

# WINE News

*Just so you know the score: Critically acclaimed wines for the New Year.*



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## I'm a 91+ on These Wines

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

**Points, we are talking about, of course.** It seems that many wine lovers nowadays follow the ratings of countless wine writers and wine raters. When a wine scores highly, K&L usually notes it in the description of the wine. This mention does not mean we rated it, nor are we saying it is a must-buy. It is purely informational. Many wine lovers follow specific writers, so we show as many scores as we can find for a particular wine *and* we always try to get the most recent reviews for that wine.

That said, this issue lists only wines that have scored at least 91 points. In fact, this first page only lists wines scoring 93 and above *and* selling for less than \$50. What bargains!

There will be 100-point wines in this issue on page 4, and there will be superb values on page 2 and 3—91+ pointers. I must add that all the wines in this issue are also recommended by our buyers and sales staff, in addition to the points. Have a great 2017.

**2005 La Rioja Alta "904" Gran Reserva Rioja (\$39.99)** **96 WE** and *Wine Enthusiast* Wine of the Year for 2016: "One look, one whiff, one taste and you're swooning. This mature, tawny, ready-to-drink gran reserva with aromas of lemon peel, cedar and dried cherry is the epitome of elegance. A juicy, supple palate is highly approachable, while flavors of vanilla, orange peel, saffron and dried plum don't waver on the finish." This will sell out quickly at this low price.



**2012 Yalumba "The Signature" Cabernet-Shiraz Barossa Valley South Australia (\$49.99)** **96 JH:** "This is one of the richest and most opulent vintages of The Signature in the 41 years since the first was made."

**2009 Tronquoy-Lalande, St-Estèphe (\$39.99)** **94 WE:** "The tannins are very fine, with rich fruitcake and smoky flavors. Red berry and black plums give a fruity character, along with delicious acidity. The wine is structured while still remaining very approachable." We have sold well over 1,200 bottles of this gem—don't miss it.



**2015 Chante Cigale Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc (\$24.99)** **93 WS:** "Intense, with bitter almond, citrus oil, white peach, nectarine and ginger notes tightly coiled together and driving through the anise- and wet stone- accented finish."

**2013 La Massa "La Massa" Toscana (\$19.99)** **93 JS:** "A solid and chewy young red with dried blackberries, licorice and hints of toasted oak and walnuts. A full-bodied, energetic red from the Chianti Classico region of Panzano."



## Some Gems from California—93 Points and Above

**2013 Sarah's Vineyard Central Coast Pinot Noir (\$17.99) 93 WE:** "This amazing wine can match up against wines double the price. Brawny red berries and wild cherries mix with cut sagebrush, eucalyptus and crushed graphite on the nose. The palate combines bright red, acid-driven raspberry fruit with the darker structure of elderberry. Throw in thyme and bay leaf for the complete package."

**2014 Hahn Estates Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir (\$19.99) 92 WS:** "The texture is plush, with lots of complex flavors, ranging from plum to anise to dusty, cedary oak. Satisfying from start to finish, ending with dusty, nutmeg-scented tannins."

**2013 Domaine Eden Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay (\$28.99) 93 WE:** "Extremely refreshing and lovely on the nose, this slightly lower-priced bottling from the Mount Eden team shows nectarine and the lightest hint of Key-lime zest on the nose. The structure on the sip is intense, with stony crushed-concrete elements and flavors of lime rind, cold Gala apple and gunmetal."

**2012 Freemark Abbey Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$32.99) 93 RP:** "Loads of sweet blackcurrant fruit, cocoa, a touch of toast, earth, and baking spice are all present in this wine that has terrific fruit on the attack and mid-palate, a full-bodied mouthfeel, no hard edges and a luscious, opulent, gorgeously pure style. For old-time reader/subscribers, this might be the modern-day equivalent of the great 1974 Souverain Vintage Selection that I recommended back in the late 1970s and is still going strong today."

**2013 Amici Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$43.99) 93 JS:** "Serious red with plum, currant, walnut and stone aromas and flavors. Full-bodied yet tight and reserved. Silky and firm tannins. A wine with tone and character."



**2012 Groth Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$Inquire) 93 JS:** "A balanced and beautiful red with chili, black currants and blackberry character. Full body, round and firm tannins and a long, long finish. A beautiful Groth. Drink or hold."

**2013 Caymus "Special Selection" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$159.99) 95 WS:** "Zeroes in on a rich, hedonistic core of wild berry, blackberry, plum and currant, with a graceful, elegant mouthfeel and supple, caressing tannins leading to a long, powerful and refined aftertaste that keeps reverberating while maintaining a strong personality."

**2013 Joseph Phelps "Insignia" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$209.99) 98 RP:** "The 2013 Insignia (their 40th vintage) is certainly going to turn out to be one of the great ones. The wine offers a stunning inky blue/purple color, a gorgeous nose of blueberry and blackberry liqueur, pen ink, graphite, new saddle leather and barrique. The wine has fabulous concentration, a full-bodied, multi-layered mouthfeel, and tremendous finish with moderate tannin."



*Having reviewed wines for many years at Wine Spectator, wine critic (and friend of K&L) James Suckling launched his own website in 2010.*



## 2015 Bordeaux Pre-Arrivals—Six Favorites—94+ Points

The top values from 2015 Bordeaux are from Margaux, Pessac-Léognan and the Right Bank. Here are some of our favorites.

**Siran, Margaux (PA \$29.99) 94-95 JS:** "This really is fantastic with so much ripe fruit and ripe tannins. Exquisite purity and beauty."

**Alter Ego de Palmer, Margaux (PA \$64.99) 94-95 JS:** "Very solid and powerful with dried mushroom and wet earth aromas and flavors. Complex. Full and chewy yet so polished and long. Spicy, meat and gorgeous. Most serious Alter Ego ever. More inner Ego now!"

**Berliquet, St-Emilion (PA \$37.99) 96-97 JS:** "Here is a wine with great pedigree near Ausone. Full body, yet fast and agile. The finish lasts for minutes. You see the chalky soil in the wine."

**Fleur Cardinale, St-Emilion (PA \$38.99) 95-96 JS:** "This is tight and very focused with gorgeous blackberry, blueberry and stone aromas and flavors. Such purity of fruit here. Full and very, very polished."

**Malartic-Lagravière, Pessac-Léognan (PA \$49.99) 94-96 RP:** "This is a classic, serious Malartic with huge potential. Chapeau to the Bonnie family for creating a stupendous Pessac-Léognan."

**Les Carmes Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan, (PA \$74.99) 96-97 JS:** "This shows incredible texture with the finest velvet mouthfeel. Super character of chocolate, walnut and orange peel. Great length and subtlety. Great power and structure at the end. Very unique." This is a fabulous wine from a relatively unknown property.

## French Bargains

**2012 Peyraron, Haut-Médoc (\$15.99) 92 WE:** “Peyraron is owned by a branch of the Bernard family that also owns Domaine de Chevalier. This powerful, complex wine shows its pedigree. Dark tannins and ripe black fruits are all evidence of its aging potential.”

**2012 Les Tourelles de Longueville, Pauillac (\$34.99)**

**91 VN:** “Powerful and deep, with a real sense of energy and overall complexity for a second wine, the Tourelles offers tons of nuance.”

**2015 Clos Floridene, Graves Blanc (\$21.99)**

**91-94 WS:** “Very tangy and fresh, with lots of thyme and gooseberry notes followed by lemon pith and quinine accents. A rapier finish glistens with fleur de sel details. Shows ample cut and purity. Pitch-perfect Sauvignon Blanc.”

**2014 Domaine Lafage “Tessellae” Carignan Côtes Catalane Vieilles Vignes (\$12.99) 92 RP:** “A crazy value, the 2014 IGP Cotes Catalanes Tessellae Carignan Vieilles Vignes is one of the best examples of this variety from the Roussillon, and the fact that it sells for a song is just icing on the cake for the consumer.”

**2012 Michel Gassier “Lou Coucardié” Costières de Nîmes Rouge (\$16.99) 93 RP:** “More ripe and decadent than the 2013, it is a big, mouth-filling effort that gives up loads of chewy black raspberry, black currants, smoked earth and pepper. Full-bodied, concentrated and dense, yet still showing elegance and purity, it has some rustic tannin that needs a year or two to integrate and will be at its best from 2016-2024.”

**2014 Domaine Lafage “Narassa Lieu Dit” Côtes-du-Roussillon (\$15.99) 93 RP:** “From one of the warmest sites in France, the 2014 Cotes du Roussillon Villages Lieu Dit La Narassa comes from 70-year-old vines planted in the black schist soils of Maury. Despite the rugged, hot terroir from where this beauty comes, the wine is pure silk and elegant, with lots of black raspberry, chocolate covered currants, pepper and olive notes giving way to a full-bodied 2014; it has polished tannin and a seamless texture.”

## Italian Gems

**2013 Felsina Chianti Classico (\$19.99) 92 JS:** “A super refined wine with sliced berry plus hints of cedar and vanilla. Full-bodied, bright and crisp; lovely finish. Drink now.”



*In 2013, wine critic Antonio Galloni departed from Robert Parker's Wine Advocate to launch his own wine review and media site, Vinous.*

**2011 Baricci Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99)**

**94 WE:** “Aromas suggesting underbrush, scorched earth, mature black-skinned fruit and a whiff of dried mint jump out of the glass. The big, chewy palate doles out mature Marasca cherry, graphite, chopped herb and dark cooking spice alongside firm, refined tannins. It's delicious.”

**2011 Felsina “Fontalloro” Toscana (PA \$39.99) 95 JS:** “Aromas of dark chocolate, berries, toasted nuts and vanilla bean follow through to a full body, firm tannins and a juicy finish. Lots of intense, beautiful fruit. Tight, layered red. All there. Better in 2017.” This wine is due at the end of January 2017.

**2014 Antinori “Cervaro della Sala” Chardonnay Umbria (\$49.99)**

**96 JS:** “This is the full treatment white from Italy and it always delivers. Aromas of cooked apple, cream, hints of toasted oak and peach. Full body, bright acidity, with tangy fresh fruit. Hints of yogurt and wood. Complex and truly great. Love the backbone of acidity that gives lovely form.”

## New Zealand Values

**2014 Tongue in Groove “Cabal Vineyard” Pinot Noir Waipara Valley North Canterbury (\$29.99) 96 BC:**

“From a clay and fragmented limestone soils of a vineyard in North Waipara. Around 35% whole-bunches were used to give structure and intensity. An impressively complex wine, with a mix of cherry, plum and chalky/mineral flavors, with a more savory, baked earth, dried herb character. Nicely structured so the wine is accessible but promises to age well.”

**2014 Akitu “A2” Pinot Noir Central Otago White Label (\$24.99) 93 SK:**

“Warm, spicy and generously fruited, this immensely appealing Pinot is filled with dark plum, game and truffle characters with beautifully infused cedary oak notes. The palate delivers excellent fruit richness and supple mouthfeel, brilliantly framed by polished tannins. Long, harmonious and wonderfully expressive. At its best: now to 2019.”



*Kerin O'Keefe moved to Italy in 1991, and currently serves as Italian wines editor for Wine Enthusiast.*





Critically acclaimed wines highlighted in our Redwood City store.

## All 93 Points and Above Here—All French or Port

**2009 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (750ml \$279.99; 12-pack OWC \$3,199.00)**

**100 RP:** “Black as a moonless night, the 2009 Pontet Canet offers up notes of incense, graphite, smoke, licorice, creme de cassis and blackberries. A wine of irrefutable purity, laser-like precision, colossal weight and richness, and sensational freshness, this is a tour de force in winemaking that is capable of lasting 50 or more years.”

**2009 Louis Roederer “Cristal” Brut Champagne**

**(\$199.00) 97 JS:** “A very rich and full-bodied Cristal that harks back to 2006 or 1989 in style. It’s round and rich, which underlies the ripeness of the vintage. Lots of dried-apple and pineapple character with bread dough and flan flavors. The bubbles are so fine you almost don’t notice them.”

**Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé Champagne**

**(750ml \$74.99; 375ml \$39.99) 93 WS:** “A lovely rosé in an almost vinous style, with mouthwatering acidity and a fine, lacy mousse carrying appealing flavors of ripe raspberry, white cherry fruit, star anise, mandarin orange peel and honeysuckle. Lightly chalky on the lasting finish. Enjoy with food.”



**2014 J. Moreau et Fils “200th Anniversary”**

**Chablis (\$19.99) 96 DC:** “A sophisticated array of aromas and flavours; acacia, lemongrass and lemon curd with hints of smoke and minerality. Complex on the palate with lip-smacking acidity, creaminess and juicy fruit. An elegant length is topped off with a fine grained flinty finish. Charming and harmonious.”

**Great Sauternes and Port to Finish Your Meal**

**2001 Guiraud, Sauternes (\$54.99) 96 WS:** “Butterscotch and vanilla with hints of ripe apples; full-bodied, with lots of sweetness and a spicy apricot and honey aftertaste. Excellent concentration and balance.” We have sold thousands of bottles of this dessert wine.

**2001 Suduiraut, Sauternes (\$94.99) 98 RP:** “A prodigious effort, possibly the finest Suduiraut since 1959, the medium gold-colored 2001 offers notes of creme brulee, caramelized citrus, Grand Marnier, honeysuckle, and other exotic fruits as well as a pleasant touch of oak. With terrific acidity, a voluptuous/unctuous palate, and sweet, powerful flavors buttressed by crisp acidity, it is a phenomenal Sauternes.”

**2013 Doisy-Védrières, Sauternes (\$34.99) 94 WS:** “Still youthfully rambunctious, this is packed with pineapple, ginger, bitter almond and apricot flavors. Despite the heft and weight, this has a glistening acidity and a long bitter orange and maple finish, and should unwind slowly in the cellar.”

**2014 d’Yquem, Sauternes (PA 750ml \$319.99; 375ml \$162.99) 96-99 WS:** “This is beguiling, with acacia, jasmine and honeysuckle notes leading the way, followed by refined peach, tangerine and yellow apple fruit flavors. Very long, with a lemon chiffon note lingering delicately.” Due at the end of 2017.

**1977 Graham’s Port (\$149.99) 93 RP:** “Graham is another great port house, producing one of the deepest-colored and sweetest styles of vintage port.” Perfect gift for that 40th birthday or anniversary—there are not too many good ’77 California or Bordeaux wines.



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