, delivers on the minerality, along with a savory, bitter-almond richness. Jeandeau is a great young grower to follow closely. —J.G.  
*Imported by A.I. Selections, Long Island City, NY*



Denis Jeandeau

## France

### Domaine de la Réserve d'O

Frédéric Chaufray, with his heavy skull rings, bright red Converse high tops and skinny frame, looks like a punk rocker—which he used to be. Since 2005, he's run a winery with his wife, Marie, a Brazilian agronomist, on the side of a steep, forested slope high in the Terrasses du Larzac. Their vineyards sit higher up the slope, gnarly old plantings of grenache, syrah and cinsault they farm biodynamically at 1,200 to 1,400 feet. Vinified with no added yeasts or enzymes and little added sulfur, the wines are across-the-board delicious, presenting Mediterranean flavors with brisk, cool energy: The Bilbo is a cinsault-bright red, a gulper; the Hissez O is its syrah counterpoint; the Réserve is a combination of the two fermented in stainless steel and blended with grenache fermented in cement, as lean and muscled as Usain Bolt, and ready to go the distance. —T.Q.T.  
*Imported by Cape Classics, NY*

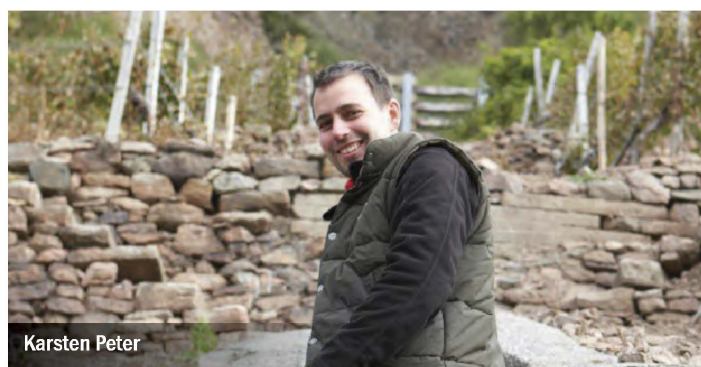


Marie & Frédéric Chaufray

## Germany

### Gut Hermannsberg

The Prussian government set up this winery in 1902, choosing some of the Nahe's best vineyards for an experimental all-riesling estate. The 740-acre property was state-owned until 2007, when Jens Reidel and Dr. Christine Dinde took over. They rechristened it Gut Hermannsberg, after their most prized vineyard, and hired Karsten Peter as winemaker. Working entirely with *Erste Lage* sites—German for grand cru—he's putting out an array of dry wines that illuminate the richness of the Nahe's diverse terroir. Two standout examples from 2012: the Bastei, a burled nugget of concentrated riesling grown in an amphitheater-shaped vineyard of ruddy-hued rhyolite, and the Kupfergrube, a lean, slate-driven example with laser-like drive. —T.Q.T.  
*Imported by Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*



Karsten Peter