

When it comes to wine, Alsace boasts more complexity in its soils than even Burgundy and has an equally tumultuous history. Located on the far eastern side of France, bordering Germany, Alsace has been invaded by the latter and repossessed by the former many times in the past 150 years. But it has a fiercely independent spirit, which is reflected in its wines. Here Fiona Sims picks out eight producers worth considering for your list

When it comes to aromatic white wines, no region in the world can match Alsace. Think rich, dry, spicy, mineral, fragrant and fat, with Gewürztraminer at one end of the spectrum and Pinot Blanc at the other. Pinot Blanc becomes lush in Alsace and Sylvaner comes into its own here, while Pinot Gris delivers a powerful opulence and Muscat takes on a heady floral grapey aroma – even lean, citrusy Riesling has a spiciness here that you won't find elsewhere.

These wines are mostly dry, which means they match well with food – particularly spicy foods. There are sweet wines, too – the richest made from noble-rotted grapes in the best years that the locals love to drink with foie gras – and there's even the odd bit of Pinot Noir.

There are three different appellations in Alsace: Alsace, which represents 75% of the total production; Alsace Grand Cru (there are 51 Grand Cru vineyards); and Crémant d'Alsace, sparkling wine made by the traditional method, which represents 21% of the total production and climbing – sales have multiplied in recent years.

Trimbach

Enotria, 020 8961 4411, enotria.co.uk

Another ancient winemaking family, Trimbach started out in 1626, and became well known in 1898 when Frédéric Emile Trimbach scooped all the wine prizes at the Great International Fair in Brussels. The jewel in the family's crown is the Clos Sainte-Hune vineyard, producing jaw-dropping Rieslings,

especially with a bit of age. The really old vintages were destroyed in the war. Trimbach owns 40ha of vineyards and sells 1.2 million bottles. "You can't go wrong with 2007, 2008, or 2009 – but if there is one vintage that will prevail then it's 2008. It reminds me of 1990," says Jean Trimbach.

■ **Trimbach Pinot Gris Reserve
Personnelle 2004, £19.40**

■ **Trimbach Riesling Cuvée Frédéric
Emile 2004, £26.62**

