

Online Merchant of the Year

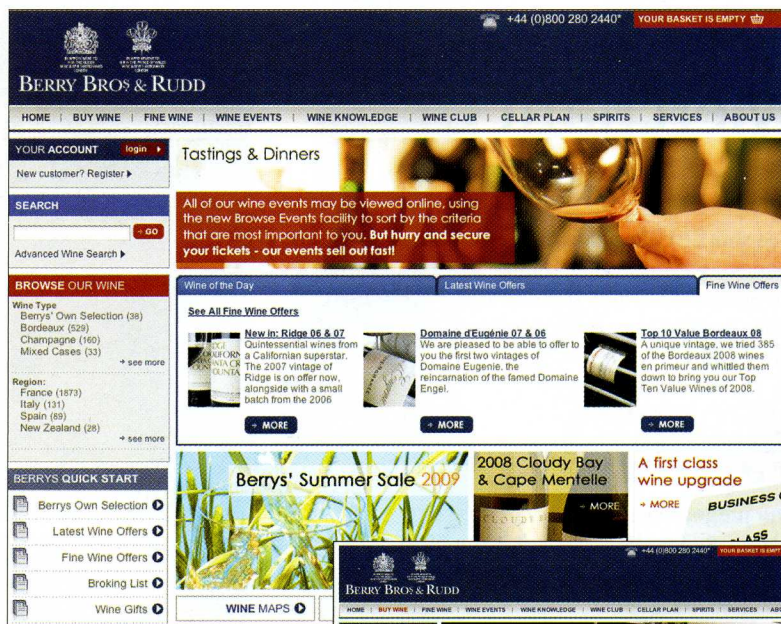
The shortlist: Berry Bros & Rudd, Direct Wines, FromVineyardsDirect, Nick Dobson Wines, The Wine Society

Winner: Berry Bros & Rudd

Winner in this category for the second year running, Berry Bros still stands head and shoulders above the competition in the online arena. The characterful St James Street shop with its creaking floorboards and vaulted cellars is the public face of Berry Bros in the UK, but its reach is global today, and the majority of sales are made via its award-winning, industry-leading website.

The key to its success is constant change. The home page is revised daily, always showcasing one 'value' wine, as well as a 'wine of the day'. The site features a comprehensive 'wine knowledge' section, excellent, interactive wine maps of the principal wine regions, vintage guides and customer reviews. The 'buy wine' section contains a photo of each bottle, tasting notes, summaries and scores from critics, plus an option to 'hide note' should you wish to compare the wines in a category quickly and easily. This year, the entire Bordeaux *en primeur* campaign was carried out online, with the latest pricing news communicated via blogs, Twitter and email.

Despite setting a benchmark for wine retailing websites around the world, Berry Bros is notable for never resting on its laurels, continually looking for ways to improve the online experience. It recently offered customers £50 off their order in return for completing a questionnaire, and as a result made several improvements, including further refinement of the search criteria – customers can now also search by in-bond price, unit size, region and vintage. A sophisticated, targeted email programme ensures that customers



'Clean, easy to use, and packed with information about its wines, events and services, bbr.com sets standards that the rest of the wine trade can only dream about' Anthony Rose



receive emails tailored to their specific interests.

The Berry's Wine Blog has also been relaunched, with more video and interactive content, and a focus on education and two-way communication, notably the new 'Wine Matters' discussion forum. The new Recipe Matching service, meanwhile, enables customers to email a recipe to in-house experts who will suggest a good wine match. It is this kind of useful innovation that keeps Berrys ahead of the pack online, and sets a challenge for the 2010 Retailer Awards – can anyone beat them?

www.bbr.com

RETAILER AWARDS

RUNNER-UP

The Wine Society

Many readers will have fond memories of receiving a subscription to The Wine Society on coming of age. And many will have been loyal customers ever since. The Society has built up an enviable relationship with its 100,000 active members, who value the company for its good-value and interesting range and its user-friendly approach – all calls are answered by people, not machines, and members now receive email notification of delivery time. An indication of this loyalty is seen in the fact that 40% of

members respond to the monthly customer surveys.

The Society is non-profit maximising, which means that profits are all ploughed back into the company, rather than being used to pay bonuses or dividends. Big Bordeaux *en primeur* buyers, The Wine Society has also built a reputation for its Chile and Alsace offerings, as well as its excellent selection of 100 own-label wines, created in tandem with the company's team of six buyers.

Over the past year The Society has focused on improving its website. This is still not quite in the league of bbr.com,

but now features improved navigation and a new section, 'Explore Wine', which includes an increasing amount of video content. It has also relaunched the Vintage Cellar Plan (a subscription service for wines to lay down), and seen a jump in customer sign-ups as a result. www.thewinesociety.com

'A vast selection, remarkably reasonable prices, beautifully stored and bottles delivered as if they were Fabergé eggs. What's not to like?' Simon Hoggart