

WINE News

One-of-a-kind wines and spirits
for a unique holiday season.



DECEMBER 7, 2020 FEATURES

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|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| 1 Top Picks 2020 | 5 West Coast Toast | 9 Regional Faves |
| 2 Gifting Bordeaux | 6 Our Burg Bestie | 10 Rioja y Mas |
| 3 Champagne! | 7 The Italian Bubble | 11 Down by Cab |
| 4 Princely Cab | 8 A Tsp. of Spirits | 12 Old & Rare |

Our Top Picks for the 2020 Holidays

Every holiday season, our wine and spirits buyers choose their one “best buy” for this page. And this year, at least in that respect, is no different!

2016 Léoville-Barton, St-Julien (\$169.99)

The No. 1 Wine of 2019 in *Wine Spectator*.

We knew this wine was great from our first taste in April 2017—big and powerful, but with layers of ripe, sweet red fruits, round tannins, and a super-long finish. A must-buy here.



2018 Domaine Jean-Michel Dupré Morgon “Côte du Py” (\$19.99)

Loaded with fruit, notes of earth and terroir, licorice and spice, this is a gorgeous Beaujolais to enjoy with holiday fare or as a party starter for adventurous folk who are up for something different than Pinot or Cab. **91 WE**

2017 Ridge Vineyards “Estate” Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.95)

This “baby Monte Bello” is crafted from the same vines as Ridge’s world-renowned \$230 flagship wine. As Antonio Galloni writes, this gives you “a Monte Bello fix now, without having to wait.” **94 VN**

2019 Oakridge “Over the Shoulder” Pinot Noir Yarra Valley Victoria (\$14.99)

This juicy, delicious Australian Pinot Noir is full of big cherry flavor at price that makes it easy to keep a case around for quick gifts or a weeknight dinner.

2018 Moulin de la Gardette “Cuvée Ventabren” Gigondas (\$39.99)

This explosive blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Cinsault is a concentrated yet elegant expression of the Rhône that will have fans of the region singing praises, and newcomers dazzled. Red and black fruits are framed by spice and garrigue, finishing with sweet tannins. **96 DC, 91-94 RP**

2015 Banfi Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99)

What better gift for Italian wine lovers than one of Montalcino’s most famous producers? The 2015s are receiving rave reviews, and their richness allows them to be drunk now. The nose here is full of rich plum fruit, spiced with wild strawberry, some vanilla toast, and hints of Tuscan brush. On the palate this wine’s texture draws you in with both fruity and savory flavors. Ideal for Christmas prime rib!

2016 Sierra Cantabria “Unica” Reserva Rioja (\$24.99)

You taste and feel the influence of both French and American oak in this modern Rioja, which shows subdued spice and fresh fruit, without losing the inviting depth and complexity of traditional Reservas.



2010 Islay Straight (Caol Ila) 10 Year Old “Sovereign” K&L Exclusive Single Sherry Butt Finish Cask Strength Blended Malt Scotch Whisky (\$69.99) This brings the rich smoke of Islay together with sweet and nutty sherry elements in one of the best values of the year. Technically a “teaspooned” blended malt, it should be twice the price.

2006 Billecart-Salmon “Cuvée Nicolas Francois Billecart” Brut Champagne (\$99.99)

This is our No. 1 seller in tête de cuvée for a reason. We loved recommending it at \$160—but with lovely brioche and a clean, dry finish, it is just too good at \$99.99!



Great Gifts for the Bordeaux Wine Collector or Drinker

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

2016 Bellegrave du Poujeau, Haut-Médoc (\$19.99) We discovered this gem earlier this year. Less than 2,000 cases made. *Fabulous!*
90 WE: “This vineyard in the southern part of the Médoc is so close to Bordeaux city that only a small part has been saved from buildings. The wine is worth the effort, rich with fine tannins and wood-aging flavors that sustain the ripe blackberry fruits and smoky character.”

2017 Labégorce, Margaux (\$34.99) This is one of my favorite properties in Bordeaux—superb wines and great pricing, next door to Château Margaux! **93 JD**

2016 Fombrauge, St-Emilion (\$36.99) One of the best values in Bordeaux since the awesome 2010. Bernard Magrez has another winner here. Black cherry and toasty oak notes on the nose and palate. **94 VN**

2016 Tronquoy-Lalande, St-Estèphe (\$39.99) I usually prefer this property to the second wine of Montrose, and this year is no exception. A great vintage for the northern Médoc—definitely cellar-worthy. **93 JS**

2016 Bel Orme Tronquoy-Lalande, Haut-Médoc (750ml \$21.99; 1.5L \$39.99) **92 JS:** “An elegant Haut-Médoc with a sleek body, rather fine tannins and attractive, redcurrant and herb character. The long, moderately dry finish suggests good aging potential.” The magnum is the perfect size for two people—*hopefully* California will not limit social gatherings to one person!

2015 Barde-Haut, St-Emilion (\$44.99) Great terroir, and a property that makes best-value Bordeaux yearly. This vintage is elegant and charming right now, and it will cellar well for several years. **95 JD, 95 JS**

2017 Malescot-St-Exupéry, Margaux (\$64.99) Another favorite property of mine, and one of the most successful Bordeaux properties over the last 15 years. Jean-Luc Zuger cranks out great Bordeaux values and great Bordeaux wines every year. This 2017 is so elegant and refined. **93+ Antonio Galloni:** “The 2017 is a wine that keeps getting better each time I taste it, and that makes me very hopeful for the future. This is a wine of great personality and character.”

2015 Malartic-Lagravière, Pessac-Léognan (\$69.99) **96 JS:** “Deeper wine from the get-go with dark violets, mocha, cassis and blackberries. The palate has suave, smooth, and sturdy tannins and terrific length. Very polished and seamless with flavors of fresh black cherries, blackcurrants and blue plums.” One of my properties to watch—now, and in the future.

2015 Pauillac de Latour, Pauillac (\$99.00) **JS 94:** “A firm and linear red with currant, blackberry and stone aromas and flavors. Full yet closed and tight. Acidity drives this one. Third wine of Pauillac. Serious.” This is a baby Latour for sure, and will cellar well for many years.

2017 Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac (\$159.99) **96 RP:** “Medium-bodied, the palate is a bundle of energy and tension with softly played tannins and beautiful floral and black fruit layers, finishing with a long-lingering whisper.”

2016 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$169.99) **100 WE:** “A voluptuous wine, this is rich and fruity yet properly balanced by a magnificent structure. Pure, crisp and packed with a black currant flavor, this will be a remarkable wine as it develops. Still young, it needs many years to develop.”

2017 Lynch-Bages, Pauillac (3.0L \$499.00) A perfect gift for the real Bordeaux lover in your life—especially if you think they will invite you to drink it! In fact, just give a bottle to yourself! **95 DC:** “Another wine that is packed with Pauillac signature; one where you feel the tightness and the bristle of the tannins. They have done a great job of carefully extracting the tannins while maintaining a fresh menthol current running through the backbone of the wine.”

Dry White Wines to Enjoy from Château Carbonnieux

2013 Carbonnieux Blanc 2013, Pessac-Léognan (\$38.99); 2016 (\$34.99); and 2017 (\$41.99) Try these fabulous dry whites—the delicious and mature 2013; the round and rich 2016; and the focused 2017, which is delicious now, with fine acidity, and also ranked No. 4 among *Wine Enthusiast’s* Top 100 Cellar Selections of 2020: “This wine’s smooth texture is deceptive. Under this creamy guise, a taut, steely character promises long-term aging. Richness and fruitiness harmonize with complexity.”





Isolated cabin in the vineyards of Champagne: The effervescent spirit of Champagne brightens any day!

Triple Treat from Champagne

By Gary Westby

This holiday will be a different one for all of us, but we still have so much to celebrate with our family and friends. As usual, our selection of Champagne, from small growers direct-imported from the region, and also the famous names, is both broad and deep. Three of my favorites are below.

Ariston Aspasic “Réserve” Brut Champagne (\$29.99)

The Ariston family, who grow and make Champagne Aspasic, are the hardest-working people that I know in the wine business. They are committed to quality in every aspect of growing and making their wine. Their Réserve is one of my favorite Champagnes for an aperitif, a celebration, or a gift. This used to be sold as “Carte Blanche,” but they found the name was confusing, and, given how long they have reserved this bottle—five years of aging on the lees—they found the name “Réserve” more appropriate. This is composed of 40% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, and 30% Meunier, from the slopes of the village of Brouillet, a half-hour drive northwest of Reims. Having been aged for double the time of most of the big brands that cost \$10–\$20 more, this has authentic toasty quality, but also wonderfully clean refreshment. It is not just great value, it is great Champagne.



2013 Ayala Blanc de Blancs Brut Champagne (\$49.99)

One of our best deals comes from the great, old Champagne house Ayala, located in Aÿ in the heart of the Marne Valley. They were purchased by Champagne Bollinger in 2005, and have made huge strides in quality since that time. Chef de Cave Caroline Latrive has made a masterful vintage with her 2013 Blanc de Blancs. This is selling for \$100 elsewhere, and has the texture and poise of Champagne in that price range. The 2013 vintage is not famous in Champagne, as it did not produce great results across the region, but it was a great vintage for Chardonnay in the Côte des



Blancs. This wine comes from the heart of those famous chalk slopes, and is composed of 100% Chardonnay: 25% from Cramant, 25% Cuis, 23% Chouilly, 14% Mesnil, and 13% Vertus. If you are looking for luxurious, creamy texture, subtle toast, and a clean, dry, mineral-laden finish, this is for you!

2012 Louis Roederer “Cristal” Brut Champagne (\$249.99) If your gathering is small, like many will be this year, or if you are looking for the best of the best to give as a gift, the 2012 Cristal is as good as it gets. Unlike almost all the other big-name tête de cuvée offerings, this wine is entirely estate, and entirely organically grown. They farm the vineyards for Cristal like little gardens, choosing only old vines in the middle slopes of the chalkiest villages in the region. The 2012 is composed of 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay, and sees 32% fermentation in large wood uprights. While the 2008 vintage of Cristal is still tight, this 2012 is fully open, and delivers on the promise of the best Champagne: it is rich without being heavy, and has a relaxed complexity that is delivered so elegantly that one could never tire of it. The subtle baguette toast and fine chalk minerality of this wine have to be experienced—my words fall short.

Another great option for a gift is our **Champagne Club**. We ship two bottles every other month to our members for a fixed price of \$69.99 per shipment. This adds up to twelve bottles a year, and the club covers the different styles and terroir of the region, each time with a detailed description of the wines inside. The December Club has two of the great Grand Crus included: Bouzy and Mesnil. It is a great way to learn about Champagne while enjoying its diversity.

I hope that all of you are healthy and safe, and look forward to pouring Champagne for you in a tasting again soon. Until then, a toast to you!



Drink Like a King this Holiday Season— Or at Least a Prince?

By Ryan Woodhouse

Second labels, sleeper wines, and hidden gems are kind of our thing at K&L. We take pride in seeking out wines that offer a fantastic drinking experience without necessarily costing a fortune. I thought it would be fun to look at a selection of “second wines,” or less-expensive wines from iconic producers that offer top-notch pedigree without the top-tier price tag! With these wines you get the same winemaking expertise and high-quality fruit from some of the finest vineyards in the country, without laying out the big bucks for the flagship wines.

Christian Moueix’s stable of Napa Valley wines offers world-class drinking at several different price points. The **2017 Dominus “Napanook” Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$69.95)** comes from the very same vines that produce the premier label, the **2017 Dominus Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$209.99)**. Upon release, Napanook is often my favorite when tasted side-by-side with Dominus. It seems to integrate and express this wonderful site while the flagship is still coming together. In 2017 Dominus made up only 50% of their regular production, due to ultra-strict fruit selections. In my mind, they are in the top wines of the vintage. **95 JS, 95 WE**



2017 Ridge Vineyards “Estate” Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.95) This has to be hands-down one of the best-value bottles in existence. This wine is quite literally a “baby Monte Bello.” The fruit for this bottling is entirely from Monte Bello Vineyard and is grown, picked, sorted, and fermented in the exact same way as Monte Bello proper. During fermentation, individual lots are tasted and assessed. Wines with more concentration, power, and structure are earmarked for Monte Bello. The other lots that show more accessible fruit, less tannin, etc, are directed to Ridge’s Estate Cabernet. As Galloni so perfectly wrote: this wine gives you “a Monte Bello fix now, without having to wait.” **94 VN, 93 JD, 93 Wine & Spirits**



Staying in the Santa Cruz Mountains for a moment: In my opinion, the wines of Mount Eden are equally as spectacular as those from Ridge, and very affordable at the same time.

2016 Domaine Eden Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon (\$44.95) Domaine Eden is from a vineyard just one mountaintop over from Mount Eden Estate proper. The wines have similar qualities running through them, and both show classic Santa Cruz Mountains cool-climate character. The wine is quite red-fruited, with plenty of dusty earth, forest floor, cedar, bay leaf, and tobacco notes. **92 RP, 92 WE**



2015 Mount Eden “Estate” Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.95) Though this is actually the premier wine of the estate, its very modest price

point warrants its inclusion here. A little darker fruited and more structured than the Domaine bottling, the 2015 Mount Eden Cab is a powerful, brooding wine with tons of depth and concentration. Just coming into its early drinking window, this is a wine with a direct clonal lineage back to Château Margaux. **95 DC, 94 VN**

2016 Larkmead Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$99.99) *Elsewhere \$120.* Larkmead is one of my favorite producers in Napa. I think winemaker Dan Petroski’s wines rank up there with the very finest in the valley. The Napa Cabernet from them is a broad, panoramic snapshot of the estate that blends the many clones and diverse, complex soils types together into one beautifully integrated and complete wine. I know that Dan personally toils over this wine perhaps even more than the ultra high-end bottlings, as he considers this wine the workhorse of the estate. Knowing this, it makes perfect sense that this wine consistently earns point scores on par with the winery’s much more expensive releases. **98 WE, 92-95 JD, 94 JS**

At Premiere Napa Valley in early 2020, the tasting hosted at Spottswode was the highlight of the entire event for me. On their home turf and against tough competition (Dominus, Eisele, Staglin, Corison), the wines of Spottswode shone very brightly and showed that they are continuing a tradition of classic, timeless Napa Cabernets that age beautifully and never disappoint.

2017 Spottswode “Lyndenhurst” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$84.95) At that tasting, the 2017 Lyndenhurst really impressed. I thought it was better than many of the much higher-end wines we tasted during that weekend. The Lyndenhurst consists of about 50% estate fruit, plus fruit from neighbors in St. Helena and partner growers on Atlas Peak and Oak Knoll. **94 WE, 92+ RP**

2017 Spottswode “Estate” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$224.99) A classic, benchmark Napa Cabernet that should be considered among the finest Cabernet-based wines in the world. **97+ RP 96 JD, 96 VN, 96 JS, 95 WS**

2017 Eisele Vineyards “Altagracia” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$134.95) After a fantastic visit to Eisele Vineyard a few years ago with GM, Antoine Donnedieu, I understand a little better how Eisele’s Altagracia and Eisele Vineyard Cabernet are differentiated. And, as I was, I think you might be surprised to know just how similar they are. The Altagracia of the Pinault era is almost entirely from Eisele Vineyard itself. The estate is quite parcelled, dissected by a couple creeks that are visual markers of the varied, gravelly soils below. I guess you could say that the Eisele flagship bottling is like the filet mignon, taken from the prime tenderloin of the estate and the oldest vines. The eastern portion of the vineyard, while farmed and made the same way, goes into Altagracia. Basically, Altagracia lets you get a taste of this famed Napa terroir for considerably less than the “Grand Vin.” **94 JS, 93 DC, 93 RP**

Speaking of the Grand Vin, we also have the **2017 Eisele Vineyard Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$499.00)** **98 JS, 97 RP, 96 WS**





Tucked way away in the forested hills of the Sonoma Coast, a newer planting in the Que Syrah vineyard winds down for the winter.

Wind Down the Holidays with West Coast Wines

By Kaj Stromer

“Wine makes daily living easier, less hurried, with fewer tensions and more tolerance.” —Benjamin Franklin

If the hurried pace of the holidays usually gets you stressed, then the unusual holidays in 2020 might be causing you to overload!

So, what better time than now to slow down the clock by treating yourself to a civilized meal accompanied by a fine wine. Good wine with good food, along with good company, is one of life’s most civilized pleasures. As the saying goes, “If food is the body of good living, wine is its soul.”

I’ve selected some of my favorite wines to recommend. I’ll be drinking all of these over the next month and beyond. I encourage you to take pause, take inventory of what is good in our lives, and take a proper respite from today’s hectic pace. To your health!

2019 Johan “Estate” Willamette Valley Pétillant Natural (\$24.99)

Sparkling wine isn’t all about Champagne! (with apologies to our talented Champagne buyer, Gary Westby). The Johan “Pet Nat” is a more casual affair. These easy-on-the-palate bubbles offer a glimmer of lovely salmon pink hue, informing you that it is indeed something decidedly different. It’s made from biodynamically grown Pinot Noir, and Johan used the “méthode ancestrale” technique to capture the carbonation in bottle while the wine goes through its primary fermentation. The result reminds me of a full-bodied rosé bristling with the energy of the fine mousse.

2017 Barden (Margerum) Sta. Rita Hills

Chardonnay (\$24.99) Elsewhere \$48. The legendary winemaker André Tchelistcheff once said, “Chardonnay is a red wine masquerading as a white.” Whatever a red wine can do, Chardonnay can do as well. If you’re an unabashed white wine lover like myself, a California Chardonnay like this gem from Doug Margerum will enhance most dishes. It possesses bright and focused acidity matched with refreshing notes of tangerine, green apple, and crisp pear. A fine example of a sleek Chardonnay from the Sta. Rita Hills.



2015 Rogstad “Tidrik” Anderson Valley Pinot Noir

(\$19.99) Elsewhere \$38. As I’ve stated before, Rogstad is my single greatest Pinot Noir find this year. This micro-production winery is run by Steve Rogstad, a 20-year winemaking veteran. Steve sources fruit for this bottling from the Anderson Valley along the Navarro River. This site produces lithe wines filled with bright red cherry fruit, a hint of tea leaves, and spice. We bought every case he could offer. Plus, we were able to negotiate such an amazing price that we’re offering it for nearly 50% off the winery price. This is the best Pinot Noir at \$20 I’ve tasted all year. A mere 124 cases were produced.



2017 J. Wilkes “Highland District” Paso Robles

Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99) Elsewhere \$30. I’ve been a big fan of winemaker Wes Hagen ever since his days crafting brilliant Pinot Noir at Clos Pepe. Now he’s deploying his skills at J. Wilkes, the sister winery to the Bien Nacido Estate. While I liked this wine at the original \$30, I’m loving it even more at \$20! Paso Robles has turned into a reliable source for fresh and juicy Cabernet Sauvignon built for early drinking. The wine is remarkably polished, with classic hints of blackberry, cassis, plum, and a touch of oak. It’s velvety smooth on the palate and simply a joy to drink. Use this as your house Cab when entertaining and needing more than one bottle. It’s a remarkably versatile Cabernet Sauvignon with just a dollop (5%) of Lagrein.

2018 Arnot-Roberts “Que Syrah Vineyard” Sonoma

Coast Syrah (\$79.95) Here’s a wine that should need no introduction. When you need a special bottle of wine, this top-rated single-vineyard Syrah is about as good as it gets. Planted in 1994, this is the oldest Syrah vineyard on the Sonoma Coast. As a play on the old expression, “whatever shall be, shall be,” this wine *should be* in your glass. It’s truly a seminal cool-climate California Syrah that sets the bar at lofty heights. There’s never much of this wine around, but it’s worth the splurge. I know I’ll be opening my second-to-last bottle very soon.



Domaine Lafouge: One of Burgundy's Greatest Values

By Alex Pross



The eternal search for value in Burgundy leads us to one of K&L Wine Merchants' most exciting Direct Import producers. Domaine Jean et Gilles Lafouge is fashioning some of Burgundy's best values at their humble winery, located in Auxey-Duresses. With impressive holdings throughout Auxey-Duresses, Meursault, and Pommard, Domaine Lafouge offers an array of terroir-driven, beautifully drinking wines that represent some of the best values anywhere in Burgundy.

The producers that thrived in the warm vintage of 2018 were those that have traditionally cooler-climate sites—exactly what Domaine Lafouge has—and who focused on early harvesting.

The **2018 Domaine Lafouge Bourgogne Aligoté (\$19.99)** is a wonderful example of Aligoté with bright acidity, freshness, and loads of mineral and zesty green fruit flavors.

The **2018 Domaine Lafouge Auxey-Duresses Blanc 1er Cru "Les Boutonniers" (\$39.99)** comes from a vineyard located on the border with Meursault. This wine exudes the characteristics of a fine Auxey-Duresses blanc as well as those of a

Meursault. Flavors of orchard fruits, citrus, chalk soil notes, and hints of almond dominate this beautiful wine. **91 JG, 90 RP, 88-91 BH**

For an entry-level Meursault, the **2018 Domaine Lafouge Meursault (\$49.99)** springs from the glass with aromas of white flowers, fresh pears, and a subtle note of oak that leads to a delicate palate of orchard fruits, lime zest, and hazelnut. **91 JG, 90 RP**

Following on the heels of the village-level Meursault come two single-vineyard offerings that really showcase the quality of winemaking at Domaine Lafouge.



Jacque Frost nipping at their nodes, vines settle in to winter dormancy in Burgundy. (Photo: Vins de Bourgogne)

The **2018 Domaine Lafouge Meursault "Meix Chavaux" (\$59.99)** flows from the glass with aromas of apricot, peach, lemon, and hazelnuts. The palate is awash in white peach, pear, and hazelnut flavors that basically echo the nose. Balanced and full-bodied, this is a Meursault built to wow the Burgundy lover at home as well as the California enthusiast. **92 JG, 88-91 BH**

We finish the range of whites from Domaine Lafouge with the **2018 Domaine Lafouge Meursault "Les Casses-Têtes" (\$59.99)**. The Meix Chavaux on steroids, with a greater depth of fruit flavors and a more tightly wound core, this wine slowly unfurls to reveal a Meursault that offers up everything one would want from a top Premier Cru—except for the accompanying high cost. **93 JG, 89-92 BH**

Although it really comes down to a coin flip as to which are the more impressive set of wines from Domaine Lafouge, the whites or the reds, I love the range of red wines, which go from strength to strength with only highs. From vines located in Pommard, the **2018 Domaine Lafouge Bourgogne Rouge Cote d'Or (\$27.99)** is a "baby Pommard" with red berry, earth, and game notes that make it a great entry-level red Burgundy. But it also separates from the pack thanks to its complexity and sense of terroir.

The impressive range of Auxey-Duresses rouge from Lafouge starts with the **2018 Domaine Lafouge Auxey-Duresses Rouge (\$34.99)**. This is a great introduction to Auxey-Duresses. With red and black berry fruit flavors, earthy tones, and subtle notes of game, this richly textured red has a silky, open-knit feel. **90 JG**

As we step up into the Premier Crus, the **2018 Domaine Lafouge Auxey-Duresses Rouge 1er Cru "La Chapelle" (\$42.99)** is a beauty packed with dark berry fruit, menthol and earth notes, all nicely framed by just a hint of oak. This is a wonderful wine with admirable depth and power. **93 JG, 90 BH, 90 RP**

The **2018 Domaine Lafouge Auxey-Duresses Rouge 1er Cru "Les Duresses" (\$42.99)** is incredibly complex, with dark fruit flavors, bitter chocolate, mineral, and cedar notes. Here's a classic wine that exudes terroir and structure and can easily sit in your cellar and handsomely reward 10-plus years of patience. **94 JG, 92 RP**

Last, but most certainly not least, the **2018 Domaine Lafouge Pommard 1er Cru "Les Chanlins" (\$59.99)** is a gorgeous example of Pommard. Loaded with dark berry, plum, and spice notes, this velvety wine shows the depth and power Pommard is renowned for. This may be the most impressive set of wines from Domaine Lafouge I have yet tasted! **93 JG, 92 RP, 90 BH**



Burgundy Key: JG John Gilman BH Burghound



Piedmont, northern Italy: A bottle of Barolo brings warmth to any shelter in winter. (Photo: Shutterstock)

The Italian Bubble

By Greg St. Clair

This holiday season may be unlike anything we've seen before, but whether you're going to be doing remote holiday Zoom gatherings or in-person in a family "bubble," you are still going to want to celebrate with wine!

Speaking of which, I always like to start off any gathering with bubbles—maybe this year, "bubbles for your bubble" will be the new hashtag. The **2019 Silvano Follador Prosecco Superiore Brut Nature (\$19.99)** is without a doubt the best Prosecco I've ever had. This wine, however, is not headed to your Christmas morning Mimosa. This is dry as a bone, clean, mineral driven, Biodynamic, and will change your opinion of the category.

If you are wanting some slightly more easygoing version, the **San Venanzio Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore Brut (\$13.99)** is one of the best values on the market—richer, fuller, and so easy to drink!

This year has been really difficult for Italian producers. Restaurants, where most wine is sold in Italy, have been closed or partially open, so for producers the local market has dried up. I happened to know one producer whose winery was still full of wine, but he needed the tank space for the new vintage. He decided—I was very skeptical, by the way—to blend all of his white wines together and sell it all at a tremendous loss (the whites normally sell in the \$25–\$30 range) just to empty his cellar. I should not have been so skeptical. The wine is predominantly Pinot Bianco and Chardonnay, and is wonderfully complex, balanced, and has exceptional weight and freshness. He didn't want to confuse it with his own label, so it is labeled as **2019 Il Bianco Veneto (\$9.99)**.

Last year we introduced a new producer from the Tuscan town of Montepulciano, called De' Ricci. Their **2018 De' Ricci Rosso di Montepulciano (\$14.99)** is absolutely delicious, full of wild cherry spice, and richly textured on the palate. Their **2017 De' Ricci Vino Nobile di Montepulciano (\$19.99)** is a bolder wine with more depth, and is structured perfectly for hearty dishes.

The **2015 Poggerino Chianti Classico (\$19.99)** is one of my favorite Chianti Classico. At this totally organic winery, situated way up high in Radda in Chianti, Piero Lanza makes superb wines of depth, length, and aging ability. His high-toned aromatics just light up this 2015, and it is drinking magnificently now—it's the last of this vintage, so stock up!

I don't want to seem too Tuscan-biased here, so here's an array of wines from Piedmont from our favorite producer in Barolo, Fratelli Barale. Their wines are superb for their balance and varietal purity.

As in other vintages, the **2019 Fratelli Barale "Le Rose" Dolcetto d'Alba (\$14.99)** has bold fruit and a crunchy texture, but the 2019 is particularly fantastic, and there is another layer of fruit density.

The **2018 Fratelli Barale Langhe Nebbiolo (\$19.99)** is one of our most popular wines and difficult to keep in stock, it sells so fast! The nose of this Nebbiolo says earth, smoke, and leather, with bits of sweet, dark fruit, and hints of the classic tar and roses signature of Nebbiolo. It's like an introductory Barolo!

Barale, however, is a Barolo producer, and theirs are tremendous. The **2016 Fratelli Barale Barolo (\$34.99)** is stunning. This wine is the textbook definition for Barolo. The nose shows hints of smoke and dried rose aromatics, followed by hints of wild cherry. On your palate, the wine has weight and depth, while darker fruits come forward—but this 2016 vintage adds another dimension of power.

The vineyard-designated Barale Barolo are even more stunning. The **2016 Barale Fratelli "Castellero" Barolo (\$49.99) 96 WE, 94 VN**, the **2016 Barale Fratelli "Bussia" Barolo (\$49.99) 95 WE, 95 VN**, and the **2015 Barale Fratelli "Cannubi" Barolo (\$69.99) 96 WE, 94 RP** are wines of depth and aging potential.

A happy holiday season to all, and may we all say goodbye to 2020—I know I sure am ready!



Whisky Season is Here!

By David Othenin-Girard and Andrew Whiteley

Single Cask Blended and Single Malt Exclusives

The Douglas Laing & Hunter Laing Company have worked tirelessly to offer our customers the very best malts at unbeatable prices. While this year wasn't typical, we've still managed to acquire a huge portfolio of exceptional Scotch malt whiskies sold exclusively at K&L. The Hunter Laing Company has gone so far as to declassify our *single malt* casks into *blended malt* casks through a practice called "teaspooning," not an easy or straightforward endeavor. A teaspooned whisky is one where a micro amount of single malt of the same age from another distillery is added to the barrel in question. In exchange for losing the single malt classification and the distillery name on the label, we avoid the 25% tariff and have the same quality and flavor whisky as we did before the process. All are bottled at cask strength without coloring or filtration of any kind. Treat them just as you would any other high-quality single-cask whisky—as that's exactly what they are!

Archiestown Adjacent (Dailuaine) 22 Year Old "Old Malt Cask" Single Refill Hogshead Scotch (\$109.99)

Hebridean Mulligan (Ledaig) 21 Year Old "Old Malt Cask" Single Hogshead Scotch (\$119.99)

Behind The Highlander (Craigellachie) 14 Year Old "Hepburn's Choice" Single Refill Sherry Butt Scotch (\$59.99)

Cromarty's Firth (Dalmore) 13 Year Old "Hepburn's Choice" Single Hogshead Scotch (\$59.99)

Hector Macbeth (Glenfiddich) 23 Year Old "Hepburn's Choice" Single Sherry Butt Finished Scotch (\$119.99)

Islay Straight (Caol Ila) 10 Year Old "Sovereign" Single Sherry Butt Finish Scotch (\$69.99)

In some cases, it just wasn't possible to apply the teaspooning technique to avoid the tariffs. In fact, our dear partners, the Douglas Laing company, would not use this method for any products under their Old Particular line. Instead, they worked wonders to find incredible products at extremely competitive prices, which we're able to offer despite the new tax burdens. We will still be offering certain, although limited amounts of single-cask single malts, at stunningly reasonable prices. Most of the barrels we've already advertised have sold out completely, but a few remain that we've not yet highlighted. These will likely sell fast once people begin to realize what they're missing!

1995 Aberlour 25 Year Old "Old Particular" Single Hogshead Single Malt (\$299.99)

2003 Craigellachie 16 Year Old "Old Particular" Single Sherry Butt Single Malt (\$109.99)

2008 Glengoyne 11 Year Old "Old Particular" PX Sherry Finished Single Malt (\$69.99)

2010 Glen Garioch 10 Year Old "Old Particular" Single Hogshead Single Malt (\$54.99)



Our friends at Douglas Laing sent us this enchanting "holiday glamor" photo of our Aberlour 25 selection.

Rare and Exclusive Bourbon

Our goal at K&L is to offer our customers exclusive access to the finest Kentucky has to offer. As the super-premium bourbon market continues to explode, aged stocks have become impossible to find, but K&L's good name and unwavering pursuit of excellence has paid big dividends this year.



Blue Run 13 Year Old Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$154.99) Blue Run Spirits is a new whiskey company determined to do things differently. The company has partnered with

Jim Rutledge as their "liquid advisor," and they've selected this incredible high-proof 13-year for their inaugural run. We're honored to be the exclusive source for this rare bourbon in California. Only 180 bottles in California for 2020.

New Riff "Winter Whiskey" Bottled-In-Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99)

A new release for the cold season. The mashbill features 20% malted oats, 7% pale ale malt, 5% steel-cut raw oats, and 3% chocolate malt. These specialties balance the sweet corn to offer the "chocolate oatmeal stout" of bourbon.

New Riff "Balboa Rye" Bottled-In-Bond Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey (\$59.99) 95% heirloom Balboa rye from a single estate in Indiana and 5% malted rye make this one of the most flavorful ryes on the market.

New Riff "Maltster" Malted Wheat Bottled-In-Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey (\$59.99) The 65% corn is enhanced by floor-malted wheat, unmalted wheat, and dark wheat.

All spirits listed above are sold in 750ml format.

French Regional Wines: Just a Few of My Favorite Things

By Keith Mabry



Something that I have truly missed this year is the personal interaction we used to have with so many of our great customers. Walking the sales floor and talking about wine were the highlights of my day and are now absent. Recommendations for food pairing, gift giving, daily drinking, sharing experiences...I have so many things I have wanted to tell you all about. So, in the spirit of the holiday and to recapture a small part of that personal puzzle, here are some my favorite things I've wanted to share with you.

When you ask me about sparkling wines, the first wine that springs to mind is the **2018 Antech "Cuvée Eugénie" Cremant de Limoux Brut (\$13.99)**. One of the biggest extroverts I know in the wine business is Francoise Antech-Gazeau. This esteemed matriarch of Limoux sparkling wine has single-handedly introduced me to three of my favorite producers in the Languedoc-Roussillon, all of whom have become great partners. Her sparkling wines are as engaging as her personality and they are a staff and client favorite. Hers is one of our best dollar-for-dollar bubbliques. A blend of Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, Mauzac, and Pinot Noir. Perfect to share with friends over Zoom gatherings, or just to have some sparkling on hand to get you through this cooler time of year.

When talking about white wines, my first thoughts go to the Loire Valley. We have a host of direct producers from Sancerre, and lots of other clever offerings from some of the hinterlands. I can think of no better aperitif to start a holiday meal than the **2019 Eric Cottat Sancerre (\$19.99)**. While this wine is a perennial staff favorite, and consistently one of the best Sancerres in its class, the 2019 reaches a new level. I would strongly argue that this would make any Sancerre fan weak in the knees for its focus and intense palate. It's a gorgeous rendition that will light up your palate and have you coming back for more.

Because I'm such a fan of Sauvignon Blanc, I tend to recommend a variety of producers. A new rising star in the Loire is Florian Mollet, who is a masterful winemaker. He's based in Sancerre, but his wine from neighboring Pouilly-Fumé is worthy of seeking out. The **2018 Florian Mollet Pouilly-Fumé (\$29.99)** is a mouthwatering rendition with Makrut lime leaf, lemongrass, and peach notes. This has the hallmark finish of a great Pouilly-Fumé with that smoky, flinty edge really showing the complexity of its terroir. This is great now, and worthy of drinking for a few more years to come. This is the perfect gift for those Sancerre and Sauv Blanc fans out there. **94 JS**



For a little fuller style, one of my favorite whites this season has to be the Vouvray from Vincent Carême. Carême is an emerging icon from the Loire, farming organically and working biodynamically. He's a native of Vouvray but has gained world-class credibility for his joint wine project in South Africa. The **2018 Domaine Vincent Carême Vouvray Sec (\$19.99)** has a sinewy frame with plump apple fruit and a mix of gorgeous fall spices. Few wines scream, "serve me with butternut squash soup," like this one does. For under \$20, this is a great buy. **92 WS, 91 VN, 91 DC, 91 WE**

I always like to introduce people to something that speaks of familiarity but might be outside their normal orbit of wine selections. That's when I lean toward the Cabernet Francs, which are some of my favorite fall and winter reds (actually, all year-round). One terrific new find comes from an emerging sub-appellation of Saumur, Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame. This little appellation sits a little higher in altitude than surrounding Saumur. I think this helps produce more perfumed and aromatic reds, reflecting the floral side of Cab Franc. The **2017 Domaine de l'Enchantoir "Le Pied à L'Étrier" Saumur Puy-Notre-Dame Rouge (\$15.99)** is the red to pair with any of those "other" turkey dinners that may come along, but is also a fine and savory foil to a standing rib roast. This is a versatile red to offer to friends who are looking to step outside the box. Did I mention, they're also organic and low intervention? Great stuff! **92 VN**

Recommending our Direct Imports is built into my DNA as one of K&L's buyers. One of our best direct partners is Château de la Negly in the Languedoc. They are one of the diamonds in our crown of southern French producers. Their styles are deep, rich, and oh, so thrilling. Along with their sumptuous reds, they also make exquisite whites. Two big standouts (which as a pair make a great gift!) are the Falaise Blanc and Rouge. The **2018 Château de la Negly "La Falaise" Pays d'Oc Blanc (\$24.99)** is hard to define with its blend of Chardonnay, Marsanne, Petit Manseng, and Sauvignon Gris. But in the glass, it has a wonderful texture with a nose filled with stone fruits. The Manseng and Gris add a vibrant backbone of acid that make this a sum-greater-than-parts blend. This is just gorgeous. **93 JD**

On the other side, the **2018 Château de la Négly "La Falaise" La Clape Rouge (\$24.99)** is a lusty red composed of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Carignan. Breaking the mold of traditional Languedoc reds, this has an explosive nose of black fruits and savory spices. With sweet tannins and a sense of balance hard to find in wines with this depth of concentration, this is the ideal foil for all cold weather hearty dishes. Some braised short ribs? Yes, please!



Dear Spanish Wine Santa: I Hope I'm Not on the Naughty List

By Kirk Walker

What I Want for Christmas

2013 Remelluri Reserva Rioja (\$39.99) Telmo Rodriguez has one of my favorite stories in all of the wine world. He's from a winemaking family with a great and historic vineyard in one of the best subregions of Rioja, Remelluri in Rioja Alavesa. Telmo went to Bordeaux to learn to make wine, became inspired after working at Petrus, came home and told his father he wanted to make a "great" wine at their estate. His father said, "No, we want to make good wine and a good amount of it," as that was what Rioja was about in the '80s. Telmo left, explored the country, and started a bunch of small projects in mostly forgotten regions all over the country: Valdeorras, Sierra de Gredos, Malaga, Toro, Ribera del Duero, and Rioja. In 2009 he was asked to come back "home" and take over for his father. He did, but only if changes could be made. Remelluri has always been one of the great Rioja houses (even if dad wanted to keep production levels up). It has always reflected its special Alavesa terroir with its stony, calcareous soils giving purity and energy to the wines, regardless of time in oak. It's this coming home story that makes me think of this wine for the holidays. Chances are, some of us will not be making it home this year, but this is a wine that hits all the marks I would want for this season. It is nostalgic—classic Rioja always has that for me. The nose is deep, earthy, oaky, spicy, the way only Rioja can be. The fruit on the nose is mulled dark cherries that are spiced with dark herbs and stones. The palate is full, restrained, and energetic. It feels mature and youthful—that is Telmo's touch. The cherry fruit is lifted and somehow darkens and brightens—that is Alavesa for me. The finish is great—the flavors just seem to fan on the back end. When I think about it, it is very much like the holidays, with the past and present intertwined so. Great for tonight, just decanted for about an hour, this is a wine that you could build future holiday traditions upon, for at least a decade to come.



And Now, a Quick Rundown of Fun Gift Ideas for the Wine Lovers on Your Shopping List, in No Particular Order...



For the Depressed Record Collector

Lustau "3 En Rama" Fino En Rama El Puerto de Santa María Spring 2020 bottling (500ml \$29.99)

Lustau "3 En Rama" Fino En Rama Jerez Spring 2020 bottling (500ml \$29.99)

Lustau "3 En Rama" Manzanilla En Rama Sanlúcar de Barrameda Spring 2020 Bottling (500ml \$29.99)

En rama is to sherry what vinyl is to music. En rama is the unfinned, unfiltered expression of sherry, or the uncompressed version. It is deeper, warmer, and just fills the palate more. All of these were bottled at the end of May, each an expression of the village where the wines were aged. To take the music thing one step too far, these are the expressions of one band recorded in three different recording studios. The similarities and differences are amazing!



For the Person Who Wants Cheval Blanc but They Haven't Been That Good This Year

2015 Bodegas Aleanna "Gran Enemigo" Cabernet Franc Gualtallary (\$89.99)

I know it is Argentina, and not Bordeaux, but this subregion could be a better place for Cab Franc than St-Emilion. Also, this is the wine that, after trying it, helped me better understand the greatness of Cabernet Franc as a varietal wine.

For the Cinephile on Your List

2017 Raventós i Blanc "Blanc de Blancs" Brut Conca del Riu Anoia (\$19.99)

Popcorn or potato chips? Doesn't matter. Whatever they want to watch, this delicious sparkler will keep them on the edge of their seat—that is, unless the ice bucket is on the edge of the coffee table.



For the Person Who Wears a Leather Fedora and Eats Red Meat

2016 Garage Wine Company "Truquilemu Vineyard Lot 77" Carignane Maule Valley (\$37.99)

I can't help it, I always think of Indiana Jones when I think of off-the-beaten-path Chilean wines. These wines are treasures, and it feels like they have been hidden forever. This is the statue of a god that was the love child of Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Burgundy, that has been hidden away in the Andes.





Meanwhile, December comes to the vineyards of South Africa. (Photo: Rustenberg Wines)

Compelling Cabernet from Unexpected Places

By Thomas Smith

Cabernet Sauvignon always makes a great wine gift. With its bold, full-bodied flavors of cassis and black cherry, and complemented with nuanced oak, it always makes a statement that anyone on your list will love. And while I love Napa Valley Cabernet as well as the Cabernet-dominant wines of Bordeaux's Left Bank, there are so many countries to explore that make a compelling Cabernet. And these places deliver delicious, ageable, and finely crafted wines, comparable to the best Cabernet made anywhere.

What I love about covering the regions of New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa is that these regions are the underdogs. Where they lack the prestige of Bordeaux, or luxury appeal of Napa, they make up for in exceptional quality at outstanding prices. New Zealand? "They make Sauvignon Blanc." Australia? "Has to be Shiraz." But a handful of producers from these faraway places have spent generations perfecting their own interpretations of Cabernet, with resulting wines that are every bit as good as their peers, but at half the price.

South Africa

In South Africa, Stellenbosch is easily the most well-known wine growing region, and it has built its reputation on Cabernet Sauvignon. Grapes were first planted here in the 1600s, but during the mid-20th century a number of estate owners traveled to Bordeaux, where they were struck by its similarities in climate and geography to their home. Rustenberg was one of the wineries that first planted vines centuries ago, but has been revitalized and modernized in the years since. Today, they are held in such high regard that when the owners of Château Pichon-Lalande sold their property in Bordeaux, they moved to Stellenbosch and bought the farm next door. The **2018 Rustenberg Cabernet Sauvignon Stellenbosch (\$19.99)** is a powerhouse Cabernet that over-delivers in this vintage, as it does in every single other. With concentrated black fruits, tobacco and spice, the wine is beautifully structured with firm tannins and rich flavors. Rustenberg showcases some of the best of what South Africa has achieved with Cabernet Sauvignon, demonstrating that Stellenbosch has tremendous value for those who love Cabernet.



New Zealand

Meanwhile, on the other side of the globe, there is one producer that has spent over 100 years perfecting their expression of a world-class Bordeaux blend. Te Mata Estate in the Havelock Hills is one of New Zealand's national treasures—literally. It is the only winery in New Zealand that has been elevated to a National Heritage Site, with viticulture dating back to the 1890s. The Coleraine is universally acclaimed as New Zealand's greatest red wine, with *Decanter* naming it "New Zealand's First Growth," and, "among the top Bordeaux blends in the world." At 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot, and 15% Cabernet Franc, the **2018 Te Mata "Coleraine" Bordeaux Blend Hawke's Bay (\$74.99)** is crafted with uncompromising quality at a level of detail seen only among the world's greatest wine estates.



Australia

In Australia, it's Shiraz that typically stands in the spotlight. But the overlooked corner of Margaret River has been producing stunning, world-class Cabernet Sauvignon that is changing the face of Australian wine. Robert Mondavi was an early pioneer in Margaret River, where he found the climate remarkably similar to Napa. After leaving his family's winery, he was hired as a consulting winemaker at Leeuwin Estate in 1971, where he spearheaded the planting of the property to Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. The **2015 Leeuwin Estate "Art Series" Cabernet Sauvignon (\$39.99)** is a testament to what they have achieved since. With black cassis, dark cherry, charcoal, and a gorgeous bouquet of baking spices and oak, the Leeuwin Art Series has all the rich, and bold fruit you would find in top-tier Napa Cabernet.

So, if you're giving wine this holiday season, remember that Cabernet can come from nearly every wine country across the globe. Don't hesitate to explore—you'll be impressed by the results.



Old and Rare Bordeaux from \$19.99 to \$300

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

From Values to Classics, for Holiday Gifts

1998 Haut-Franquet, Moulis (\$19.99) Our buyers were fortunate to get their hands on a limited quantity of wine from this neighbor of Château Poujeaux. While some 1998 Left Bank wines are a bit coarse and tough, this—like the Poujeaux—is elegant and fruit-driven. A superb value gift for the holidays.

2010 Coufran, Médoc (\$21.99) 87-90 VN: “Deep ruby. Lovely aromas of dark plum, blackcurrant, graphite and black pepper. Then smooth and rich on the palate, with ripe blackberry and chocolate-covered blackcurrant flavors showing very good precision and lift.”

Clyde thinks it is at least 92 points—another winner from this wonderful estate.

2010 Verdignan, Médoc (\$21.99) From the Coufran group, this wine is the big brother of Château Coufran. If you want a bit more power and body, try this gem. Plenty of red fruit flavors and a touch of oak. Old school Bordeaux.

2010 Bel Orme Tronquoy de Lalande, Haut-Médoc (\$21.99) 91 JS: “Attractive nose with loads of candied violets, raspberries and rose petals. Plum and some licorice. Full and nice texture on the palate with charming fruit and fine tannins. Enjoyable finish with medium length and a tasty licorice note. Drink from 2016.” Personally, I love this property—also try their great **2016 (\$21.99)** that we have in stock.

2010 Lestage, Lustrac (\$24.99) Old school Bordeaux with plenty of stuffing for your cellar. Decant and enjoy with a T-bone steak. Buy two and give one to your uncle.

2010 Prieur de Meyney, St-Estèphe (1.5L \$49.99) This is the second wine of Château Meyney. James Suckling: “Lots of ripe strawberries, with juicy orange and chalky mineral notes. Sweet red fruit on the palate with a juicy acidity and fine ripe tannins. Medium-full body and a pleasant medium-long finish with nice red fruit. Elegant.” What a steal here in the magnum size!

2005 Belgrave, Haut-Médoc (\$59.99) 91 WS: “There’s black licorice, coffee bean and ripe fruit on the nose. Full-bodied, with velvety tannins and a wonderful concentration of ripe fruit and currant. Shows tar and vanilla on the finish.” A fine fifth growth for your brother?

1999 Meyney, St-Estèphe (\$64.99) One of the oldest properties in Bordeaux and one of the best-situated near the Gironde. We love the wines of 1999, which got lost between the great 1998 and 2000. This wine is quite elegant and flavorful, with plenty of cassis on the nose and palate. Ready for the holiday table.

2010 Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$64.99) Robert Parker 94+ points: “This wine needs a good 7-10 years of cellaring and should keep for 30 more years, but this is the finest Cantemerle I have encountered in my professional career of tasting young vintages (dating back 34 years now).”

2007 Labegorce-Zede, Margaux (1.5L \$89.99) This property does not exist anymore, as in 2009 it was folded into Château Labegorce. This 2007 is a delicious wine—purely Margaux elegance with aromas of violets and toasty oak. After decanting, the wine was rich and ripe on the palate, with a delicate texture and lingering finish. This still has a long life ahead. Perfect wine for a holiday party (six people maximum, of course 😊).

2009 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$289.99) and 2010 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$289.99) We just received about 10 cases of each vintage. *Two* perfect wines—**100 points** from Mr. Parker. We will argue for many more years about which vintage is better, the plush, decadent 2009, or the powerful, full-bodied 2010. Buy one of each for yourself and your cellar. We have sold thousands of bottles of each vintage—and now it is becoming harder to find in Europe.

2007 d’Yquem, Sauternes (\$339.99) 98 points Robert Parker: “Pale to medium gold colored, the 2007 d’Yquem delivers powerful scents of tropical fruits—dried mangoes and pineapple paste—accented by acacia honey, toasted almonds and woodsmoke with hints of chalk dust, kettle corn and lime blossom. The palate reveals one of those vintages that shape-shifts into an apparently drier style than it is, largely thanks to its uber-racy backbone of freshness and layered mineral-inspired flavors, finishing with a regal, satin-textured savoriness.” I much prefer this fabulous wine to the 100-point 2009 vintage. I love its bright acidity.



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