

Woolf's top 10 buys from the slopes of Etna



Benanti, Pietramarina, Etna, Bianco Superiore 2010

18/20pts (93/100pts)
£30-£35 **Exel Wines, Les Caves de Pyrène, Smiling Grape Co**

Benanti's white 'grand cru' continues to shine. The 2010 is barely

getting into its stride, still taut and bright, with some Riesling-like waxiness and haunting florality. **Drink** 2015-2020 **Alcohol** 12.5%

Filippo Grasso, Mari di Ripiddu, Etna Bianco 2011 18 (93)

N/A UK www.filippograssi.it

There's a nervy steeliness to this subtly oaked Carricante, beautifully offsetting the honeysuckle and candied pear fruit. Unusually, a blend of grapes from Milo and the northern slopes. **Drink** 2015-2019 **Alc** 12.5%

Planeta, Eruzione 1614, Carricante, Castiglione di Sicilia 2013

17.75 (92)

£16.99-£19.14 **AG Wines, Bacco Wine, Blanco & Gomez, Exel Wines, Great Western Wines, Hic Wine Merchants, Noel Young**

The addition of a small amount

of Riesling seems to lift the aromatics in this superbly focused, pin-sharp Carricante from a large but quality-focused producer. The fruit is generous, the finish long and mineral. **Drink** 2015-2016 **Alc** 13%

Nicosia, Fondo Filara, Etna Bianco 2012 17 (90)

£11.50 **The Wine Society**

Etna has few bargains, but this might just be one of them – fruit-driven, with Carricante's signature salty finish, and a nutty dryness. A good introduction to Etna Bianco wines. **Drink** 2015-2015 **Alc** 13%



Tenuta di Fessina, Il Musmeci, Etna Rosso Riserva 2008

19 (96)

£30-£35 **A Moveable Feast, Christopher Keiller, Forty-five 10, Huntsworth Wines, Handford, Petersham Cellars,**

The pretty, floral nose gives barely a clue of the strength and heft of this wine. Superbly poised, dark fruit, refined and mineral on the finish. Many years of life ahead. **Drink** 2015-2023 **Alc** 14%

Passopisciaro, Contrada R, Rampante, Sicilia IGP 2012

18.5 (95)

£40-£50 **Corney & Barrow, Harvey Nichols**

Franchetti has achieved an admirable balancing act with this late-harvested Rampante from a hot year. Violets and fresh cranberry sing on top of chewy tannins, sage and underbrush. Focused and elegant. **Drink** 2015-2017 **Alc** 15.5%

Destro, Sciarakè, Etna Rosso 2008

18.5 (95)

N/A UK www.destrovini.com

Almost a 'Left bank' style of Nerello – brooding and savoury, but superbly refined with it. Maturing nicely, with spicy wild berries and noticeable grip on the finish. A great expression of the northern slopes and the vintage. Organically certified. **Drink** 2015-2020 **Alc** 13.5%

Fattorie Romeo del Castello, Allegracore, Etna Rosso 2012

18.25 (94)

N/A UK www.romeodelcastello.it

A panoply of dried herbs,

woodsmoke, cassis and bitter chocolate. Seriously structured, but the vibrant, generous fruit keeps the tannins in check. Ciara Vigo's best effort yet. **Drink** 2015-2020 **Alc** 14.5%

C & S Biondi, San Nicolò, Etna Rosso 2012 18 (93)

N/A UK www.ibiondi.com

First vintage for this expressive, perfumed Nerello, notably more poised than the other Biondi *contradas*. Lifted fruit, orange zest and black cherry. Very fine tannins. **Drink** 2015-2020 **Alc** 13.5%



Pietradolce, Archineri, Etna Rosso 2011 18 (93)

£25-£28 **Armit Wines, Christopher Keiller, Exel, Four Walls, Hic Wine, The Secret Cellar**

Thrilling, rather wild Nerello Mascalese from Michele Faro's promising estate, high on the northern slopes in Rampante. Spicy, structured and delicious. Feisty, bordering on volatile, but gets away with it. **Drink** 2015-2017 **Alc** 15%

For full details of UK stockists, see p88



Graci

One of Etna's prodigal sons, Alberto Graci returned in 2004 and traded his grandfather's central vineyards for high-altitude parcels on Etna's northern slopes, including part of *contrada* Barbabecchi. For Graci, 'sense of place' is vital – everyone here has wine culture in their blood'. With hands-off winemaking (wild yeasts, little temperature control), the results are vivid and accessible. At local enoteca Cave Ox, order the Pizza Graci, Alberto's lemon-zested creation. www.graci.eu



Girolamo Russo

Like Graci, Giuseppe Russo returned to his roots in 2004, abandoning a career as a concert pianist to tend the family's vineyards. The organically certified estate comprises 15ha spread across four *contradas* around Randazzo. The Nerellos show real typicity and focus. The Etna Bianco is painstakingly harvested from a few white grapevines co-planted with the reds. The wines don't make concessions to any kind of international styling, and are all the better for it. www.girolamorusso.it



Tenuta di Fessina

Given that Tuscan Silvia Maestrelli only established this estate in 2007, the wines, made by Piedmontese winemaker Federico Curtaz (above) are remarkably assured. Maestrelli says the finer volcanic sand around Rovitello is key for freshness and refinement. Curtaz brings elegance and tension to both reds and whites, the latter including a standout Etna Bianco Superiore. The Erse wines, for earlier drinking, and lighter wallets, are a true delight. www.tenutadifessina.com