



# CLASSIC cabernet

**The Cabernet Sauvignon Masters once more demonstrated that Cab is a grape of resilience and reliability, with New World examples impressing the judges with their consistent quality – even at entry level, writes *Patrick Schmitt MW***

**AS WE** noted in last year's report, such are the powerful traits of Cabernet Sauvignon, wherever it's grown, and however it's handled, the grape displays a pleasing sameness. In essence, it's a grape of resilience and reliability.

So, unlike Pinot Noir, another grape in our Global Masters series, Cabernet Sauvignon offers regularity in personality, which is derived from its dense tannins, and juicy blackcurrant flavours, along with its subtle and refreshing leafy lift, as well as lingering coffee and cedar characters. It's a bit like ex-pat Brits drinking tea and playing cricket: Cabernet behaves the same way wherever you find it.

But what about quality? Here too, Cabernet offers consistency, although the

high points are only attained in certain places. As this year's competition confirmed, the great sites for Cabernet are Chile's Maipo and Colchagua Valleys, North America's Sonoma County along with its Napa and Columbia Valleys, and Australia's Coonawarra and Margaret River regions.

Of course, Bordeaux is the home of this noble grape, and the benchmark Cabernet-based wines, but the Masters competition was primarily a New World tasting, simply because it is focused on unblended examples, which one rarely finds in Europe.

Nevertheless, there were notable Cabs from the Old World, surprises even. Two Gold medal-winners in particular highlighted the value of this type of

competition – tasting the wines blind without knowledge of source country does allow lesser-known regions to shine. Consequently, among this year's top scorers were wines from Turkey's Thrace and Spain's Castilla-La Mancha.

Furthermore, a theme noted last year, and continuing in 2016's tasting was the quality of Cabernet from Argentina, a country far more famous for its Malbecs, but crafting beautiful wines from Cabernet too.

If, however, one were to select a single country where the Cabernets were consistently good across all price points, it would undoubtedly be Chile. Here is a nation that manages to serve up a typically juicy Cabernet character at £10, and, at higher prices, deliver the grape's

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## 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 by 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.

Wines were scored out of 100, with those gaining over 95 points being awarded the top title of Master. Those earning over 90 points were given a Gold, those over 85 points a Silver and those over 80 points a Bronze. The wines were judged by a cherry-picked group of Masters of Wine and Master Sommeliers on 14 April at the Tramshed in Shoreditch, London. This report only features the medal winners.

For more detail on the top-scoring wines, including tasting notes, see [thedrinksbusiness.com](http://thedrinksbusiness.com)

potential for making structured, complex, age-worthy reds too.

## LIGHTNESS OF TOUCH

However, to move away from the sources of accomplished Cabernet, and looked at the winemaking approaches, it was evident after this year's tasting that cellar techniques aren't too heavy handed. While there were instances of slightly harsh tannins from crude extraction techniques, the judges were impressed at the high number of smooth, polished wines in this year's competition.

The other criticism that tends to plague Cabernet-based wines is the use of too much oak. Exposure to young barriques in large quantities can yield a grainy

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## 100% Cabernet Sauvignon – Unoaked

Company	Product Name	Region	Country	Vintage	Medal
<b>Under £10</b>					
Santa Rita Estates	Doña Paula – Paula Cabernet Sauvignon	Luján de Cuyo	Argentina	2015	Bronze
Concha y Toro UK	Viña Maipo Classic Series	Maipo	Chile	2015	Bronze
Cremschi Barriga	Tierra Del Fuego	Central Valley	Chile	2015	Bronze

## 100% Cabernet Sauvignon – Oaked

Company	Product Name	Region	Country	Vintage	Medal
<b>Under £10</b>					
Casas del Toqui	Single Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	Central Valley	Chile	2014	Gold
Australian Vintage	Nepenthe Altitude Cabernet Sauvignon	Adelaide Hills	Australia	2015	Silver
Finca Las Moras	Barrel Select Cabernet Sauvignon	San Juan	Argentina	2015	Silver
Casas del Toqui	Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	Cachapoal	Chile	2014	Silver
Australian Vintage	McGuigan Shortlist Cabernet Sauvignon	Coonawarra	Australia	2013	Silver
Les Domaines Auriol	Le Réveil Cabernet Sauvignon	France	France	2014	Bronze
Trivento Bodegas y Viñedos	Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	Uco Valley, Mendoza	Argentina	2015	Bronze
Santa Rita Estates	Carmen Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	Colchagua Valley	Chile	2014	Bronze
<b>£10-£15</b>					
Siegel Family Wines	Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	Colchagua Valley	Chile	2014	Gold
Ken Forrester Wines	The Bridge Cabernet Sauvignon	Alexander Valley	USA	2013	Gold
Mr Riggs	Outpost Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon	Coonawarra	Australia	2014	Silver
El Esteco	Finca Notables Cabernet Sauvignon	Cafayate	Argentina	2013	Silver
El Esteco	Ciclos Cabernet Sauvignon	Cafayate	Argentina	2014	Silver
Flagstone	Music Room	Western Cape	South Africa	2012	Silver
Mascota Vineyards	Mascota Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Argentina	2014	Silver
Navarro Correas	Colección Privada Cabernet Sauvignon	Mendoza	Argentina	2014	Silver
Viña Valdivieso	Single Valley Lot Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	Rapel	Chile	2014	Silver
Casarena	Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	Mendoza	Argentina	2012	Silver
Aresti Chile Winery	Trisquel Cabernet Sauvignon	Colchagua Valley	Chile	2013	Bronze
Millaman	Limited Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	Curicó Valley	Chile	2014	Bronze
Broquel	Broquel Cabernet Sauvignon	Mendoza	Argentina	2014	Bronze
Viña Concha Y Toro	Marques de Casa Concha Limited Edition	Maipo Valley	Chile	2013	Bronze
Montgras	Antu Cabernet Sauvignon	Alto Maipo – Lindetos	Chile	2014	Bronze
Viña Apaltagua	Tutunjian Single Vineyard	Curico Valley	Chile	2013	Bronze
Zonte's Footstep	Peacock's Tail Cabernet Sauvignon	South Australia	Australia	2014	Bronze
Trapiche	Gran Medalla Cabernet Sauvignon	Mendoza	Argentina	2012	Bronze
El Esteco	El Esteco Cabernet Sauvignon	Cafayate	Argentina	2013	Bronze
Viñedos Emiliana	Signos de Origen Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2013	Bronze
Viña Tabali	Tabali Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2014	Bronze
<b>£15-£20</b>					
Terrazas de los Andes	Terrazas Cabernet Sauvignon	Mendoza	Argentina	2012	Silver
Bird in Hand	Bird in Hand Cabernet Sauvignon	Adelaide Hills	Australia	2014	Silver
Miguel Torres Chile	Cordillera Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo Valley	Chile	2011	Silver
Katnook Estate	Katnook Founder's Block Cabernet Sauvignon	Coonawarra	Australia	2014	Bronze
Pascual Toso	Selected Vines Cabernet Sauvignon	Mendoza	Argentina	2014	Bronze
Viña Apaltagua	Signature Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo Andes	Chile	2013	Bronze
Wakefield/Taylor's Wines	Reserve Parcel Clare Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	Clare Valley	Australia	2014	Bronze
KWV South Africa	KWV The Mentors Cabernet Sauvignon	Coastal Region	South Africa	2013	Bronze
<b>£20-£30</b>					
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Cold Creek Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	Columbia Valley	USA	2012	Gold
Miguel Torres Chile	Manso De Velasco	Curicó Valley	Chile	2012	Gold
Marqués de Griñón	Cabernet Sauvignon	Castilla La Mancha	Spain	2013	Gold
Aresti Chile Wine	Family Collection Cabernet Sauvignon	Curico Valley	Chile	2011	Gold
Pascual Toso	Alta Cabernet Sauvignon	Mendoza	Argentina	2014	Silver
St Hugo Wines	Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon	Coonawarra	Australia	2012	Silver
De Bortoli Wines	Melba Reserve	Yarra Valley	Australia	2013	Bronze
Casarena	Owen's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Agrelo	Agrelo, Mendoza	Argentina	2011	Bronze
Viña Perez Cruz	Pircas de Liguai Cabernet Sauvignon Single Collection	Maipo Andes	Chile	2012	Bronze
St Hugo Wines	Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon	Coonawarra	Australia	2004	Bronze



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drying sensation on the palate, while smothering Cabernet's attractive perfume due to the vanillin from the wood. But, for the most part, the wines in this year's Masters tasting displayed a level of oak that complemented the flavour and structure of the Cabernet, rather than overwhelming the grape. And the best entries were a pleasure to assess, leaving one salivating at the thought of the rare sirloin that would partner them perfectly – although it was just water biscuits for the judges.

As the results over the following pages show, Cabernet can yield good wines at lower prices, with a clutch of Silver medals awarded below £10 and one Gold medal too, which was given to an example from Chile's Casas del Toqui. Between £10 and £15, Chile once more picked up a Gold, this time for the price-competitive and highly-respected Cabernet specialists from Colchagua Valley, Siegel Family Wines.

But even at these lower prices there was a wine from California that took home a Gold. Called The Bridge, the wine is a collaboration between South Africa's Ken Forrester and America's Jesse Katz, and uses grapes grown in the Alexander

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## 100% Cabernet Sauvignon – Oaked (continued)

Company	Product Name	Region	Country	Vintage	Medal
<b>£30-£50</b>					
Jackson Family Wines	Kendall-Jackson Hawkeye Mountain	Alexander Valley	USA	2012	Master
Santa Rita Estates	Santa Rita Casa Real	Alto Maipo	Chile	2012	Master
Bird in Hand	Nest Egg Cabernet	Adelaide Hills	Australia	2013	Gold
Katnook Estate	Katnook Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	Coonawarra	Australia	2013	Silver
Jackson Family Wines	Atalon Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	Napa Valley	USA	2012	Silver
Jackson Family Wines	Stonestreet Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	Alexander Valley/ Sonoma County	USA	2012	Silver
Terrazas de los Andes	Single Vineyard Los Amoros	Luján de Cuyo	Argentina	2013	Silver
Villa Vallemaggiore	Poggio Re	Tuscany	Italy	2014	Bronze
<b>Over £50</b>					
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Stag's Leap Wine Cellars FAY Cabernet Sauvignon		Napa Valley	USA	2013
	Napa Valley/Stags Leap District				
Wakefield/Taylors Wines	St Andrews Cabernet Sauvignon	Clare Valley	Australia	2013	Silver
Bird in Hand Winery	Marie Elizabeth Cabernet Sauvignon	Adelaide Hills	Australia	2013	Silver
Wakefield/Taylors Wines	The Visionary Cabernet Sauvignon	Clare Valley	Australia	2012	Silver
St Hugo Wines	Vetus Purum Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon	Coonawarra	Australia	2010	Silver

## Cabernet Sauvignon blend – Unoaked

Company	Product Name	Region	Country	Vintage	Medal
<b>Under £10</b>					
Quinta de Maipo	1948 Cabernet Sauvignon	Central Valley	Chile	2015	Silver
<b>£10-£15</b>					
Santa Rita Estates	Medalla Real Unoaked Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2014	Bronze

## Cabernet Sauvignon blend – Oaked

Company	Product Name	Region	Country	Vintage	Medal
<b>Under £10</b>					
De Bortoli Wines	De Bortoli Family Selection Cabernet Merlot	South Eastern Australia	Australia	2013	Silver
Viña Palo Alto	Winemaker's Selection	Maule Valley	Chile	2014	Bronze
Viña Maipo	Vitral Cabernet Sauvignon	Central Valley	Chile	2014	Bronze
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	14 Hands Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley	Columbia Valley	USA	2013	Bronze
Viña Canepa	Famiglia Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva	Central Valley	Chile	2014	Bronze
<b>£10-£15</b>					
Viña Errazuriz	Max Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	Aconcagua Valley	Chile	2014	Silver
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Chateau Ste Michelle Indian Wells Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley	Columbia Valley	USA	2013	Silver
Trivento	Golden Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	Valle de Uco, Mendoza	Argentina	2013	Silver
Viña Perez Cruz	Cabernet Sauvignon Limited Edition	Maipo Andes	Chile	2014	Silver
Santa Rita Estates	Medalla Real Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2012	Silver
Santa Rita Estates	Carmen Gran Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon	Alto Maipo	Chile	2013	Silver
Viña Perez Cruz	Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva	Maipo Andes	Chile	2014	Bronze
Concha y Toro UK	Marques de Casa Concha Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2014	Bronze
Quinta de Maipo	Famiglia Cabernet Sauvignon Finisimo	Central Valley	Chile	2014	Bronze
Zonte's Footstep	Avalon Tree Cabernet	Fleurieu Peninsula	Australia	2014	Bronze
<b>£15-£20</b>					
Viña Concha Y Toro	Terrunyo Cabernet Sauvignon Lot N 1	Maipo	Chile	2014	Gold
Cremaschi Barriga	Limited Edition de Familia	Valle de Locomilla	Chile	2013	Silver
Viña Valdivieso	Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2013	Silver
Montgras	Intriga	Alto Maipo – Lindetos	Chile	2012	Silver
Viña Concha y Toro	Terrunyo Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2013	Silver
Kaiken	Ultra Cabernet Sauvignon	Lujan de Cuyo	Argentina	2014	Silver
Viña Arboleda	Arboleda Cabernet Sauvignon	Aconcagua Valley	Chile	2014	Bronze
Cape Mentelle	Cabernet Merlot	Margaret River	Australia	2014	Bronze
Zenato	Santa Cristina Cabernet Sauvignon Garda DOC	Veneto	Italy	2013	Bronze
Viña Cono Sur	20 Barrels Cabernet Sauvignon	Maipo	Chile	2013	Bronze



Valley. While, proving that this may be a sweet spot price-wise for good Cabernet from Argentina, there were no fewer than five Silver medals awarded to this single nation between £10-15 (if one includes varietal and blended Cabs) and two from one winery in particular, El Esteco.

## JUMP IN QUALITY

Over £20 though, there was a step change in the quality of Cabernet. Even before we had moved into the £30-plus category we had exceptional examples from Columbia Valley, with the Cold Creek Vineyard Cabernet, as well as Miguel Torres's top wine from Chile, the Manso de Velasco, and Aresti's Family Collection, also from Chile, and the same region –both of these Cabs were from the Curicó Valley.

Within the £20-30 price range there was also a Spanish Cabernet, although it is perhaps no surprise that it achieved a Gold –this was from Marqués de Griñón, a producer that sources its grapes from the prized Dominio de Valdepeña vineyard in Castilla-La Mancha, which, at over 1,000ft, is one of the highest in Spain.

In the same price band, but in the blended Cabernet category, was the wonderful Finis Terrae from one of Chile's oldest wineries, Maipo's Viña Cousiño Macul.

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## Cabernet Sauvignon blend –Oaked (continued)

Company	Product Name	Region	Country	Vintage	Medal
<b>£20-£30</b>					
Viña Cousiño Macul	Finis Terrae	Maipo	Chile	2011	Gold
Jackson Family Wines	Fortress	Sonoma County	USA	2012	Silver
Jamieson Ranch Vineyards	Double Lariat Cabernet Sauvignon	Napa Valley	USA	2014	Bronze
Viña Valdivieso	Caballo Loco Grand Cru	Apalta – Santa Cruz	Chile	2013	Bronze
Viña Valdivieso	Caballo Loco Grand Cru	Maipo	Chile	2013	Bronze
<b>£30-£50</b>					
Terre à Terre	Crayères Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	Wrattonbully	Australia	2014	Gold
Chamlija Wines	Chamlija Cabernet Sauvignon	Thrace	Turkey	2013	Gold
Château Tanunda	50 Year Old Vines Cabernet Sauvignon	Barossa Valley	Australia	2013	Gold
Cape Mentelle	Cabernet Sauvignon	Margaret River	Australia	2012	Gold
Viña Cousiño Macul	Lota	Maipo Valley	Chile	2010	Silver
Viña Errazuriz	Don Maximiano Founder's Reserve	Aconcagua Valley	Chile	2013	Silver
Ste Michelle Wine Estates	Stag's Leap Wine Cellars ARTEMIS Cabernet Sauvignon	Napa Valley	USA	2013	Silver
Jackson Family Wines	Freemark Abbey Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	Napa Valley	USA	2012	Silver
Viña Maipo	Protegiado	Maipo	Chile	2013	Silver
Castello Vicchiomaggio	Ripa delle More	Tuscany	Italy	2013	Bronze
<b>Over £50</b>					
Frank Family	Reserve Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon	Napa Valley	USA	2013	Master
Justin	Justin Isosceles	Paso Robles	USA	2013	Gold
Viña Valdivieso	Valdiviso La Primavera	Lontue	Chile	2005	Silver

## Judges' comments



### DAVID ROUND MW

"The tasting had a very positive impact on my perception of Cabernet Sauvignon. Given that we were seeing examples at all price levels from a wide range of regions, I was pleasantly surprised by how many good wines there were in the under £10 category. There were very few poor wines at this level, and many that looked to be great value. Across all price points, tannins generally seemed to have been well-handled and oak treatment generally well-judged.

"What really impressed me, however, was how well Cabernet Sauvignon retains a recognisability wherever it is grown, through its structure, freshness and trademark aromas and flavours such as cassis and cedar, while also managing to express something of its region of origin in the resulting wine. Cabernet Sauvignon came out of this tasting as combining strong identity with impressive adaptability.

"I was impressed by the number of Mendoza Cabernets that scored highly in my notes. They had polished texture, freshness and generosity. At the top end, I loved the two Bird In Hand wines, Stag's Leap Fay and Jackson Family's Atalon. At the cheaper end I liked the De Bortoli Family Reserve Cabernet Merlot, Casa del Toqui Reserva and Caserena Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon."



### RICHARD BAMPFIELD MW

"The tasting this year showed for me that Chile performs increasingly consistently and, given the youth of many of the vineyards, continues to look very exciting. Although there wasn't much from South Africa that I tasted, the Cabernets that I did try from this country looked exciting too. Finally, it is very hard for Bordeaux to emerge positively from this sort of tasting – it is outgunned in terms of fruit and flesh."

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## The judges (l-r)

Patrick Schmitt MW  
David Round MW  
Keith Isaacs MW  
Richard Bampffield MW  
Patricia Stefanowicz MW  
Clement Robert MS



At £30 and above we had yet more great wines from Chile, including perennial high-performer Casa Real from Santa Rita's oldest Cabernet vineyards in the Alto Maipo, and the Jackson Family's Hawkeye Mountain from the Alexander Valley. Both of these Cabs received the ultimate accolade of Master.

## AIMING HIGH

Australia also confirmed its ability to craft Cabernets great enough to command high prices, dominating the top medals for wines priced £30-£50. Notably good examples hailed from the Bird in Hand winery, which uses grapes from Adelaide Hills, and Terre à Terre, a project from husband and wife Xavier Bizot and Lucy Croser (daughter of Brian Croser) that takes its Cab exclusively from the Crayères vineyard in Wrattenbully.

Wines from both the Barossa and Margaret River also took home Golds in the blended category from producers Château Tanunda and Cape Mentelle, respectively, while we were excited to unearth an equally high-quality example in this category from Turkey -The Chamlija Cab from the country's Thrace wine region.

Finally, over £50, California showed its skill with top-end Cab. As one might expect, Napa-based Stag's Leap wine Cellars gained a Gold, which was earned for its Cabernet from the Fay vineyard. In the blends category, Frank Family was

## Judges' comments



### KEITH ISAACS MW

"I have a preference for riper styles with a black/blue fruit spectrum of flavours rather than red fruit... Low yields, picking times and selection are key. Cabernet Sauvignon does well in Chile higher up the scale, so those wines with 'single vineyard' or 'family reserve' type of designation; and our group got several of the top Chilean wines, such as Finis Terrae and Casa Real, which I would have expected to have shown well. In many countries it needs to be planted more

thoughtfully, perhaps.

"I particularly liked the top-end Chilean and top-end US and Australian Cabernets. What I didn't like were those wines with green and unripe flavours with red fruit and dry tannins. And high-toast, chippy to cover thin wine. I was surprised to discover one very good Turkish wine, and one top Spanish."



### CLEMENT ROBERT MS

"We have tasted a lot of wines with some very polished and refined tannins. I tend to associate Cabernet Sauvignon with strong tannins, but there is a clear trend for polished and driven styles of wine. I was impressed with some of the South American Cabernet Sauvignons, which were showing a high level of complexity. I usually find them simple and one-dimensional. In particular I liked some sophisticated and elegant wines from Chile, while I didn't like the fact that there are still some Cabernets which are being over-extracted and over-oaked from the US and Argentina."



### PATRICIA STEFANOWICZ MW

"What I like about Cabernet and Cabernet-dominated blends is the variety of styles and the sense of place. The terroir doesn't happen at the entry level (£10 and below) or even with mid-priced wines (£10-£15), but origin does start becoming demonstrable at £15+. At over £20 origin and even terroir should be an integral part of the wine.

"What I didn't like is that there was occasionally too much oak (especially chips or staves), which gave a coarseness to some wines. Care in using oak is essential, both in quantity and quality. Sometimes there was also just too much alcohol. Light (table) wines cannot sing properly when alcohol reaches or exceeds 14.5% ABV. We do not need a guttural bass or a stratospheric soprano note with every sip; balance is crucial for successful wines."

**Australia confirmed its ability to craft Cabernets great enough to command high prices, dominating the top medals for wines priced £30-50**

gloriously awarded a Master for its Napa Cab called Reserve Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon, while, showing the quality potential of Californian Cabernet in Paso Robles too, Justin was given a Gold for its rich and ripe Isosceles.

In short, the tasting confirmed the superiority of New World Cab-centric regions such as Napa and Maipo, while highlighting the quality potential in areas less well known for this grape, whether it's Mendoza, Castilla-La Mancha or, the real surprise this year, Thrace. *db*