

## Top 100 Vintners

# AUSTRIA

Austria has been creating wine since Roman Emperor Probus overturned the ban on growing grapes north of the Alps, in part to avoid mischief by giving his idle armies something to do. Later, monasteries adopted the region's vineyards, and over the centuries, Austrian viticulture has flourished, giving the world some truly great wines. While many of the reds are excellent, the country's reputation rests largely on its whites, in particular on its dry and dessert Rieslings.

### Alois Kracher

Three generations of the Kracher family have been making some of Austria's most auspicious wines in Illmitz, located near Lake Neusiedl, at the easternmost point of Austria's border with Hungary. Here, Alois Kracher Jr. continues to create gorgeous, silky, and dense, Sauternes-like wines with Scheurebe, Chardonnay, and Welschriesling grapes.

**Recommended** *Alois Kracher Scheurebe Trockenbeerenauslese Burgenland Zwischen den Seen No. 10 2004* (\$90, 375 ml)

### Franz Hirtzberger

Located in western Wachau, among alpine streams and valleys, the Hirtzberger family cultivates a variety of vineyards planted primarily with Riesling and Grüner Veltliner. The latter performs best in the flatlands, while the former grows in the steeper, difficult-to-farm hillsides. The spicy, lush, mineral results, however, are well worth the effort.

**Recommended** *Franz Hirtzberger Riesling Smaragd Trocken Wachau Spitzer Hochrain 2005* (\$65)

### F.X. Pichler

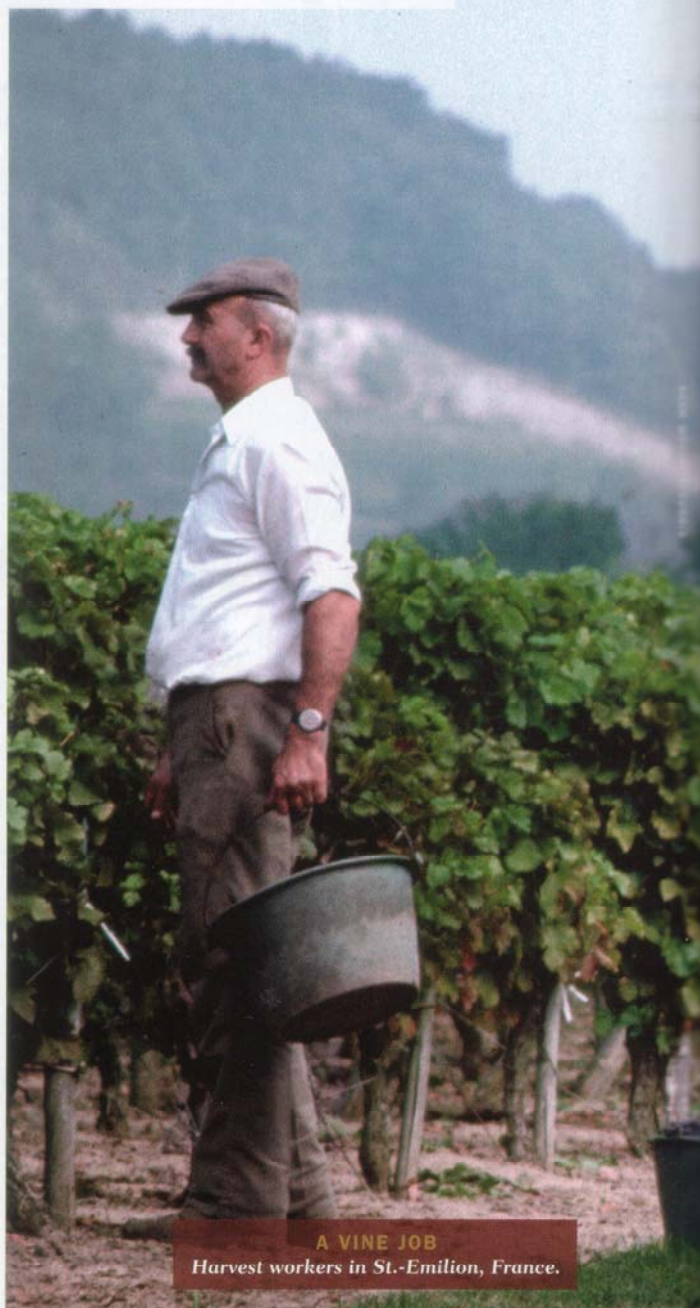
F.X. Pichler is regarded by many to be Austria's most gifted winemaker, though his wines, unfortunately, are made in such small quantities that they are sometimes painfully difficult to come by. His vineyards lie in the Wachau, a stunningly beautiful area northwest of Vienna, where the Grüner Veltliner grape yields gorgeously structured whites.

**Recommended** *F.X. Pichler Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Trocken Wachau Dürnsteiner Kellerberg 2005* (\$76)

### Prager

Winemaker Toni Bodenstein coaxes from the hills of the Wachau region precisely articulated Grüner Veltliners that balance a cool, mountain-lake minerality with fruit-blossom fragrances and seductive spice. In particular, the Weissenkirchen Zwerithaler displays exuberant peach fruit, a creamy texture, and a mineral bite.

**Recommended** *Prager Grüner Veltliner Smaragd Trocken Wachau Weissenkirchen Zwerithaler 2005* (\$40)



**A VINE JOB**  
Harvest workers in St.-Emilion, France.

# EUROPE

