

With the rise of the artisan vineyard, there's an almost endless array of small producers offering top-class wine. Richard Cree picks his favourites

Le Due Terre, Friuli, Italy

Natural wines and biodynamic vineyards are words laden with preconceptions, conjuring up memories of foul, unstable, cloudy wines and weird hippies ashing vines by moonlight and dancing round copper pots. It was a total delight to taste Le Due Terre's wines first, then read the blurb. Yes, they produce natural wines and the winery is biodynamic. But what matters is that the wine tastes absolutely brilliant.

Pick of the wines: Due Terre Sacrisassi Bianco 2008. A blend of Tocai and Ribello Gallo, this is a heady, punchy white that knocked my socks off at a recent wine-tasting.

Ngeringa, Adelaide Hills, South Australia

This is another biodynamic winery. It's perhaps not surprising how many artisan wineries, free from the demands of industrial volume, opt to take this more challenging route. For anyone still labouring under the impression that Australian whites are overly oaked and greasy, here is proof that they can also produce small, delicate and slow-growing jewels.

Pick of the wines: The 2009 Pinot Noir is a prime example of how Ngeringa takes its time to create a gentle, clever wine.

ACORN Winery, Alegria Vineyard, Sonoma County, California, US

Run by a husband and wife, the Acorn Winery is all about quality wines with as little interference as possible. They grow and pick varieties they plan to bottle together in the same terroir and claim this harmonious approach makes for more balanced wines. With results this good, who can argue?

Pick of the wines: Alegria Vineyards Russian River Valley Cabernet Franc. A complex, smokey wine with plenty of Cabernet Franc punch, hints of cedarwood and even moments of chocolate orange.

Domaine La Colombette, Béziers, France

The father and son team that run this vineyard overlooking the Mediterranean manage to combine a deep sense of tradition with a keen eye for innovation. For example, they were early adopters of the screw cap and the vineyard specialises in full-flavoured, but lower alcohol wines. The Grenache rosé is the epitome of a summer Saturday lunchtime.

Pick of the wines: The Chardonnay Demi-Muid 2012 is one of the best I've tasted and at just £15, a bargain.

Bodega Catena Zapata, Mendoza, Argentina

Father-daughter team, Nicolás and Laura Catena have been on a 20-year mission to raise the standards of Mendoza wines. With spacious vineyards in awe-inspiring settings, Catena wines have all the verve, punch and panache of their makers.

Pick of the wines: Nicolás Catena Zapata is a blockbuster blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. Buy young and keep for as long as your willpower holds out.

Bodegas Los Astrales, Anguix Burgos, Ribera Del Duero, Spain

Forget Rioja, Spain's real gem is the Ribera Del Duero. Astrales is a typical example of the high-quality output of the region and has a reputation for excellent Tempranillo.

Pick of the wines: There's only one each year, but it is always a cracker. Deep, solid tannins, plenty of toasted oak and liquorice with enough blackberry and cassis to make it dangerously moreish. Not cheap, but worth every pound.