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Olivia Mason, March 8 2021.

Women in wine: award-winning wines by influential females



Founders, winemakers, CEOs – this International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women in wine.

From across the globe, we highlight a selection of female talents in the industry and some of their award-winning wines from the [Decanter World Wine Awards](#) 2020 for you to discover...

Women in wine: award-winning wines by influential females

(Listed alphabetically by country)

Argentina

Susana Balbo – Winemaker and founder of [Susana Balbo Wines](#)



One of Argentina's most respected and influential winemakers, Susana Balbo holds a wide array of achievements from being Argentina's first female oenologist to serving three times as president of Wines of Argentina. She is perhaps best known as the 'Queen of Torrontés' for her contributions in developing Argentina's indigenous white grape variety. After almost two decades working for wineries in Argentina and as a consultant globally, Susana founded Susana Balbo Wines in Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza in 1999. Today both her son and daughter have joined her in the family business. [Read the Decanter Interview: Susana Balbo](#)

Susana Balbo, Signature Barrel Fermented Torrontés, Paraje Altamira, Mendoza 2019

Gold, 95 points
100% Torrontés

Youthful and inviting with notes of elderflower, white fruits, grapefruit and citrus peel. On the palate it is exuberant but retains a sense of freshness and elegance.

Susana Balbo, Nosotros Single Vineyard Nómade Malbec, Los Chacayes, Tunuyán, Mendoza 2016

Silver, 94 points

100% Malbec

Enticingly complex with aromas of dark fruits, chocolate, sweet spices, cedar, balsamic. Ripe, juicy and exuberant with great poise.

Australia

Virginia Willcock – Winemaker at Vasse Felix



Having completed almost 30 grape harvests in Margaret River, Virginia is an authority on winemaking in the region. In 2006 Virginia joined Vasse Felix as Chief Winemaker and her hands-off winemaking approach has transformed the wines to best express Margaret River's regionality. She's won several winemaking awards and is a sought-after presenter, panellist and regional wine show judge.

Vasse Felix, Heytesbury Chardonnay, Margaret River, Western Australia 2018

Gold, 96 points

100% Chardonnay

Beautifully opulent with hints of flinty smoke, lemon oil, caramel and apricot on the nose, stone fruit, lemon sherbet and a red apple acidity on the palate.

Vasse Felix, Tom Cullity Cabernet Sauvignon-Malbec, Margaret River, Western Australia 2016

Gold, 96 points

78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Malbec, 2% Petit Verdot

Perfumed with exotic spice, incense, blackcurrant flower and plush plum, while the palate is textured with lush, rich fruit and a neat acidity.

Austria

Birgit Eichinger – Winemaker and founder of **Weingut Eichinger**



Birgit Eichinger

Birgit Eichinger established her own winery in 1992 with 3.5 hectares of vineyard land in the Kamptal region of Austria. This has since grown to comprise around 15 hectares planted to both international and indigenous grape varieties, with a clear focus on Grüner Veltliner and Riesling. Brigit's winemaking style is precise, modern and focused on the purity of the fruit.

Weingut Birgit Eichinger, Ried Zöbinger Gaisberg 1ÖTW Riesling, Kamptal, Niederösterreich 2018

Gold, 95 points

100% Riesling

Elegant and multi-faceted, with a nose reminiscent of apricots, peaches, lemon peel and smoke. To taste it displays a cool, cracked-stone minerality, tangerine peel, hay and flint, then a wonderfully long and salty finish.

Weingut Birgit Eichinger, Ried Kammerner Lamm 1ÖTW Grüner Veltliner, Kamptal, Niederösterreich 2018

Silver, 91 points

100% Grüner Veltliner

Textured, almost creamy, with aromas of meringue, ginger, quince and acacia backed up by lingering ripe fruits and peppery spice.

Chile

María Luz Marín – Winemaker and founder of Casa Marín



María Luz Marín

María Luz Marín is the first female winemaker and winery owner in Chile. With a degree in agronomy and winemaking, María worked at various wineries before founding her own, Casa Marín, in 2000. Against advice about the winery's location and cool climate, María was successful in developing her vineyard and winery in Lo Abarca in the San Antonio Valley, paving the way for more vineyards to be established in Chile's cooler sites.

Casa Marín, Cipreses Sauvignon Blanc, Lo Abarca, San Antonio 2019

Platinum, 97 points

100% Sauvignon Blanc

Intensely aromatic nose of asparagus, green pepper and citrus. Extremely bright and fresh with a mouthwatering palate. Complex on the finish with real character and a moreish elegance. Very food friendly.

Casa Marín, Miramar Riesling, Lo Abarca, San Antonio 2018

Gold, 95 points

100% Riesling

Green and red apple with zesty lime on the nose. Deep fruit and vibrant acidity on the palate match well with a long, harmonious finish. Plenty of potential for more.

France

Evelyne Roques-Boizel – President of **Champagne Boizel**



Evelyne Roques-Boizel

Established in 1834, Champagne house Boizel has been run by the Boizel family for six generations. Recently retired, fifth generation Evelyne Roques-Boizel has served as Chief Executive Officer of Champagne Boizel and as Director on the Board of Directors for Lanson BCC SA. Under her management, the Champagne house introduced Joyau de Chardonnay and Joyau de France Rosé, both inspired by her father's original Joyau de France launched in the early 1960s.

Boizel, Brut Réserve, Champagne NV

Platinum, 97 points

55% Pinot Noir, 30% Chardonnay, 15% Pinot Meunier

Liquorice aromatic notes with resonant plum and red apple. Deep, mouth-filling, vigorous and long, this is an exuberant, vinous Champagne with plenty of richly-textured aromatic lift. Crowd-pleasing but connoisseur-pleasing too.

Boizel, Blanc de Noirs Brut, Champagne NV

Silver, 90 points

100% Pinot Noir

A full-bodied, weighty example with charming floral aromas. The mouth is all about very ripe and juicy red berries, with some bright lime juice acidity.

Italy

José Rallo – CEO and co-owner of **Donnafugata**



José Rallo

José Rallo is the face and voice of Donnafugata as CEO and co-owner alongside her mother and brother. José is the head of marketing and public relations for Donnafugata and is in charge of management supervision and quality system oversight. She was recently appointed to the board of directors of the ICE – Italian Trade Agency to support the business development of Italian companies abroad and attract foreign investment in Italy.

Donnafugata, Ben Ryé, Passito di Pantelleria, Sicily 2017

Platinum, 97 points

100% Zibibbo

Seductively rich, crystallised peach nose, then an equally concentrated, rich, peachy fruit palate with hints of orange marmalade. The palate is round, viscous and has great intensity of fruit. This is as good as it gets!

Donnafugata, Mille e una Notte, Sicilia, Sicily 2016

Silver, 90 points

50% Nero d'Avola, 32% Petit Verdot, 18% Syrah

Stylish nose with elegant oak under rich dark cherry aromas refreshed by leafy notes. Muscular palate, with dense black fruit.

New Zealand

Janiene Bayliss – Director and co-owner of **Ata Mara**



Janiene Bayliss

Janiene is the co-owner of family-owned Ata Mara in Central Otago. From her 20 hectares of vineyard land, Janiene produces Pinot Noir, Grüner Veltliner, Pinot Gris and Riesling. She is a founding member of 'Women in Wine in Central Otago' which provides a valuable platform and professional support for women in the industry.

Ata Mara, Pinot Noir, Central Otago 2016

Silver, 90 points

100% Pinot Noir

Supple and rounded, this is starting to show some development. Tannins are resolved and there's brisk acidity giving structure and freshness.

South Africa

Ronell Wiid – Winemaker at **Bartinney**



Ronell Wiid

Ronell studied Geology at the University of Stellenbosch and has since put her knowledge of soil to use in the vineyard and winery. She worked as winemaker at four different wine estates around Stellenbosch before settling at Bartinney and is known for her adventurous spirit and ability to take risks and experiment in the winery.

Bartinney, Skyfall Cabernet Sauvignon, Banghoek, Stellenbosch 2015

Gold, 96 points

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

The nose is deep and pure with lovely earthy creme de cassis notes, black berry and a hint of cedar spice. Dense, creamy, muscular and suave with fabulous grip.

Bartinney, Cabernet Sauvignon, Banghoek, Stellenbosch 2016

Silver, 92 points

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

Attractive violet note in amongst the blackcurrant and cassis on the nose. Inviting and polished style with generous complexity.

Spain

Marisol Bueno & Ana Quintela of Pazo Señorans



Marisol Bueno

Known as the 'Great lady of Albariño,' Marisol Bueno is the founder and owner of Pazo Señorans. She has been a viticulturalist since 1979 and was the first woman President of the Regulatory Board for Rías Baixas wine as well as a regional deputy at the Galician Parliament. Today her daughter Vicky Mareque runs the winery. Pazo Señorans is not short of entrepreneurial women – Ana Quintela has been the winemaker at the family-owned winery since the early 1990s. An Albariño specialist, Ana works solely with this indigenous white variety from almost 80 hectares of planted vineyards. She endeavours to produce age-worthy Albariños and has been successful in proving its ability to age. At the Decanter World Wine Awards 2020 her Selección de Añada Albariño 2011 received a prestigious Platinum medal – awarded to just 178 wines out of 16,518 judged at the competition.

Pazo Señorans, Selección de Añada Albariño, Rías Baixas 2011

Platinum, 97 points

100% Albariño

Really expressive tropical fruit nose. Great mouthfeel with notes of pineapple, mango, lemon sherbet and a savoury, saline overlay. Exceptional intensity and length. Fabulous example of the ageing potential of the variety. Won't fall over any time soon.

Pazo Señorans, Tras Los Muros Albariño, Rías Baixas 2017

Gold, 95 points

100% Albariño

Earthy and caramel nose with hints of toasty new oak. Palate is lively and crisp with beautiful notes of vanilla, oak, mango and apricot. Long, compelling, nutty finish. Good ageing potential here. Lovely wine.

United Kingdom

Ruth Simpson – Co-founder/owner of **Simpsons Wine Estate**



Ruth & Charles Simpson

Ruth Simpson and her husband Charles have been making wine in the south of France since 2002, and in 2014 they established Simpsons Wine Estate in Kent with the aim to produce high-quality, traditional method English sparkling wines. Across both wine businesses in the UK and France, Ruth shares all duties and responsibilities with Charles from vineyard work to wine production, marketing, sales and finance. Their recently launched Roman Road Chardonnay 2018 received the top accolade of Best in Show at the Decanter World Wine Awards 2020 – one of just 50 wines from the entire competition to receive this.

Simpsons Wine Estate, The Roman Road Chardonnay, Kent 2018

Best in Show, 97 points

100% Chardonnay

For the second year running, England (and Kent) has stepped up to the Best-In-Show challenge with a still Chardonnay wine of starry quality. That doesn't, of course, mean something the colour of a buttercup and with a lush and flamboyantly nutty scent; this wine is green-silver pale and aromatically very shy: a little slight teasing

creaminess, just hinting at both flowers and fruit without actually cashing in on the promise with a suite of emphatic allusions. On the palate, it is pure and vivacious, lively and dancing: a spring-fresh Chardonnay of great grace whose pleasures are almost amplified by their restraint, and by the resulting drinkability and gastronomic amenability of the wine. Fine vineyards and a fine season have come together to memorable effect here.

Simpsons Wine Estate, Chalklands Classic Cuvée Brut, Kent 2016

Silver, 92 points

60% Pinot Noir, 40% Chardonnay

Tart bruised apple, backed by red berries and dried fruits which show a discreetly nutty edge, leading to a long and toasty finish.

USA

Shawna Miller – Winemaker at Luna Vineyards



Shawna Miller

Shawna received a degree in forestry from Virginia Tech, working for several land management agencies and university facilities across the USA before pursuing a career in the wine industry. She gained valuable experience in winemaking working harvests in the Napa Valley, New Zealand and Australia and received an Extension Winemaking Certificate from the University of California, Davis. Shawna has been the winemaker at Luna Vineyards since 2011.

Luna Vineyards, Petit Verdot, Napa Valley, California 2017

Gold, 96 points

100% Petit Verdot

Fascinating and impressive. Plentiful aromatics show chocolate Sachertorte cake, while the palate is deep and driving, with dark pepper and sloe fruits, elderberries and olive tapenade.

**Luna Vineyards, Winemaker's Reserve Sangiovese, Napa Valley, California
2017**

Silver, 94 points

100% Sangiovese

Softly defined apples and ripe plums with a mushroomy autumnal note and bright red fruit aromas.. Suave and savoury.