

25 Great Vineyards

HOW MANY WINEMAKERS HAVE TOLD US, "You can make bad wine from great grapes, but no one can make great wine from bad grapes."

So it follows that if you're looking for extraordinary wine, you'd better find some extraordinary grapes. And you'll find them in the world's greatest vineyards, growing in each of the 25 legendary sites on the pages that follow. We selected these 25 great vineyards with a specific idea in mind: Each presents a direct connection between the distinction of the site and the character of the wine. These are vineyards where the *terroir* – the French term that roughly translates as the total environment of a place, including soil, climate, aspect, vine, even history – is most clearly perceptible in the wine.

To that end, we scoured our own tastings, contemplated the vineyards we'd visited throughout the world, and got recommendations from experts in every corner of the wine business: sommeliers, journalists, winemakers, vineyard owners, collectors. And we came up with the list you see here.

Admittedly, these are not bargain basement wines. Duplicating these tastings can be an investment, but it's a worthwhile one; and if you gather a group of six or seven friends who all contribute, that investment suddenly becomes much more affordable. Also, while some of the older wines may be difficult to track down, they do turn up at auctions, or you can avail yourself of websites like www.wine-searcher.com to hunt through the wineshops of the US with a few quick keystrokes. Nor will it ruin the purpose of a tasting to substitute a different vintage – do a little research, find out what the vintage was like, and then see what the bottle holds.

And who knows. After tasting these wines from some of the world's greatest vineyards, you may find a desire kindled inside you to jump on a plane and head off to the Wachau, or Burgundy, or the foothills of the Andes, to walk the vineyard rows in the summer sun, or feel a fistful of cool, stony soil crumble in your hands.

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