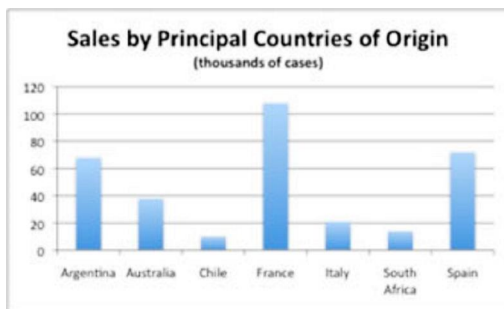


## IMPORTER FOCUS: KYSELA PÈRE ET FILS



Located near the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, Kysela Père et Fils is one of America's most successful, medium sized importers of premium wine. The founder, owner, and guiding light of this business is Fran Kysela. We recently sat down with Fran at his offices in Winchester, VA to talk and taste through a selection of the large number of wines that he imports. Our reviews of the wines follow.

Fran's success is attributable to a number of things. He had the good fortune to have a wine collector father who instilled a basic knowledge and love of wine. In addition to receiving a fine education at Ohio's Miami University, he has an entrepreneurial spirit and dynamic personality, and he has exceptional taste in wine, as exemplified by his receiving the Master Sommelier award from the British Court of Master Sommeliers in 1989. He first parlayed his talent and knowledge into selling wine for Gallo and then worked for two of America's premiere wine importers—Kermit Lynch and Weygandt-Metzler—before starting his own wine importing business in 1994. Today that company sells a half million cases of wine annually from 200 suppliers and distributes wine throughout North America.



The Kysela portfolio runs the gamut from inexpensive to ultra-premium wines. Fran brings in wine from around the world. While France and Spain lead in terms of sales volume, his portfolio includes a relative emphasis on Argentina, Australia, and South Africa as well. As might be expected, inexpensive wines are the biggest sellers, but ultra-premium wines are well represented, too. Both categories are reviewed below.

What ties all these disparate wines from different countries and price levels together are quality and value. Fran travels and tastes extensively to find wines that meet his standards, whatever the price level. And his wines almost invariably represent good value—high quality relative to price, as is reflected in our tastings below.

What's next for Fran Kysela? His portfolio has already expanded beyond wine to beer and sake, and he has developed his own label, Rubus, which enables him to commission special lots of wine from around the globe. His latest venture is to develop a vineyard and small winery in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. He will undoubtedly make a significant contribution to Virginia's already rising reputation for producing distinctive, quality wine.