

# SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The team behind Frederick's Wine know all about working for big wine companies. But their heart lies in sourcing limited-production wines from sustainable, family growers that will appeal to indies

**Y**ou can tell when someone loves their job. Guy Smith, like the other two members of the Frederick's Wine team, has worked for some big companies in the drinks industry. But, chatting from an old cider cellar on a Somerset farm, dog sleeping not far from his feet, you sense that he's found his spiritual home.

Like partners Stuart Bowman-Hood and Will Willis. Smith worked in various high-profile beverage businesses, handling upscale wines as well as mainstream brands, before establishing Frederick's in 2018. (The name was borrowed from Smith's faithful black Labrador, who lived a happy life roaming the small vineyard which is also part of the set-up.)

"We've all worked for big corporations and we've all done massive projects but at some point you've got to go back to your heart and soul," Smith says.

"So we are working with family growers, pretty much all organic – certainly sustainable – and we simply choose wines that we love and that we believe in."

Frederick's is now ready to introduce the portfolio to the independent trade. The team talk a lot about their "hearts ruling their heads" with the way the business is run, joking that if some of the limited-

edition wines don't do as well as hoped, the directors – and their friends and families – will happily snap them up for their personal enjoyment.

Yet there's a sense that the range has been more carefully assembled than that would suggest. In addition to importing wines, Frederick's is also creating some of its own unique labels.

"We have been so involved with NPD, winemaking and blending," Smith says. "It's something we still want to do, so one of our points of difference is L'Entente.

"It's a bit of an umbrella brand. It's all organic and vegan, and we're just about to do a bee-friendly certified wine, biodynamic, sulphur-free ... it's really focusing on trying to do the right thing, and we have producers who want to do this with us in France, Spain and Italy. The idea of developing our own brands is really exciting and goes a long way to satisfying our creative urges."

Smith also sits on the board of WineGB and makes wine from his small Somerset estate under the Smith & Evans name.

He produces a craft cider too – "we're in Somerset, so it's the law" – labelled as Hunky Punk.

Aside from the sustainability credentials, is there any other theme running through

the wines that Frederick's offers?

"I would say we all go for freshness, nothing over-extracted. And that sense of place is best represented by family ownership. This is really important to us as it means we are always working with the decision-makers who are ultimately building their dream, which we all want to share in.

"Fratelli Fanucci ([vignano.com](http://vignano.com)) is a great example of this: three brothers who have returned to their native Tuscany to produce fantastic organic wines, not just Chianti. Everything has a little family twist."

The company has clearly not gone overboard with its overheads, and has a small staff. But Smith insists that the team stands ready to help its independent customers above and beyond offering keen pricing.

"We want to be at as many events as possible so we do want to help with tastings in shops – and so do our producers, who want to come over and meet people.

"We have a minimum order of 10 cases of six and if someone goes much larger than that then we'll be flexible: if it costs less to transport then we'll charge them less.

"We're trying to make it as easy as possible because we've all been there. I've run shops, Will's run shops and in fact in our cellar door we have a wine shop.

"Everyone's costs are going up and we know that keen pricing and sensible stockholding are the key to supporting the vibrant independent sector, and cash flow will be tight for the foreseeable future.

"We're never going to compete on entry-level but that's not really our thing. Our opportunity is offering unique, family-owned wine gems, often never seen before in the UK. It's real hand-picked, hand-chosen, hand-sold wine."

*From left: Guy Smith, Stuart Bowman-Hood and Will Willis*





## SOME KEY AGENCIES

### Passel Estate, Margaret River

“Wendy and Barry Stimpson grow Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon on this 6ha estate, which also includes a western ring-tailed possum sanctuary (hence the name Passel, the collective noun for possums). They are aiming purely for quality.

“There’s a French phrase – ‘if you put your hand in the vineyard, it will take your arm’, and I think that applies to them. Wendy and Barry bought a house in Margaret River, then a bit of land, and then in 2011, when a vineyard came up for sale, they bought the whole estate.

“Focusing on small quantities of seriously great quality wines which are regularly awarded internationally, this is their first foray into UK and we are all super-excited to be their partner.”  
[passelestate.com](http://passelestate.com)



### Des Annereaux, Bordeaux

“We have an exclusive on this. It’s organic and unbelievably good.

“It comes from a single organic plot called L’Ane Mort (Dead Donkey) in Lalande de Pomerol. Don’t let the name put you off, this is delicious. It is owned by the Hessel family who have been at Annereaux for centuries. One of the reasons the wine is so good is that it contains 2% Petit Verdot which adds grip and freshness. It’s beautifully balanced and so great to drink on release, but will also age.”  
[annereaux.com](http://annereaux.com)

### Aegerter, Burgundy

“The fact that we could get hold of a Burgundy producer who could do the whole of the region amazed us. The maison is based in Nuits-Saint-Georges. These passionate people are daring enough to leave the beaten track and offer all consumers, beginners and experts alike, carefully picked selections, new blends and different bottles.”

[aegerter.fr/en](http://aegerter.fr/en)



### Château La Sable, Luberon

“We were introduced to Virginie and Jean Marc by Guy’s cousin and once we tried their organic wines we just had to buy them. The first vines were planted in 1967 on steep slopes at 250m above sea level. The sandy soils lend themselves not only to the name of the estate but also the incredible freshness and expression of pure fruit flavours.”

[chateaulasable.com/en](http://chateaulasable.com/en)

### Jesus Madrazo

“Jesus was the winemaker at Contino for 17 years. His father founded Contino so his family is one of the founding families of CVNE. He chose us because he’s known us for over 20 years. He is rightly considered one of Spain’s leading winemakers, with a worldwide following.”



### Lozano Family, Rioja and La Mancha

“Founded in 1853 in Villarobledo, La Mancha and now in its fourth generation, at a large, modern, state-of-the-art winery, Jaime Lozano just wants to make something that is exceptional and new to this market. With grapes sourced mainly from their own vineyards, Lozano have been shipping bulk and bottled wine here under various labels for decades, but their Rioja is new and they have some amazing 80 to 100-year-old viticultural stock.”

[bodegas-lozano.com/gb](http://bodegas-lozano.com/gb)

### Julia Kemper, Dão

“Julia is a real live wire, a real experimenter and very high profile in Portugal and a lot of export markets, but she hasn’t done much here yet. From high in the mountainous Dao region, Quinta do Cruzeiro has been part of the Melo family for more than 400 years. Now farmed biodynamically, the wines are so focused and refined and well-noted by international wine critics. This is a real find for us.”

[juliakemperwines.com](http://juliakemperwines.com)



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