

The wines of Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova

Caroline Gilby MW

‘Whatever happened to Bulgaria?’ The rise and fall and rise of Eastern Europe’s wines

There was a time, back in the eighties and nineties, when Bulgarian wines found many fans among those who wanted to match the reach of their palates to the limits of their pockets. But then something changed and those cherished bottles started disappearing from supermarket shelves.

The cause was a fall in quality due to the complicated land-restoration process following the fall of communism. A lack of empathy between wine producers and grape growers – many of whom were inexperienced in farming vines – caused a crisis in the industry, since most wineries did not grow their own grapes. At the same time key markets like the UK saw a huge influx of quality, affordable wines from the likes of Australia and the Americas. Romania, which had recently begun exporting to the West, suffered too as its signature Pinot Noirs found it difficult to compete with those coming out of countries like New Zealand. Romania’s neighbour Moldova had never been an exporter to the West but when its main market, Russia, brought in a ban on Moldovan wines it faced the possibility of an economic catastrophe. All three countries had to drastically change their approach to growing, creating and selling wine.

Now, as a new book by Eastern Europe wine expert Caroline Gilby MW demonstrates, these countries are finding a place on the shelves of wine sellers in the US, UK and other northern European countries. In *The wines of Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova* Gilby demonstrates an obvious excitement at seeing the rise in popularity of these wines: ‘I am passionate that Eastern Europe is the last undiscovered treasure trove of the wine world,’ she says.

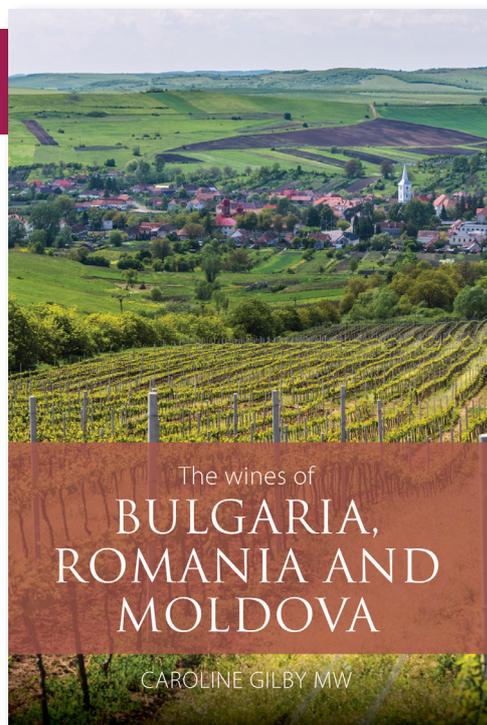
As somebody who has been involved first in selling and then in consulting for Eastern European wine for three decades Gilby is particularly proud to see the results of this wine revolution, putting the success down to today’s wines being artisan, afford-

able and authentic. This is in stark contrast to the wines of the past: ‘Each country has emerged with a clear and distinctive identity,’ she says. ‘The change has been a complete revolution from communist, mass-market, wine-based alcoholic beverage, to today’s industries where an exciting raft of small producers has added interest and individuality and pushed quality forward.’

Although there are similarities between the experiences of Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova there are also distinct differences. The book tackles each country’s story in turn, examining the unique histories, geography, grape varieties and wine producers that have formed the three wine industries we see today. For wine lovers interested in discovering new wines that rival any in Western Europe or the New World this is an essential guide.

About the author

Caroline Gilby MW joined Augustus Barnett as a trainee wine buyer in 1988, working for them for seven years and becoming an MW in 1992. Since 1995 Caroline has provided wine consultancy to a range of clients, from major international PLCs to small boutique wineries. A member of the Circle of Wine Writers, Caroline contributes to magazines including *Decanter*, *Harpers*, *Revija Vino* and *Meininger’s Wine Business International*. She also writes for *Hugh Johnson’s Pocket Wine Book* and has contributed to several other wine guides. Caroline judges regularly at international wine competitions and is the Decanter World Wine Awards joint regional chair for North, Central & Eastern Europe. She has been President of the Vinistra Wine competition since 2014 and frequently judges in Eastern Europe.



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