

# WINE News

*No holiday's a turkey with wines like these.*



## NOVEMBER 9, 2020 FEATURES

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## Thanksgiving Picks from Around the World

By Trey Beffa

In this newsletter, our K&L buying team will give you their best recommendations for what has been a long-awaited kickoff to the holiday season. While this Thanksgiving may look and feel a bit different than in years past, the focus on family and being thankful should remain. I am hoping that everyone will still be eating their traditional family holiday meal, whatever that may be. However, if there is one thing that 2020 has taught us, it's that we must always be on our toes and ready for what comes next. In that spirit, our picks for this holiday will be from all over the world. Or course, we still have the traditional Burgundy and Pinot Noir picks to choose from—but what about an Italian wine for this

Thanksgiving dinner? Or a wine from Spain? Or Bordeaux? Champagne is always a great pairing as well. Many of these regions don't cross our mind this time of year, but let's change that. My pick this year is the **2010 Coufran, Haut-Médoc (\$21.99)**. I loved the 2009 and drank many bottles. I did notice, however, that if you don't finish the bottle on the first night, on the second night the bottle was a bit tired. The 2010 will not have that problem. This wine has more structure, depth, and power than the 2009, but still is very drinkable with some air. I would consider this a more classic example of a Bordeaux wine from a property that makes classically styled Bordeaux! Enjoy!

### 2017 Arterberry Maresh "Old Vine" Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$39.95)

This is a staff favorite at K&L—we may be buying and drinking as much as our customers! Folks looking for prototypical Oregon Pinot need look no further. Intoxicating aromas and flavors of deep red berries mingle with rose petal, forest floor, spice box, sandalwood, and nutmeg. The tannin structure is plently pliable enough to drink right now, or in holiday seasons to come. **96 VN**



### Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé Champagne (\$74.99)

Rosé Champagne is a natural with the wide range of flavors on the holiday table—and Billecart defines the category. It is composed of 40% Chardonnay, 30% Pinot Noir, and 30% Meunier, and gets its color and rosé flavor from 8% of old-vine, massal-selected Pinot Noir from the Premier Cru of Mareuil-sur-Aÿ, which is made into red wine. Always elegant, dry, and completely ready for Thanksgiving pairing!



### Domaine du Manoir de Montreuil 20 Year Old "Whiskey Barrel Finish" Calvados Pays d'Auge (\$119.99)

This decadent, dark, and rich apple brandy packs all the best fall flavors into one bottle. It was aged for 10 years in a 200-liter whiskey barrel that once held Jack Daniel's, before being shipped to Scotland, and finally landed in the hands of artisanal Calvados distiller Patrice Giard.





## Unbeatable Burgundy Value: 2018 Domaine Sylvain Langoureau

By Alex Pross

Dollar-for-dollar, Sylvain Langoureau is easily one of our best producers, and their 2018 wines may very well represent their finest vintage yet. Husband and wife Sylvain and Nathalie Langoureau make wine in their garage and cellar in the hamlet of Gamay, situated between St-Aubin and Chassagne-Montrachet. Here they fashion what I have come to believe are some of the best values you can find among the dizzying array of appellations and producers in Burgundy. Primarily focused on Chardonnay and Aligoté, they pick early to keep their wines fresh, with bright acidity.

The 2018 vintage was warm and shares many similarities to 2015, which has turned out to be a very good vintage for white wines. The **2018 Domaine Sylvain Langoureau Bourgogne Aligoté (\$16.99)** has all the zestiness and brightness one expects from Aligoté (the *other* white grape of Burgundy, this obscure variety was once widely planted until the 19th century phylloxera epidemic nearly wiped it off the map, but is now undergoing a renaissance in the 21st century). With notes of citrus, apples, and white flowers, and a hint of salinity, this beauty is a great example of Aligoté.

St-Aubin has long been considered the epicenter of value in white Burgundy, since it is nestled next to the two prime regions of Chassagne-Montrachet and Puligny-Montrachet, yet sells for a fraction of those appellations. The **2018 Domaine Sylvain Langoureau St-Aubin (\$29.99)** is a wonderful village wine that clearly demonstrates the immense value to be found here, and is drinking great right now. Loaded with citrus and petrol notes, this cool, restrained offering beautifully melds fruit, earth, and terroir all into a superbly balanced wine.

The **2018 Domaine Sylvain Langoureau St-Aubin 1er Cru “Derriere Chez Edouard” (\$39.99)** is quite possibly my favorite of their trio of Premier Crus. Loaded with citrus and orchard fruit flavors, and aromas of cut apples and wet stone, this is a thrilling white Burgundy. **91 BH**

Next up, the **2018 Domaine Sylvain Langoureau St-Aubin 1er Cru “En Remilly” (\$39.99)** comes from a vineyard site that lies up the hill from the famed Chevalier-Montrachet vineyard, and clearly



demonstrates that a large part of Burgundy’s greatness is location, location, and location! Richer and fuller than the “Derriere Chez Edouard,” the En Remilly is a powerful wine with lemon notes echoing throughout. This powerhouse is a Grand Cru-bodied wine at an affordable price. **91 BH**

Wrapping up our trio of values, the **2018 Domaine Sylvain Langoureau St-Aubin 1er Cru “Les Sentiers du Clou” (\$39.99)** is more overtly floral, with notes of Granny Smith apples and telltale lemon flavors that always accompany the fruit and aroma notes of a Sylvain Langoureau St-Aubin. If you have been priced out of Chassagne-Montrachets and Puligny-Montrachets, then you owe it to yourself to take a look at these fine wines.

## Go Bigger on Bourgogne Rouge — Or Save Big on Our Own Label Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir!

**2017 Sérafin Père et Fils Bourgogne Rouge (\$54.99)** Classically structured and from an early-drinking the vintage, this delicious rouge provides the quintessential Burgundian experience of ample fruit seamlessly intertwined with terroir and structure. An intoxicating bouquet of red flowers, and dark plum aromas, give way to a densely packed core of dark berries, black plums, spice, and hints of vanilla. Layered and complex, this wine unfurls slowly.



**2019 Kalinda Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$16.99)** Our last Kalinda Sonoma Coast Pinot was a smashing success, and this one has just arrived from the same property. Sweet, spicy aromas of cherry and toasty oak. Rich and round on the palate (decant one hour), with a long, lingering, sweet black cherry finish. It was just bottled on November 2, so allow two weeks for it to settle down, but it should be in fine shape for Thanksgiving dinner. Superb value! —Clyde Beffa Jr.

# Pinot Comes to the Table in Many Shades of Noir

By Ryan Woodhouse

**Pinot Noir is the undisputed champion of the Thanksgiving feast.** Sure, we always like to throw out a few alternatives that work well, but let's face it: when you look at the numbers, the vast majority of folks are reaching for Pinot Noir when the turkey hits the table. But for a fun little spin on things this year, I decided to dig a little deeper into our selections to find some Pinot Noir of different forms that will all complement your festive spread!

**2019 El Lugar "Greengate Vineyard" Edna Valley Pinot Noir Blanc (\$29.95)** Many vintners attempt to make white wine from Pinot Noir, but very few achieve success. However, when it's done right the results are fantastic! This effort from Colby Parker-Garcia at El Lugar is one of the best I've tasted. It captures the floral, rose water qualities of Pinot Noir, combined with crisp, refreshing acidity and zesty spiced citrus nuances. Time on the lees in small stainless drums builds texture and length on the palate. Such a delicious and versatile wine. **93 WE**

**2019 Red Car Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir Rosé (\$19.95)** Elsewhere \$25. Red Car makes one of the most highly regarded rosés of Pinot Noir year in and year out. This vintage we managed to lock in a super competitive price from the get-go, and this has been a top seller all summer. However, Thanksgiving offers the perfect autumnal last hurrah for this racy, mouthwatering number. Picked early to preserve bright, zesty acidity, this one is for folks who like crisp wines with laser-like acidity. Tart alpine strawberry, chopped herbs, saline minerals, and a long, salivary finish. **94 WE**

**2018 Flowers Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir Rosé (1.5L) (\$29.95)** Elsewhere \$50. Another best-selling summer rosé that's equally adept for the holiday table! Flowers, a longtime stalwart of the west Sonoma Coast, is renowned for world-class Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Their rosé is just as classy. Wonderful floral bouquet with ripe summer berries, golden orchard fruit, fine minerality, and a beautiful tingle of coastal acidity on the finish. You can't go wrong with this benchmark rosé. **93 WE, 91 RP**

**2012 Schramsberg North Coast Brut Rosé Sparkling Wine (1.5L) (\$79.95)** This wine was a big hit last holiday season and we managed to grab a little more this year. This vintage got twice the regular time on the lees, building spectacular flavor and texture alongside bright, juicy red fruit. With big scores from many critics, this one is sure to impress at the holiday table! **94 RP**



**2016 Chanin "Sanford & Benedict Vineyard" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$29.95)** Elsewhere \$60. If you shop at K&L regularly, you'll probably have seen some of our recent offerings from Chanin. Our winery-direct relationship has allowed us to bring you Gavin Chanin's wines from some of California's finest "Grand Cru" caliber vineyards at incredible prices! Exhibit A: the 2016 Sanford & Benedict Pinot. This fabled vineyard, home to the oldest Pinot Noir in the region, is the jewel in the crown of the Sta. Rita Hills, and you almost never see it for this price. Add in Gavin's obvious skills in the cellar, and a bunch of huge scores, and you've got perhaps the Pinot Noir bargain of the year! **94+ JD, 94 VN, 93+ RP**

**2017 Evesham Wood "Sojeau Vineyard" Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir (\$32.95)** While the wines have remained somewhat under the radar, we've been raving about (and drinking) Evesham Wood for years. This recent single-vineyard release is stunning. Very much in the more elegant, savory, complex vein of Pinot Noir, it shows qualities of crushed rose petal, freshly turned earth, subtle red and black fruits, truffle, tree bark, and woody spices. Very energized and lithe on the palate. **94 VN**

**2018 Sandar & Hem Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir (\$34.95)** Likely unknown to most of you and unknown to me until earlier this year, Sandar & Hem is an exciting new project focused on the incredible diversity of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Coming mostly from the Mindego Ridge vineyard, this wine absolutely thrilled me. Despite being quite light and translucent in the glass, the wine is filled with abundant flavors of fresh berries, Turkish delight, baking spice, and citrus peel, and has exquisite, lifted aromas of spring blossom and raspberry compote. So fresh, pure, and quaffable, this is a contender for my own family Thanksgiving table. **91 VN**

**2018 Vivier Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$36.95)** This is up there with the best Pinots I've tasted this year. Winemaker Stéphane Vivier was born and raised in Burgundy. He lived and worked among the vines and in the cellars of the Côte-d'Or before setting out to discover the New World of wine. More recently, Stéphane has been the longtime winemaker at Hyde de Villaine, a collaboration between Larry Hyde, the celebrated grower in Carneros, and the legendary Aubert de Villaine of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (DRC). His eponymous



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## It's Never too Early for Champagne Season

By Gary Westby

**Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday of the year.** I love the sentiment of gratitude, the wonderful variety of the feast, and the leftovers. I like it so much that at my house, we do it twice. It was just last night that we had our “practice Thanksgiving” for this year. You see, it’s my responsibility to make sure that my choices for these pages work with the food. I can assure you that they do. And, while I always “double fist” with red Burgundy and rosé Champagne, I will stay in my own lane and talk Champagne here. But, I encourage you to check out Alex’s article as well, as the two together make my favorite holiday even better.



*Tirelessly dedicated to the consumer wine experience, Gary Westby double-fists Champagne and Burgundy, off the clock, in order to offer his best advice on Thanksgiving wine pairing.*

The tremendous diversity of flavor that graces our Thanksgiving table makes pairing the wines tricky. Over the years, my favorite choice for everything from the sweetness of the yams and the cranberry sauce to the savory complexity of the stuffing and the gravy covered turkey has been the **Ariston Aspasié Brut Rosé Champagne (\$34.99)**. Last night, like on many occasions before, this excellent Champagne came up aces with the food. It is made in the most difficult and expensive way possible, but due to our direct buy from the Ariston family, is a fantastic value. The grapes are entirely estate grown in the tiny hamlet of Brouillet, in the far corner of Champagne, about a half-hour drive northwest of Reims. It is composed of even parts Pinot Noir and Meunier, and half of the juice is given a short maceration on the skins to give the wine plenty of color and dark cherry aromas and flavors. Paul Vincent Ariston is the only producer I know who does this direct skin contact method and also adds red wine to the blend before bottling. His red wine comes from over-40-year-old Meunier vines and allows him to dial in the aromas and flavors exactly how he wants them. This has it all: great toast from over three years of aging on the lees, plenty of Bing cherry power, and a clean, dry, long, chalky finish.



If you have gone to the trouble to source an organic, heritage turkey this year, I would encourage you to start festivities off with the excellent **Bruno Michel “Assemblée” Brut Champagne (\$34.99)**. The Michel family estate is one of the leaders in Champagne for organic viticulture, but most importantly, makes fabulously refreshing, precise wine for your holiday aperitif. This wine comes from the Sud d’Épernay subregion of Champagne, where Épernay gives way to vineyard land on the way down to the Côte des Blancs. It is composed of 78% Chardonnay and 22% Meunier from one of the coolest pockets of Champagne, so cool that Pinot Noir is rarely grown here. This is crisp and racy Champagne, with a super dry finish and a low dosage of just six grams per liter. But it still has wonderful texture and a fine, tight bead after more than four years on the lees.



Many of us will be dining with a smaller group than normal this year, and if you want something very special to celebrate with, my top choice would be the **2004 Laurent-Perrier “Cuvée Alexandra” Brut Rosé Champagne (\$299.00)**. This Champagne is only made when the Chardonnay and the Pinot Noir in the very best crus ripen at the same time. In my 20-year career at K&L we have only sold four vintages—the 1988, 1990, 1997, and 2004. At 16 years old, this masterpiece of a wine is drinking spectacularly. It was our top wine



*This photo depicts an earned refreshment for autumnal labor—and is not Gary’s suggested alternative to “sabering” a bottle of Champagne.*

from our staff summit (where we taste nearly 100 grand marque offerings) three years in a row! It is composed of 80% Pinot Noir and 20% Chardonnay and all of the juice is macerated with all of the Pinot Noir skins, giving a wine of finesse, delicacy, complexity and unforgettable length. While this is a Champagne with the depth and intrigue of many still wines at triple the price, it still is a completely easygoing partner

to a wide variety of foods. If you are looking for something mind-blowing, don’t miss it!

*A Thanksgiving toast to you!*



# Give Turkey the Boot: Greg's Tips on Italian Wine

By Greg St. Clair

For me, Thanksgiving is always an opportunity to share some of my favorite food and wine pairings with my friends and family.

This year is obviously unique in so many ways, and our Thanksgiving table will be smaller than usual. I try to focus on wines that won't overpower the food. Turkey is not a particularly flavorful bird—in fact it is quite delicate. This year I'm buying a specially raised turkey, from a place where they eat only walnuts, which gives the meat a satiny texture and slightly (highly emphasized on the *slightly*) more flavorful meat, as well. The real challenge for Thanksgiving pairings isn't the turkey—it is all of the side dishes, from very flavorful to wonderfully fresh and crisp.

I'm going to start with the **2019 Silvano Follador "Brut Nature" Prosecco (\$19.99)**. Silvano Follador isn't your normal Prosecco. It is bone-dry, no dosage, and the perfect light, mineral prep for your palate. And by the way, when I say bone-dry, I mean it.

When the vegetable courses pop up, **2019 Le Battistelle "Montesei" Soave Classico (\$12.99)** is my first choice. Wonderful volcanic minerality at its core and a richly textured mouthfeel make it great for everyone. 2019 is a really good year across Italy for both whites and reds, and this wine is rocking.

I love white wines, but I also know that the world is red, so Thanksgiving must have an array of lip-smacking reds to add to the fun. I think that Barbera, with its its fleshy richness and acidity, is one of the best matches for this meal. I love the **2017 Cascina Alberta "Tres" Barbera d'Alba Superiore (\$24.99)**, and not just because it got 96 points from *Decanter*, but because it has incredible, juicy fruit, with lots of supple richness that just flows across your tongue. Yet, it has a crisp core that makes it a perfect match for heavy gravies.

The **2019 Fratelli Barale "Castle" Barbera d'Alba Superiore (\$15.99)** is absolutely delicious, with its layers of complex fruit and a luscious, full-flavored body that is just scintillating. You'll love this wine.

Those looking for something more international may find the **2017 La Massa "La Massa" Toscana (\$19.99)** is their wine. This bargain Super Tuscan hails from the best part of Chianti Classico in Panzano: the famous Conca d'Oro, a southwesterly-facing amphitheater that offers a perfect position for excellent ripening. The wine is a blend of 70% Sangiovese, 15% Merlot, and 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged in a blend of new and used barrique. The nose is full of blackberry spice, cassis, and hints of barrel spice. On the palate the wine shows bold, dark fruit with structure and depth, while the finish is lively and fresh, showing its Tuscan origins. I would decant this wine for an hour or two ahead of time.



*Have to scale-down the Thanksgiving dinner? Greg models just such an ideal repast, this past year in the village of Barolo, just down the street from the Barale winery, with a previous vintage of "Castlé" Barbera d'Alba Superiore.*



I always find that at the end of the meal I want something that has size, power, and richness to give me a feeling of, "That's a wine!" This year the **2015 Sesta di Sopra Brunello di Montalcino (\$59.99)** is that wine. I have tasted this wine many times from when it was still juice until its release, but it was in April of 2019 at Vinitaly that I was bowled over—the completed and bottled wine was amazing. The nose of the wine is incredible: it has a deep, mesmer-

izing effect; it's a cauldron of wild herbs, wild cherry, plum, and a hint of savage. On the palate, the wine rolls across your tongue, treating you to a lush richness where a savory intrigue emerges and adds to the wild cherry, plum, and herb. Plush yet buoyant, it keeps your attention focused. The finish is vibrant. There is a freshness and lift on the back end that makes this wine exceedingly memorable.

Dessert is always a course not to be missed at the Thanksgiving table, and there's one wine I always suggest—because most of the time one doesn't have much space left!

The **2019 Saracco Moscato d'Asti (\$14.99)** is lively, fresh and cleanses your palate with a low-alcohol burst of lime and peach. It's just irresistible, and although sweet, it's so well balanced that it doesn't seem sweet—and won't fill you up!

The **2017 Donnafugata "Ben Rye" Passito di Pantelleria (375ml \$42.99)** is one of Sicily and Italy's finest dessert wines. It is made from dried grapes and has an ultra-complex nose full of Middle Eastern spices and honey. This wine gives you an incredibly long, and I mean long, finish. A perfect ending for a Thanksgiving dinner.





## For the Holiday Meal Endgame, Think Rioja and Port

By Kirk Walker

**Thanksgiving is the best.** There is nothing better than spending time with family and friends cooking, sharing and (over) indulging with them. It's funny—sitting down, trying to figure out how to weave together all the different regions that I buy from, I am struck by how much I have to be thankful for this year. I that know most, me included, cannot celebrate this holiday the way we would like to. I know that, to compensate, I will probably (over) indulge. And way before the main course, I am dreaming of dessert. So, let's start thinking about the end of the meal first.

For me, the GOAT (greatest of all time) of Thanksgiving desserts is my mom's apple pie with vanilla ice cream. Now, typically I am a decaf tea guy with my desserts—sweet and savory is my usual style. But that will change this year. The inspiration for this is **Cockburn's 20 Year Tawny Port (500ml \$39.99)**, an incredible wine from a producer that tends to be overlooked. This is indulgent. It tastes and feels like luxury and decadence. This showcases the nutty quality that is always talked about with this style of Port. Nutty, spicy, and sweet, the wine is textbook tawny in color. The nose is nutty, toffied, caramelized (peanut brittle?), with a touch of earth; then dried spiced apples, peaches, and raisins. The palate is where it shines. When it hits your tongue you feel that there is something extra here. There is a touch of tannin, which gives the wine a larger frame for all the flavors. This is a treat, a dessert in and of itself, but I know I want some of this with that apple pie. I will also have some of this way before Thanksgiving ever gets here!



OK. Maybe we should have dinner before dessert.

**2014 Miguel Merino Reserva Rioja (\$31.99)** This is the flagship wine that Miguel Merino envisioned when he started his winery in 1994. Old vines, good oak, and time were what Rioja was all about. He has his own twist to that formula: French and American oak, low yields, and riper fruit. This year has had me watching and rewatching a lot of movies with my son, so a fun way that I think about this wine is with Marvel's *Ironman*. Traditional Rioja, which I love, is the MK IV suit from the second movie, and Merino's Reservas are like the MK 46 from *Civil War*. Like the newer suit, this wine is sleeker and modern, but not flashy like the armor from *Spiderman* and *Endgame* (someone in my house is obsessed with Marvel). The blend is mostly

Tempranillo, with a little Graciano, and a bunch or two of Manzanillo. This is a darker-fruited wine, with blackberries and plums, polished, sleek, tannins, and lots of energy—and the chalky soils act as an Arc Reactor for this wine. The fruit and drive of the wine are contained in beautiful oak, which is there in all its glory—but not in a way that I would imagine 177A Bleecker Street would smell like in traditional wines. The spice is there to accent that wonderful fruit, and a hint of earthiness gives it contrast. That brings me back to Thanksgiving. This is a dark meat turkey, and rich and savory side dishes kind of wine; slightly bigger than what is traditionally recommended, but how many times have you had something bigger than a Pinot at Thanksgiving dinner? Probably more times than not!

If am going to zig bigger with my last wine, I'm going to zag lighter with the **2019 Martinez Alesanco Rioja Rosado (\$11.99)**. If there's an ideal wine for Thanksgiving dinner, it is rosado, and more specifically a clarette. Clarette is a type of rosé that is a mixture of red and white grapes, in this case Garnacha and Viura, which are vinified together. This is not a Provençal rosé. Mouthwatering and textured, it's not a simple quaffer, but is great for dinner—and before and after dinner, too. A mix of red berries, hints of stone fruits, blood orange, and sweet citrus. There is a roundness to the palate and just a hint of tannin and a bit of minerality.

Final thoughts: The day after Thanksgiving presents an opportunity to continue overindulging. With what? The open-faced turkey, stuffing, and dressing sandwich. What can you pair with that? What will take it to a whole different level? Thanks to my colleague, Chris, I now know: more Port! Not a tawny Port, but late bottled vintage. The **2015 Dow Late Bottled Vintage Port (\$22.99)** is bold and heady, with an intense mix of dark berries, spice, and floral lift. It smells so good but gets even better on the palate. The secret: tannin. Dow's Ports all have a little more brawn, a touch more grip, and a little more spice, changing the attack of the sweetness to the wine. It's rich, bold, and energetic, balancing all those youthful fruit qualities with fine spice and finer tannins. The balance makes it more fun to pair with, and definitely leads me to the sweet and savory thoughts, but it will also be great with desserts. This will stand up to, enhance, and contrast that monstrosity of a sandwich. Loosen your belt and relax—it's going to be a long weekend!

# Times Like These: Kaj's "Best-Price" Picks from California

By Kaj Stromer

It's times like these that benefit most from the sharing of great wines. By "great wine" I am referring to any wine that you especially enjoy. Social gatherings have real concerns these days, and should be held with great care, but if done respectfully, we can spend quality time with those who matter most. Whether or not you'll be hosting any get-togethers over the holidays, everything will be a bit better with some world-class wine (and values!) at the ready. Here are a few of my selections that will enhance any occasion—and we're offering most of them at the "best price in town."

Sparkling wine aficionados should take note of the exceptional

**Cruse Wine Co. "Cruse Tradition" Zero Dosage Sparkling Wine (\$44.95).** Nothing starts a meal better than a glass of the bubbly. Though I am a card-carrying Champagne lover, this year my glass tips to California. Michael Cruse, SF Chronicle's Winemaker of the Year 2016, is already somewhat of a "cult wine" hero. This extra brut is a blend of 54% Pinot Noir and 46% Chardonnay. Like Champagne, it's made using the traditional method. It's aged two years on the lees, which adds both complexity and texture. This sparkler is bone-dry, with laser-like precision. The bouquet is bright and fresh, with hints of brioche and lemon curd. There's a great fine-bead mousse on the palate, resulting in a wine that is bracing, creamy, and long on the finish.



Serving wine from a magnum always makes a bold statement. Sold elsewhere for up to \$60, the **2018 Massican Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (1.5L \$44.99)** is a spectacularly complex and pleasing white. Dan Petroski, who makes legendary reds by day at Larkmead Vineyards, pursues his passion project at Massican, an homage to his Italian heritage. His Sauvignon Blanc is a dead-ringer for the legendary Terlan Quarz, one of Italy's greatest whites. I was stunned by how this wine evolved in my glass, gaining additional complexity by the minute. There's sexy waxy lemon rind, green leaf, and a distant hint of tropical fruit. It's textural, and shines with a complex streak of both passion fruit and honeysuckle.



Few wines offer the sheer pleasure and food friendliness found in Pinot Noir. The **2015 Rogstad "Tidrik" Anderson Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.99)** ranks as my best Pinot Noir find of the past few months. Veteran winemaker Steven Rogstad creates magnificent gems from a few select parcels in northern California. The "Tidrik" hails from the Anderson Valley and leans towards the aromatic, ethereal style. I recently shared this wine with the staff, and it was received with a collective thumbs up. Even our French wine buyer (no names!) picked up a few bottles. Elsewhere it's \$38!



If your tastes lean toward a slightly more California style, we're offering the **2017 Westwood "Annadel Gap Vineyard" Sonoma County Pinot Noir (\$29.99)** at an unheard-of price (*elsewhere* \$52). This wine is about as seamless and charming as Pinot Noir gets. The nose has a brilliant combination of ripe red cherries and roses that rise from the glass, followed by incredible flavors of strawberry, raspberry, and touches of spice (nutmeg particularly). This is a gorgeous mid-weight Pinot Noir whose finish lasts for a minute plus.



Many of you prefer Zinfandel for Thanksgiving, as it is often considered "America's grape." The bold, spicy flavors just seem to match the flavor profile of fall. I highly recommend the **2016 Artezín "Collins Vineyard" Russian River Valley Zinfandel (\$16.99).** This elegantly styled Zinfandel possesses aromas of fresh boysenberry and blackberry, with hints of pepper and wood spice. There's plenty of plush fruit here, but it's all presented in a sleek and balanced wine that put it in the supporting role instead of dominating the stage. This is a "don't miss" wine, as we're able to offer it an insanely low price (*elsewhere* \$40).



## Shades of Pinot (Continued from page 3)

label is focused on parcels that he believes to be truly special. This wine has haunting aromatics of purple flowers, singed agarwood, leafy bramble fruits, and exotic spice. The palate is silky and vibrant, coming across with more luscious fruit than the less than 13% alcohol might suggest, but at the same time is wonderfully elegant on the palate. This wine has the clichéd "je ne sais quoi" that I don't really know how to convey—so you'll just have to try it! **94 RP**

**2017 Nicolas-Jay Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$49.95)** *Elsewhere* \$65. Another Frenchman making wine on US soil, Nicolas-Jay is a partnership between Jay Boberg (famed music executive) and iconic winemaker Jean-Nicolas Méo of Domaine Méo-Camuzet.

On the surface one might think: OK, so...big music guy does well for himself, pays Burgundian super-star winemaker to come and make wine for him at hobby winery, right? But one would be wrong! Jean-Nicolas and Jay's friendship started decades before, while in college together. And it was actually Jean-Nicolas' idea to collaborate on a wine project in Oregon! The wines are spectacular in their own right, a fact they're not scared to demonstrate: Earlier this year I went to a comparative tasting where the two poured their Oregonian wines side-by-side with the Méo-Camuzet wines. After the tasting, all but the most jaded Francophiles in the room confessed the Oregon wines had stood up to the test very admirably—and for a lot less money. **93 VN, 94 JD**



# Down Under, Chardonnay is Looking Forward

By Thomas Smith

**There's always a lot to look forward to at Thanksgiving.** Celebrating with family, good food, and great wine never seem to come soon enough. Call me crazy, but what I look forward to most is delicious Chardonnay on our Thanksgiving table. For me, Chardonnay is the essential Thanksgiving wine: it pairs beautifully with a variety of holiday staples; and its bright acidity cuts through rich foods and complements everything from turkey to vegetable sides. I can't think of anything better than Chardonnay with buttery, Robuchon-style mashed potatoes. And this year we're serving some of the exciting new Chardonnays from Australia.

In an ocean of big, full-bodied Shiraz, Chardonnay might seem like an unlikely candidate for Australia's next "it" variety. But in the last few years, Chardonnay has become the breakout star of Australian wine. It is grown in nearly every Australian wine region, resulting in a wide diversity of wines that reflect the climate in which they are grown. Both new and classic producers alike have started to regard Chardonnay as some of the best wines being made in Australia today. The result has been a wave of new Chardonnays from across Australia that are setting a new benchmark for quality.

Back in the early '70s, Margaret River's potential for great wine was discovered by a handful of pioneers, including Robert Mondavi, who found the climate in this alcove of Western Australia remarkably similar to that of Napa Valley. Fast forward a few decades and Margaret River has become Australia's most award-winning region. And, as much as I love their Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay is the true star of Margaret River.

One of my recent discoveries is the **2018 Hay Shed Hill Chardonnay Margaret River Western Australia (\$22.99)**. This is big, full-bodied Chardonnay at its best. Stone fruits with green apple and brioche abound in the glass. Mouth-coating and weighted, the acid perfectly complements the power of the fruit. A great example of the gorgeous Chardonnay being produced in Margaret River today. **95 JH, 92 WS**



On the other side of Australia, just outside of Melbourne, is the Yarra Valley: Australia's Burgundy. The cool, maritime climate here produces bright, mineral-driven Chardonnay with crisp acidity and exceptional power. One of my all-time favorite Chardonnays is the **2018 Oakridge "Henk Vineyard" Chardonnay Yarra Valley Victoria (\$24.99)**. The nose here is intensely aromatic, with white peach and green apple over hints of saline minerality. On the palate, there's flint, wet stones, and a beautiful expression of lemon curd that persists all the way through the finish. Yet for all of its intense flavor, the texture is like mineral water. Fresh, clean, and effortless to drink. **96 JH, 96 JS**



Tasmania's ultra-cool climate has earned it a reputation for some of the most racy Chardonnay styles in Australia. The **2018 Ministry of Clouds Chardonnay Tasmania (\$29.99)** is one of the region's best being made today. It's got incredibly delicate aromas of white flowers and flint stone, and the palate follows up with delicious flavors of peach and lemon zest. I love the brilliant acidity that carries from first sip to finish, making it a great food pairing wine. This gorgeous Chardonnay has all the quality you would find in Premier Cru Burgundy. **95 BC, 95 JH, 94 JS**

There are few wines like the **2017 Leeuwin Estate "Art Series" Chardonnay Margaret River Western Australia (\$69.99)**. A pioneer in Margaret River, Leeuwin's breakthrough came with the 1981 vintage, when *Decanter* gave their Art Series Chardonnay its highest recommendation, sending a shockwave through the wine world. Never before had an Australian Chardonnay been compared to the best examples across the world. And, year after year, they have continued to raise the quality, crafting the wine that all Australian Chardonnay stands in the shadow of. Aromas of peach, citrus, wet stones, and a hint of tarragon all waft from the glass with a complexity and depth that has to be experienced to be believed. The oak usage is exquisite here, adding nuanced layers of spice and rich flavor in perfect complement to the power of the fruit. This is not just Australia's best Chardonnay, but one of the best Chardonnays found anywhere on the planet. **99 JH, 98 BC, 96 JS**



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