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# more

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## INDIA'S FINEST WINES

THE BT MORE INDIAN  
WINE RATINGS 2008

PUB HOPPING  
IN PRAGUE

DRESS SHARP ON THE  
GOLF LINKS

WATCHES WORTH  
A CRORE AND MORE

COOL CARS  
AT VILLA D'ESTE

THE BEST  
DIM SUM  
LUNCHES







Say cheers: The panelists pose before the wines after the blind tasting session. (L-R) Sourish Bhattacharyya,

Mohit Balachandran, Rocky Mohan, Andrew Steele, Rochie Rana, Subhash Arora, David Ansted and Bill Marchetti

Just 10 years ago, Indian wines were a bad joke. They were not as bad as a Bosca or a Golconda that many of us cut our teeth on, but they didn't show much promise. No one then could have imagined the proliferation of the Indian wine industry, sparked by a nondescript official document titled Maharashtra Grape Processing Policy, 2001. The policy turned winemaking into a profitable alternative career for the state's table grape farmers, who were then fighting with their backs to the wall against competition from cheaper Chilean grapes and a ban on Indian grapes in many countries triggered by high pesticide residues.

Today, the consumer has an array of choices and it is evident from a visit to a wine shop. You will find the wine counters reasonably stocked with Indian brands. Go to any party, and you'll find an Indian wine being served. But with choice comes confusion. The average consumer doesn't really know which wine to trust and is unaware of the good, bad and ugly wines entering the market.

The *BT More Indian Wine Ratings*, which will be an annual affair, is the first step towards making wine buying a matter of more informed choice.

Before we end the suspense and declare the results, here's how we went about things. First we put together a panel of judges at short notice, so that their names did not get out into the public domain. We also approached Shangri-La Hotel in New Delhi to host the event for two good reasons: it is doing some innovative things with wine, making wines by the glass both accessible and affordable; and its General Manager Andrew Steele is a well-travelled wine connoisseur.

**We Did It in Style:** A wine rating, like Caesar's wife, must be above suspicion.

1. We did what hasn't been done in any wine rating exercise. We did not charge any entrance fee from any participating company.
2. We also kept the names of the panel members a secret.
3. The participating companies were approached by the *BT More* editorial staff, who were not involved in any way in the judging process.

**What We Discovered:** Indian wines have a long distance to travel before they can cross the 15-point barrier on the UC-Davis scale and become eligible for comparisons with their international peers. The *BT More* Indian Wine Ratings is the earliest sign of the consumer waking up to the immense potential of Indian wine. It is now up to Indian wine companies to reciprocate and keep working at climbing the quality ladder.

**How We Judged the Wines:** We rated the 38 wines according to the 20-point method developed at the University of California at Davis. Under this system, we assigned Appearance 4 points (2 each for colour and clarity), Aroma 6 points, Taste 8 points and Overall Impression 2 points. Needless to say, none of the judges knew which wines they were tasting.

**Appearance:** How your eyes perceive the wine before tasting.

**Aroma:** What your nose tells you about the wine after you swirl it.

**Taste:** A complex interaction of mouth feel, taste (sweet, sour and acid) and aroma (smells that travel up the back of the throat to the nose). Complex tastes and those that linger are associated with good wines.

**Overall Impression:** This is the subjective bit. You can rate a wine on this parameter only by asking yourself whether you'd like to pay for it.

## OUR EXPERT PANEL

**Subhash Arora**, President, Indian Wine Academy, and founder of the Delhi Wine Club. He has judged top wine competitions in France, Italy and Spain.

**Andrew Steele**, a well-travelled wine connoisseur, who has completed four of the exhausting five steps to becoming a Master of Wine (only 250 people in the world hold this title).

**Rocky Mohan**, Executive Director, Mohan Meakin, presides over Old Monk rum, and is the author of three books on Indian cuisine. He divides his loyalty between single malts and good wine.

**Bill Marchetti**, Corporate Chef, Spaghetti Kitchen chain of restaurants and a wine connoisseur.

**Mohit Balachandran**, Deputy General Manager, Olive Bar & Kitchen, is a regular at wine events from Singapore to Bordeaux.

**David Ansted**, The Executive Chef at Shangri-La New Delhi, has travelled around the world. The American is known for planning wine dinners where he lends an Indian twist to international dishes.

**Rochie Rana**, A talk show host at Radio Meow, she is a wine lover and has authored a book on colour therapy.

**Sourish Bhattacharyya**, Executive Editor, *Mail Today*, he is also *BT More's* wine columnist.





THE  
BEST

Sauvignon Blanc

### Château d'Ori Sauvignon Blanc

Nashik is gaining a solid reputation for producing decent warm-weather Sauvignon Blanc that exudes the herbaceous aromas of the New World. Château d'Ori is the love child of Ranjit Dhuru, self-declared Bordeaux snob, who trained to be a lawyer but now heads infotech company Aftek. This wine is fresh and fruity, but the fruit is layered with too much oakiness, which reminded the judges of the Californian Fume Blanc. Nevertheless, it's a good, drinkable wine.

RATING: 12.8/20

PRICE: Rs 460 ex-Mumbai

THE  
BEST

Cabernet Blend

### Château d'Ori Cabernet Merlot 2007

You had to expect a red wine coming from a Bordeaux fanatic to be among the top of the pops, but this one has a drawback—it was matured not in oak barrels, as they would do in France, but in concrete tanks with oak chips thrown in. Still, the wine tastes good and shows great aging potential. It's not a here-and-now wine, but one you can store (properly, that is) and enjoy even after two years. We felt, though, that the wine should be released six months later, otherwise the consumers may be denied some of the enjoyment.

RATING: 12.8/20

PRICE: Rs 550 ex-Mumbai



THE  
BEST

Merlot

### Château d'Ori Merlot 2007

Just in case you were wondering how the winery got its unusual name, here's the story. The "Château" bit is its owner's personal tribute to Bordeaux and "d'Ori" is short for Dindori, the taluka in Nashik where the winery is located. Here's our verdict on the wine. In Subhash Arora's words, it literally "dances on the palate". It's a luscious wine with a magnificent mouth feel, a hint of spiciness that works on the Indian palate.

RATING: 11.5/20

PRICE: Rs 460 ex-Mumbai

