

WINE News

Drink the stars: check out our top-selling wines and spirits.



DECEMBER 24, 2018 FEATURES

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A Year in Review — K&L's 2018 Best Sellers

The end of the year brings no shortage of “wine of the year” rankings of one kind or another, so we’re going to do something different.

Instead of compiling a list of elusive wines that become harder, if not impossible, to find by the day, we’re taking this opportunity to celebrate wines and spirits that are some of our greatest offerings of 2018, are

immensely popular with our clientele, and are readily available for the holidays and well beyond. Some are high-end collectibles, but many are sterling examples of tremendous value. Either way, these are among the most flat-out rewarding and over-delivering bottles on our shelves that are accessible to any serious collector or casual drinker.

2015 Opus One Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$344.99)

The Napa icon is back for another triumphant vintage. The tireless work that they have put into the vineyards and facility has helped the modern era of Opus fulfill their First Growth-caliber dreams. As Antonio Galloni states in his review of this wine: “Dark, sumptuous and voluptuous in the glass, with no hard edges, the 2015 captures all the essence of the vintage.”
98 JS, 97 RP, 96 VN



Launois “Cuvée Reserve” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$34.99)

Get it while you can! Every year we sell out of this terrific wine that many would call one of Champagne’s true gems. But we wouldn’t be caught without it at this time of year. 100% Grand Cru and a reference point for our Direct Import program, it delivers the prestige and caliber of a tête de cuvée at a price that reminds us all that Champagne can be an everyday thing.



2013 Hidden Ridge “55% Slope” Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99)

We haven’t hesitated to say that 2013 has legendary potential for Northern California, but the sad fact is that most of the collectible bottles are long sold out from nearly every winery. And yet here’s the Hidden Ridge—not only a shining example from this great vintage, but it comes with a huge score from Robert Parker himself. For under \$90, it is easily one of the best collectible buys in California Cabernet.
97 RP



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Cover: Bernard Launois prepares ice buckets for the tasting while K&L's Champagne buyer Gary Westby takes notes, and the likeness of a certain monk is drinking the stars all over again. K&L's direct import relationship with Launois makes it our number one seller in Champagne.

2009 La Rioja Alta “Viña Ardanza” Reserva Rioja (\$29.99) If you’re looking for an incredible Spanish wine at any level, just look for La Rioja Alta’s historic labels. From their high-end reserves to their famed 904, the wines go from one strength to another. The one that captured our adoration this year is the 2009 Ardanza, which is not only a best seller in the category and price point, but comes with massive press for the modest price. Add the fact that it is approaching a decade past the vintage and what more could you ask? **96 JS, 93 RP**



great vineyards. Burghound gave it his “outstanding” designation, and in time Jadot’s 153rd could easily hold its own with many bottles at multiples of the price. **92 BH, 92 VN**

2015 La Massa “La Massa” Toscana (\$19.99) The 2015 vintage seems like it was custom crafted for a Super Tuscan like La Massa, so we weren’t surprised to find that this perennial best-seller is a big winner. One of the most dependable wines at the price point from any category, it has shades of Bordeaux and California while staying true to its Tuscan roots. The label has become a flagship in our K&L Italian section and it just takes a few sips to figure out why. This is a great ambassador for the terrific Tuscan 2015 vintage. **94 JS, 92 RP**



2016 Moulin de la Gardette “Cuvée Ventabren” Gigondas (\$39.99) We’ve been following Moulin de la Gardette closely over the years, and this terrific under-the-radar property just got its due. A Decanter 98-point score has it among the elite of a celebrated vintage—an amazing accomplishment considering the sub-\$40 price. But consensus is also the story here as two more 95-point scores from Dunnuck and Wine Advocate confirm what we’ve said all along—this is one of the Rhône’s true hidden gems. **98 DC, 95 RP, 95 JD**



2016 Clos Saint-Jean Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes (\$39.99) Jeb Dunnuck has mentioned that in the incredible 2016 Southern Rhône vintage, many entry-level cuvées are closing the gap with the luxury bottlings that go for a significant premium. Clos Saint-Jean’s Vieilles Vignes is a perfect example of just this, and it is a wine that will challenge many of the great wines from the previous handful of vintages at a truly modest price. Those who have a cellar full of 2016 Châteauneuf will have thrilling wines to follow over the years. **95 JD, 94 RP**



cult-caliber California bottling. Garnering a 98-point mark from James Halliday that may look modest in time, it is irresistible but will age beautifully for another 10 to 15 years. Not enough can be said about the quality here—those who have tried it know, and those who haven’t owe it to themselves to experience one of the world’s elite Chardonnay bottlings. **96 RP**

2016 Au Bon Climat K&L Exclusive “Bien Nacido Vineyard” Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.99) When Au Bon Climat bottles a Bien Nacido Pinot, it is usually a \$30-plus wine, and deservedly so. Bien Nacido is often referred to as Central Coast’s Grand Cru, and is the source for some of the region’s most cherished, high-end bottlings. Combine all of that pedigree with a great vintage and a sub-\$20 price point and you’ll find one of the best deals in domestic Pinot Noir that anybody is offering these days. Since it is our exclusive batch, no professional critic will have a score on it—the better, as we get to share it with those in the know.



2012 Louis Jadot Beaune 1er Cru “153rd Anniversary Cuvée” (\$49.99) Highly rated Burgundy from a great producer, solid vintage, and with a bit of age, is usually a \$100 proposition. But this is the wine that defies that trend, and does so by a significant margin. Jadot’s anniversary bottling is only made in great vintages and is a tribute to their immense holdings of some of Beaune’s



2014 Leeuwin Estate “Art Series” Chardonnay Margaret River Western Australia (\$69.99) When a winery’s top wine is their Chardonnay, it usually is a take-notice wine. Such is the case for Leeuwin’s Art Series Chardonnay, a rival for any great Grand Cru or



2009 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$289.99) This is a wine that defines a generation in Bordeaux, and is probably one of the most significant bottlings of the young century so far. At the time, it showed clearly that a modest property could challenge the First Growth elite. Now it is the poster child for a vintage that is celebrated by most every Bordeaux collector in the world. The dual 100-point ratings are rarely challenged, and there is no doubt it is a truly special wine. Those who are lucky enough to own it can enjoy anytime in the next 25 to 30 years, and the price tag is still incredibly reasonable when considered alongside the wine world’s elite. **100 JD, 100 RP**



Krug “Grande Cuvée” 166 Ème Édition Brut Champagne (\$159.99) Many would argue that it doesn’t get better than Krug, but Krug has stepped up their game with their base-year “Editions.” Sure, the first release was met with a bit of confusion and uncertainty, but every subsequent release has been an instant best-seller and the 166th is again triumphant. A Krug that will cellar beautifully but gives so much right now, it is already one of the reference-point bottlings from the 2010 vintage.



Every bottling so far this year has sold out in quick order, so we’re lucky to have a strong allocation right now. **96 RP**

2006 Taittinger “Comtes de Champagne” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$124.99)

As *Decanter* says, “all the wonder of classic Comtes” can be found in this remarkable gem that defies the lofty price points that other houses charge for this kind of quality in their tête de cuvée. The 2006 vintage is a landmark wine, and many folks wouldn’t blink if the price was 25% higher. There is consensus press with 97 and 96 point scores, including Antonio Galloni, who calls the 2006 “a magical Champagne in the making.” **97 VN, 96 DC, 96 RP**



2015 Poujeaux, Moulis (\$34.99) As our Bordeaux buyer Clyde Beffa says, “you can never go wrong with Poujeaux.” This is especially true in 2015 where it nailed a 94-point mark, for its extremely modest price. It is one of the many examples of why some of Bordeaux’s great values were huge successes in 2015. We’ve enjoyed verticals and many aged vintages of Poujeaux over the years—those who pick this up now will have a go-to claret for a few decades to come. **94 JS**



Best-Selling Spirits — K&L Exclusives

We wish we could offer our favorite exclusive spirits again and again, but they are limited by nature to the barrel they’re raised in. That said, they are easily among the most exciting opportunities in our store and we go to great lengths to make sure there are always some truly special and unique bottlings to add to your collection. Check out these recent gems and know we’ll be bringing in more exclusives every month:

1982 Cambus 35 Year Old “Old Particular” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Grain Scotch Whisky (\$179.99)

One of the amazing things about our Scotch exclusives is that we often find some very mature bottlings and get to sell them for a price that puts other age-statement bottlings to shame. Such is the case with 35-year-old Cambus, a product of 1982—10 years before the distillery was absorbed by Diageo to contribute to their luxury bottlings. That this is available for well under \$200 is pretty stunning.



1996 Auchroisk 21 Year Old “Hepburn’s Choice” K&L Exclusive Single Barrel Cask Strength Single Malt Scotch Whisky (\$89.99)

One of our favorite things to do in this program is to find 20-plus-year bottlings that we adore, and find a way to get them under \$100. For most other major producers, this is a proposition that carries twice the price tag. But



this Auchroisk barrel hits that sweet spot and shaves \$10 off, while making no compromises. Light in color but extremely deep in flavor, it is a real treat that far outperforms its modest cost.

1990 L’Encantada 27 Year Old “Domaine le Parre #18” Tenarèze Armagnac (\$89.99)

L’Encantada is one of the most significant finds for us at K&L in the recent years. For many years this was one that disappeared from the shelves the moment it landed. The depth and caliber here is simply undeniable, and at just under \$90 and a 27-year age statement, it is harder to have your money go further in any mature spirit. This is a cult-quality bottling at an unbelievable price, and something that any spirit lover should take the time to try.



Russell’s Reserve Single Barrel “#17-400” K&L Exclusive Kentucky Straight Bourbon (\$64.99)

Our Russell’s single barrels have very quickly become the most popular bourbons on our shelf. They easily challenge many of the highly allocated bottlings quality-wise, but still maintain a reasonable price. Each barrel tells a different story, but they have one thing in common: they are incredibly complex, rich, and rewarding examples of why folks cherish bourbon so much in the first place.



The Next Vintage of Some of Our Best-Sellers for 2019

When something truly special comes along, you'd better believe we're going to also be anticipating the next vintage to see if it can either match or surpass what was so special in the original best-seller. What you'll find below are follow-up bottlings to some of our all-time favorite wines, often from vintages that are considered on par or better than the previous effort. The beauty of these wines is that they're often assumed to be in the shadow of their predecessor, but that's often not the case. The result is a collection of under-the-radar gems that deliver at a very high level and will most likely receive the same fanfare in due time.

2015 Tapiz "Alta Collection" Cabernet Sauvignon Mendoza (\$14.99)

With a Petrus winemaker at the helm, unanimous critical acclaim, and a sub-\$15 price point, it's hard to find a better value Cabernet from anywhere. The 2014 was an all-time best seller at K&L, and the 2015 stands up to the previous vintage and then some. Sure, the score might be a bit less flashy, but many of us prefer the more structured 2015 vintage. Either way, it's a winner. **93 JS**



2015 de Landiras Rouge, Graves (\$14.99)

Remember the 2014 de Landiras? It landed a massive score from *Decanter* and was a



best-selling Bordeaux in quick order. It's no secret that the 2015 vintage in Bordeaux is terrific in general, but it also is a value vintage of the highest order—both of which are echoed in this brilliant Graves. As it goes, wines like this seem to capture the world's attention in a quick way and don't keep their price for long. De Landiras has a bright future, but it'll have a tall order topping this one.

2016 Fèlsina Chianti Classico (\$19.99)

Fèlsina's Chianti Classico always delivers a ton of value and the 2015 wasn't long for our shelves. Where the 2015 was incredibly giving, the 2016 is refined and detailed in a way that speaks to a much higher price point. 2016 is going to be a thrilling vintage in Tuscany (and most of Italy for that matter) and this is a bottling that shows why. What a stunner, and one we're going to miss once folks catch on to just how good it is. **93 JS, 92 RP**



2016 Scattered Peaks Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$34.95)

The 2015 of this wine received a *Decanter* 97-point mark, making it one of the best \$35 Napa Cabs out there. It sold like crazy and we didn't have near enough to satiate demand. That said, the 2016 vintage in Napa is something truly special and it shows in this year's Scattered Peaks. This is easily of the



same 97-point caliber, but don't tell *Decanter* or anybody else... it's nice to have one of the best under-the-radar Napa Cab values remain a secret.

2010 Bodegas Casa Juan Señor de Lesmos Reserva Rioja (\$19.99)

The 2005 Lesmos Reserva is an all-time wine at K&L—an amazing tribute to traditional, detailed, and delicious Rioja with ten years in the bottle for under \$20. Years later, we're able to deliver the next great vintage, one that is just as strong, at the same bafflingly low price. Just entering a drinking window that will carry through the next decade, it is one that almost thumbs its nose at the rest of the wine world and challenges them to deliver more for the money.



2016 Chappellet "Signature" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$64.99)

Antonio Galloni has called Chappellet Signature "a wine that delivers superb quality and value," while Robert Parker once commented it is "a profound Cabernet Sauvignon that actually sells at a bargain price for what is in the bottle." Well, 2016 is a great vintage, too, and early returns are incredibly positive, with a Wine Advocate score that is the highest for the publication since they started reviewing Signature back in 1980. **96 RP**



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