

WINE ENTHUSIAST

APRIL 2025



CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

A BANTAM BOOK

STORY

Wine

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

04

YOU'RE THE STAR OF THE STORY!
CHOOSE FROM 28 POSSIBLE DESTINATIONS.

THE TRAVEL ISSUE

BY WINE ENTHUSIAST

23868-X



ILLUSTRATED BY CAT SIMS

\$7.99 US & CANADA

\$7.99US/CAN

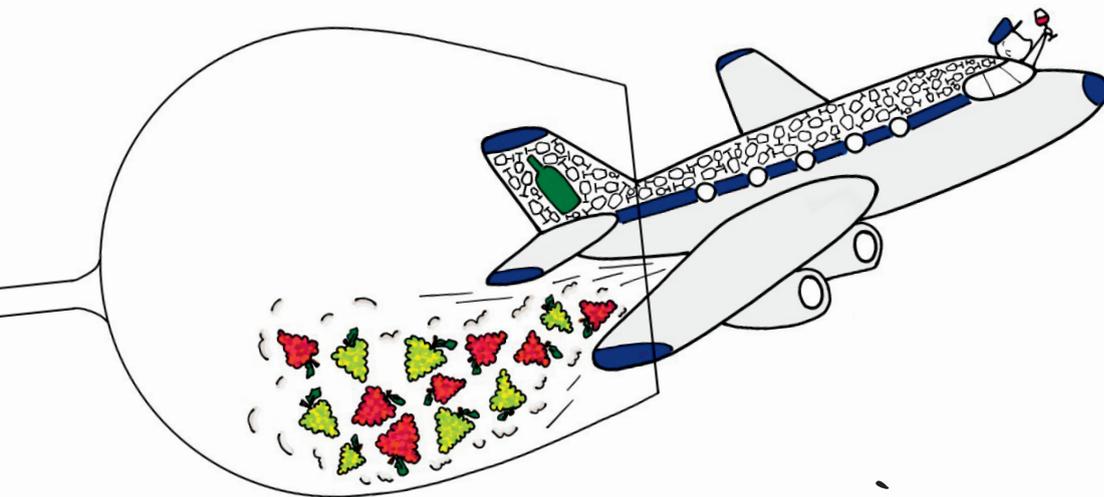
04>



0 09128 01101 1

FRANCIS
COPPOLA
DIAMOND COLLECTION

Splish
& Sparkle
Splash



wine

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE



A very special thanks to Shannon Gilligan and everyone at Chooseco (and R.A. Montgomery for creating the series). Choose Your Own Adventure books are available in the United States and Canada (though not the one we made up for the cover of this magazine); ask your local bookseller or visit cyoa.com.

Cover by Tom Arena



56

From Mexico City

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM:
MARGARITA: CHEVRIERE/PHOTOHOSE,
CHELSEA KYLE, SCENE SELECT



44

First-class drinks

Features

- 44 CLEARED FOR TAKEOFF**
BY KARA NEWMAN
These bars find inspiration in mid-century modern aviation.
- 50 A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE IRISH EXIT**
BY KARA NEWMAN
Happy hour starts at 2 p.m. at this busy train station bar where history repeats itself every two minutes.
- 53 IT ALWAYS ENDS WITH POUTINE**
BY ANNA-CHRISTINA CABRALES
A crawl through Montréal sip by sip and bite by bite.
- 56 HAVE TEQUILA WILL TRAVEL**
BY KARA NEWMAN
How the Margarita Al Pastor has made its way well beyond Mexico City.
- 60 NO CHASER**
BY JOHN CAPONE
A seaside Champagne and salt pairing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, breaks taste down to the elements.
- 62 WHERE WEED MEETS WINE**
BY LOUISE HURREN
Wandering Mendocino's Cannabis Trail shows in more ways than one why the region is known as California's 'greenest AVA.'
- 66 LOST CANTONESE SPIRITS**
BY JONATHAN DELISE
Hong Kong bar owner Gavin Yeung is reviving nearly forgotten distillates with roots in traditional Chinese medicine.
- 71 PACIFIC RIM PINOT**
BY THOMAS SHOEMAKER
A winemaker incubator grows in Hokkaido, Japan.
- 74 A LAGUNA TO LOVE**
BY DANIELLE CALLEGARI
Visiting Venice isn't all twisting past tourists trudging lost along canals, if you have access to a boat and you know what you're doing—Dr. Callegari is known for both.

WINE ENTHUSIAST

The Travel Issue 2025

60

Pacific crest

COLUMNS

PUBLISHER'S LETTER

6 In praise of a toast before takeoff

BY JACQUELINE STRUM

VIEWPOINT

38 Thailand is becoming a very good place to drink wine

BY DANIELLE CALLEGARI

LAST DROP

112 What happens next on this wine trip? It all depends on you and the choices you make

BY WINE ENTHUSIAST

DEPARTMENTS

OUT & ABOUT

8 The 25th annual Wine Enthusiast Wine Star Awards

CHEERS

36 The best of what we tasted for this issue

BY THE TASTING DEPARTMENT

BUYING GUIDE

79	Reviewed this month	105	Rhône Valley
98	California	106	Tuscany
100	Beaujolais	109	Israel
102	Loire Valley	110	Spirits
103	Bordeaux		
104	Provence		

THE CRUSH

- 18 Brown sugar rums offer remarkably complex flavors, with fruity or grassy nuances that molasses can't match
- 20 Pairing wines with the transportive power of passion fruit
- 22 Quiz: Which type of tiki bar should you be going to?
- 24 This mezcal margarita with a habanero kick is a road trip through Mexico in a glass
- 27 Hardy, aromatic ingredients foraged from the high desert give spirits a Western flavor
- 30 Searching for the elusive and rare Rosa Chardonnay
- 32 In North Carolina's Yadkin Valley AVA, the successful protocol is no protocol
- 34 Billy Joel somewhere over Texas, maybe with the Dom Perignon

22

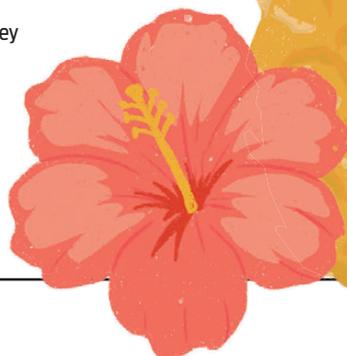
Tiki test



24

Hot stuff

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: BLAKE MARVIN/EE BERGER, ADRIANA HANSEN





Less glass Less weight Less CO₂

In a World looking toward the future, we choose to act today. By using lighter bottles we cut CO₂ emissions by up to 29%, reducing our impact on the Environment.

Each glass reflects our commitment to sustainability: we bring to you the unique flavors of our land while *preserving resources for future generations*. Choosing our wines means supporting a tradition that embraces innovation for the good of the Planet, *without compromises*.

Sustainability is our way to Excellence.
Masters in Primitivo, Masters in Sustainability.

Only Pleasure.



PRODUTTORI DI MANDURIA

Maestri in Primitivo

Jacqueline Strum **EDITOR & PUBLISHER**

MAGAZINE

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
 John Capone

ART DIRECTOR
 Monica Simon

PRODUCTION MANAGER
 Jordon Kaplan

PHOTO PRODUCER
 Tom Arena

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
 Brooke Barber

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, FOOD
 Nils Bernstein

COPY EDITOR
 Melissa Johnson

FACT CHECKER
 Anna Archibald

DIGITAL

MANAGING EDITOR
 Rachel Tepper Paley

SENIOR DIGITAL VISUALS EDITOR
 Evan de Normandie

DIGITAL DESIGNER
 Eric DeFreitas

SENIOR DIGITAL EDITORS
 Diana Budds, Sara Ventiera

TASTING

TASTING DIRECTOR
 Anna-Christina Cabrales

TASTING MANAGER
 Cody Wexler

SNR. TASTING COORDINATOR
 Russell Peborde

TASTING COORDINATOR
 Anthony Bates

COPY EDITORS
 Lana Bortolot, Carolyn Gruske,
 Kathleen Kent, Risa Wyatt

SOCIAL

DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA
 Elyse Estrella

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIST
 Marco Bruno

VIDEO

SUPERVISING VIDEO PRODUCER
 Braxton Parr

VIDEO PRODUCER
 Rob Martin

WRITERS AT LARGE

WINE
 Michael Alberty, Brandon Borcoman,
 Elaine Chukan Brown,
 Danielle Callegari, Tom R. Capo,
 Cheron Cowan, Matt Kettmann,
 Christina Pickard, Tonya Pitts,
 Jeff Porter, Emily Saladino,
 Reggie Solomon, Jessica Vargas,
 Roger Voss, Aleks Zecevic

SPIRITS
 Kara Newman

TASTING ASSISTANTS
 Graeham Alberty, Kathy Buckley,
 Chris Coffman, Matthew Gaughan,
 Hugh McDougal, Jason White

EDITORIAL OFFICES

200 Summit Lake Drive Valhalla, NY 10595
 TEL: 914.345.9463
 editor@wineenthusiast.com

DIRECTOR OF CLIENT SERVICES & OPERATIONS Emily Matson

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Sherrill Flaum

ADVERTISING

**WEST COAST ACCOUNT MANAGER,
 NAPA, CENTRAL COAST**
 Laurie Robertson TEL: 805.825.5801
 lrobertson@wineenthusiast.com

**WEST COAST ACCOUNT MANAGER, SONOMA,
 NORTHERN CA, PACIFIC NORTHWEST**
 Anthony Eyzaguirre TEL: 914-815-5407
 aeyzaguirre@wineenthusiast.com

EAST COAST ACCOUNT MANAGER
 Margaret Kalaher TEL: 845.654.1420
 mkalaher@wineenthusiast.com

**DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY & SALES,
 BUYING GUIDE & TRAVEL**
 Denise Valenza TEL: 800.315.4397
 dvalenza@wineenthusiast.com

SNR. ACCOUNT COORDINATOR, BUYING GUIDE
 Taylor Termine TEL: 914.345.9463 ext. 5858
 ttermine@wineenthusiast.com

**ACCOUNT COORDINATOR,
 BUYING GUIDE & TRAVEL**
 Addison Schrand TEL: 914-355-1941
 aschrand@wineenthusiast.com

ADVERTISING CONSULTANT
 Sara Maule smaule@wineenthusiast.com

ASSOC. DIRECTOR, DIGITAL ADVERTISING
 Nicole Bramble nbramble@wineenthusiast.com

DIGITAL ADVERTISING PRODUCER
 Abby Castrillo

SENIOR DIGITAL ADVERTISING PRODUCER
 Irvin Vidals

CLIENT SERVICES MANAGER
 Carlos Garcia

JUNIOR DESIGNER, CLIENT SERVICES
 Molly Tuohy

MARKETING

COPY DIRECTOR, COMMERCE
 Laura Newman

WEB DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR, DIGITAL PRODUCT
 Jessyca Frederick

SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER
 Irakli Khakhvashvili

FULL STACK DEVELOPER
 Christopher Jangl

FINANCE

CONTROLLER
 Suzanne Normoyle

CIRCULATION

**SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CIRCULATION
 & PRINT PRODUCTION**
 Barbara Gianisis

PWX SOLUTIONS
 P.O. Box 37120, Boone, IA 50037-0120

CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
 Victoria Linehan
 victoria.linehan@pwxolutions.com

RETAILERS
 To carry Wine Enthusiast magazine, call 800.678.2432
 ext 9410

EVENTS

EVENTS MANAGER
 LaShana Daniels

EVENTS COORDINATOR
 Victoria Smith

WINE ENTHUSIAST COMPANIES

**CHAIRMAN & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER/
 EDITOR & PUBLISHER EMERITUS**
 Adam M. Strum

CHIEF BRAND OFFICER/COFOUNDER
 Sybil Strum

PRESIDENT, WINE ENTHUSIAST COMMERCE
 Erika Strum Silberstein

PRESIDENT, WINE ENTHUSIAST MEDIA
 Jacqueline Strum

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
 Robert Rockman

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER
 Glenn Edelman

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
 Sharon McCann

**CHIEF REVENUE & EDUCATION OFFICER,
 COMMERCE**
 Marshall Tilden III

VICE PRESIDENT OF CONTENT
 Dara P. Kapoor

VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCT
 Taylor Tremblay

**VICE PRESIDENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE
 & TECHNOLOGY**
 John Burke

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
 Bonnary Lek

SUBSCRIPTIONS

SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES 800.829.5901
 (International: 386.447.2397)
 wineenthusiast@emailcustomerservice.com

BACK ISSUES & ADDITIONAL COPIES
 pr@wineenthusiast.com

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE, the CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE IN OVAL and the Choose Your Own Adventure trade dress (book design) are trademarks of Chooseco LLC and are registered in the United States and Canada, and may be registered in jurisdictions internationally. Chooseco's trademarks, service marks, and trade dress may not be used in connection with any product or service that is not affiliated with Chooseco LLC, or in any manner that is likely to cause confusion among customers, or in any manner that disparages or discredits Chooseco LLC. Choose Your Own Adventure books are available in the United States and Canada, ask your local bookseller or online at cyoa.com.

Certified



Wine Enthusiast (ISSN 1078.3318) is published monthly except January with combined issues in February/March, June/July and August/September and an extra issue in December. Wine Enthusiast may also publish occasional extra issues. Subscriptions are \$34.95 (International: Canada \$59.95; Foreign \$89.95). ©2025 Wine News, Inc. 200 Summit Lake Drive, Valhalla, NY 10595. Periodical postage paid at White Plains, NY and additional mailing offices. Manufactured and printed in the USA. Reprints: You must obtain permission to reproduce any material. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Wine Enthusiast, P.O. Box 37120, Boone IA 50037-0120



ZUCCARDI
VALLE DE UCO

We cultivate
mountain wines



93 PTS

CONCRETO
MALBEC 2022

WINE ENTHUSIAST

“ .. fermented and aged in concrete vats to showcase its texture and vibrant character. Floral and blackberry aromas blend on the nose. It features chalky tannins and floral notes on the midpalate, followed by dried herbs and enough vivacious black fruit flavors... ”

October 2024



IMPORTED BY WINESELLERS, LTD.

@zuccardivalledeuco

| www.zuccardiwines.com

AIRPORT POURS

In praise of a toast
before takeoff.

There's something exhilarating and strange about the energy of an airport bar. The transient nature of the whole endeavor puts it in a place between normal life and adventure. It's the purgatory of the travel experience. You're not quite where you're going, but you're definitely not at home either.

There's a wide range of quality in the offerings for tipples. I've seen everything from lengthy lists of my favorite glass pours to the simply bifurcated decision of red or white. However, what it never fails to serve up is, unequivocally, some of the best people watching in modern life.

A glass of something offers us a moment to pause in an effortlessly civilized fashion and observe the everyday.

We're all alone at home so much these days. When we do leave, our life experience is pretty narrowed in focus to our small

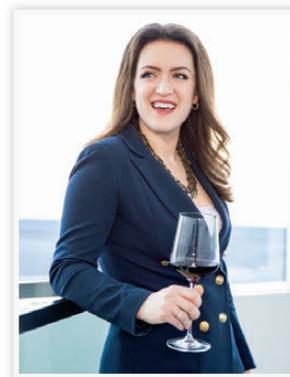
radius of shops, schools and cafes. We have our phones' dopamine calculus partly to blame for this problem, especially for younger generations, but the window to go out and see others feels like it's getting smaller every day. Even our groceries and food can be delivered, further slimming our chances for run-ins with strangers in the wild.

A libation doesn't just offer a moment for us to connect with others, although it does that oh so well. A glass of something offers us a moment to pause in an effortlessly civilized fashion and observe the everyday. This effort to take in what's around us is always a part of travel, but I wager the airport offers some of the most interesting encounters on the journey.

I've seen bar fights, breakups, business dealings and warm embraces. I've observed teary phone calls, relentless gossiping, children misbehaving with reckless abandon and even people fast asleep. The full spectrum of human emotion is waiting to be witnessed at the airport. It's this study of our lived condition—not the fake edited version we see online—that allows us to feel closer to each other. We're all so

boundlessly relatable outside of the theatre of social media.

So the next time you step into the airport—for business or pleasure—order yourself a glass and put the phone down. Enjoy the spectacle of real life playing out in front of you. It may not be until your next journey that you'll see it again.



JACQUELINE STRUM
EDITOR & PUBLISHER WE Media
@jackistrum

PASQUA

HOUSE OF THE UNCONVENTIONAL



MINISTERO DELL'AGRICOLTURA
E DELLE FORESTE



CAMPAIGN FINANCED ACCORDING
TO EU REG. N. 2021/2115



THE FIRST 100 YEARS



THE 25TH ANNUAL WINE STAR AWARDS



All of the 2024 Wine Star Award winners gathered on stage. For a full list of honorees, see wineenthusiast.com/wsa-winners-2024

More than 500 of the most influential movers and shakers in the wine and spirits industry gathered for the silver anniversary of Wine Enthusiast's Wine Star Awards at the Westin St. Francis San Francisco on Union Square on January 27. Not only was the black-tie gala packed with trade industry star power, but celebrity musicians shared their congratulations through recorded messages including Dolly Parton, Jon Bon Jovi and Zac Brown. Actress Issa Rae made an in-person appearance to accept the award for Innovator of the Year in recognition of her Prosecco brand Viarae's runaway success—one of 15 Wine Star Award winners of 2024.



Eric Aafedt and Jacqueline Strum



Laurent Prada



Jen Locke



Guest, Felipe Tosso, Francisco Grohnert, Maria Jose Vial, Juan Ignacio Zuniga Guzman, Catalina Bräuchle, Catalina Zegers Vial, Julio Alonso Ducci and Horacio Fuentes



Jean-Charles Boisset



Simone Meletti, Matteo Meletti, Kara Newman and Mauro Meletti



Sandro Boscaini



Jeffrey O'Neill



Sybil Strum, Shaun Kajiwara, Katie Jackson, Barbara Banke and Julia Jackson



Adam Strum



Tom Klein



Amy Racine and Chef John Fraser



GAMMA NINE PHOTOGRAPHY

Christopher Jackson and Craig McAllister



Issa Rae



Austin and Celeste Hope



Angela Slade

THE AFTER-PARTY

After all the trophies had been handed out, guests and Wine Star Award winners took in beautiful views of San Francisco riding up 32 floors in glass elevators to the St. Francis Heights Golden Gate Ballroom. The celebration continued at the official after-party presented by Meletti, the 2024 Spirits Brand of the Year award winner. Party-goers were treated to signature cocktails featuring a collection of Meletti's spirits and liqueurs while dancing to entertainment brought by DJ Just-IN.



Opici and Meletti team



DJ Just-IN



Joey Stockton



Horacio Fuentes and Francisco Grohnert



Erik Segelbaum, Tonya Pitts and Cristie Norman



Maria Jose Vial

SPECIAL PROMOTION



At the Peak

Centered on a mighty mountain, AOC Ventoux crafts cool-climate wines in Southern Rhône amid breathtaking views.

Ventoux is one of France's best kept secrets. Among the coolest climates in the Southern Rhône, Ventoux's wines offer more freshness and brightness than is typical to this sun-drenched part of southeastern France. There's a mighty mountain to thank for that: Mount Ventoux. Its dramatic limestone-capped peak is both feared and revered by cyclists who consider it the most grueling part of the famous Tour de France race. Its vastly different night-to-day temperatures and chilly winds (after all, "vent" translates to "wind") also make it a life force for grapes, giving them the chance to ripen slowly and evenly on vines that have dotted its foothills and western slopes in some form for over 2,000 years.

Like Ventoux's famed mountain, wine quality here is on a steep incline. Besides vibrancy, wines from Ventoux increasingly offer elegance and precision. The reds, made from Rhône's famed fruit basket of varieties (Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, Mourvèdre and Carignan) dish up all of the silky, supple, hug-in-a-glass comfort we've come to love from the Southern Rhône, but with beautifully balanced acidity, spice and filigreed tannins. Rosés range from ballerina pink to cherry in hue with heady floral and red berry aromas. They're exceptionally food friendly. The whites, made from Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Roussanne, Viognier and Vermentino, are delicate-yet-creamy drops with texture and orchard fruit characters perfect for pairing with seafood and spring greens.

In addition to the brisk mountain air, Ventoux's soils contribute to the region's wines, adding both power and delicacy depending on site and variety. They're a rare combination of limestone, clay, sand and marl strewn across a region known for its biodiversity. Ventoux is, after all, the only AOC in Rhône to span two UNESCO biosphere reserves.

"AOC Ventoux benefits from a double blessing: a cool climate that shapes an exceptional terroir as well as an untouched and breathtaking landscape," says Frederic Chaudière, président of the AOC Ventoux and winemaker at Chateau Pesquié. "Consequently, our winemakers have a double mission: crafting great wines while preserving this remarkable ecosystem!"

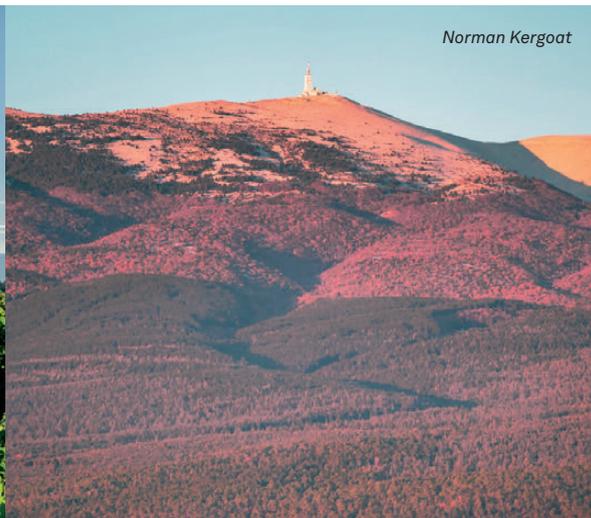
Ventoux's award-winning tourism, like its wines, has also ramped up a notch. Hike or bike through quaint countryside villages and towns dotted with castles, monasteries and abbeys, which add postcard stamp charm to unspoiled views of rolling vineyards, lavender fields and pine forests fringed by the mighty Mount Ventoux and the surrounding hills. In this pastoral landscape, with over 150 wineries, visitors can visit an array of tasting rooms, dine at an abundance of eateries from modern bistros to traditional fine dining, and relax at accommodations ranging from campsites to charming maisons to ups`cale hotels built into the hillsides.

Ventoux's secret is out.

Emmanuel Perrin



Norman Kergoat



Norman Kergoat



LIT & LUXE

The conversation piece that really lights up a room (maybe not literally, but yeah, also kind of literally). It shows off your best bottles and barware against a natural woven cane backing that adds character and style.



Shop at
[WINE ENTHUSIAST.COM](https://www.wineenthusiast.com)

BROWN SUGAR RUMS

A globe-trotting array of influences are bringing the spirit to these shores.

While rums made from fresh cane juice or molasses remain bar staples, a growing range of brown sugar rums offers exciting new options to pour. No, these rums don't taste like brown sugar. Yet, they offer remarkably complex flavors, with fruity or grassy nuances that molasses can't match.

BY
KARA NEWMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CHELSEA KYLE

DRINK STYLING BY
DREW AICHELE

HOW
COME
YOU
taste so
good?

Fans

of global cuisines will want to snag a bottle of brown sugar-based rum. This nascent category reflects a wide range of cultures that use brown sugar in various forms for cooking. Think India's jaggery, Japan's Kokuto or panela, piloncillo, chancaca and rapadura—just some of the names used in Mexico and Latin American countries.

"It's many names for the same thing," explains rum expert Peter Holland—in short, cane juice boiled down to an unrefined sugar (as opposed to refined white sugar), and sometimes packed into shapes like cones (panela/piloncillo), bricks or balls (jaggery). In this solid form, it offers numerous benefits to rum makers, he notes: "You've got a source that can be more readily stored, and takes up less space, has a smaller carbon footprint to transport and generally retains a strong connection to the source."

Once reconstituted, these brown sugars can be fermented and distilled into rum with attitude.

For example, Hilton Head Distillery in South Carolina makes Panela Rum, a lively white rum with bright hints of lemongrass and toasted coconut that would shine in a Daiquiri. The distillery works with a third-generation Colombian farm to source panela, which "allows us to support the communities and traditions that have made panela what it is today," explains wholesale director Matt Manning. While the distillery team isn't Colombian, "It's about paying tribute to the rum makers who came before us," he says. And from a distilling perspective, "Panela is a dream to work with," he adds—a clue as to why these rums are proliferating. During the fermentation process, he continues, "It gives the yeast a little extra to work with, and that shows up in the quality of the rum."

Elsewhere, India's Amrut, a distillery better known for single malt whiskey, recently introduced Amrut Bella, which it calls a "single jaggery rum." Aged in ex-bourbon casks, the new-to-the-U.S. limited edition has a maple hue and shines with luscious caramelized stone fruit and spice.

Made with jaggery sourced from Mandya, India's "sugar city," the base ingredient is cane juice plus pulp, which is cooked to caramelize the solids and reduce moisture content. The resulting caramel-colored solid is typically rolled into a ball and wrapped in cloth for families to use at home as a sweetener when cooking.

"Since jaggery is used for food consumption, Amrut had to obtain special government permission to distill it," explains Raj Sabharwal, founding partner of Glass Revolution Imports, which imports Amrut. The brown sugar solids are reconstituted and then distilled to make rum. Bella is currently available only in the U.S. and India; a single-cask, U.S.-exclusive offering is planned for 2025.



BOTTLES TO TRY

**Hilton Head
Panela Rum**
(Hilton Head,
South Carolina; \$41)
*Grassy and fresh,
with a tropical fruit lilt.*

**Amrut Bella
Single Jaggery Rum**
(India; \$85)
*Rich and caramelly,
this rum is aged in ex-
bourbon barrels.*

**Barber Lee
Piloncillo White Rum**
(Petaluma,
California; \$40)
*A toasty, full-flavored rum;
the producer recommends
it for Cuba Libres.*

**Furia Aguardiente
de Piloncillo**
(Mexico; \$43/1 liter)
*Labeled as aguardiente
de caña, an unaged,
moonshine-y cousin to rum,
this distillate is made from
piloncillo.*

**Black Creek
American Rum**
(Middleburg,
Florida; \$87.99)
*Made by Black Creek
Distillery, a small craft
distillery specializing in
panela rum. You'll only find
this one at the distillery.*

The Sweetest Things

A wide range of sugars is used to make rum—do you know the difference?

CANE JUICE

The liquid pressed from sugarcane stalks can be distilled into rum, usually called agricole rum. It can also be processed to make sugar and molasses.

CANE SYRUP

Cane juice with a substantial amount of water evaporated; creates a thick liquid. Some producers call it “sugarcane honey.”

MOLASSES

What’s left behind after cane juice is processed and sugar crystals are removed. Has a dark or amber hue and a thick, viscous texture.

RAW OR UNREFINED BROWN SUGAR

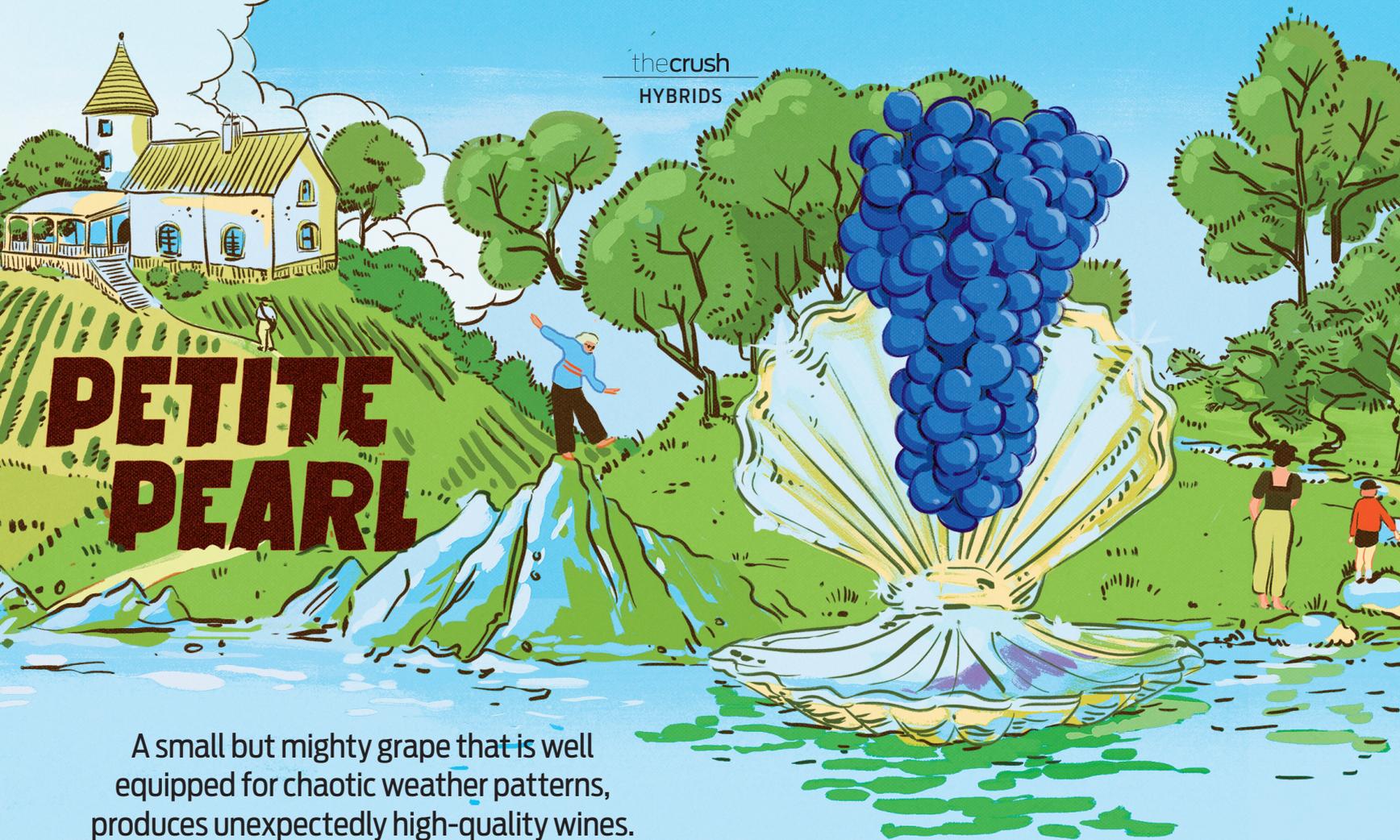
Unrefined sugar with some molasses content. The method, flavor and shape can vary. Piloncillo is often described as having a smoky note, while jaggery is considered richer and has a caramel-like flavor. Muscovado, a particularly dark, molasses-saturated brown sugar, often carries a toffee-like note.

In addition to cultural connections, brown sugar rums also appeal in terms of flavor. For those who find molasses-based rums too generic and agricole (fresh cane juice) rums too pungent, brown sugar rums offer an amiable middle ground: They contain just enough molasses content to evoke familiar hints of almond or toasted coconut, while delicate hints of tropical fruit or fresh-cut grass linger in the background.

Still, there’s no mistaking it for any other spirit but rum: The underlying sugarcane remains evident. Even barrel aging doesn’t overpower brown sugar, Holland observes. “It generally retains a strong connection to the source.”

“In addition to cultural connections, brown sugar rums also appeal in terms of flavor.”





PETITE PEARL

A small but mighty grape that is well equipped for chaotic weather patterns, produces unexpectedly high-quality wines.

A few weeks into harvest's 14-hour workdays, all the grapes start blurring together. But then there's Petite Pearl. And it's the type of grape that can make even the sleep-deprived harvest interns poke their heads out and wonder: "What is this?" Its dense clusters of small, blue-black berries are unlike almost anything else on the crush pad.

It's truly "in a lane of its own," says Tyzok Wharton, winemaker at Carboy, which has four locations throughout Colorado. When they first started working with the grape in 2017, they weren't quite sure what to do with it. They set out to make a rosé but they ended up doing a sought-after single-varietal red.

Petite Pearl was bred in Minnesota by Tom Plocher, owner of Plocher Vines. His goal was to create a grape that could withstand cold winters, be disease resistant and—perhaps most important—make good, well-balanced wine. Petite Pearl hit the market in 2009, but Plocher stood on the shoulders of viticulturists before him.

Like Louis Suelter, who in the 1800s sought to breed a grape that could survive cold winters. The result was the Beta, which you can still find growing on old fences around Minnesota. It does indeed withstand cold winters. "But the wine is terrible," Plocher says. "Beta would be used as a parent to produce generations of cold-hardy grapes." It's one of the key grapes in Petite Pearl's complex parentage.

Elmer Swenson, a mentor of Plocher, spent his life breeding hardy grapes. "I was able to bring together the University of Minnesota's breeding line with Swenson's to create the Petite Pearl," says Plocher.

"Compared to the other cold-hardy varieties that we're growing, it has a chemistry more similar to vinifera varieties," says Ethan Joseph, head winegrower of Shelburne Vineyard in Vermont. Joseph was the first to plant the grape when it was released. At the time, he was just trying to find grapes that would grow well in Vermont. But it isn't enough to just be hardy in the cold. A grape needs to be able to withstand a myriad of unpredictable climate shifts. "In the last five years or so, our winters have been warming—so what's become more important is a grape's hardiness in the shoulder seasons when climate has become unpredictable."

"When I started breeding Petite Pearl, the big issue was hardiness to extreme cold mid-winter temperatures," says Plocher. "With the progression of climate change, warm spring temperatures arrive earlier and encourage some grapes to lose their winter dormancy. But there's a risk of freezing when temperatures drop again. Petite Pearl is a late-budding variety. And even if there is a freeze that kills its primary buds, its secondary buds can be up to 80% fruitful. This isn't the case with classic European varieties like Merlot."

—Kristen Richard

CROSS OF:

MN1094 and E.S. 4-7-26
(background includes *V. vinifera*, *V. riparia* and *V. labrusca*)

WINE STYLES:

Still reds, red blends, rosés,
pét nats

AROMAS/FLAVORS:

Tomato leaf, blackberry, forest
floor, cherry and mint

Natural Sips of Lightness



WINEinMODERATION

CHOOSE | SHARE | CARE

NATURALLY 90 CALORIES • NATURALLY 9% ALCOHOL



These wines are born in the pristine alpine vineyards of Mezzacorona. Here a delicate wind, named Ventessa, caresses the grapes and keeps them crisp and healthy. The result are wines that are light and refreshing, naturally lower in calories and alcohol.

ventessa.wine

VENTESSA

TAKE ON TUNA

This recipe from a standard bearer of Oaxacan coastal cuisine falls somewhere between aguachile and tataki.

BY
NILS BERNSTEIN

Puerto

Escondido, on the Oaxacan coast, has emerged as one of Mexico's hottest travel destinations. In recent years, a wide variety of design-driven boutique hotels has opened along a seemingly endless coastline, drawing artists, celebs and influencers in equal measure. Accordingly, a spirited culinary scene has emerged as well, reimagining the region's traditions and ingredients with a global perspective.

Helmed by chefs Shalxaly Macías and Quetzalcóatl Zurita (a native of the region), Almoraduz was a pioneer in this new wave of comida costeña oaxaqueña (Oaxacan coastal cuisine). Beets are a year-round staple in Oaxaca, seen in empanadas, tostadas, salads, juices and more. Here, the sauce includes Japanese-inspired ingredients for a dish that falls somewhere between aguachile and tataki. The burnt chile adds an intriguing contrast of pungency and char.



PHOTO: CHELSEA KYLE
FOOD: DREW AICHELE

TUNA TATAKI WITH CHILE ASH AND BEET EMULSION

Courtesy Almoraduz, Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca

© @almoraduzpuerto

If you don't have a juicer, blend 2–3 raw beets (peeled and chopped) with just enough water (1–2 tablespoons) to turn the blender blades, and push through a fine-mesh strainer into a bowl.

- 2/3 cup fresh beet juice**
- 1 serrano (or small jalapeño) chile, stemmed**
- 5 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice**
- 2 1/2 tablespoons light soy sauce**
- 2 tablespoons agave syrup or mild honey**
- 1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil**
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger**
- 2 teaspoons minced chives**
- 1 ounce guajillo chiles (about 4 large), stemmed and seeded**
- 8 ounce best-quality tuna loin**
- Avocado (or other vegetable) oil, as needed**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- 1 shallot or small spring onion, cut into paper-thin rings**
- 1/2 small avocado, cut in small cubes**
- 2 packed tablespoons baby beet greens or beet sprouts**
- 2 packed tablespoons cilantro leaves**

In a blender, add the beet juice, serrano chile, lime juice, soy sauce, agave syrup, sesame oil and ginger and blend until smooth and emulsified. Taste and add more lime, soy or agave, if desired. Stir in the chives, cover, and refrigerate until needed (this can be made one day ahead, stirring in the chives just before using).

Heat oven to 400°F. Bake guajillo chiles until they blacken and turn brittle (check often as timing will vary). Grind to a powder in a spice grinder or small food processor and sift through a fine-mesh strainer for an even powder. Set aside.

Rub the tuna with oil and salt. Pat the chile ash on in a thin equal layer. Coat a large sauté pan with oil and place over high heat. Sear the tuna just to seal the ash onto the surface, no more than 45 seconds per side. Transfer to a plate.

To serve, slice the tuna 1/4 inch thick. Pour just enough sauce to cover the bottom of a shallow bowl or deep plate (you may not need all the sauce). Arrange tuna decoratively on top, and garnish with the shallot, avocado, beet greens and cilantro. Serves 4 as an appetizer.

WINE PAIRING

Maybe it's because **rosé** pairs so well with the balmy weather and maritime breezes of the northern Baja peninsula, but it's rare to find a winery in Valle De Guadalupe (Mexico's largest wine region) that doesn't have a rosé in its lineup. Grenache is one of the most popular grapes used in rosé there, where it expresses the grape's bold acidity and flavors of wild herbs and blood orange. In this dish, a fresh rosé can straddle the bright sauce and almost-raw fish, while having enough presence for the earthy beets and meaty tuna.

TRY: La Carrodilla "Polen" (Valle de Guadalupe)

PASSION PLAY

THERE'S SOMETHING TRANSPORTIVE ABOUT PASSION FRUIT.

Maybe it's because most people from the U.S. (save for Hawaii) didn't grow up around its intoxicating aroma, reminiscent of flowers and musk—maybe an air of mystery. Its sharp taste sings of the tropics, as if a citrus party were crashed by mango, guava, lychee, vanilla and tamarind. Until recently, it was hard to find passion fruit except in artificial form or combined with too many other fruits and a lot of sugar. Now, you can find 100% passion fruit pulp, frozen pieces and juice at many supermarkets, Latino markets and online—and fresh whole passion fruits are often seen in specialty markets. Pick some up to experiment with in the kitchen and let it whisk you away to Brazil, China or India (the three biggest passion fruit producers, FWIW). —Nils Bernstein

Chinola brand passion fruit liqueur is made from ripe passion fruit, cane sugar and neutral spirit, and—to this food editor anyway—is the best offering of passion fruit in alcohol form. It's a bar staple for any tropical drink lover. #notanad

◆ CEVICHES

Fresh passion fruit juice is bracingly tart and can serve the same purpose as lime juice in ceviches, poke and seafood salads: Just substitute some or all of the lime juice for passion fruit in any recipe. While many light "seafood wines" lack sufficient fruit to stand up to passion fruit's complexity, **Silvaner** can show luscious peach and passion fruit flavors on its own, with brilliant acidity and a mineral backbone that keep it fresh.

◆ SAUCES

By substituting passion fruit juice for the usual citrus, wine or vinegar, you can make passion fruit pan sauce, beurre blanc, piccata, gastrique, even passion fruit hollandaise for a tropical Benedict. Assuming you're saucing seafood, chicken or pork—a fuller but racy white is called for. **Dry Pinot Gris** from Alsace or Oregon can have considerable weight with tropical and stone fruits, ginger and honey to match rich sauces, but always enough acidity to keep coming back for more.

◆ DRESSINGS AND SALSAS

Any citrus-based vinaigrette gains character with the addition of passion fruit, as do savory salsas made from mango, watermelon or pineapple. Try passion fruit in a spinach salad with goat cheese, Thai green papaya salad or watermelon-cucumber salsa over grilled salmon or trout. **California Sauvignon Blanc** varies widely, but always shows the herbal and gooseberry notes that make SB so good with salads, as well as passion fruit and melon flavors.

◆ DESSERTS

Passion fruit's myriad flavor notes come to the fore in sweet dishes, whether pies (substitute it in a lemon meringue or Key lime and let the accolades roll in), custards, cakes, even rice pudding. **Barsac** is a sub-appellation within Sauternes, whose wines tend to be a bit drier and crisper than other Sauternes, while still showing the musky tropical notes that are one of the many noble hallmarks of Sauternes. Splurge on a bottle from one of the premier cru Barsac châteaux: Climens and Coutet.



CORK+COMPASS

BY WINE ENTHUSIAST

Let us take you there.

Wine Enthusiast's Cork + Compass is the magazine's first endeavor into exceptional wine travel and tourism. The C+C philosophy is rooted in the mission of our parent company, Wine Enthusiast—to enhance the wine experience for all.

In the Fall of 2025, Cork + Compass will host its premiere trips to Sonoma, Tuscany and Burgundy. As the foremost authority on wine, you can trust Wine Enthusiast to give unfettered access to the best wine country has to offer.

Scan here to learn more
corkandcompasstravel.com



By Kara Newman

Illustrations by Adriana Hansen

VACATION MODE



Which type of tiki bar should you be going to?

Tiki and tropical bars are all about escapism: Even if you're not going anywhere, you can still be surrounded by the illusion of swaying palm trees and endless sunsets with a Fog Cutter in hand.

Of course, not all tiki bars are the same. But how do you know which one is for you? The following will tell you where best to fill your glass (or scorpion bowl).

1 The main reason I go to a tiki bar is to...

- A. Escape life
- B. Pretend I'm a pirate
- C. Enjoy fanciful drinks in a serene setting
- D. Drink out of a robot head
- E. Try to remember how I got there

2 I'm at tiki bar, the drink I'm ordering is:

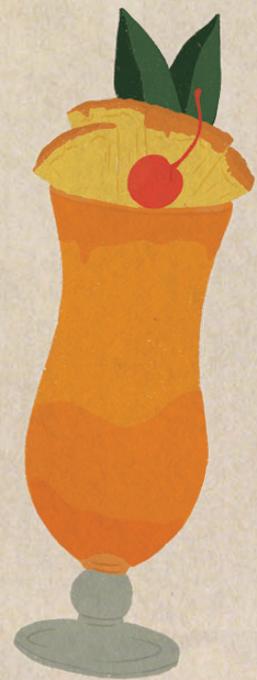
- A. Mai Tai
- B. Port Light
- C. Jungle Bird
- D. Anything set on fire
- E. Too much rum

3 My ideal tiki playlist includes:

- A. Martin Denny (or anything from a stack of vintage Hawaiian records)
- B. Sea shanties
- C. Lo-fi beats
- D. *Empress Rising* by Monolord
- E. King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard

4 The last show I binged was:

- A. *Yacht Rock: A Documentary*
- B. *Black Sails*
- C. *The White Lotus*
- D. *Penny Dreadful*
- E. *Magnum P.I.*



Mostly A's

CLASSIC



You revel in mid-century kitsch and appreciate a historic space and vintage trappings. Luckily for you, the original **Trader Vic's**—which first opened in 1934 (at first called Hinky Dinks)—is still around and even expanding. In 2024, the Bamboo Room by Trader Vic's opened in Miami's Esmé hotel, and 2025 will bring outposts in Oakland Airport and Kona (Hawaii). Meanwhile, the **Mai-Kai** in Fort Lauderdale reopened in November after a four-year closure due to flooding—and added a 10-foot-tall volcano to the 1956 original. And don't forget L.A.'s iconic **Tiki-Ti**, which opened in 1961, still going inside a tiny tropical hut filled to bursting with glowing pufferfish and local artwork.

Mostly C's

AESTHETIC



Bring on high-end cocktails in a swanky setting. That might mean a resy at **Sunken Harbor Club**, above famed steakhouse Gage & Tollner in Brooklyn (there's an outpost in Bermuda, too), where centrifuged, force-carbonated drinks are served over perfect pebbled ice. See also **Mayport Garden Club** in Atlantic Beach, Florida, with its dimly lit speakeasy style and monkey print wallpaper, or **Wusong Road** in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for Asian American-inspired tapas alongside a mai tai served in a ceramic mug designed to look like a Chinese takeout box.

Mostly E's



You like a little grit with your grotto. Grab a stool at the thatch-covered bar at **Otto's Shrunken Head** (NYC) and order potent, rum-soaked drinks to go with the (very loud) live music on some nights. On the West Coast, **Trad'r Sam** in San Francisco, despite a recent remodel (new management replaced the broken floor and fractured bar top) maintains its twinkle-light festooned bamboo arches and slightly scuzzy seaside charm. Or head to whatever watering hole in your neighborhood that has hung a lei around a jackalope's mounted head and has a mermaid bottle opener somewhere behind the bar.

Mostly B's

NAUTICAL



Grab your pirate's eye patch and order Navy-strength rum at spots like San Francisco's **Smuggler's Cove**—festooned with anchors, fishing nets and other seafaring gear. Or **Beachbum Berry's Latitude 29** in New Orleans, where you can sip drinks out of oversized conch shells and Pearl Diver glasses. You could also go all-in at **UnderTow** in Phoenix, an immersive bar designed to evoke the cargo hold of a turn-of-the-century clipper ship, complete with porthole "windows" where you might see an octopus swim by.



Mostly D's

OFFBEAT/FANTASY

Reality has no place in your escapism. Bring on blacklights to cast an eerie neon glow, a sci-fi backstory and robots everywhere at Nashville's **Chopper**. San Diego's **Mothership** suggests a crashed spaceship amid twinkling stars and creepy alien plants. Elsewhere, the campy tropical "hellscape" of NYC's **Paradise Lost** is dark and deliberately eerie. Palm fronds are interspersed with bat and alligator taxidermy, and drinks like the Bottomless Pit arrive with smoky pyrotechnics and a werewolf howl overhead.



SPICE TRAIL

This mezcal margarita with a habanero kick is a road trip through Mexico in a glass.

If a spicy margarita is your go-to, you do want this smoke. Featuring mezcal—an agave-based spirit that resembles blanco tequila with a bit of vegetal sass—it's practically a road trip in a glass, paying homage to three key points in Mexico.

From north to south, the recipe was devised in San Miguel de Allende, in the Colonial Highlands. But Mexico City plays a role too; award-winning Handshake Speakeasy, located in the central, cosmopolitan capital, has a hand in the drinks at the luxe Casa di Sierra Nevada resort. And winding farther south, mezcal, the agave spirit that's one of Oaxaca's most beloved exports, forms the core of this cocktail, accented with fresh mint and habanero—tied together with an unexpected splash of herbaceous absinthe.

If possible, opt for an espadin mezcal, from the most commonly found varietal of agave used to make the spirit. We like Del Maguey Vida, Dona Vega Espadin and Montelobos Espadin Joven for mixing. —Kara Newman

MADE IN OAXACA

Courtesy Eleazar Barbosa, lead mixologist, Casa di Sierra Nevada, a Belmond Hotel, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

- 2 slices cucumber
 - 5 mint leaves
 - 1 habanero pepper slice
 - 1/3 ounce simple syrup
 - 2 ounces mezcal
 - 1 bar spoon absinthe
- Habanero pepper slice, for garnish

In a cocktail shaker, muddle cucumber, mint and habanero with simple syrup. Add mezcal, absinthe and ice. Shake well, and strain into a coupe glass. Garnish with habanero pepper slice.



90 POINTS
WINEENTHUSIAST
12/2022



Z ZARDETTO
PROSECCO DOC
Sparkle with Style

This is 24 Bottles of Wine,

The Jet Set Collection from Wine Enthusiast is everything our editors need when visiting wine regions worldwide.

Mostly this means suitcases and bags ready-made to bring back our favorite wines, like the two VinoVoyage with inserts to hold 12 and 6 bottles you see here. Who says you can't take it with you?



READY FOR

Take Off



Read more

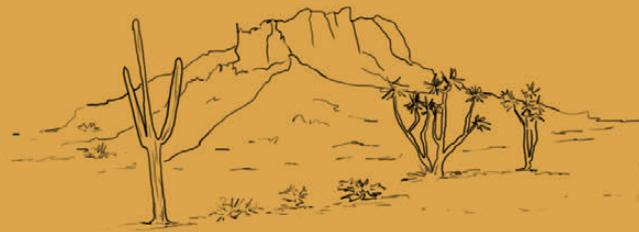
WINE ENTHUSIAST.COM

If you choose to open the VinoVoyage and look inside, turn to page 40.

If you choose to shop the collection, go to wineenthusiast.com/jet-set-collection

A Field Guide to the High Desert Harvest

Hardy, aromatic ingredients
foraged from parched lands give
spirits a Western flavor.



By Rebecca Toy
Illustrations Claire Rollet

Often tossed aside as wretched wastelands, dismissed deserts hide plenty of life—and flavors. This covert cornucopia only amplifies with altitude. Distillers across the American Southwest are stepping out of more temperate-climate ingredients by responsibly sourcing native bark, resin, berries and wood from the Mojave. Gaining ground and reputation by leaning into ancient staples, here's a field guide to the high desert harvest shaping the future of spirits.

IDENTIFICATION:

Mesquite grows as a small, scrubby tree for up to 200 years on hillsides without much water. They thrust up to 50 feet tall with droopy shade branches along water. Mesquite has rough and shaggy bark, narrow leaves, yellow seed pods and infamous thorns.

WHERE TO FIND IT:

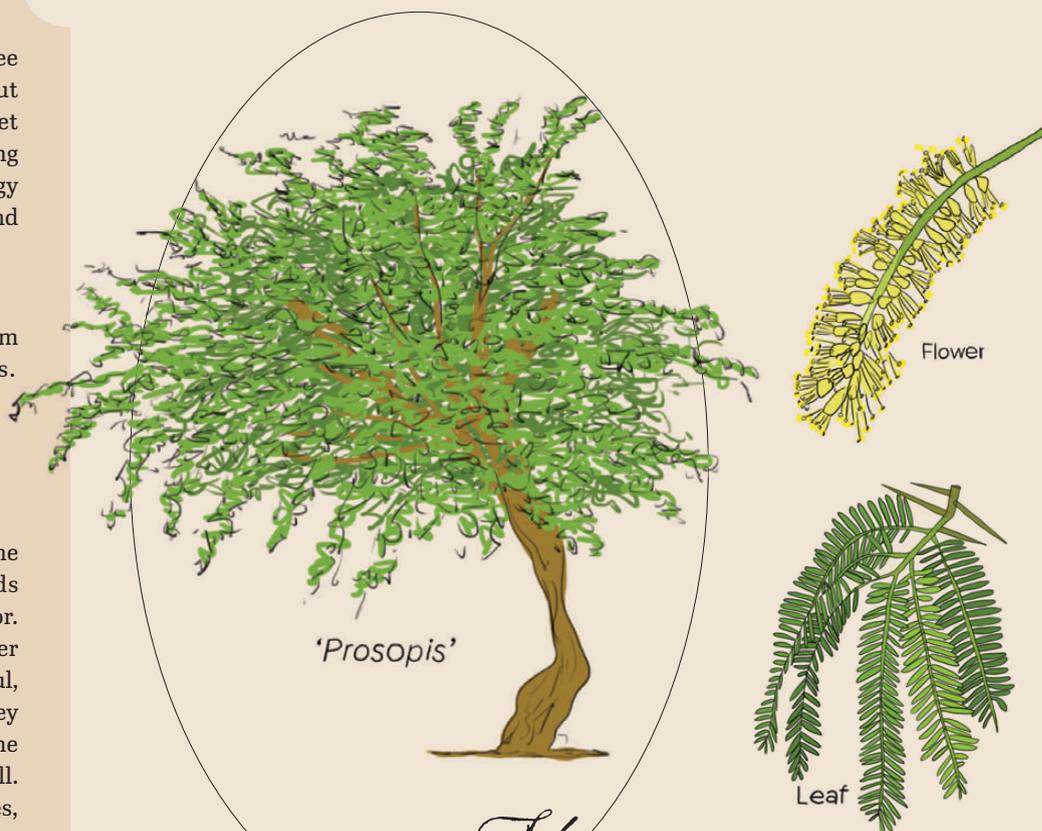
This tenacious desert native hails from the American Southwest and Texas. While the thirsty trees are invasive on plains, they're beloved for shade, dense firewood and edible pods in the desert.

TASTING NOTES:

Mesquite is widely used throughout the Southwest to smoke meats and adds sweet and smoky flavors to robust liquor. "Mesquite is definitely softer and sweeter on the palate than peat," says Stephen Paul, cofounder of Hamilton Distillers Whiskey Del Bac. For Paul, who grew up in the Sonoran Desert, it's also a nostalgic smell. "The familiar aroma of mesquite campfires, or walking through my neighborhood on winter nights with mesquite smoke coming out of neighbors' chimneys, has always been an emotionally sweet and compelling experience."

DISTILLATION POINTS:

Instead of traditional peat, distillers smoke malted barley over mesquite fires for whiskey. Like with Old Forester's King Ranch, spirits can also be filtered through the tree's charcoal.



Mesquite



Usage

TRY IT IN:

Whiskey Del Bac Dorado American Single Malt, Sentinel Straight Rye Whiskey (Whiskey Del Bac), Colkegan American Single Malt Whiskey (Santa Fe Spirits), King Ranch Edition (Old Forester)

IDENTIFICATION:

The largest western pine species can grow over 200 feet tall, and sports tufted bundles of pine needles and thick, patchy orange bark. Native populations have harvested the sweet inner bark as a food source for centuries.

WHERE TO FIND IT:

Prolific throughout the American West, this hearty tree thrives in locations with less than 20 inches of annual rainfall and elevations up to 10,000 feet.

TASTING NOTES:

“Ponderosa bark, as any traveler who has entered a ponderosa forest would know, is full of hints of vanilla and cardamom, delivering a punch to the palate that speaks only to the West,” says Nicole Barady, co-owner of Ponderosa Whiskey Co. who sought and won FDA approval to incorporate this ingredient.

DISTILLATION POINTS:

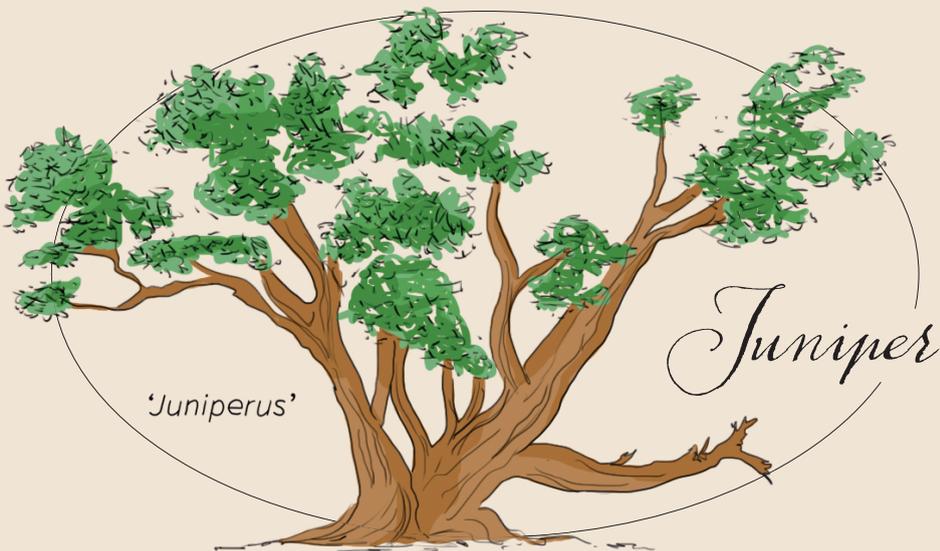
For whiskey, distillers can macerate bark in corn. The tree’s resin sweetens liqueur with vanilla tones.



Ponderosa pine

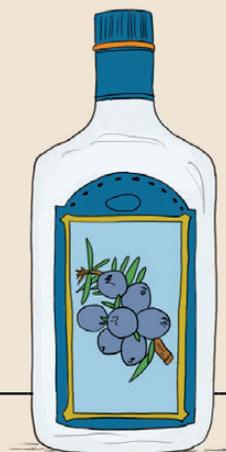
TRY IT IN:
Ponderosa 4.2 Whiskey (Ponderosa Whiskey Co.), Atapiño Liqueur (Santa Fe Spirits)

Usage

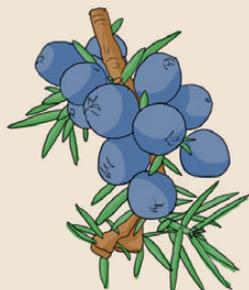


Juniper

TRY IT IN:
High Mountain Desert Gin (Spirits of the Wasatch), Native Colorado Gin (Dry Land Distillers), Cemetery Gin (Comstock Distillers)



Usage



Female cones and needles

IDENTIFICATION:

Junipers are known for waxy, berry-like seed cones which mature to blackish blue among silvery-green needles. More rounded than most evergreens, the branches warp to adapt to high mesa winds.

WHERE TO FIND IT:

These trees dominate mid-elevation foothills with wild temperature swings, taking root from the Rocky Mountains through the Colorado Plateau and arid Pacific Northwest.

TASTING NOTES:

Tannins in juniper berries add tart astringency, often likened to eating a Christmas tree. For Brent Pounds, owner and lead distiller with Spirits of the Wasatch, juniper embodies the high-mountain desert rainfall that releases plants’ fragrant oils. “These botanicals give off a resinous, slightly spicy aroma, with hints of pine and citrus, complemented by a subtle sweetness that lingers as the air becomes momentarily lush.”

DISTILLATION POINTS:

Most commonly associated with gin (in fact, it’s a defining factor), distillers often add juniper for its distinctive peppery pine-like bite. Freshly sourced botanicals pack in potency.

SEARCHING FOR ROSA CHARDONNAY

A rare pink-skinned grape mutation isn't easy to find now, but it might be in the future.

YOU can't help but become captivated when someone mentions Rosa Chardonnay, an enigmatic grape also sometimes called Chardonnay Rose (like the flower), the naming of which has nothing to do with rosé (though it could make one). An ultra-rare mutation of Chardonnay with pink skins, it is stubbornly resistant to googling (and also likely bunch rot and botrytis). The path to tracking down its provenance and plantings outside France is considerably more book-based.

A small tonnage appears every year on the Lodi Winegrape Commission's grape report because LangeTwins Family Winery and Vineyards has nine rows planted (and, according to President MARRISSA Lange, intends to make sparkling wine from them). Then, the trail goes somewhat cold.

There are conflicting reports of where the unique mutation originated. While the grape can be found growing in Montpellier, some say it first came from Baden, Germany or Alsace. Others think it had a Burgundian birth in Mâcon. The 1979 edition of Pierre Galet's *A Practical Ampelography* (a grape identification book) mentions "There exists a Chardonnay Rose, which is not propagated..." but offers no more information. A clone has now been cleaned up at Geisenheim University in Germany and is being studied there. That clone is available for propagation, but the folks at Geisenheim did not have much light to shed on its history.

"Those pink skins seem to be a little more durable."

—Aaron Lange

"We are hoping that it has some other benefits besides the beautiful cosmetic ones," says Aaron Lange, vice president of vineyard operations at LangeTwins, who sourced the Geisenheim clone planted in Lodi from a nursery and is curious to see what it can contribute. "Those pink skins seem to be a little more durable, less prone to rot and perhaps less prone to sunburn for those heat events that are predicted to increase in frequency for the foreseeable future."

Rosa ripens a bit later than regular Chardonnay, which may explain why it retains acidity well. The blushing pink hue doesn't come to the berries until they reach about 21 or 22 brix, so almost full maturity. If pressed gently without skin contact there's no detectable color in the resultant wine, though phenolics from the skin can add complexity. All might be reasons why

growers in Champagne are beginning to propagate it more widely.

"Unfortunately, I think it is going to require a trip to France to really understand the history of this selection," says Aaron Lange, suggesting hopefully that we hop a flight. At this juncture, we are still waiting to hear back from accounting. —John Capone



ARRIVE WITH LAMBERTI



CAMPAIGN FINANCED ACCORDING
TO EU REG. N. 2021/2115



MINISTERO DELL'AGRICOLTURA
DELLA SOVRANITÀ ALIMENTARE
E DELLE FORESTE



PLANTING A FLAG

In North Carolina's Yadkin Valley AVA, the successful protocol is no protocol.

North Carolina's state motto, *Esse Quam Videri*, "to be rather than to seem," is spot on. The Yadkin Valley, like much of the state, is a place to be real and easygoing—or just real easygoing.

For example, is the Yadkin Valley the easiest place in the state to grow grapes? Not really. But with over 50 wineries, it is wildly prolific, like much of North Carolina, with numerous grape varieties planted. A few of them become defining, and plenty of others are powerful regional representatives, offering consistency, depth and refinement.

Viticulture in central North Carolina is a familiar post-Prohibition story—reawakening, due to a new generation of grape growers and winemakers who've invested in the region with vision and optimism. Jay Raffaldini, co-owner of Raffaldini Vineyards, in Swan Creek AVA, in the Brushy Mountain foothills and south-central in the Yadkin Valley AVA, explains, "We are planting a flag to show it's possible to do this in North Carolina."

The AVA, the state's first and largest,

is shaped like a miniature version of the state of Florida, albeit with a fluffy panhandle. Pilot Mountain to the north is an auspicious monadnock, a lone monolith of metamorphic quartzite eroded to a knoblike formation. The Yadkin River cuts through the center, flowing from Blowing Rock, North Carolina to South Carolina (where it becomes the Pee Dee River) to the Atlantic Ocean. The profound agrarian promise that defined 19th-century wine and spirits in North Carolina is being realized through listening and learning, not compromising and also, quite frankly, not being too pretentious. Fermentation science programs at Surry Community College (within the AVA), Appalachian State University, North Carolina State University and Fayetteville Technical Community College are infusing the wine industry with skilled oenologists. The North Carolina Winegrower's Association hosts an international wine symposium in May. "You can't grow a wine region without camaraderie," says Mark Friszolowski, winemaker at Childress Vineyards.



Yadkin Valley soils are relentlessly fertile. There's abundant sunshine and rain—sometimes too much of both. Ripening isn't a challenge, but rain, frosts, Pierce's Disease and mildew are.

JW Ray is the owner and winemaker for JOLO Winery & Vineyards in Pilot Mountain, where the namesake mount reminds weekend revelers of the breadth of geologic time that shaped North Carolina's Appalachian region and diverse clay, schist and mica soils. Ray planted grapes in pursuit of versatility and consistency. For example, early harvest Chambourcin takes the lead in JOLO's rosé blend, but it can be vinified as a single-varietal red, within blends, sparkling and dessert wines. Finding balance, stability and interplay with hybrids while experimenting with vinifera like Merlot and Cabernet Franc has proven an effective strategy for growing a successful wine program.

Ray also describes "planting a flag" in a state without preconceived notions of what one should or could grow. Unpretentiousness and nonconformity have freed up many to

dig deep to build upon their successes. Raffaldini Vineyards exemplifies the latter, committing to a painstaking appassimento process for all wines, an Italian viticultural practice where drying grapes on mats or racks reduces their volume and concentrates sugars, acids and flavor. Friszolowski explains that wineries are inclined to invest experimentation. "The state is growing—and good, consistent wine year after year will ensure our reputation."

At Round Peak Vineyards in Mount Airy, in the AVA's northern corridor, winemaker Eric Steinbicker, a graduate of Surry Community College's viticulture and enology program, takes pride in a new skin-contact Vidal Blanc that "drinks like a Georgian amber wine and has tremendous character," adding, "These are the wines that will catch the eyes of younger wine consumers. Our adaptation to hybrids has been promising for quality. If we grow what works, our region will only flourish, and overly ripe, overly oaked, and overly planted varieties will be history."

— Amy Beth Wright

**Date AVA
Established:**

December 9, 2002

Total Size:

1,400,000 acres

Planted Acreage:

829 acres

**Most widely planted
grapes:**

Vinifera: Petit

Manseng, Petit
Verdot, Cabernet
Franc, Chardonnay,
Sangiovese,
Montepulciano;

native grape:

Muscadine; **hybrids:**
Traminette, Vidal
Blanc, Chambourcin,
Cynthiana

Climate:

Warm continental,
with interim periods of
humidity

Fun fact:

More than 50 llamas
roam the pastoral
grounds of Divine
Llama Vineyards in
East Bend, North
Carolina, about a half-
hour west of downtown
Winston-Salem, some
of which are "show
llamas," as majestic as
thoroughbreds.







B I G S H O T

Reclining somewhere over Texas, Billy Joel is first class even in coach. You can be sure The Piano Man was being brought beer, not bubbles, on this trip between Austin and Dallas during the **52nd Street** tour.

*Photo: Wally McNamee/
CORBIS/via Getty Images*

VINTAGE VOYAGE

This month WE tasted wines from across 12 countries, including Bulgaria, Brazil, Argentina and Israel. In this issue we also travel to Japan, Thailand, Canada, Mexico and more exploring international wine scenes. To get started on that journey with us, flip to page 112.

Rip out this page and stuff it in your pocket for when you go to the wine shop next or just search wineenthusiast.com/ratings.

FOR THIS ISSUE

- Nearly 1,500 wines scored 90 points or higher
- Of those wines, 28 wines from Chile presented the best value with an average price of \$25
- Just 104 wines were rated 95 or above; these had an average price point of \$99.50
- The 50 wines from California that scored 95 points or better were a relative value at an average price of \$85

cheers

BESIDES THE POINTS

Top 5 Best Buys

These wines represent the highest quality-to-price ratio at \$20 or less.

94 Mazzei 2020 Castello di Fonterutoli Poggio Badiola Gran Selezione Red Blend (Chianti Classico)

Price: \$14 abv: 13%

93 CRU Winery 2023 Albariño (San Luis Obispo Coast)

Price: \$20 abv: 13.5%

92 Bedouet 2023 Le Domaine Sur Lie Melon de Bourgogne Muscadet (Sèvre et Maine)

Price: \$18 abv: 12.5%

92 San Felo 2021 Lampo Sangiovese (Morellino di Scansano)

Price: \$14 abv: 13.5%

92 Château de Chantegrive 2023 Sauvignon Blanc-Sémillon (Graves)

Price: \$18 abv: 13%

Top 5 Hidden Gems

These wines may be atypical but they are worth trying—especially if you are looking for something different.

94 Ernest 2023 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

Price: \$40 abv: 12.7%

94 Mathis Wine 2022 Mathis Vineyard Grenache (Sonoma Valley)

Price: \$40 abv: 14.2%

93 Robert Renzoni 2022 Vecchio Frate Lagrein (California)

Price: \$48 abv: 15.1%

91 Bouvet-Ladubay 2020 Tresor Blanc Brut Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay (Saumur)

Price: \$24 abv: 12.5%

91 Fallen Grape Wine Co. 2023 Chilled Red Natural Wine Grenache Blend (Santa Barbara County)

Price: \$24 abv: 12.5%

Top 5 Cellar Selections

Our editors think these wines are especially age-worthy.

97 Inama 2022 Foscario Garganega (Soave Classico)

Price: \$33 abv: 12.5%

97 Epoch Estate Wines 2021 York Mountain Vineyard Syrah (York Mountain)

Price: \$105 abv: 15%

97 Hamel 2021 Nuns Canyon Cabernet Sauvignon (Moon Mountain District Sonoma County)

Price: \$225 abv: 13.8%

96 Delas Frères 2022 Ligne De Crete Syrah (Hermitage)

Price: \$266 abv: 13%

96 Château du Moulin-à-Vent 2022 Les Grands Savarins Gamay (Moulin-à-Vent)

Price: \$95 abv: 13%



“The nose is a feast—reminiscent of takeout night of roasted duck in plum sauce, beef lo mein, roasted cherries, hoisin, five-spice, thyme—mouthwatering in the best way possible.”

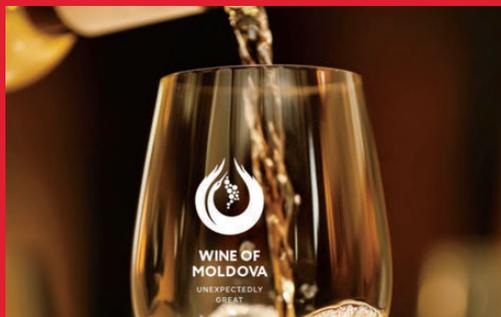
—Anna-Christina Cabrales

Check @wineenthusiast on Instagram to see what wine we're talking about.

SPECIAL PROMOTION

Paradise Regained

From ancient vines to modern revival of its winemaking heritage Moldova is a modern marvel



Don't make the mistake of overlooking the Republic of Moldova: The small but mighty country is cementing its place in the world of fine wine. This land has been making wine going all the way back to the Cucuteni-Trypillia culture 7,000 years ago, long before Greek colonists brought their own grapes. The soil, the hills, the air have all played their part in shaping wines with a history that goes beyond the bottle. Yet, Moldova's story is one many in the U.S. are just learning about.

The archaeological evidence for this deep history includes the presence of vine seeds dated to the middle of the fourth millennium BC. By the 13th century, the Principality of Moldavia was shipping wine to the European courts and established as an integral part of the region's trade routes. The Russian Empire took notice in the 1800s and expanded production. During the Soviet era, Moldova's wine culture suffered until Moldova gained its independence in 1991 and began reclaiming its winemaking heritage, reviving native grape varieties and discovering newly selected local-born varieties. In the last decade Moldova has pivoted westward. In 2005, 85% of Moldova's wine exports went to Russia; but today 80% of the exported wine goes elsewhere, half to Europe and more than 20% comes to the U.S.

With Moldova increasingly attracting visitors from around the world, interest in the wines is only growing. The Wine Lover's Index named the Republic of Moldova the second-best country in the world for wine tourism. It is in the top 10 in the world of per capita wine production and no. 1 in the world in terms of per capita vineyard area.

Moldova is also home to the world's largest wine cellars, Milestii Mici and Cricova, which stretches for 320 kilometers under the earth and were

included in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List this year. But it's what's happening above ground that's even more important. More wineries are turning to organic and biodynamic practices, reshaping the country's wine landscape for the future. Young winemakers, trained in France, Italy and the New World, are returning to Moldova, blending international knowledge with ancient traditions. They're redefining what Moldovan wine can be.

The limestone-rich land here is bathed in sunlight, kissed by the temperate influence of the Black Sea. Native varieties like Rara Neagră, Fetească Neagră, and Fetească Albă truly capture the essence of the place but local winemakers truly show their skill in the blends they produce.

Today, Moldova has four wine regions with protected geographical indication: Codru, Ștefan Vodă, Valul lui Traian and Divin. Codru excels in white and sparkling wines. Ștefan Vodă is renowned for its red wines, particularly Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Rara Neagră. Valul lui Traian is known for its rich, fruity wines, including distinctive rosé wines and exceptional dessert wines. Divin consists of PGI wine-derived spirits, or brandy, made from both European and local varieties, with strict aging classifications.

The quality leap in Moldova since the Soviet-era bulk wines is undeniable. It has led to a booming industry that has won more than 7,000 international awards. These wines don't need gimmicks—just the terroir of a place steeped in centuries of wine knowledge, poised for a bright future. In June the nation will host the 46th World Congress of Vine and Wine in Chișinău, putting it once again at the center of the winemaking world.

THAILAND IS BECOMING A VERY GOOD PLACE TO DRINK WINE

From an onerous tariff being lifted to a curious younger population, the country is poised for pours.

BY DANIELLE CALLEGARI

“**B**angkok is not a place one goes to relax,” an older wine journalist said to me, rather condescendingly, when I mentioned I would be there shortly and looked forward to using the visit to unwind a bit. I understood his point. Asian megacities aren’t known for their chill vibes and calming atmospheres. But in my case, “I need to relax” is actually a shorthand for “I need to take a break from tasting so much Italian wine,” so Thailand seemed like the perfect choice for a reset after another punishing year of having to judge expensive juice from the peninsula for a living. Alas, as probably everyone who knows me could have guessed, it was less than 72 hours before I found myself in a private dining room at the much-lauded Lenzi Tuscan Kitchen, popping magnums of older vintage Barolo in a room full of hospitality professionals and getting wildly excited about drinking wine, Italian or otherwise, in Thailand.

There’s very good reason to be excited about wine in Thailand right now, even if you’re not several glasses deep shoving prosciutto in your face while doing karaoke to songs played off your friend’s phone. The lifting of once-punishing tariffs on wine imports—a whopping 54% on standard table wines from countries without a free trade agreement—in a decision from the Thai Ministry of Finance in early 2024 means that wine is becoming cheaper and both more readily and more widely available to this young, vibrant population, especially in thirsty Bangkok, where drinkers consume 60% more per capita than the national average. Lily Nuttiya Wisootsat, assistant director at Fabulous is Needed (FIN Wine for short) and director at MUST Wine Bar is justly enthusiastic: “The market for drinkers [in Bangkok] is continuously growing.” What stands out to her is how intrepid wine drinkers are in Thailand—their desire to explore is what promises the most for the future: “It is very exciting to see people wanting to learn the right stuff, and the effort that they make to truly appreciate wine. They are very intrigued to learn more, try more, drink more.”

The capital’s cocktail culture has already become the envy of

the world with its unique ability to sit at the crossroads of avant-garde sophistication and sensitive attention to tradition and local ingredients, from the delightfully performance-driven sips offered at TEP Cultural Bar of Thailand to the carefully guided offerings at Independence Cocktail Bar and beyond. Wine bars already have an outside presence on the scene in Bangkok (check out my colleague Alek’s list of his fave natty places on wineenthusiast.com) as witnessed by the rarefied lists at places like Mod Kaew Wine Bar and Chenin Bangkok. The list at Chenin, driven by sommelier and wine director Paul Ozbirn, is pushing limits also because of the unusual pricing structures in Thailand: “Ironically I’m able to list wine for almost half what I would on an American wine list at a place like Chenin, despite paying a bit more in wholesale cost.” He is optimistic that the shift will be toward serving that local population of wine-

curious drinkers and looking forward to a demographic shift: “I think what’s next for Thailand is for actual Thai people to desire and drink more wine at the dinner table.”

And this optimism is further buoyed by what’s happening across the country. Group sommelier and beverage manager at Riedel Bangkok, Luca Lodoli points out that the

expansion of hospitality options in Chiang Mai and elsewhere means that there’s a lot to expect on the horizon. Lodoli expects an ascent in wine consumption at all levels with the Thai audience, thanks to the generally more accessible format: “Wine is not a ‘luxury’ product for a niche anymore or only available in fine dining restaurants. The trend of wine bars focusing on approachable and easy-to-drink wines is going to continue and grow, as locals and visitors are looking for value and to enjoy themselves with wine.” Would that we all saw wine as approachable, non-niche, easy to drink and just enjoyed ourselves. Thailand seems ready to lead the way.

Danielle Callegari reviews wines from southern and central Italy for this magazine and is the author of the book *Dante’s Gluttons*.

© @drcallegariscabinet

It was less than 72 hours before I found myself in a private dining room at the much-lauded Lenzi Tuscan Kitchen.

WINE ENTHUSIAST

Tasting Room Directory

Let Us Guide You to Your Next Glass.



The Tasting Room Directory is the definitive source for winery destinations, with thousands of tasting room listings including dynamic filters and Google map integrations to inspire your next vineyard-bound trip.

The Directory has everything you need to plan your adventure to the vineyard led by our experts' recommendations.

BOOK NOW





TSA Pre- Check *but for wine*

Wrapping your precious bottle scores from your travels in an old sweatshirt and wedging them in your checked bag between your sneakers is a sure way to end up with inadvertently red-dyed clothing. Vino-Voyage TSA-Approved Wine Suitcases ensure your wine makes it home with you safe and sound with foam inserts to keep them snug.



Vino-Voyage TSA-Approved 12-Bottle Wine
Suitcase & Vino-Voyage TSA-Approved
6-Bottle Wine Suitcase



Shop at
WINEENTHUSIAST.COM

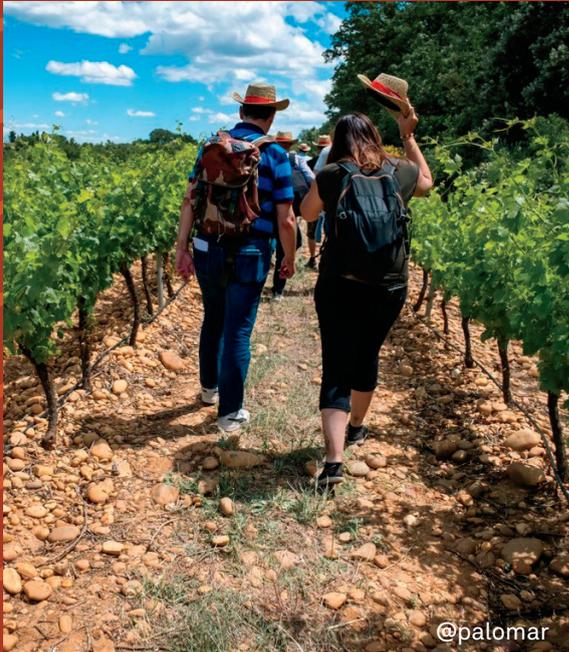
COSTIÈRES

DE NÎMES

A Destination for Cool-Climate Wines and Much More.



David Z



@palomar

Nestled at the southernmost edge of the Rhône Valley, just a few miles from the French coastline, Costières de Nîmes pulsates with vibrant energy.

Once considered part of the Southern coast, the region has long established its distinct identity. Granted AOC status in 1986, it confidently claims its place within the Rhône Valley, linked through the signature Rhône soil of sunbaked rolled pebbles—known as grès—that define the landscape.

Costières de Nîmes is also shaped by two distinct wind patterns: the cool and drying influence of le mistral winds as well as the gentle, humid afternoon breezes that sweep in from the Mediterranean—a welcomed respite from the heat that radiates off the grès.

With its vineyards' proximity to the Camargue marshes and sea, this delicate maritime microclimate dances in harmony—striking a balance of drainage, minimal hydraulic stress, warmth retention and the opportunity for slow evening ripening. The result is fruit brimming with character and vibrant acidity. Cyril Marès, winemaker and Costières de Nîmes President is passionate about the growth in quality and remarks, “We have freshness, fruit, depth and the potential for 30 years of aging! What more can we want?”

Here, Syrah—a grape traditionally grown in the clay-granitic soils of the Northern Rhône, thrives well. As Michel Gassier, winemaker and Costières de Nîmes Copresident explains: “Syrahs from warm climates can be saturating—impressive on the first sip but by the third, you’re done. We are all about balance—more of a good thing isn’t always better.”

In Costières de Nîmes, where its future and land is guided forward by its passionate descendants, tradition and innovation blend seamlessly. At the heart of this transformation is a new generation of winemakers. More than 60% of the independent growers there are emblematic of a phenomenon of young viticulturists returning to the region with fresh eyes and bold ideas, eager to tap into the region’s rich potential. Costières de Nîmes Copresident and winemaker Jérôme Castillon adds, “We are gardeners, and we must pass this soil, this terroir to the next generation. In Costières, there are many generations and brilliant young people to carry this legacy forward. This deep and draining soil, this proximity to the Mediterranean and its winds, comfort me when I see my son investing so much in biodynamics and aromatherapy. I believe in our future, I believe in my land.” With passionate new leadership at the helm, Costières de Nîmes is poised for a bright future.

DON'T-MISS EVENTS

Named a top-50 destination to visit in 2023 by the New York Times, Nîmes is rich in annual festivities. Here are some to mark on your calendar in 2025.

May 24-25

15th edition of Vignes Toquées, gastronomic walk in the vineyards

A unique blend of outdoor adventure and fine dining, this route takes participants on a 5-mile hike through the vineyards with 6-7 stops, each featuring wine and dishes prepared by Michelin-starred chefs.

June 5-9

The Bodega of the Costières, during 4 evenings in the heart of Nîmes.

Nîmes' vibrant city center and excellent restaurants come alive during Pentecost, when the entire city transforms into a massive five-day party. With over a million visitors, it's the pinnacle celebration of the city.

May & June

Opening of a Costières de Nîmes showcase, in the heart of Nîmes

In the main square, a glass-enclosed space is transformed into an enoteca, featuring a wine wall that dispenses tastings from 20 producers.

July & August 2025, every Thursday evening

JeuDiVin, each week 10 producers of the appellation come to the heart of Nîmes from 6-11 p.m.

Shops stay open late and, for a small fee, glasses and tasting tickets can be purchased. Ten to 12 producers gather to pour three cuvées each, while food trucks line the area and a band plays live music.



WARNING!!!

Do not read this book straight through from beginning to end! This book contains many different adventures you may go on, starting as you try to find your way out of a very long and winding wine cave.

Your guide, Cody, whose good nature is matched only by his thirst for rare wines, has led you down this tunnel and disappeared. Maybe it was the bones or the bear that scared him (or maybe it ate him). But the question is: Do you have the luck and skills you need to survive? You're about to find out.

From time to time, as you read along, you will be asked to make a choice. Your choices may lead you to a white sandy beach or the longest wine cave in the world (located in the Republic of Moldova) or Nosferatu's crypt. After you make your choice, follow the instructions to see what wine destination you are heading to next.

Think carefully before you act. Any move could be your last—or it might lead you straight to the prized 100-year-old bottle of botrytized wine.



ARRIVES

FROM	AIRLINE	ARRIVAL
ROME	ALITALIA	11:30
MERHBA	MORSE	11:35
VENUE	TWA	11:40
ETORRI	MORSE	11:45
YA'AT'EEH	MORSE	11:50
OMMEN	TWA	11:55
KAAAC epleate	TWA	12:00
TULOA	TWA	12:05

TAKEOFF



CHELSEA KYLE

BY KARA NEWMAN

World Flight Center
by The Twentieth-century, 1962
Saarinen, Architect

Attention, please:

This is your captain speaking.

While it's no longer possible to fly on now-defunct airlines like Pan Am, TWA, Eastern Air Lines or Braniff International Airways, a growing number of new bars are channeling the nostalgic Friendly Skies of the mid-20th century.

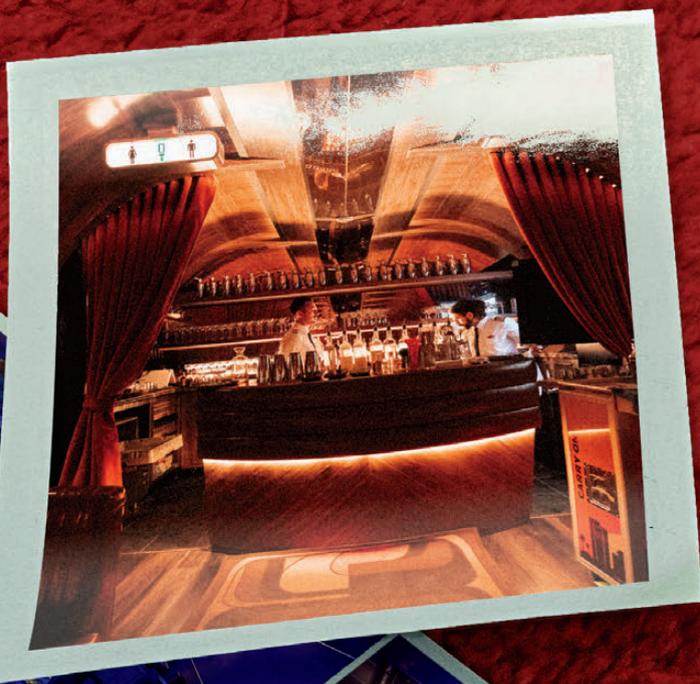
Perhaps the earliest iteration of the trend was the **TWA Hotel**, which opened in 2019

in NYC's JFK International Airport as a full-scale rehabilitation of the TWA Flight Center. The deep-dive homage to the 1962 landmark structure included multiple bars and restaurants, including a red-carpeted sunken lounge with a flipboard-style departures board, and "Connie," a 1958 Constellation aircraft-turned-cocktail lounge serving classic drinks with cheeky names, like the Control Tower Sour (an Amaretto sour with an optional float of bourbon).

Elsewhere, **PS Air Bar & Lounge** first opened in Palm Springs, California, in March 2020, an aviation-themed "speakeasy" hidden behind wine store Bouschet. (The pandemic, of course, meant a turbulent opening period; the bar didn't fully open until April 2021). The brain-child of two former international flight attendants, the space is outfitted with ivory-and-blue seats sourced from Southwest, interiors salvaged from inactive planes and features saucy overhead announcements and drag performers.

"It's the romance of it all," says co-owner Dennis Costa about the appeal of what some regard as the Golden Age of air travel. "It's the original feel of airline flight, when people dressed up to fly, instead of wearing sweatpants everywhere."

In addition, Palm Springs is noted for preserving and celebrating Mid-century Modern art and architecture, so it felt natural to hone in on midcentury aviation

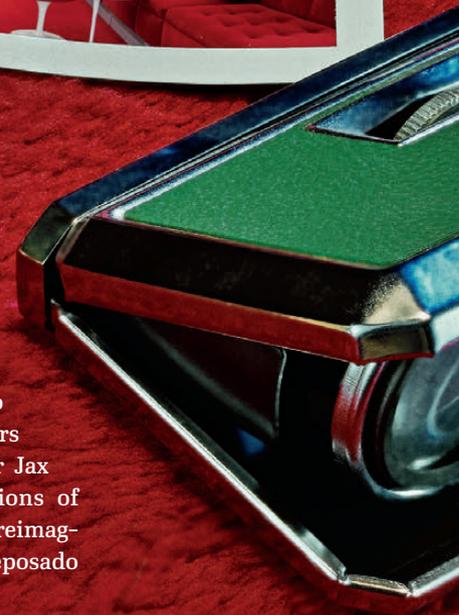


TWA
HOTEL



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CHELSEA KYLE

DRINK STYLING BY
DREW AICHELE



as the theme, Costa adds.

Similarly, **Carry On** in Phoenix opened in 2023, focusing on the groovy skies of the 1960s and 1970s. “I’ve always been obsessed with old-school glamorous travel that doesn’t exist anymore,” explains owner and operating partner Teddy Myers. He cites the late *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner’s private jet—noted for its onboard discotheque, crushed velvet and microsuede lounges, and celebrity passengers—as design inspiration. “People want to experience that grandeur that’s not here anymore.”

At **Carry On**, that translates as replica boarding passes, flight attendants in ’70s-style uniforms and go-go boots and video monitors built to look like old plane windows depicting takeoff and landing. “We even put

rumble shakers under every seat” to mimic the feel of a plane engine, Myers says. In addition, beverage director Jax Donahue developed elevated versions of period drinks, like a Pink Squirrel reimaged as a clarified cocktail with a reposado tequila base.

And when the green neon “Martini Time” light goes on, a vintage Pan Am cart glides through the aisles, dispensing martinis from mini cobbler shakers shaped like penguins: “It’s a bird that can’t fly for a plane that can’t fly.”

Armchair travelers will also want to add **Birds of Paradise** to their must-fly lists (the Brighton, Massachusetts bar opened in late 2022). Though you won’t find repurposed aircraft fittings, touches like leather valises decorated with travel stickers make clear the bar is inspired by mid-20th century voyages—and the menu makes the influence even more apparent. The jet-setting “global cocktail menu” brings together ingredients from two different locales (Kingston to Milan,

MAIN IMAGE: PHOTO: CHELSEA KYLE,
DRINK: DREW AICHELE

INSETS: COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM
TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF THE TWA
HOTEL; SCENE SELECT FOR CARRY ON (2);
COURTESY OF PS AIR (3)



LEFT: CHELSEA KYLE
RIGHT: PHOTO: CHELSEA KYLE, DRINK: DREW AICHELE

for example, melds Jamaican rum and passion fruit with Italian olives), and another rotating section of the menu explores a “current destination” (most recently, Mexico).

In addition to drawing adventure-some locals, some of these venues have drawn a surprising group of fans: current airline employees. “We get pilots and flight attendants all the time,” says Carry On’s Myers. “It really blew our minds how many want to come in. But they’re the ones always providing great service, and sometimes they want someone taking care of them.”

However, this particular crowd is trained to spot any inaccuracies among the high-flying details. For example, the bar team’s uniform includes jaunty epaulets with stripes. “One of my team had the stripes slightly off,” Donahue recalls. “A pilot came in and said, ‘You need to flip your stripes.’” ❏



Pearplane

Adapted from, PS Air Bar,
Palm Springs, California

📍 @psairbar

This crisp pear-flavored martini is one of the most popular drinks at the aviation-themed PS Air Bar. To customize it, try swapping out the simple syrup for an equal amount of elderflower liqueur or ginger syrup.

- 1/2 fresh ripe pear, diced**
- 2 ounces Absolut Pears pear-flavored vodka**
- 3/4 ounce lemon juice**
- 3/4 ounce simple syrup (or 1 ounce, if a sweeter drink is preferred)**
- 3 thin pear slices, for garnish**

Muddle pear chunks in the bottom of a cocktail shaker, until the fruit is mashed and releases pear juice. Add remaining ingredients and ice. Shake and double-strain into a chilled martini glass.

Spear pear slices on a toothpick or cocktail pick, and fan them out. Balance on rim of glass to garnish.

*If you choose to fly to Hong Kong, turn to page 66.
If you'd rather catch a flight to San Miguel de Allende, turn to page 24.*

BY
KARA
NEWMAN

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE IRISH EXIT



Happy hour starts at 2 p.m. at this busy train station bar where history repeats itself every two minutes.

The Irish Exit, in the middle of NYC's Moynihan Train Hall, is like Groundhog Day for Guinness.

Well-named for the practice of slipping away from a social gathering without saying goodbye, at this hectic train station bar—an offshoot of The Dead Rabbit, a financial district cocktail bar with outposts in Austin, Texas and Washington, D.C.—commuters, tourists and travelers come and go, come and go. I'm the rarity who has posted up for the long haul spending a day observing the comings and goings, pulls and pours. And what I see is a lot of Guinness.

To my left, a 30-ish-year-old man in a chore coat orders a pint. It's the most

popular order at The Irish Exit, where more than 600 pints of Ireland's iconic stout are pulled from the tap each day, in an elaborate three-part pour. The first pull fills the glass about 60%; it's then allowed to settle, as is the second pull, which leaves about a half inch at the top. The final "back pour" tops the deep brown liquid with a frothy white collar. A bartender spritzes the exterior of the glass with water to remove any sticky residue. The full process takes 90 seconds, which can be an eternity for someone with a train to catch. "You only get two minutes to impress," says General Manager David Moylan.

Chore Coat dispatches his Guinness quickly; before it's even empty, the

bartender has inquired whether he'd like another ("Sure, why not?"). What look like sparring hummingbirds etched on her arm dart and fight as she pulls the lever in the designated three-part choreography. As the last sip leaves white foam in the guest's glass, Chore Coat pauses to capture on his phone, in all its pristine chocolate-brown glory. Minutes later, the Guinness is gone; he's gone, too.

Moynihan Train Hall opened on January 1, 2021, an expansion to NYC's overworked Penn Station; The Irish Exit took over the bar concession in 2023. A black and white flipboard over the bar—reminiscent of the one that departed Penn in 2017—clacks

NICHOLAS RUIZ



“The full process takes 90 seconds, which can be an eternity for someone with a train to catch.”

crisply, displaying fun facts about Ireland, Irish whiskey and, occasionally, timely alerts about outbound trains.

Drinks feature Irish whiskey and other Irish spirits, though they're not the big sellers here; a paltry 15 Irish coffees (on the menu as “Irish Cawfee,” in Noo Yawk parlance) sell per day. By comparison, a vodka-based Espresso Martini on tap sells about 194 each day. That's the drink I order—and I sip through it way too fast, as if I have an Amtrak to catch.

The Irish Exit opens daily at 10 a.m.—earlier than even venerable Irish saloon McSorley's Old Ale House, which opens at a leisurely 11 a.m. “People are traveling then, and we have guests lined up and waiting,”

to fortify with Bloody Marys, Mimosas and, of course, Guinness, says Irish Exit Bar Manager Sami Foster. Midday tends to be slower—this might be the only bar where happy hour begins at 2 p.m.—and hits its stride between 5 and 8 p.m.

The bar aims to capture attention with live musicians (Irish, 'natch) or DJ sets Tuesday through Friday. “It can be wild,” Foster acknowledges. “People dance.”

From 8 to 10 p.m., the vibe is more chill, but it's still a full bar, as local travelers are heading out after Broadway shows or Rangers games at Madison Square Garden. Many are ordering stiff nightcaps, like Martinis or Old Fashioneds.

Midnight brings last call (after a second

10 to 11 p.m. happy hour). At this point, “We do a lot of drinks to go,” says Foster, which are poured into branded paper cups to drink discreetly on the train (or whenever their next stop is).

At this witching hour, down the bar from me, between a boisterous foursome toasting with Sauvignon Blanc (about 245 by-the-glass pours sell daily), I spot a white-haired gent in a tweed newsboy cap nursing a Guinness. He cuts a figure that could be anywhere, even a pub in Ireland. But the roller bag tucked next to his barstool reminds you that a train is likely rolling into the station, just a hasty sprint away. 

All statistics supplied by The Irish Exit.

If you're ready to hop a flight, turn to page 44; if boats are more your thing, turn to page 74.

Tilt a Swirl

Somm Cabernet
Handblown Glass

*What if there were a
handblown glass that
looked like you should be
afraid to touch it but that
you can actually throw in the
dishwasher. The main thing,
though, is the bowl built for
optimal aeration—give it a swirl.*

Shop at
WINEENTHUSIAST.COM



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CHELSEA KYLE

FOOD STYLING BY
DREW AICHELE

Every
bite
you take,
every
breath
you take,

I won't
be
kissing
you.

IT ALWAYS
ENDS WITH

Poutine

A crawl through Montréal sip
by sip and bite by bite.

BY
ANNA-CHRISTINA CABRALES

It's

2 a.m., and I've landed in the more bougie side of Montréal, indulging in the requisite late-night snack at Poutine **La Banquise**, tucked in the heart of the Plateau. A sip of beer cuts through the grease in the air I just breathed in. Locals swear this rendition of poutine is the best in town, and I won't argue. On golden paper, fries, cheese curds and gravy sound deceptively simple, but here in Montréal they are like nowhere else. Dammit Montréal, you hold me hostage.

Arriving in Montréal earlier that day meant connecting almost immediately with my bestie, Gilbert Lemieux—a name in this city's bar scene that is treasured royalty. You can find him at **Maison Boulud in the Ritz-Carlton Montréal**. Sit at the bar, order a martini and burger and life's problems melt away. We first met a decade ago at a wine "throwdown," swirling glasses of

Chave Hermitage '01, toasting like we were born to do just this, and it feels like yesterday. The vibe is unpretentious, surprising and never, ever forgettable. Just like the Montréal scene. Whether you're in a Michelin-starred restaurant or a hole-in-the-wall, this place celebrates a deep love for local ingredients, honest craftsmanship and genuine hospitality. The cherry on top? The exchange rate. Armed with 1.4 USD to 1 CAD, I feel like I'm stealing. Once my girl math kicked in, I ambitiously devised a whirlwind tour of the city's delights.

9:00 a.m-ish that morning

LIGHT BREAKFAST

Gilbert kicked off our day much as we are ending it—with local decadence: a plate of fluffy pancakes smothered in maple syrup straight from his brother's trees—it's dark, rich and complex. The lighter stuff? Toss it, it's tourist trap nonsense. To balance the sweet, he cuts me a slab of Comtomme, local cow's milk cheese straight out of Compton—from the Eastern Townships of Québec, that is. It ages like a fine Comté, all deep and nutty. The chaser: a glass of Polisson's Baumier, a local cider with balsam fir added during fermentation. The savory punch it adds to the maple syrup is insane. This is the stuff you polish off in 10-minutes flat. Simply irresistible.

Later, channeling his inner Shania Twain, Gilbert belts out: "Let's go, girl!" Translation: The day has officially begun. Breakfast was just the warm-up.

1:05 p.m.

REPEAT OFFENDER

We hit up **Le Petit Alep**, right across from Jean-Talon market, this rustic Syrian and Armenian spot where scents greet you within a 20-foot radius. Dropping \$100 a head feels like a crime you'd happily commit again. Scan the menu but don't even think about skipping the hummus and muhammara—walnuts, Aleppo pepper, roasted bell pepper and pomegranate molasses. Pure heaven. Kabobs are also a must—tenderloin or chicken, depending on the wine du jour. Garlic here is gospel—every bite you take, every breath you take, I won't be kissing you. Gilbert orders chicken kabobs with a bottle of Pierre Frick Riesling Rot Murlé 2022—j'adore! High acid, mineral-laden juice with inviting complexity that tangoes beautifully with all the spices and richness.

4:00 p.m.

AMARI HOARDERS

Apéro time, baby! Because nothing goes down smoother after a solid meat sweat than a crisp, bitter drink. To kill time before Mon Lapin opens, we hit up amari and vermouth kingdom **Bar Bello**, just a four-minute walk away. Think '90s Italian with bright, punchy colors but with a sleek Brooklyn-Williamsburg vibe without trying too hard. The star here? A wall of vermouth and amari so stacked, it's like they're hoarding liquid gold. Pair anything with their no-frills menu of croquettes, fromage and charcuterie. Always go for the olives—salty, briny little flavor bombs that amp up each sip.

5:00 p.m.

NEXT LEVEL

Next, we head to **Mon Lapin**, where walking in feels like we're crashing a secret VIP party. Low lighting, moody wood, banquettes tucked away: You've unlocked some secret level. It's been awarded Canada's best restaurant, but still is très laid-back and unapologetically cool. Homey with mismatched plates, like Grandma's holiday dinnerware collection. Just right for serving comfort dishes like le croque-pétoncle, a scallop purée sandwich, that makes you feel like a kid again—but one at a fancy pretend tea party. As for the wine list? It presents like it's the love child of all of Canada's sommeliers put together. Just lock me in their cellar with a corkscrew, please.



“Montréal’s food scene feels more alive to me than anywhere else.”

3:30 p.m.

WHILE YOU WAIT

Gilbert makes the call for an Uber. Using that time to recover, we quickly find ourselves steps away from **Crocodile** for cocktails. I raise an eyebrow. Formerly a summer pop-up, this spot is an ode to both Montréal’s rawness and craft. Tucked behind a nondescript backroom door of Alambika, Montréal’s high-end cocktail supply shop, Crocodile feels like a well-kept secret for a reason.

10:00 p.m.

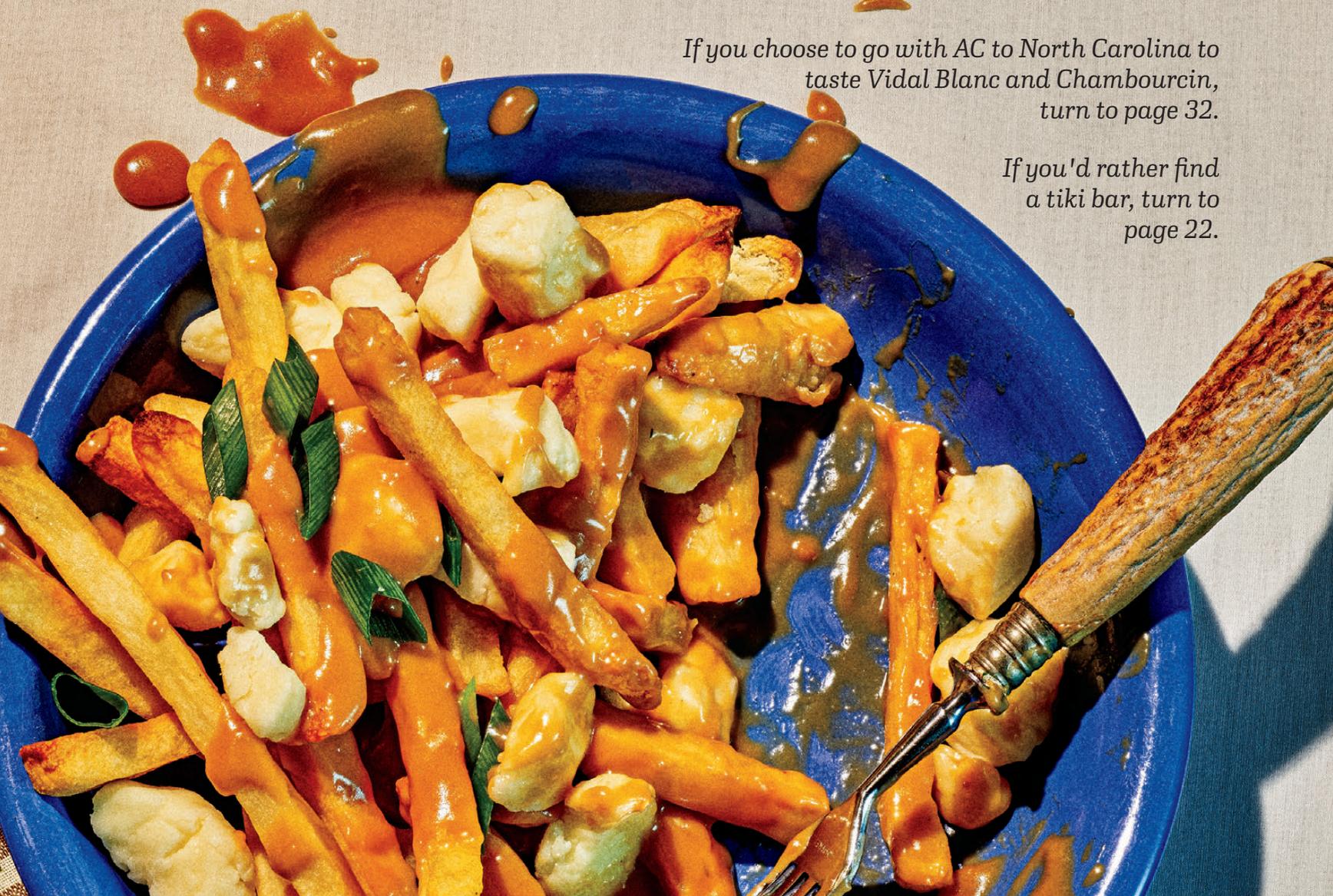
WAY AFTER 8

I can never leave Montréal without swinging by **Monopole**—my favorite wine bar since it opened in 2017. Forget paper menus or QR codes—the wall is the wine list. You scan the bottles and pick whatever strikes your fancy.

The team greets us like old friends, pouring something to catch up. I’ve always loved Monopole, but when the night stretches into the early hours, that’s when the magic really happens. It’s never the same experience twice—and that’s exactly what keeps me coming back. Each visit, I beg for their seasonal After 8 cocktail—think liquid Thin Mint, but dangerously sluggable. It could also probably cure my garlic breath at this point. **VE**

If you choose to go with AC to North Carolina to taste Vidal Blanc and Chambourcin, turn to page 32.

If you'd rather find a tiki bar, turn to page 22.



HAVE TEQUILLA,

Will Travel

BY
KARA
NEWMAN

When

Benjamin Padrón Novoa first devised the Margarita Al Pastor in 2009, he had no idea how far the delightfully fruity-spicy cocktail would travel. Though Novoa is now well known as cofounder of pioneering Mexico City bar Licorería Limantour (he parted ways with the bar in mid-2024), he wasn't even a professional bartender when he created the drink. After a career in marketing, working with brands such as Nestlé, Calvin Klein and Bacardí, in 2009 he signed up for a cocktail class in London. The final exam: Create a twist on a classic cocktail.

"I said, I'm Mexican, I'll work with the margarita," Novoa recalls. He drew on his own experience as inspiration: "After you go out in Mexico, after a party, you go get tacos, your tacos al pastor. I said, 'Let's combine that into a drink.'"

Typically, al pastor layers crisp-edged pork (spit-roasted on a trompo, then shaved off into super-thin slices) on a tortilla, along with small pieces of pineapple, onion and cilantro, often topped with a salsa made with chili peppers and lime. Novoa interpreted that as a spicy margarita, muddling pineapple chunks and cilantro with serrano chilis, and shaking it with tequila, orange liqueur and lime. An instructor from the cocktail class suggested adding mint and basil to that, "to add more fragrance," and the drink was complete.

He went on to cofound Limantour—one of Mexico's first cocktail bars—in 2011. The Margarita Al Pastor was part of the opening menu. "But it needed to be adapted for a high-volume bar," he says, and muddling proved too slow. "People are thirsty, there is pressure." So the bar began pre-batching a

**How the
Margarita
Al Pastor has
made its way
well beyond
Mexico City.**

“taco mix,” blending pineapple with the herbs and a serrano-infused agave syrup, which could be quickly shaken with the other ingredients and added a coriander-salt half-rim for complexity.

Today, the drink has migrated well beyond Mexico City, with ever-changing permutations.

Of course, one reason it has traveled so far is because the Limantour team brings it with them, taking on an active schedule of guest shifts. “We have served the Margaritas Al Pastor in five continents and more than 55 countries around the world,” Novoa claims. And no matter what else is on the menu, “90% of the time, it’s the first drink to finish.”

But it’s endured because it’s sufficiently versatile to encourage myriad adaptations. For example, at live-fire-focused Pascual in Washington, D.C., a base of espadín mezcal is enlivened with chipotle-morita syrup, plus a pineapple garnish charred in embers from the kitchen hearth, according to bar manager Suzanne Critchlow. At NYC’s La Contenta, Alex Valencia translated the drink into a beer-based Michelada Al Pastor, blitzing cilantro, pineapple and chipotle into a “pastor mix,” topped up with passion fruit and Monopolio beer, served in a Tajín-rimmed glass. Perhaps the most over-the-top variation: a clarified milk punch, developed for an event in Shanghai, Novoa recalls.

But the drink has mainstream appeal, too: At Guy Fieri’s Tequila Cocina in Boston, it’s made with roasted pineapple purée, chipotle sour mix, and a Flavortown-friendly chili-lime dust rim.

After all, despite the fancy twists and turns, the drink is still a spicy margarita—one of the most popular drinks in the U.S.—at heart. And it’s a drink that potentially has room to run even farther in 2025 and beyond, as it incorporates multiple trending flavors: pineapple (and sometimes other tropical fruit), fresh herbs, and savory and spicy flavors.

Plus, “everyone knows tacos,” says Chad Spangler, partner at Service Bar D.C. Yet, it has a unique aspect: Al pastor is distinguished by the spit-roasting of meat, reflecting the heritage of Lebanese immigrants who brought shawarma-making techniques to Puebla in the 1930s. “It’s a recognizable piece of everyone’s favorite food that’s very different and helps it become this cultural icon,” Spangler says.

Though few Al Pastor Margs include meat, the charred flavor derived from spit-roasting ideally should be part of the drink, he adds. Some might opt for a smoky mezcal to achieve that, Spangler says. His variation grills pineapple over charcoal and mesquite, then blends it with dried guajillo and chipotle chili peppers, plus earthy annatto seed, giving the drink a ruddy hue. That “pastor mix” is shaken with blanco tequila and raicilla, plus pineapple and lime, and

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CHELSEA
KYLE

DRINK STYLING BY
DREW
AICHELE

served in a traditional clay pot garnished with pineapple fronds.

Of course, someone always has to take the party one step further.

“We decided we wanted to take the taco and translate it into the pure version of itself,” says Max Reis, beverage director of Los Angeles restaurant *Mirate*. “We take the pork fat left over from our kitchen, called *asiento*, and fat-wash our house mezcal. Also, we have house tortillas we make every day. We take the ones we would not be using, and put them into the mezcal as part of the fat wash,” adding a subtle cooked-corn flavor. This particularly complicated, conceptual variation also includes a Oaxacan chili liqueur and pineapple eau de vie. Named “El Taquero #2,” (a *taquero* is a person who makes or serves tacos), the drink is served with a splash of cilantro-infused olive oil for extra aroma.

“It’s out-there, but it’s fun, intriguing,” says Reis. After all, a decade-plus after its invention, this taco-inspired drink is easy to recognize and celebrate: “It’s one famous thing from Mexico meets another famous thing from Mexico.” 🍸



- 2 ounces blanco tequila
- 1 ounce pineapple juice
- ½ ounce orange liqueur
- ¼ ounce lime juice
- 1 tablespoon chipotle powder or guajillo powder, to rim glass (select something a little smoky)
- 1 tablespoon salt, to rim glass
- Lime wedge, to rim glass
- Fresh mint leaves, fresh basil leaves, fresh cilantro sprig

“ We have served the Margaritas Al Pastor in five continents and more than 55 countries around the world. ”

MARGARITA AL PASTOR

Adapted from Benjamin Padrón Novoa, Licorería Limantour, Mexico City

📷 @limantourmx

This spicy margarita is inspired by the flavors found in *al pastor* tacos: namely pineapple, chile peppers and fresh cilantro. While there’s no meat in this drink, the glass is rimmed with a mix of dried chili powder and salt to add a smoky, savory effect that subtly mimics the flavor of spit-roasted pork.

Combine chipotle powder and salt in a shallow bowl or dish. Use the lime wedge to moisten half of the outer edge of a rocks glass. Roll the outer edge of the glass in the chipotle-salt mixture to coat. Set glass in freezer.

In the bottom of a cocktail shaker, gently muddle the fresh herbs. Add remaining ingredients and ice. Shake well. Strain into prepared rocks glass, over fresh ice.

If you choose to drive to Baja, turn to page 60.

If you choose to fly to Hong Kong, turn to page 66.



VINO *with a* VIEW

Keep your labels faced out with a clear view so you always know what you're opening next.

- *Patented VinoView® matrix shelves face labels out so you always know what you're opening next*
- *Smart Cellar Remote App is sort of like a nanny cam for your wine*
- *You might not know what high-performance inverter compressor cooling is, but you'll be glad you have it when you pop the cork on perfectly aged wine*
- *Full cabinet LED lighting so you spotlight your collection the same as you would art in a museum*
- *Complete with shelf tags and chalks to label what you want to "drink first" or "save for the in-laws"*

Shop at
WINE ENTHUSIAST.COM



NO

BY
JOHN CAPONE

Chaser

A seaside Champagne and salt pairing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, breaks taste down to the elements.



In Mexico, when you get tired of pouring agave spirits down your throat, you can pay someone to massage them into your skin. The spa at Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal offers a mezcäl massage, which, like many of the spa's treatments, has roots in Mexican folk healing (or *curanderismo*) with treatments also tied to moon phases and the sea (the spa itself sits surrounded by saltwater pools fed by the Pacific). As you lay face down, and the familiar scent of mezcäl strikes you, you might ask your masseuse where this idea comes from, and they might tell you, as Luzmarie answers: "Our grandmothers would do this when we were sore," and goes on to explain the alcohol is believed to relax the tissue in your skin. Regardless of how you feel about folk healing, you would probably agree that the arnica used has more effect than the mezcäl, so the jury is still out. However, 80 minutes of listening to whale songs and chimes in the dark while covered in mezcäl will get you thinking about the agave plant on a cosmic level.

But that truly transportive massage—after a soak in the saltwater pools and maybe a stroll on the beach back to your room where your nightly Corona and guac care package awaits, which you enjoy as you watch from the balcony while the sun sinks into the ocean—sets the tone for what is a surprisingly singular wine tasting experience offered at Pedregal. At the restaurant El Farallon (one of three on the grounds and is carved into the side of a cliff overhanging waves crashing into the rocks below), you'll

soon enjoy the Champagne tasting, pairing a range of sparklers with salt.

When you arrive at 8 p.m., set up on the balcony of El Farallon are three tulips of Champagne: Veuve Clicquot, Michel Gonet Rosé and Henriot, each with a small pile of salt next to the stem—charcoal, pink Himalayan and smoked salt, respectively.

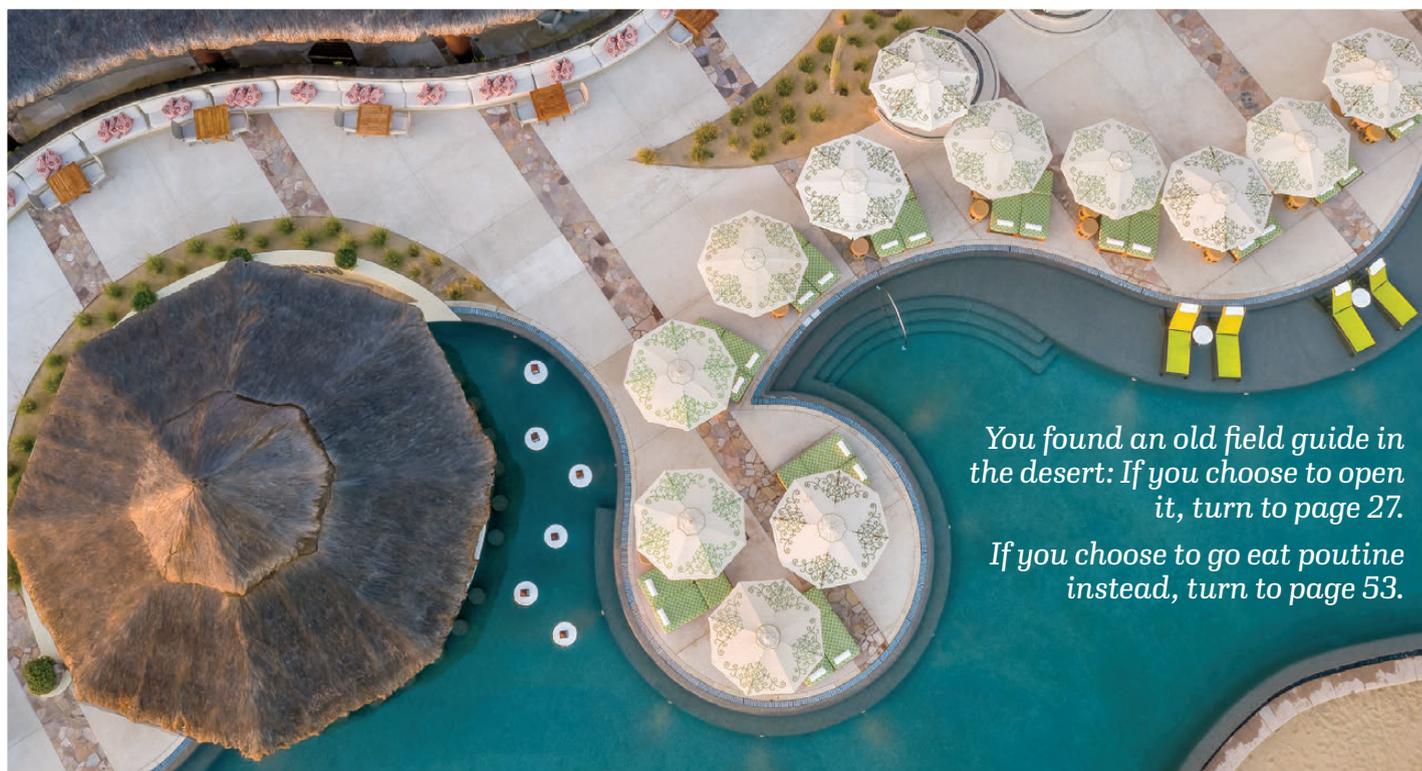
The premise might sound like something more appropriate to a tequila shot you'd have at Señor-Frog's than the rarefied experience it actually is, but if you were skeptical at first, you won't be after you try it. The idea is to take a sip of the bubbles, consider the taste, take a pinch of salt in your mouth and swallow, then take another sip.

If you've ever paired sparkling wine with a potato chip or, more relevantly to this seaside setting, caviar, you know exactly what is going on in your mouth with this pairing. In fact, after going through the salt pairing, you might be shocked to learn it's not more common. El Farallon is known for it, and seems to stand alone in offering it in quite this manner.

The natural pairing of a zip of salinity and brioche with mineral-driven bubbles works in the culinary sense, but it also serves to pull fruit from the glass as a contrast in some instances, especially the Gonet, while the smoked salt highlights the flintiness in the Henriot blanc de blancs. The salts are "more mineral than Champagne," says Jhonatan Adame, wine director at the property, "bringing out the best expression of the Champagne in your mouth, allowing you to taste the fruity notes better and distinguish elegant acidity." No lime necessary. **WE**



BLAKE MARVIN PHOTOGRAPHY (2)



You found an old field guide in the desert: If you choose to open it, turn to page 27.

If you choose to go eat poutine instead, turn to page 53.

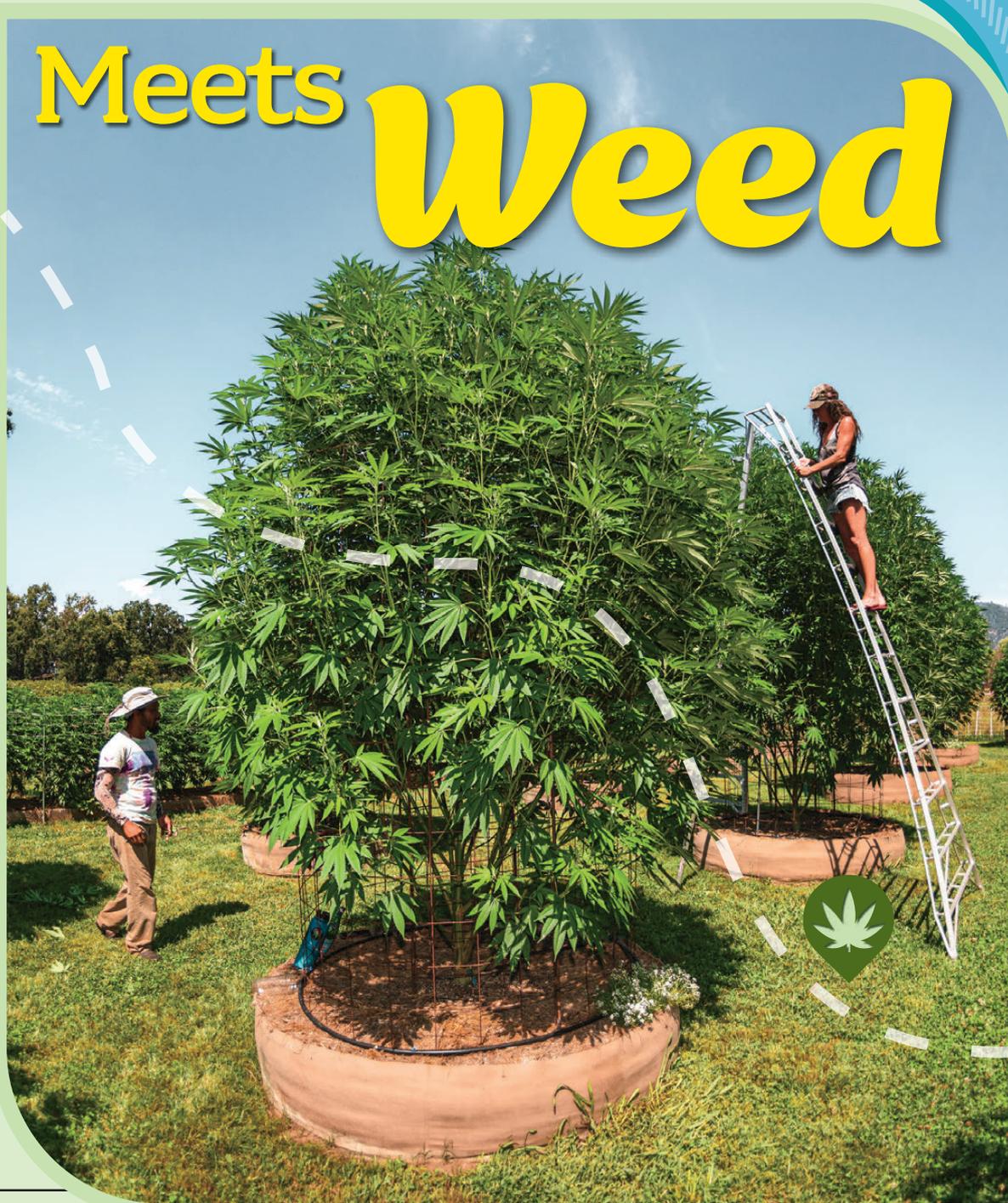
Where Wine



Meets Weed

Wandering Mendocino's Cannabis Trail shows in more ways than one why the region is known as California's 'greenest AVA.'

BY
LOUISE
HURREN



LEFT: JAMES REA, RIGHT: COURTESY OF HERITAGE MENDOCINO

Late summer in San Francisco, the weather is warm and the sky cloudless. With 48 hours of vacation left before I board a plane home to Europe, I'm looking to wind down—quit the gritty city for a laid-back vibe. Northern California offers heaps of wine-themed itineraries, of course (but been there). A search led me to The Cannabis Trail and its suggestions for exploring the history of the area's marijuana movement.

In France, where I was due to head home in two days, cannabis is illegal, so a plan for a whistle-stop trip through the Emerald Triangle—the largest cannabis-growing region in the U.S. just a couple of hours north—greatly appealed. Mendocino is one of the three counties (along with Trinity and Humboldt) that form the Triangle, and it has been a mecca for marijuana cultivation since the 1960s. Now it's entering its cannatourism era. The Mendocino County visitors guide told me to expect high-grade, quality craft cannabis cultivation, consumption lounges and dispensaries, canna-friendly lodging and even “artistic expression of cannabis in museums, galleries and cuisine”—enough said. I jumped in the rental car and set out.

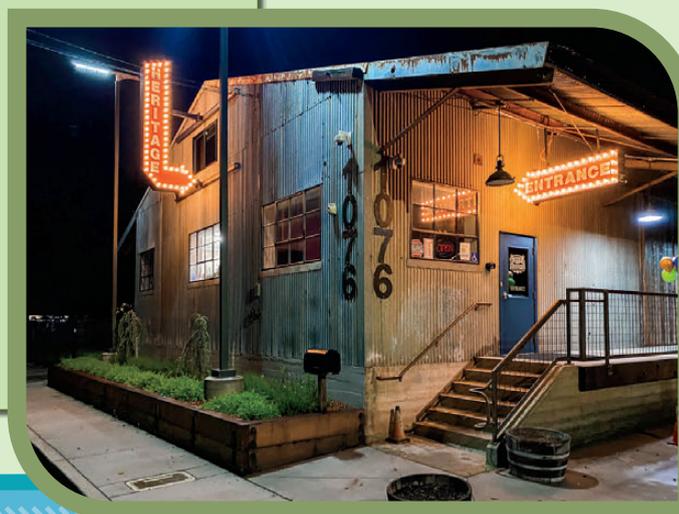
UKIAH BOUND

The route was real simple: north up U.S. 101, straight on through Santa Rosa, and a couple of hours later, I was in the southernmost tip of the Triangle. I chose Ukiah as my base: Located just off the 101, it was perfectly positioned for exploring the area, and offered multiple choices for drinking, dining and sleeping.

Ukiah's downtown dispensaries were a revelation. Some were more aesthetically appealing than others (a couple were downright intimidating), but all yielded their fair share of fascinating product and kit. I expanded my mind and vocabulary to include gummies, bangers, terp slurpers, dab rings and even lube and suppositories. (Who knew?)

I got the warmest welcome at **Heritage Mendocino**, the world's first public cannabis hashery plus dispensary and lounge, where I watched solventless hash being made by hand (it involves white lab coats and sophisticated machinery, and the end product looks like taffy).

I confessed my 420-newbie status to kindly budtender Bryan, who briefed me on the dispensary's 75 different flavors of hash and the kind of intricate aromas I could expect from high-quality marijuana; talking about tropical fruit and pine notes and earthy, floral undertones made perfect sense to the wine drinker in me. I sniffed my way through a menu of elaborately named concentrates (Gush Mints and Garlic of Oz) and Bryan patiently answered all my questions about resin, rosin, extracts and edibles. The top-tier service, plus a fridge full of cannabis-infused beverages and a sweet outdoor deck made Heritage one of my pot hot spots.



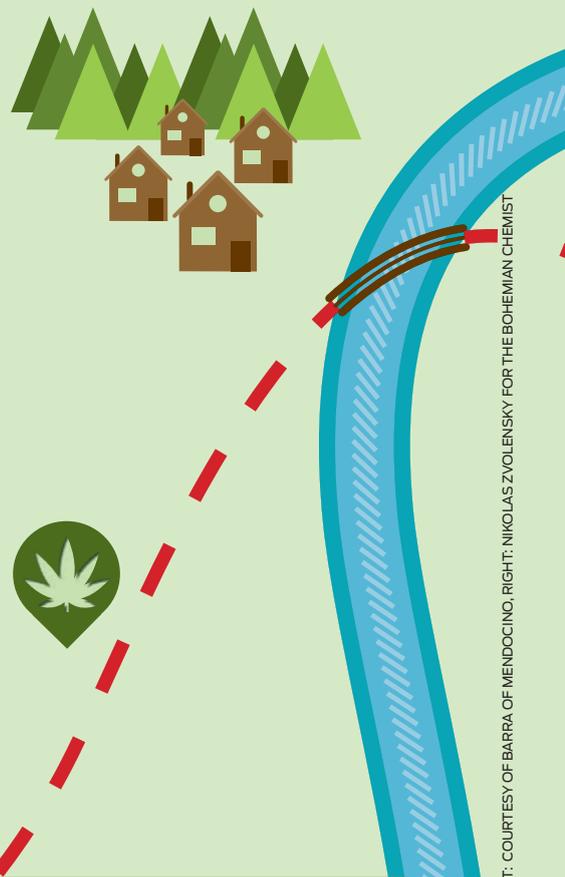
THE SPLENDORS OF REDWOOD VALLEY

Also high on the list (no pun intend—well, yes) **Plantshop**, a women-owned dispensary, had a female-friendly feel. Tucked away on the edge of town, it specializes in sun-grown cannabis, and a Cannabis Trail plaque commemorates the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s. A yoga class was in progress, and several upcoming events were posted (a gathering of Nor-Cal Women in Cannabis with certified ganjier Leah Cerri intrigued me). I took photos of the plants in the half-acre outdoor lounge and generally vibed with the smiley staff.

Heading to my next stop in Redwood Valley, I drove slowly with the windows down, taking in the views of seemingly endless acres of rolling golden grassland. I inhaled deeply, and the sweet, citrusy smell of sensimilla hung heavy in the air. Hoopouses sat behind tall fences, hiding their precious crops from prying eyes. Time stood still, and life was, well, groovy.

I drifted up the valley to **Frey Vineyards**—America's very first USDA Organic and Demeter Biodynamic certified winery—to see their new, ultra-sustainable facility (official inauguration scheduled for later this year), then made a pit stop at **Barra** to admire their historic tasting room that resembles an upturned champagne glass (trippy, but hey, it was the 1970s).

I was getting the munchies, so supper at the **Ukiah Brewing Company** (America's first certified organic brew pub) was in order. I ordered some \$2.50 samplers and worked my way through their handcrafted, unfiltered beers until I found my sweet spot (the Orr Springs IPA, a crisp red apple and citrus blend on a firm hop frame). One order of Fort Bragg Rock Cod tacos later, and I was ready to tune in, drop out and, um, go to bed.



LEFT: COURTESY OF BARRA OF MENDOCINO, RIGHT: NIKOLAS ZVOLENSKY FOR THE BOHEMIAN CHEMIST





420-FRIENDLY LODGING

Mendocino County has an impressive selection of canna-friendly accommodations, from the upscale, more boutique-y (The Madrones, The Brambles Hideaway), the pet-friendly (The Andiron Seaside Inn and Cabins, Mendocino Magic), the eco-friendly (Shambhala Ranch Eco Lodge), the vintage (Rendezvous Mendocino) and the accessibly priced, amusingly named Captains Quarters “bud & breakfast.”

TASTE AND TERPENES

Anderson Valley is an easy side trip from Ukiah, and a no-brainer for wine lovers: Highway 128 is a winding ribbon lined by lichen-draped oaks and mighty redwoods, connecting the 101 with the coast. A delightful drive, it's studded with small-scale tasting rooms where I sampled some of the AVA's cooler-climate wines. I loved **Husch Vineyards** and their lush, late harvest Gewürztraminer, ditto **Navarro Vineyards** (family-run, intimate, no tasting fee) and **Boonville's Disco Ranch**, a charmingly kooky wine bar anchored in local wines (but stretching well beyond) and tasty morsels like charcuterie and cheeses.

However, the highlight was **The Madrones**, a classy, canna-hospitality concept within a collection of cloistered buildings and courtyards just outside Philo. As a wine lover, I felt right at home—the site features two tasting rooms, a wood-fired restaurant, a ritzy gift shop and some smart lodgings—but The Madrones' real unique appeal is **The Bohemian Chemist**, an Art Deco herbal apothecary with eastern European cabinetry, antique glass pharmacy bottles, Man Ray photographs and its own brand of exquisitely packaged, sun-grown cannabis products.

I talked taste and terpenes with the affable budtender, and learned that the founder's mother grew her own supply on-site back in the days before legalization; today her legacy lives on through the cultivation of quality landrace cannabis. And just as harvest parties are common in wine country, so The Bohemian Chemist marks the release of its latest crop with a pickup party for club members who come to collect their allocation and then enjoy a little recreation and relaxation (apparently the last party included a ganja and wine pairing led by renowned canna-blogger Jamie Evans aka The Herb Somm).

This sounded most excellent, but there was more: From July through October, The Madrones hosts cannabis weekends, with Saturday dinner and live music in the consumption lounge, and on Sundays, a local craft cannabis market in the courtyard. I kicked myself for visiting on a weekday. It was time to head to the airport, but I was already planning my return. **WZ**

To head south to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, turn to page 60.

If you have the munchies, turn to page 18.



LOST *CANTONESE* SPIRITS

BY
Jonathan
DeLise



ALL IMAGERY COURTESY OF KINSMAN

Hong Kong
bar owner
Gavin Yeung
is bringing
back nearly
forgotten
distillates
with roots in
traditional
medicine.

IN Hong Kong, a liquor bottle might hold much more than the liquid inside it. Reviving Cantonese spirits has become a passion of Gavin Yeung, who went from covering the bar scene as an editor at *Tatler Dining Hong Kong* to shaping it as cofounder of restaurant and bar Kinsman.

Since Hong Kong's handover from the UK back to China in 1997—and the subsequent diffusion of Mandarin throughout the city—the desire of younger generations to maintain a connection with Cantonese (which has become a signifier of local identity) has never been stronger. Cantonese became the dominant language in 1842. Subsequently, the swift growth in the finance and shipping industries helped turn present-day Hong Kong into the world's prominent hub of Cantonese culture as it became a center for liquor production with distilleries concentrated in the Sheung Wan district, an area best known today for traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). TCM and the evolution of Cantonese distilling are inextricably linked, with alcohol serving as the base to extract medicinal properties from various herbs and roots.

The first distilleries popped up in the 1800s and by the 1940s, Hong Kong had around a dozen, mostly near Sheung Wan, producing Cantonese spirits. These liquors experienced their heyday in the late '40s into the '50s, but due to a number of factors, including globalization in the 1960s and an influx of cheap rice-based liquor from the mainland, Cantonese

spirits production dried up. Five decades later, when Yeung was bitten by the bug to explore them, they were quite difficult to find. Quinary in the city's Central financial district and Bound in the Sham Shui Po district offered a token taste, but Yeung wanted to expand upon that. In 2020 he both began experimenting with Cantonese spirits-based cocktails at home and created a cocktail glassware company called The Fukuokan.

Following collaborations with Hong Kong-based liquor companies such as Magnolia Lab, founded in 2020 as the brainchild of a mixologist and of all things, a TCM practitioner, Yeung teamed up with contemporary Hong Kong hospitality firm Singular Concepts to hatch his own bar.

The goal was simple—present to locals and visitors alike a nostalgic yet understated glimpse of Hong Kong, albeit with modern twists on classic menu items. The 1950s ambiance would blend the look of a local diner with a Japanese kissaten, or café, decorated with designs of old city landmarks and 1980s movie posters from famed Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai. However, the cornerstone of Yeung's concept was an emphasis on Cantonese and other regional Chinese alcohol.

The notion of a bar specifically highlighting native liquor was considered audacious, so Yeung had to find the right name. Ultimately, he settled upon Kinsman, or 建民號 in Cantonese. The name, meaning “a relative by birth,” refers to the many family-run distilleries that decades ago inhabited nearby Sheung Wan.

After a soft opening in December 2023, Kinsman, located in Central, held its grand opening on January 16, 2024. At first, “You're so brave for using local spirits” was a common refrain Yeung would hear. But his local history lessons masquerading as approachable fare wouldn't take long to be a hit with the city's mercurial night owls.



“The goal was simple—present to locals and visitors alike a nostalgic yet understated glimpse of Hong Kong, albeit with modern twists on classic menu items.”

KINSMAN

香港人之物語

A TALE OF HONGKONGERS

A liquid exploration of the assorted indigenous peoples of Hong Kong and their respective cultures



KINSMAN

香港中環卑利街65號
65 Peel Street, Central, Hong Kong

電話號碼：八伍二 二八六伍 伍零一一



Yuk Bing Siu (玉冰燒) Wing Lee Wai brand, 29% abv. A rice liquor washed with pork fat. Wing Lee Wai, founded in 1876, is one of the oldest remaining distilleries in Hong Kong.

Flavor profile: pandan (a sweet Southeast Asian plant), milk, rose

Monk Fruit Spirit (羅漢果紅米酒), Kwei Feng brand, 28% abv. Made by macerating monk fruit, in a mixture of baijiu (a Chinese sorghum-based liquor) and red glutinous rice wine.

Flavor profile: sweet and toasty



Snake Wine (蛇酒), Ser Wong Fun, 36% abv. Consuming snake-based dishes and drinks has long been considered to improve blood circulation. With a history spanning thousands of years, snake wine, typically made using cobras or keelbacks, is typically produced by fermenting them in rice wine for two to three months. The goal is for the essence of the snake—and even the venom—to contribute flavor and purported health benefits. Ser Wong Fun, founded 130 years ago in Guangdong province, is the second-oldest restaurant in Hong Kong, and specializes in snake dishes.

Flavor profile: varies greatly, but typically is earthy and can be fishy

Papaya Wine (木瓜酒), Wing Sang brand, 38% abv. A type of Cantonese digestif. Besides papaya, other ingredients include duzhong, a hardy rubber tree famed in traditional Chinese medicine for its bark and maitake mushrooms. This blend is then brewed with Tianjin baijiu, and rice wine.

Flavor profile: strong tropical fruit notes



Black Glutinous Rice Wine (黑糯米酒), Sam Seng brand, 22% abv. To make its version of rice wine, Sam Seng, founded in 1961, uses anthocyanin-rich black glutinous rice grown in southern China's Jiangxi province, morinda root and duzhong. As with many Cantonese liquors, this one is also thought to have traditional Chinese medical origins; many drink glutinous rice wine for its antioxidants and positive effects on blood circulation.

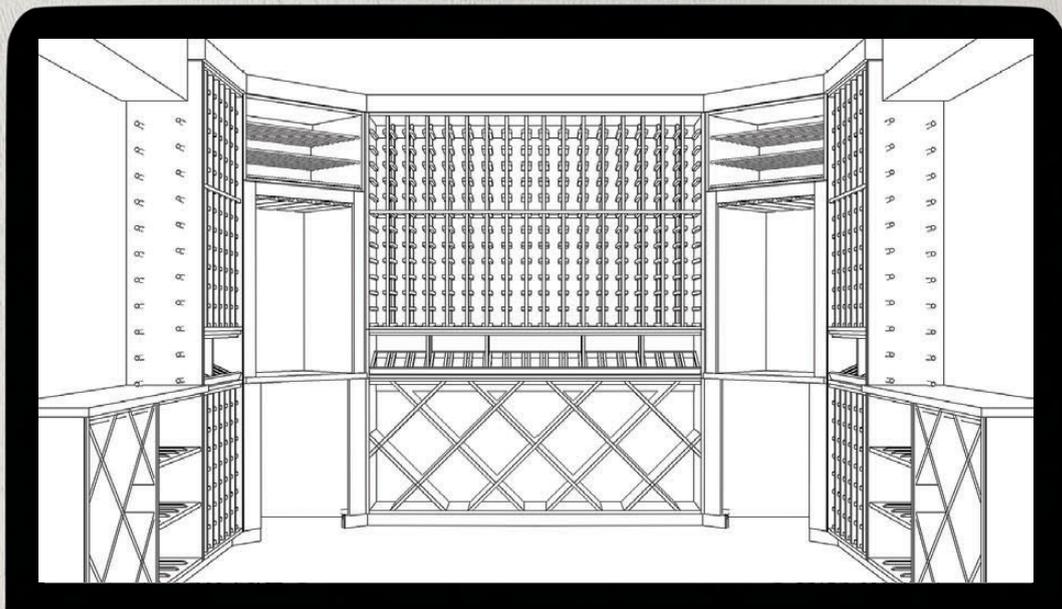
Flavor profile: mellow yet sweet, with an earthy aroma

If you choose to visit Japan next and go wine tasting, turn to the next page.

If you choose to bring a lost Cantonese spirit to the busiest bar in New York City, turn to page 50.

Take your vision out of storage

Your collection deserves to be seen



**Our team
of professional
Wine Storage
Consultants
can help you
create the
perfect wine
environment in
your home**

*whether that's for
a few cases or a few
thousand bottles.*



Start your free
design consultation at

WINE ENTHUSIAST.COM

8 6 6 . 2 7 2 . 5 4 5 6

Let us bring your custom-cellar
design dreams to life.

Pacific

Rim Pinot

A winemaker
incubator
grows in
Hokkaido,
Japan.

BY
THOMAS
SHOMAKER

If you visit IOR Winery on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, you won't find a fancy tasting room. Nestled on a hillside about an hour east of Sapporo, its production facilities are ringed by just over two acres of picturesque vineyards. But despite humble appearances, it would be hard to find a person who has contributed more to Hokkaido's modern wine scene than its founder, Bruce Gutlove.

Gutlove's fascination with wine began when he was an undergrad at Cornell University in New York's Finger Lakes Wine Country. After attaining a Master of Enology from University of



California, Davis, he worked for several years in Napa Valley before moving into consulting. One day in 1989 a call came in from Japan's COCO Farm & Winery north of Tokyo. COCO, which is owned and operated by people with intellectual disabilities, was looking to improve its wines' quality. Gutlove's consulting firm wasn't interested. He was.

Gutlove arrived in Japan unfamiliar with the language and culture, but intrigued by the chance to work with the intellectually disabled in a challenging winemaking environment.

"At the time, most Japanese wine was very sweet, oxidized and with excessive SO₂," said Gutlove. "It was made with what we considered in the West to be bad winemaking choices."

Gutlove discovered that part of the issue was that many Japanese winemakers who had studied vinification abroad tried to replicate what they had learned at home. But Japan is not Bordeaux or Napa Valley in either a climatic or aesthetic sense and the results were often disastrous. Gutlove began guiding COCO in best practices while encouraging its winemakers to develop their own distinctive styles.

Gutlove and his wife opened IOR Winery in 2012 as Hokkaido's only custom crush facility and incubator for aspiring winemakers. "The apprenticeship model for moving around to different wineries is not common here," said Gutlove, citing Japanese cultural ideas of employee loyalty. IOR thus became something of a safe space for Hokkaido growers to make their own wines, typically for five years. Each pays a fee for the facility, participating in every aspect of the production and then selling the vintages under their brands and the IOR label. The program is limited to Hokkaido fruit as Gutlove, having worked with grapes from all over Japan, wanted to deeply focus on one region, but there are also two-year apprenticeships open to all aspiring Japanese winemakers.

Gutlove's minimal-intervention vintages are typically defined as natural wine, although he doesn't like the label or the contention around it. He wants winemakers to find their own expressions and IOR facilitates additives for those who want to use them. By the early 2000s, COCO's winemakers were able to produce excellent vintages on their own and Gutlove was contemplating stepping aside lest his influence impede their individual development. He also wanted to do something that expressed his personal aesthetic.

COCO sources grapes from contract growers all over the country and as Gutlove was planning his next move, he became increasingly intrigued by the quality of Hokkaido fruit. And just as Canada and Britain have recently been able to cultivate grapes that couldn't be grown there before, climate change creates new viticulture possibilities in the region.

Speaking with Gutlove, it becomes clear that he sees Hokkaido wine's recent local popularity as a nice happenstance, not a destination. While pointing out that Hokkaido vintages have "definitely improved," Gutlove also says the quality isn't yet being reached consistently. And though some in Hokkaido's wine scene have described global warming as a boon to their industry, Gutlove is far more concerned about its negative impact.

"The weather is quite a bit warmer than even 10 years ago," said Gutlove. "We are a young industry and we have a lot of questions. If the weather is changing rapidly, it makes it harder to find answers."

Warming weather, however, has opened up Hokkaido to Pinot Noir cultivation just as it has become more difficult in traditional regions like Burgundy. As the northern Japan wine industry matured and adapted practices suited to its particular environment, winemakers and consumers began to notice unique attributes on Pinot Noirs and other wines

“France’s
Domaine
de Montille
established
vineyards in
Hakodate,
Hokkaido
in 2016.”

imparted by Hokkaido's rich volcanic soil. The resultant growth of Hokkaido viticulture has been dramatic. As of early 2024, Hokkaido had 64 wineries, triple the amount of 10 years ago, with an outsized number of their founders coming from the roughly 35 winemakers who have incubated at IOR. The winery has also attracted industry heavy hitters, like when France's Domaine de Montille established vineyards in Hakodate, Hokkaido, in 2016 and produced wine at IOR for four years with sourced fruit before its own grapes reached maturity.

Currently, 21 winemakers are producing at IOR, and Gutlove plans to double its acreage over the next couple of years. He also continues to serve on COCO's board of directors, visiting about once a month to guide—but not unduly influence—its vinification.

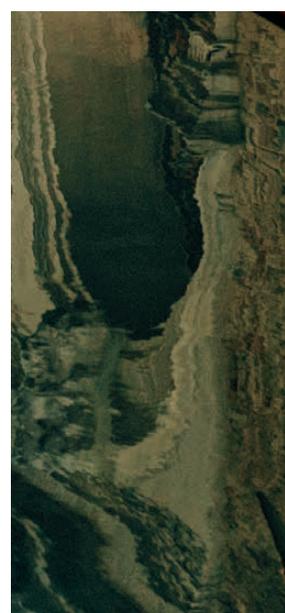
"The best wines I have ever tasted always come from the same kind of person," said Gutlove, describing someone with a clear vision and dedication to every step. "You look at the Japanese aesthetic sense in so many different things and when it is done well it is just stunning. I want to see what Japanese wine can achieve." 

If you choose to taste wine from the hybrid grape Petit Pearl in Colorado, turn to page 16.

If you choose to track down a rare mutation of Chardonnay, turn to page 30.

LAGUNA TO LOVE

Visiting Venice isn't all twisting past tourists trudging lost along canals, if you have access to a boat and you know what you're doing—*Danielle Callegari* is known for both.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
CHELSEA KYLE

katie

Parla and I love the Italian south. Katie wrote a book about it—titled, indicatively, *Food of the Italian South*—and when called upon by this very magazine to review Italian wine, I requested to cover only the wines from the south of Italy (though eventually I was strong-armed into accepting my once-adopted Tuscany, where they do also have some pretty good wine). Katie and I have a podcast, *Gola*, where we hammer on about this, emphasizing how everyone should spend more time in Italy's least tourist-trafficked areas. I note all this because it would seem to thoroughly preclude our interest in one Italian city in particular. And yet, we also love Venice. We more than love Venice. We adore Venice and go there often, and we encourage others to do the same—with an asterisk.

How do we reconcile hanging out in a place very much north of the Po that is literally drowning under the weight of an ungainly tourist population? For myself, I can point to the winning combination of preternatural confidence and a high threshold for embarrassment that makes me mostly immune to criticism for hypocrisy, but it's also true that there's more than one way to skin a cat, or in this case, to enjoy the capital of a once-great maritime republic. While most people trudge from the train station over the Rialto to Piazza San Marco without so much as a sideways glance at the rest of the laguna, Venice is in fact composed of more than 100 islands, the vast majority of which remain basically invisible to outsiders. Venice also still experiences extreme swings between high and low seasons, so while from April to October you have to be prepared to karate chop people to death to get from one side of the Centro Storico to the other, as soon as the weather turns cool the city is your playground, especially if you have the right means of transportation.

Besides being my podcast cohost and *bucatini's* worst enemy, Katie Parla is known for her extensive and profound knowledge of Italian food and beverage culture, a knowledge she has acquired by personally investigating every angle of the peninsula, so it's no surprise her intrepid spirit moved her to invest in a proper vehicle for year-round Venetian explorations. And for my part, if the words "boat" and "shoulder season" are pronounced aloud within 500 miles of my location I can teleport to the dock in mere milliseconds. Most recently we caught a day in late November with weather that felt positively summery but crowds that were mercifully thin—ideal for a crawl hitting some of our favorite Venetian-style bars (or *bacari*) and taking full advantage of how well you can eat and drink in this city under the right circumstances.

FIRST PORT

I pull into Santa Lucia station at 9:45 a.m., just in time to meet Katie for a first stop at **Al Mercà**, a classic but updated bacaro with a strong selection of natural wines by the glass. It's right in the belly of the beast at the edge of the Rialto Bridge, but if you arrive at 10 a.m.—a late hour to start drinking by the standards of true Veneziani—you can dip in for a quick sip of the laguna's native grape Durella or an unfiltered Ribolla Gialla from neighboring Friuli. We split the tuna salad, radicchio and horseradish sandwich because Katie considers it illegal to leave without one, and then pivot north toward the Cannaregio neighborhood, where *Laura*, Katie's romantically-named skiff, is tied up.

Having not yet been there myself I'm glad to have a chance for a glass at **La Sete**, a relatively new addition from the owners of **Da Rioba** restaurant next door. Both have the same clean, modern but cheerful atmosphere, but the more informal La Sete allows us to keep grazing. When I see baby octopus on toast and a long Champagne list I go comatose with desire and Katie has to smack me back to consciousness so we can keep moving to the now well-established and much-loved **Vino Vero**, where they vehemently refuse to serve a spritz in any form and where I inevitably end up buying another bottle of Champagne to go "just in case we need it later."

A friend has generously offered to be our designated captain for the day, so when we tip into the boat the only thing to worry about is making sure our scarves don't fly off when we hit speed. Another day might have seen us headed in the opposite direction, sitting on the Giudecca with our legs hanging off the fondamenta and Campari spritzes in plastic cups after an early morning stop at the fish market in Chioggia to round up some of the weird frutti di mare that can only be found in the laguna. The Lido is also hauntingly beautiful in late fall and early winter, after the film festival chaos is long gone, but the good weather and overall quiet gives us confidence that we can check out the otherwise usually overcrowded islands Torcello, Murano and Burano off to the northeast of the Centro Storico.



If the words

“boat” and
“shoulder season”

are pronounced aloud
within 500 miles
of my location I can
teleport to the dock in
mere milliseconds.

A visit to the Santa Maria Assunta church complex with its extraordinary mosaics followed by lingering in the sun with some more wine and snacks in the garden at **Locanda Cipriani** on Torcello would be enough to make this a perfect day. But with very little effort Katie convinces me that a stop in Murano for a tramezzino at **Bar al Faro** followed by a last cocktail on the terrace of the NH hotel is worth lifting myself out of my torpor. Indeed her suggestion proves right—mostly because Robertino, the owner of Bar al Faro, makes his own mayonnaise and dresses his tramezzini with industrial quantities thereof, but also because the view from the NH as we start to lose the last light of day is simply breathtaking.

I have to rally as I'm due for dinner at **Pietra Rossa**, one of my hands-down favorite places to eat in Italy right now, so I'm hoping that the bracing salt air will somehow allow my body to digest everything I've put in it so far today. If not, I know Andrea (the owner) has a substantial grappa collection, so we can cut right to the chase. [WE](#)

*If you choose to take The Cannabis Trail, turn to page 62.
Or to follow Dr. Callegari to Thailand, turn to page 38.*

SEAGLASS
WINE COMPANY

A COASTAL STATE OF MIND



SAUVIGNON BLANC

91

POINTS
BEST BUY

PINOT GRIGIO

90

POINTS
BEST BUY

WINEENTHUSIAST

SEAGLASSWINECO.COM

91 points, 2023 Sauvignon Blanc, Dec. 2024; 90 points, 2021 Pinot Grigio, Nov. 2022. Try our latest releases.
©2025 Seaglass Wine Company, St. Helena, CA. Table Wine. Please drink responsibly.

WINE ENTHUSIAST **BUYING GUIDE**

APRIL 2025

THIS MONTH

- 98 CALIFORNIA
- 100 BEAUJOLAIS
- 102 LOIRE VALLEY
- 103 BORDEAUX
- 104 PROVENCE
- 105 RHÔNE VALLEY
- 106 TUSCANY
- 109 ISRAEL
- 110 SPIRITS

FOR ADDITIONAL
RATINGS AND REVIEWS, VISIT
[WINEENTHUSIAST.COM/RATINGS](https://www.wineenthusiast.com/ratings)

Jeff Porter says
base yourself
here in Annecy,
France when
visiting The
Savoie. Turn the
page for more.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

The Carmel Valley is the sleeper wine country of California right now. Two dozen places to taste wines that range from rustic and rich to ripping and racy surrounded by ample restaurants, watering holes and outdoor adventure.

—Matt Kettmann

Send me on the next flight to Madeira—I hear the flight over is as intense as the wines themselves. Rich yet dry, and effortlessly versatile at the table—these wines have my heart.

—Anna-Christina Cabrales

WE ASKED OUR TASTERS:

What is a wine region everyone needs to visit this year?

The Alentejo is the home of the largest cork oak forests in the world, vines, cities that date back to Roman times and some of the best food and wine in Portugal. Only an hour and a half from Lisbon, but it's a total contrast to the mountains of the north and the tourist-dominated beaches of the south.

—Roger Voss

The Savoie. Base yourself out of the village of Annecy, France. Huge lake that is crystal clear, tall mountains to hike and bike in and delicious wine from Altesse, Jacquère, Mondeuse and more.

—Jeff Porter

STAFF EDITORS

Anna-Christina Cabrales: Burgundy, Champagne, Rhône Valley

Cody Wexler: Provence, Bandol, Méditerranée

WRITERS AT LARGE

Michael Alberty: Oregon, Washington, Alaska, North & South Dakota, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Wisconsin, Wyoming & Canada

Brandon Borcoman: Northwest Spain

Elaine Chukan Brown: Napa & Northeast Spain

Danielle Callegari: Tuscany & Southern Italy

Tom R. Capo: Sonoma County, Arizona, Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas

Cheron Cowan: U.S., states from Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi to the East Coast (excluding New York)

Matt Kettmann: Central Coast & Southern California, Languedoc-Roussillon

Kara Newman: Spirits & Ready-to-Drink

Christina Pickard: Australia, New Zealand, England, New York

Tonya Pitts: Northern California & California AVA, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah

Jeff Porter: Piedmont & Northern Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland

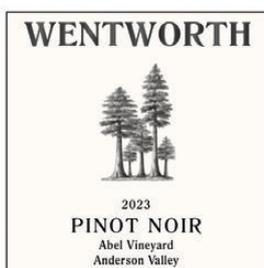
Emily Saladino: Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Lebanon

Reggie Solomon: Beaujolais, Loire Valley, Southern Coastal Spain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Israel, Macedonia, Montenegro & Asia

Jesica Vargas: Latin America & Africa

Roger Voss: Bordeaux, Corsica, Southwest France & Portugal

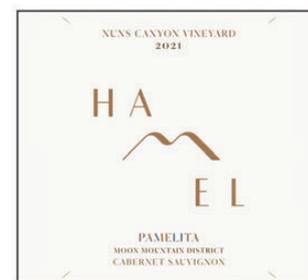
Aleks Zecevic: Austria, Germany, Alsace, Jura/Savoie, Vin de France, Armenia, Czech Republic, Moldova, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey



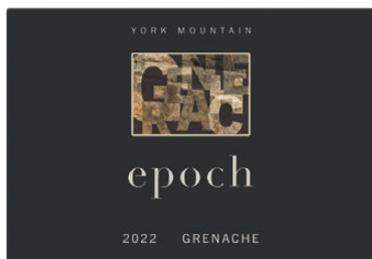
98 **Wentworth 2023 Abel Vineyard Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley).** Opulent and vibrant, this wine offers aromas of raspberry, watermelon, red currant, baking spices, dried florals and layers of minerals on the nose. The mouthfeel is velvety with pomegranate, dried persimmon, black currant confiture, crushed Bing cherry and chicory rolled into espresso, bittersweet chocolate, rocks and minerals. Decant or hold until 2036. —T.P.
abv: 13.2% **Price:** \$85



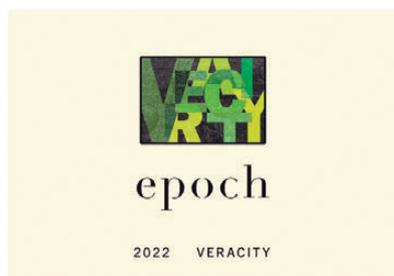
97 **Argiano 2019 Vigna del Suolo (Brunello di Montalcino).** Plums, figs and juicy blackberries show on the nose, then are followed by wild fennel and soil tilled with herbs and rocks. Pure but dense fruit are next on the palate that's still savory: saline and metallic with earth, rock shards and the lift of Mediterranean herbs. Tannins trace a careful outline around the palate with acid that feels like an electric current. It delivers an expression that tastes honest and open even as it hides many layers. Argiano. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$275



97 **Hamel 2021 Pamelita Nuns Canyon Cabernet Sauvignon (Moon Mountain District Sonoma County).** This reserve Cabernet blend is a mineral-laden beauty, with a nose loaded with plum, blackberry, sage, tobacco and shattered stone. The palate displays immense tannic force, balanced by electric acidity and flavors of blueberry, ginger, black pepper and anise. This powerhouse will reward patience. Best from 2035–2050. **Cellar Selection.** —T.R.C.
abv: 13.8% **Price:** \$225



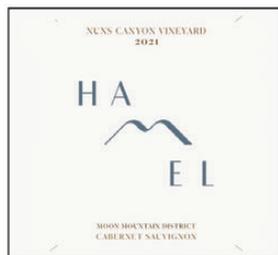
96 Epoch Estate Wines 2022 York Mountain Vineyard Grenache (York Mountain). Aromas of black cherry are offset by sandalwood and cola spice on the nose of this bottling from a mountaintop vineyard west of Paso Robles. The palate is potent in spice, with chai and root beer float flavors giving delicious depth to that black cherry core, all leveled by firm tannins and a persistent acidity. —M.K.
abv: 15.2% **Price:** \$85



96 Epoch Estate Wines 2022 Veracity Paderewski Vineyard Rhône-style Red Blend (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Dark and dense in the glass, this Rhône-style blend hits the nose with aromas of boysenberry, violet, black cherry and cola that roll out in unending waves. The palate is creamy in texture and exuberant in expression, offering elegant rosewater elements that tuck into baked strawberry, caramel and coffee flavors. A hint of bitterness offsets the lush finish. —M.K.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$85



96 Guarachi Family Wines 2023 Sun Chase Estate Pinot Noir (Petaluma Gap). Aromas of macerated cherry, blackberry liqueur and black tea waft on the nose of this wine. The palate has a charming earthy richness and flavors of spiced berry gastrique, forest floor and sandalwood that echo across the finish. *Editor's Choice.* —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$75



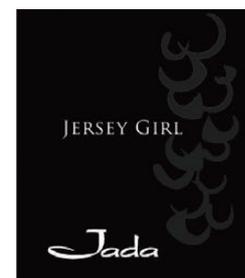
96 Hamel 2021 Nuns Canyon Cabernet Sauvignon (Moon Mountain District Sonoma County). This high-elevation Cabernet is blended with about 20% Cabernet Franc and a pinch of Grenache, lending a spicy depth to the nose, where aromas of black cherry and plum mingle with pencil shavings, violets and herb *mélange*. The palate displays rich tannin and flavors of cinnamon, pepper, tobacco and currant. *Cellar Selection.* —T.R.C.
abv: 14.1% **Price:** \$160



96 Hamel 2022 Nuns Canyon Grenache (Moon Mountain District Sonoma County). This softly extracted Grenache aged exclusively in concrete eggs screams from the glass with focused aromas of crushed red cherry, lilac, lavender and herb *mélange*. The palate is beautifully balanced, with flavors of raspberry and mint surging and receding like waves across the finish. *Editor's Choice.* —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$140



96 Jada Vineyard & Winery 2021 Hell's Kitchen Red Blend (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Dark hued and very hearty in appearance, this rich blend of 45% Syrah, 32% Graciano and 23% Grenache is savory and meaty on the nose, against a backdrop of bold blackberry and black currant fruit. The palate's intense gamy, ripe fruits get a fantastic edge from ample acidity and firm tannins. —M.K.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$72



96 Jada Vineyard & Winery 2021 Jersey Girl Syrah (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Very dark and viscous in the glass, this ageworthy wine hits the nose with bold black currant, elderberry, violet and coffee bean aromas, as the dank scent of a cave lingers in the background. The palate's tannins need time to resolve, but then expect waves of black fruit, bay leaf and peppercorn to entertain for years. *Cellar Selection.* —M.K.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$72

WINEENTHUSIAST BUYINGGUIDE

TASTING METHODOLOGY AND GOALS

Products are blind tasted in peer-group flights of from 5–8 samples. Reviewers may know general information about a flight to provide context—vintage, variety or appellation—but never the producer or retail price of any given selection.

Classic	98–100	The pinnacle of quality.
Superb	94–97	A great achievement.
Excellent	90–93	Highly recommended.
Very Good	87–89	Often good value; well recommended.
Good	83–86	Suitable for everyday consumption; often good value.
Acceptable	80–82	Can be employed in casual, less-critical circumstances.

Products deemed Unacceptable (receiving a rating below 80 points) are not reviewed.

Special Designations	Editors' Choice:	Products are those that offer excellent quality at a price above our Best Buy range, or a product at any price with unique qualities that merit special attention.
	Cellar Selections:	Are products deemed highly collectible and/or requiring time in a temperature-controlled wine cellar to reach their maximum potential.
	Hidden Gems:	Are products that are not your typical regional finds, but should not be missed. These fun, esoteric wines are priced above \$20 and score above 87 points.
	Best Buys:	Are products that offer a high level of quality in relation to price. Wines meriting this award are generally priced at \$20 or less, and are designated Best Buys after surpassing 85 points and a specific quality-to-price ratio benchmark.

SUBMITTING PRODUCTS FOR REVIEW:

Products should be submitted as detailed in our FAQ, available online via wineenthusiast.com/submit-for-rating. Address inquiries to tastings@wineenthusiast.com.

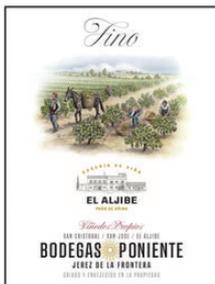
LABELS:

Labels are paid promotions. Producers and importers are given the opportunity to submit labels only after the reviews have been finalized and assigned to a specific issue. Labels are reproduced and printed along with tasting notes and scores. For information on label purchases, contact Denise Valenza at 813.571.1122; or email dvalenza@wineenthusiast.com.

Find all reviews on our fully searchable database at wineenthusiast.com/ratings



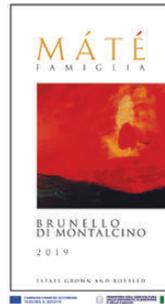
96 Sangiacomo 2022 Roberts Road Vineyard Pinot Noir (Petaluma Gap). Beautiful aromas of crushed cherry, plum, violets and cinnamon burst from the glass of this Pinot from an iconic vineyard. The palate brings flavors of macerated raspberry, Bing cherry, clove and sandalwood, with perfectly balanced tannin and acidity. The finish vibrates across four dimensions before tapering to whispers of cherry and lime peel. *Editor's Choice.* —T.R.C.
abv: 14.6% **Price:** \$75



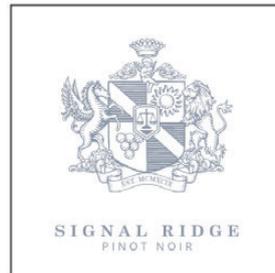
95 Bodegas Poniente NV El Aljibe Fino (Jerez). Brilliant gold in color, the wine has a nose of butter, brioche and bread dough. The wine is concentrated and flavorsome with impressive depth of flavor. This is an outstanding Fino that should be shared with those who have requisite appreciation for a Sherry with age. Olé & Obrigado. —R.S.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$60



95 Hamel 2022 Estate Grenache (Moon Mountain District Sonoma County). Cranberry, macerated cherry, gravel and sage aromas jump from the glass on the nose of this softly extracted and concrete-egg-aged Grenache. The palate displays flavors of tart cherry, pithy orange, lemon thyme and fresh earth in a framework of crunchy tannin and electric acidity. *Editor's Choice.* —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$80



95 Máté 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Sweet cherries and strawberries mingle with vanilla, hazelnut and coffee on the nose. The palate offers more cherries and strawberries plus raspberries, then the vanilla deepens into milk chocolate over a toasted hazelnut coffee aroma. Tannins have integrity without aggression. MÁTÉ. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$NA



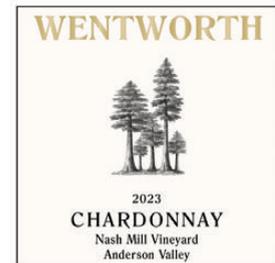
95 Signal Ridge 2019 Estate Pinot Noir (Mendocino Ridge). This wine is concentrated, with dark cherry, black plum, strawberry and dried bay leaf on the nose. The palate offers super-fresh cranberry, rhubarb, black strawberry, Bing cherry, spearmint, pink grapefruit, cedar and coriander, leading into mouthwatering tannins and a dry finish. Decant or hold the wine until 2032. Pair with braised lamb. —T.P.
abv: 13.7% **Price:** \$85



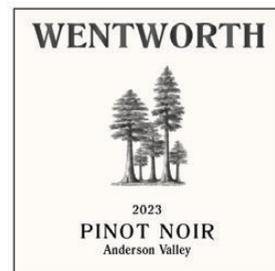
95 T. Berkley Wines 2022 Skypine Vineyard Cabernet Franc (Pine Mountain-Cloverdale Peak). Beautiful aromas of tobacco, blackberry and mocha burst from the glass on the nose of this wine. The palate displays rich, gripping tannin and flavors of concentrated cherry, chocolate malt, black licorice and ground espresso. Patience will be rewarded with this powerfully structured, high-elevation wine. *Cellar Selection.* —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$50



95 Tablas Creek 2022 Esprit de Tablas Rhône-style Red Blend (Adelaida District). Appealing aromas arise on the nose of this blend, ranging from dark strawberry and boysenberry to earthy, minty sagebrush to more candie cherry tones. Lush strawberry, rose petal and violet flavors are rich on the palate, with hints of fennel pollen and toasted chaparral adding depth. The blend includes 40% Mourvèdre, 28% Grenache, 22% Syrah, 4% Vaccarese, 3% Cinsaut and 3% Counoise. —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$70



95 Wentworth 2023 Nash Mill Vineyard Chardonnay (Anderson Valley). Bright and fresh, this wine offers aromas of green apple, citrus peel, papaya, sweet herbs and notes of alpine air on the nose. The mouthfeel conveys racy acidity and notes of white nectarine, red apple skin and baking spices, layered with crisp orchard fruit and a super-long, mouthwatering and mineral finish. Pair with fresh Dungeness crab. —T.P.
abv: 13.6% **Price:** \$82



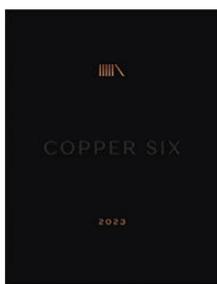
95 Wentworth 2023 Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley). Lush and vibrant, this wine offers aromas of strawberry, raspberry, dried rose petals and notes of cedar on the nose. The mouthfeel is supple with pomegranate, blood orange, star anise, hibiscus tea and sedimentary rock throughout the finish. It will be exciting to watch this wine develop and age. Decant or hold until 2035. —T.P.
abv: 13.4% **Price:** \$55



94 Alberto Orte 2021 Atlántida Blanco (Spain). This is a lively, palate-refreshing, organic wine with sophistication. Perfumed aromas of white peach and tangerine leap from your glass followed by kumquat zest, dried papaya and orange blossom. The wine leads with tartness that is carried by chalk-dusted acidity that leans into stone fruit and green plum. Pair with fried dishes and seafood. Olé & Obrigado. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.

abv: 14%

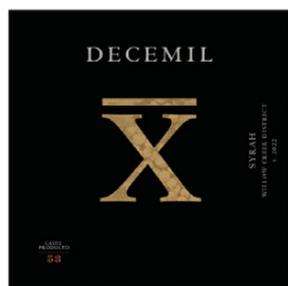
Price: \$45



94 Copper Six 2023 Gamay (Alisos Canyon). Fresh and bold aromas of black cherry are enhanced by creamy spices, crushed black stone and a pinch of herbs on the nose of this bottling. That strong cherry streak makes for a comforting style on the palate, which is lifted by chai spice and edgy tannins that don't get in the way. —M.K.

abv: 13%

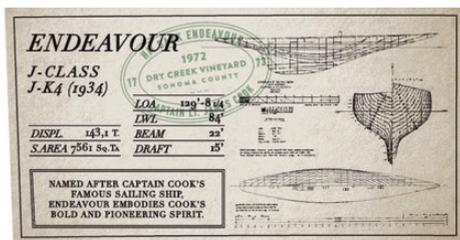
Price: \$50



94 Decemil Estate Wines 2022 Syrah (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). This bottling is a very strong showing for a new producer, indicating exciting vintages to come. Aromas of black currant, elderberry, thyme and violet lead from the nose into a palate that deftly integrates cassis, lilac, pepper and fine-grained tannins into a cohesive display. *Editor's Choice.* —M.K.

abv: 15.9%

Price: \$75



94 Dry Creek Vineyard 2021 Endeavour Cabernet Sauvignon (Dry Creek Valley). This complex and seductive wine brings aromas of raspberry coulis, currant, spiced fig jam and mint on the nose. The palate delivers a wave of bright cherry-lemon pith acidity that vibrates across the length of the wine. There's plenty of tannin here for long-term aging. Drink 2030 or beyond. —T.R.C.

abv: 14.1%

Price: \$105



94 Fossacolle 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Floral and delicate on the nose, it features violets, rose water, cherry blossom and clay pot. Cherries and blackberries, with warm soil and mixed herbs, make for an earthier palate, before an anise finish. Chalky and chewy tannins go well with the lively acid. Fossacolle. —D.C.

abv: 14.5%

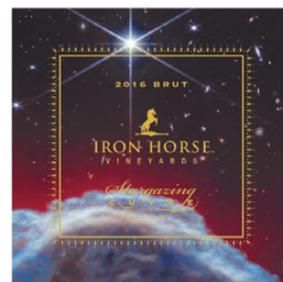
Price: \$75



94 Hamel 2021 Isthmus Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley). Captivating aromas of currant, black pepper and graphite swirl on the nose of this rich but elegant wine. The palate offers distinct flavors of roasted black cherry, plum skin and earth in a framework of silky tannin balanced by a wave of electric acidity. Beautiful now, this wine will soften nicely in the cellar. Best 2030–2045. *Editor's Choice.* —T.R.C.

abv: 14.1%

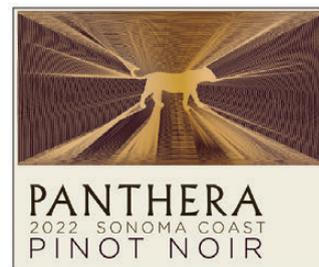
Price: \$90



94 Iron Horse 2016 Stargazing Cuvée Sparkling Blend (Green Valley of Russian River Valley). This limited-edition brut is bottled exclusively in magnums and displays a complex and captivating nose of grilled pineapple, candied ginger, Meyer lemon peel and white blossoms. The palate shows a lovely tension between lively citrus acidity, decadent leesy richness and bright floral flavors that linger and dance across a long finish. —T.R.C.

abv: 13.5%

Price: \$195/1.5L



94 Lions Head Collection 2022 Panthera Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley). Decadent aromas of roasted cherry, cranberry and cocoa powder waft on the nose of this Pinot. The palate shows a nimble personality with berry fruit, lemon peel acidity and lovely floral flavors that elevate the aromatics and dominate the finish. —T.R.C.

abv: 14.4%

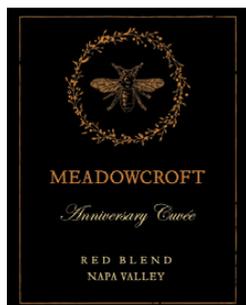
Price: \$46



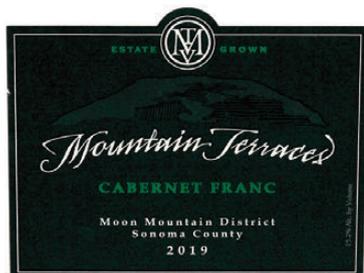
94 Masi 2019 Costasera (Amarene della Valpolicella Classico). A whirlwind of cherry pie filling aromas, red plum, and a sprinkle of clove, anise and cinnamon combine into a spice rack and a fruit basket in the glass. When this wine hits your taste buds, it's an elegant explosion of jumping in a dried leaf pile, an indulgence of dark chocolate, and a black-berry festa. The tannins? They're so well behaved, you'd think they were at a fancy dinner party. Santa Margherita USA. *Cellar Selection.* —J.P.

abv: 15%

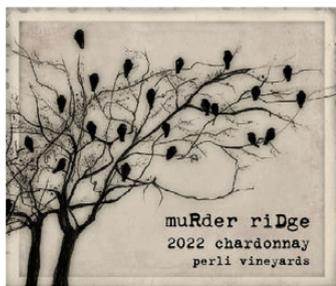
Price: \$80



94 Meadowcroft NV Anniversary Cuvée Red Blend (Mendocino). This concentrated wine offers aromas of dark plum, black currant confiture, dried herbs and florals on the nose. Flavors on the palate are blackberry, cassis, clove and orange zest, interwoven with bittersweet chocolate, espresso and tobacco leaf, finishing with supple, grippy tannins. Decant and pair with roasted prime rib. —T.P.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$55



94 Mountain Terraces 2019 Cabernet Franc (Moon Mountain District Sonoma County). Aromas of cedar, tobacco and black pepper mingle with rich raspberry fruit on the nose of this lush and enticing Cab Franc. The palate shows flavors of berry jam, cinnamon and black pepper in a broad framework, with plenty of toasty oak and length. Pair with a grilled ribeye. *Cellar Selection.* —T.R.C.
abv: 15.2% **Price:** \$160



94 Murder Ridge 2022 Perli Vineyards Chardonnay (Mendocino Ridge). Fresh and decadent on the nose, this wine conveys lemon mousse, dried baking spice, candied lemon and citrus rind, along with floral notes. It's really pretty, lifted by fresh spearmint. —T.P.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$38



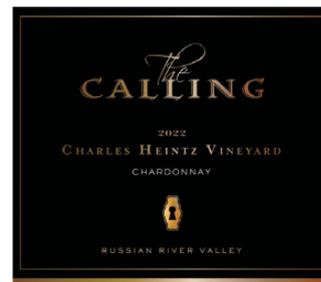
94 Rodney Strong 2019 Symmetry Red Blend (Alexander Valley). This compelling and intricate Bordeaux blend brings classic currant, blackberry, pencil shaving and black pepper aromas. The palate displays seamless balance between rich tannin, mouthwatering acidity and flavors of blackberry jam, dark chocolate and cassis. Brilliant now, this will age gracefully for well over a decade. *Cellar Selection.* —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$70



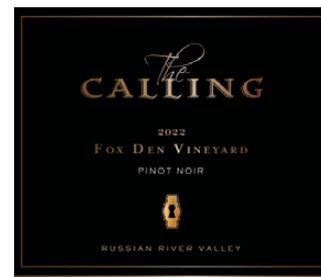
94 T. Berkley Wines 2022 Thalia Vineyard Cabernet Franc (Knights Valley). The nose of this wine displays an aromatic mélange of raspberries, dry cocoa, violets and black pepper, while the palate brings powerful tannins and flavors of plum, coffee, mint and tobacco. Best from 2030–2040. *Cellar Selection.* —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$50



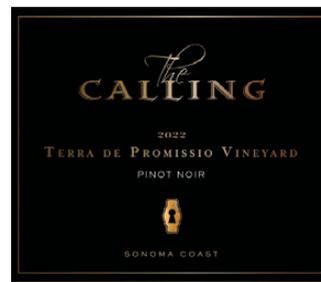
94 Talbott 2022 Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands). Dark black-cherry aromas are rich yet cut by earthy aromas of loam and slate as well as minty herbs on the nose of this bottling. The palate is bold with Luxardo cherry and crisp pomegranate flavors that evolve into spicy hints of vanilla and star anise. —M.K.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$50



94 The Calling 2022 Heintz Chardonnay (Russian River Valley). This rich Chardonnay from a legendary vineyard gives layers of spice, white flowers and minerality on the complex and constantly evolving nose. The palate brings a clever balance among oak structure, bright apple and citrus flavors. Lingering acidity swirls and dances with nuances of minerality across the finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$70



94 The Calling 2022 Fox Den Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley). This deeply extracted Pinot brings waves of concentrated Bing cherry and raspberry fruit on the nose, alongside aromas of cola spice and cedar shavings. The layered and textural palate shows flavors of intense berry fruit and orange zest, balanced by rich tannin and acidity. Best from 2028–2040. *Cellar Selection.* —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$65



94 The Calling 2022 Terra de Promissio Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast). This elegant Pinot displays layers of Bing cherry, cranberry, rose petal and sandalwood aromas on the nose. The palate brings a brace of fresh raspberry-lemon acidity along with flavors of black tea, cinnamon and sage, finishing with a balance of grippy tannin and acidity. A few years in the cellar will soften this wine nicely. Best from 2028–2040. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$80



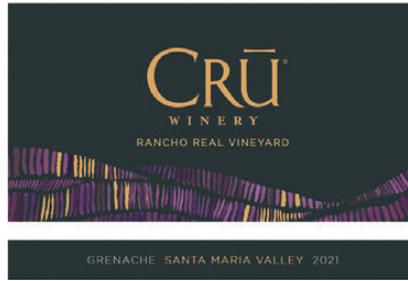
93 **Bedarra 2021 Estate Grown Malbec (Alexander Valley).** The nose of this wine displays a bright lemon note, layered with aromas of berry pie, black cherry and licorice. The palate gives flavors of black pepper, raspberry liqueur and cinnamon in a framework of polished tannin with balanced acidity. *Editor's Choice.* —T.R.C.
abv: 14.3% **Price:** \$50



93 **Blair Estate 2019 Clones 115/828/DRC Del-fina's Vineyard Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco).** Quite light colored in the glass, this three-clone cuvée offers sharp aromas of cranberry, pomegranate, blood orange peel and charcuterie on the dynamic nose. The palate pairs sour cherry with sagebrush and pepper-salami flavors. —M.K.
abv: 14.3% **Price:** \$60



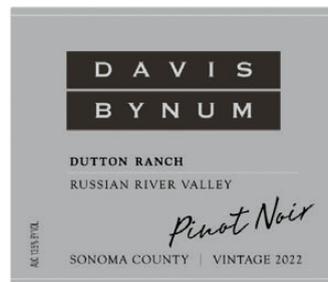
93 **Conte Guicciardini 2021 Mandorlaia (Morellino di Scansano).** Sweet and sunny, this is not cloying on the nose, offering aromas of wild strawberries, citrus peel, soil and herbs. Strawberry jam, fresh figs and milk chocolate define the palate, while tannins are grippy but sleek. Conte Guicciardini di Ferdinando Guicciardini. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$47



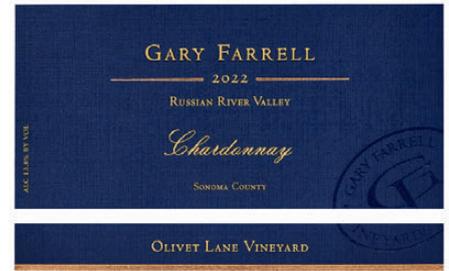
93 **CRU Winery 2021 Rancho Real Vineyard Grenache (Santa Maria Valley).** A lighter hue in the glass, this bottling begins with juicy cherry and strawberry aromas that are cut by rugged chaparral and minty tarragon touches on the nose. The palate is flashy with strawberry and cola flavors that are easy to drink. —M.K.
abv: 14.3% **Price:** \$50



93 **CRU Winery 2021 Rancho Real Vineyard Syrah (Santa Maria Valley).** Black raspberry, chipped graphite and white peppercorn aromas make for a focused nose on this bottling. The wet stone, raspberry and pepper combination picks up a juicier angle on the quaffable palate. —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$50



93 **Davis Bynum 2022 Dutton Ranches Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** Rich and savory, this Pinot displays aromas of cherry, cranberry and black tea on the nose. The palate gives flavors of roasted berry, fried shiitake and cola spice across the long finish. Pair the wine with burgers or grilled chops. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$65



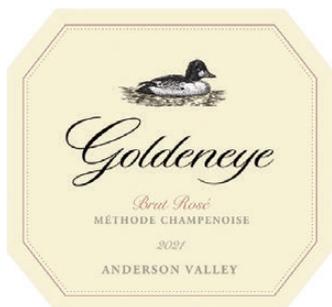
93 **Gary Farrell 2022 Olivet Lane Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley).** The nose of this aromatically intense wine displays aromas of tangerine, nectarine, white cherry, flowers and flint. On the palate, waves of vibrant citrus acidity, juicy stone fruit and pithy lemon peel lead to a mouthwatering finish with tons of floral character. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.8% **Price:** \$50



93 **Georges Dubœuf 2022 (Moulin-à-Vent).** Deep ruby in color, reserved aromas of black raspberry, muddled black plum and pomegranate juice combine with violet blossom and black olive. The chalk-dusted palate wraps around and celebrates its taut fruit core that will relax with more time in bottle. Decant and drink now, but this wine will show even better 2026 and onward. Quintessential Wines LTD. *Cellar Selection.* —R.S.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$28



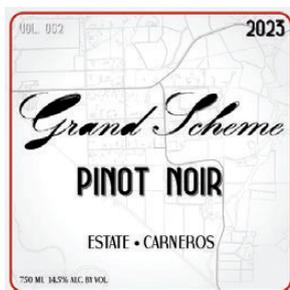
93 **Georges Dubœuf 2023 (Fleurie).** Rose hip-dusted red raspberry fills the nose followed by red plum, dried cranberry skin and boysenberry blossom. The palate begins with grippy tannins and then cascades into dried violet blossom and blackberry on the long finish. Decant and drink now; this wine can continue to develop in bottle through 2040. Quintessential Wines LTD. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$28



93 Goldeneye 2021 Brut Rosé Pinot Noir-Chardonnay (Anderson Valley). Tiny bubbles dance in the glass, and the nose of this wine offers aromas of strawberry, apricot, Red Vines and caramel. On the palate, flavors suggest orange-lemon cream, nectarine, yellow plum and crystallized ginger. The midpalate features a firm mousse, raspberry frappé, cotton candy and a dry, supple finish. Pair with grilled shrimp tacos. —T.P.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$72



93 Grand Scheme Wines 2023 Barnhouse Vineyard Estate Chardonnay (Los Carneros). This unoaked Chardonnay brings aromas of green apple, lime peel and lemon verbena on the nose. The palate feels a bit fleshier, with flavors of green papaya, tart pineapple, Meyer lemon and apple blossom pulsing across an acid-driven finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.6% **Price:** \$42



93 Grand Scheme Wines 2023 Estate Barnhouse Vineyard Pinot Noir (Los Carneros). This bright and fruit-forward Pinot displays loads of sunny personality and bright ripe cherry and strawberry aromas on the nose. The palate possesses a vibrant streak of raspberry lime acidity and flavors of crushed Bing cherry, black tea, cinnamon and whippers of rose petals that linger and linger. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$58



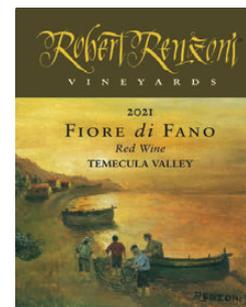
93 Hamel 2021 Stratum Red Blend (Sonoma Valley). A captivating nose comes alive in the glass with a few swirls, offering aromas of blackberry, currant, violets and bitter cocoa. These give way to savory flavors of plum skin, tart cherry, rose petal and almond skin that vibrate along the finish for over a minute. Give this a few years in the cellar and enjoy with lamb or venison. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.1% **Price:** \$60



93 J Vineyards & Winery 2020 Blanc de Noirs Champagne Blend (Russian River Valley). This beautiful blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier offers generous aromas of Rainier cherry, biscuit and tangerine on the nose. The palate brings a charming lacy texture and flavors of bright citrus, ginger and tart pineapple before a fresh and floral finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$75



93 J. Lohr 2023 Fog's Reach Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco). Muddled cherry and baked strawberry aromas meet with toasted tanbark touches on the nose of this bottling. The palate is fairly ripe but wrapped in firm tannins, offering bold boysenberry and cardamom flavors. —M.K.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$35



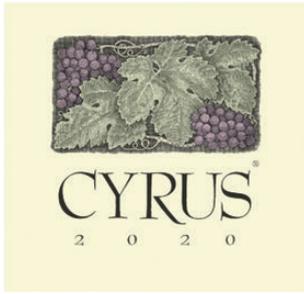
93 Robert Renzoni 2021 Fiore di Fano Red Blend (Temecula Valley). Deftly integrated aromas of dark red cherry, caramel and warm oak invite the nose into this Super Tuscan-style blend of Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The palate is tense and mildly dense, showing cherry, cranberry, oregano and anise flavors that will further unite with time. Drink now–2039. *Cellar Selection.* —M.K.
abv: 14.3% **Price:** \$62



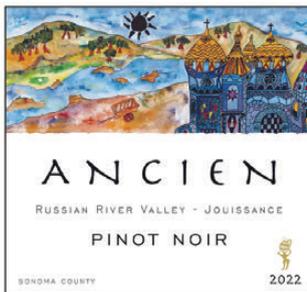
93 Tablas Creek 2023 Patelin de Tablas Rhônestyle Red Blend (Paso Robles). There's a rustic edge to the nose of this 11-vineyard blend of 45% Syrah, 30% Grenache, 23% Mourvèdre and 2% Counoise, starting with aromas of fennel and sage alongside cranberry fruit. The palate settles into a smoother display of wild berry and cherry, as chaparral spice pairs to the leathery texture. —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$28



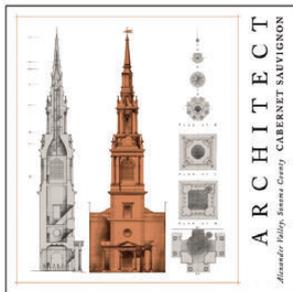
93 Zenato 2018 Riserva (Amarone della Valpolicella Classico). Dark cocoa powder and rich chocolate interweave with concentrated black fruits, framed by a complex spice tapestry of everything from sweet baking notes to savory undertones. The structure shows polished, refined tannins, while unexpected brightness emerges on the finish, offering a refreshing lift that balances the wine's depth and intensity. Zenato. *Cellar Selection.* —J.P.
abv: 17% **Price:** \$130



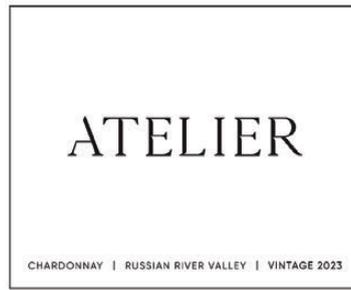
92 Alexander Valley Vineyards 2020 CYRUS Red Blend (Alexander Valley). Intense aromas of crushed raspberries and blackberries mingle with chopped mint leaves on the nose of this Cabernet blend. The palate brings a lively herbal freshness, juicy cherry-plum fruit and zippy acidity before grippy tannin exerts itself along the finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$75



92 Ancien 2022 Jouissance Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley). Aromas of raspberry, cherry and anise jump from the glass of this wine. The palate brings flavors of spiced cherry, saffras and violets framed by bright acidity and rich tannin. Pair this with roasted pork and mushrooms. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$58



92 Architect 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley). Aromas of currant, roasted cherry and dark cocoa dominate the nose of this rich and decadent Cabernet. The palate is loaded with flavors of blackberry, plum skin, spiced fig and black pepper in a framework of barrel spice and powerful tannin. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$25



92 Atelier 2023 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley). Floral aromas swirl alongside fresh apple, Meyer lemon and pineapple on the nose of this charming wine. The palate brings flavors of fresh Anjou pear, nectarine, lemon peel and orange blossom before a long finish with tons of flowers and spice. —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$44



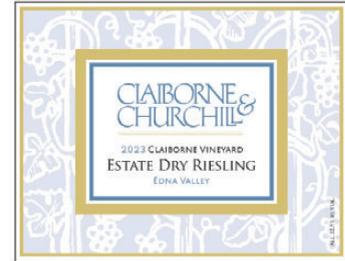
92 Badia di Morrona 2020 VignAalta (Terre di Pisa). The floral, sunny nose is a swirl of cherry blossoms, orange peel, wild strawberries, warm bricks and caramelized fennel. On the palate, flavors of strawberry jam and tangy red plums are balanced by mixed soil and herbs, before a finish of warm, acidic citrus. Badia di Morrona. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$27



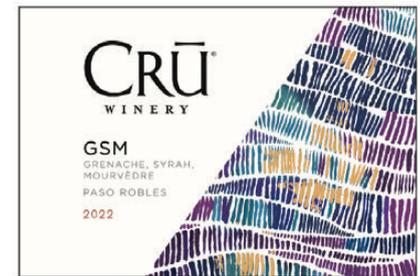
92 Cantina Vignaioli del Morellino di Scansano SCA 2021 Sicomoro (Morellino di Scansano). Cool, fresh aromas of sour cherries, wet slate, wild mint and fennel come first, then savory old leather, soil and flint. The palate brings more cherries and berries, but also a continuation of that cool, fresh, minty element, with a touch of eucalyptus, which pushes back against powerful tannins and fiery heat. Cantina Vignaioli del Morellino di Scansano SCA. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$35



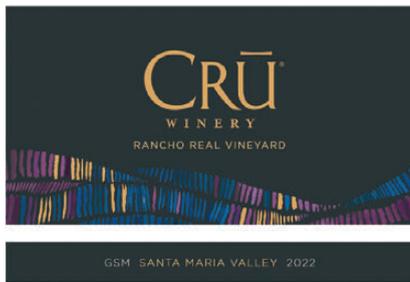
92 Carmel Road 2022 Pinot Noir (Monterey County). This brand tends to overdeliver, and this bottling is a case in point. Aromas of dark plum and tree bark open up into warmer spices on the nose. The palate shows rounded cherry compote, ample baking spice and pleasant oak flavors. *Editors' Choice.* —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$18



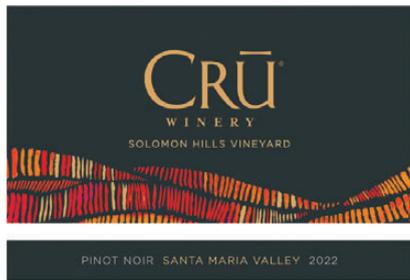
92 Claiborne & Churchill 2023 Claiborne Vineyard Estate Dry Riesling (Edna Valley). A sharp, pithy element shows on the nose of this bottling, which also offers aromas of honeydew and yuzu zest. There's a firm tension to the palate, where nectarine, apple and bright citrus flavors stay nimble, as that texture lingers long. —M.K.
abv: 12.9% **Price:** \$36



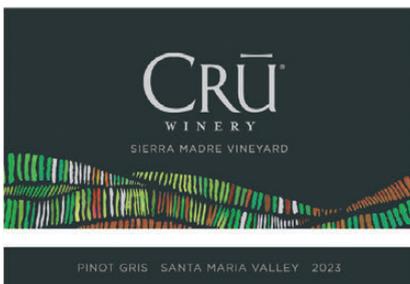
92 CRU Winery 2022 GSM (Paso Robles). This very satisfying blend of 40% Grenache, 36% Syrah and 24% Mourvèdre is more bright than rich. Aromas of black raspberry and rose petal make for a tart nose. The palate is more rounded with sour cherry and richer rose elements, finished with a warm spice. *Editor's Choice.* —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$25



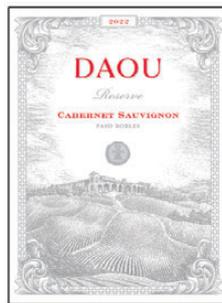
92 CRU Winery 2022 Rancho Real Vineyard GSM (Santa Maria Valley). A lighter hue in the glass, this blend of 55% Syrah, 42% Grenache and 3% Mourvèdre shows pleasantly funky aromas of tar, pepper and strawberry compote on the nose. The palate is firm in texture and both juicy and savory in flavors, with peppercorn spicing up the red fruits on the finish. —M.K.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$40



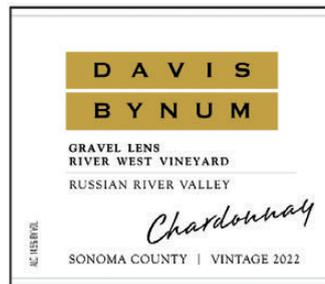
92 CRU Winery 2022 Solomon Hills Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Maria Valley). Dark cherry aromas meet with rustic earthiness and cracked pepper on the nose of this single-vineyard expression. Dusty cranberry and sour cherry flavors partner with lemon peel and gamy dried pork flavors on the palate. —M.K.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$60



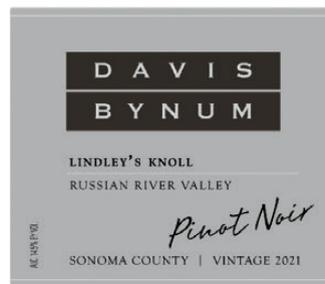
92 CRU Winery 2023 Sierra Madre Vineyard Pinot Gris (Santa Maria Valley). Lovely aromas of white flower, honeydew and Meyer lemon pith pick up tropical notes on the nose of this bottling. There's compelling tension to the palate, where bright citrus and Pink Lady apple flavors make for a brisk, pithy expression. —M.K.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$30



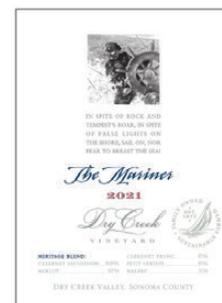
92 Daou 2022 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles). Intense aromas of black currant and elderberry extract meet with toasted walnut and hints of tar on the nose of this always reliable reserve bottling. The palate is lavish with creamy tannins that present flavors of stewed blackberry, nutmeg and light anise. Very satisfying. Pair with grilled steak. —M.K.
abv: 15.2% **Price:** \$60



92 Davis Bynum 2022 Gravel Lens River West Vineyard Chardonnay (Russian River Valley). This bright and sunny Chard brings tropical aromas of pineapple, honeysuckle and lemon balm on the nose, while the palate bounces with citrus energy, backed by racy acidity and rocky minerality. The mouthwatering finish brings whispers of orange blossom and ginger. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$50



92 Davis Bynum 2022 Lindley's Knoll Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley). The nose of this wine is lively, with aromas of fresh strawberry, juicy raspberry and flowers jumping from the glass. Softly structured, the palate has a brilliant streak of berry-lemon acidity that elevates the energy. Pair with roasted salmon or duck with cherry sauce. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$65



92 Dry Creek Vineyard 2021 The Mariner Blend (Dry Creek Valley). This deeply extracted Cabernet blend displays aromas of currants, cassis, black pepper and bitter cocoa on the nose. The palate shows powerful tannic structure and flavors of cranberry, plum, violets and graphite. Enjoy with rich stews or braised meats. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$50

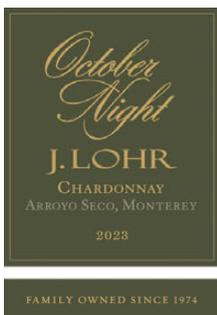


92 Fattoria di Magliano 2020 Heba (Morellino di Scansano). Warm, oozy tar and coffee with brown sugar and a cinnamon stick smolder on the nose, which contrasts with an invigorating palate of fresh Morello cherries, dark chocolate and a sprig of wild mint that vibrates with heat and acid. Fattoria di Magliano. —D.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$22

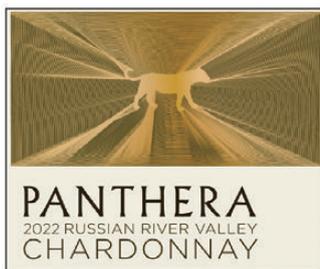


VINEYARDS & WINERY

92 J Vineyards & Winery 2022 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley). Aromas of roasted raspberry and cherry dominate the nose of this wine, while the palate brings concentrated cherry and cola spice energy. A lovely streak of raspberry-lemon acidity runs the length of the wine and lifts the grippy tannin a bit. A year or two in the cellar should soften this nicely. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.7% **Price:** \$52



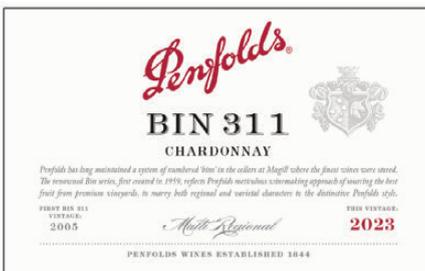
92 J. Lohr 2023 October Night Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco). Rounded apple and pear flesh aromas are very fresh on the nose of this bottling, as lemon blossom and chiseled stone elements add depth. The palate is tense in texture, with flavors of lemon blossom and grapefruit balm that lead into hints of apple flesh on the finish. —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$25



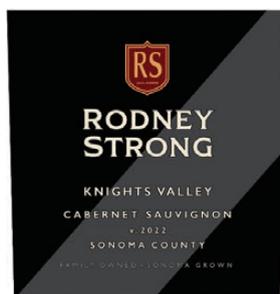
92 Lions Head Collection 2022 Panthera Chardonnay (Russian River Valley). This decadent Chardonnay delivers focused aromas of Anjou pear, nectarine, caramel and orange blossom on the nose. The palate bursts with flavors of buttery roasted apple, cinnamon and white flowers. Drink this with crab cakes. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$46



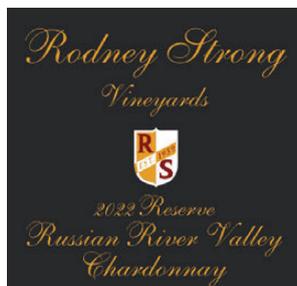
92 Mia Marie 2021 Reserve Petite Sirah (San Diego County). Blackberry and blueberry aromas pick up hints of tobacco leaf and damp oak on the nose of this bottling. There's a prominent dryness to the sip, where blueberry paste and woodspice cling to firm tannins. Drink now–2036. **Cellar Selection.** —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$75



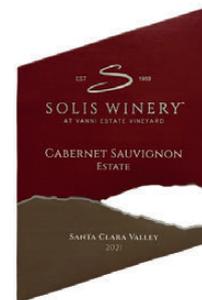
92 Penfolds 2023 Bin 311 Chardonnay (South Eastern Australia). A polished, toasty, oh-so-Aussie-Chardy style, this needs a few good swirls in glass after opening before it offers up aromas of ginger, peach and lemon drop, set to a buttered toast backdrop. There's power on the palate, a punch of acidity that harmonizes with the textural weight. This walks a line between traditional and modern. Treasury Wine Estates. —C.P.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$45



92 Rodney Strong 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Knights Valley). This powerful wine delivers aromas of roasted black cherry, dark cocoa, violets and cinnamon on the nose. The palate displays rich berry character and flavors of currant, saddle leather, black pepper and a wave of raspberry-lemon acidity across the middle before a powerful, tannic finish takes over. Best from 2030–2045. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$40



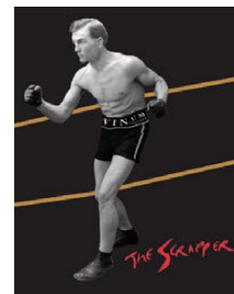
92 Rodney Strong 2022 Reserve Chardonnay (Russian River Valley). Loads of fresh citrus and white flower aromas dominate the nose of this wine. The palate brings rich texture from barrel aging and flavors of roasted pear, cinnamon, lemon peel and a finish that brings to mind salt spray and juicy tangerines. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$50



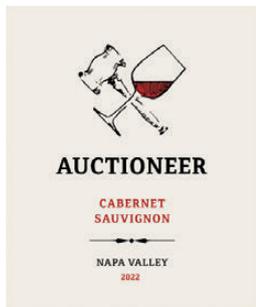
92 Solis Winery 2021 Vanni Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Clara Valley). There's no reason that this warmer but still coastally influenced region south of San Jose shouldn't be able to make classy Cab. This bottling supports that notion, offering aromas of dark cherry and maple on the nose. The palate's flavors of roasted red fruit, cedar and pepper are supported by deep tannins. **Editor's Choice.** —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$35



92 Stark-Condé 2019 Three Pines Cabernet Sauvignon (Jonkershoek Valley). This balanced and fruity Cabernet hails from the Jonkershoek Valley and offers an aromatic nose of cassia and hints of green bell pepper. Blueberries and blackberries show depth on the palate. Peppercorn and sweet spices followed. It's balanced and fruit focused, with a fresh minty finish. Vineyard Brands. —J.V.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$NA



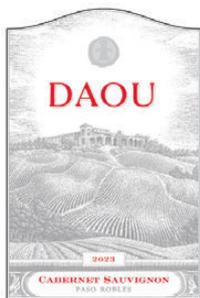
92 Vinum Cellars 2019 The Scrapper Camino Alto Vineyard Cabernet Franc (El Dorado). Rich, dark berries, cocoa, vanilla cream and florals pulsate across the nose of this wine. Flavors on the palate are blackberry, olallieberry jam, cardamom, tangerine sorbet and chicory, with silky, dried tannins to finish. Pair with grilled calf liver and onions. —T.P.
abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$40



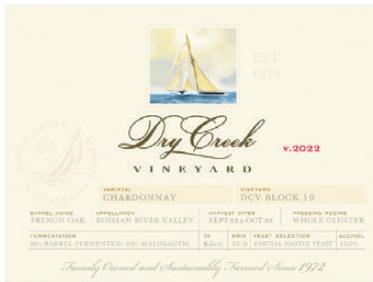
91 Auctioneer 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley). Juicy ripe fruits and a blend of baking spices are carried by this full-bodied wine. The tannins are ample and palate coating, with a moderate finish. —E.C.B.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$38



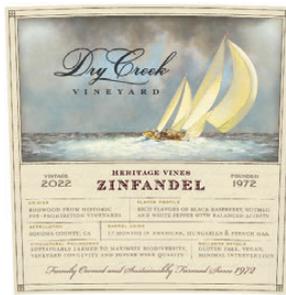
91 CRU Winery 2022 Solomon Hills Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Maria Valley). A golden hue in the glass, this bottling begins with toasted almond, dried apricot and lemon marmalade aromas. The palate is tense and grippy, with a texture that balances the salty macadamia nut and lemon syrup flavors. —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$45



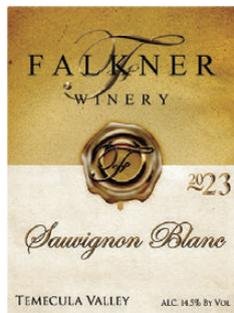
91 Daou 2023 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles). Clean lines of cherry, toasted wood, red flower and a pinch of thyme make for a satisfying nose on this widely available wine. The palate pairs blackberry flavors with mocha spice. —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$30



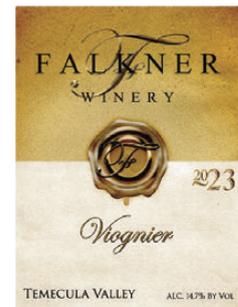
91 Dry Creek Vineyard 2022 DCV Block 10 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley). This round and tropical-scented wine brings aromas of pineapple, mango and Meyer lemon on the nose. The palate displays bright green-apple acidity balanced with barrel spice and flavors of Anjou pear, marzipan and pomelo pith. Serve with roasted halibut en croute. —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$45



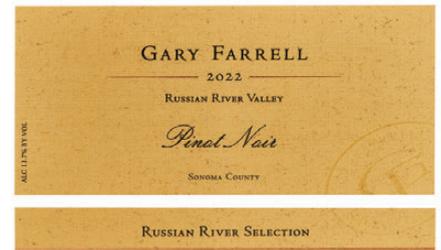
91 Dry Creek Vineyard 2022 Heritage Vines Zinfandel (Sonoma County). This big and opulent wine displays lavish aromas of roasted cherry, blackberry and plum on the nose. The palate delivers a rich balance of tannin and acidity, with flavors of spiced fig, plum skin, dark chocolate and licorice. It has plenty of stuffing for mid-term aging. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$28



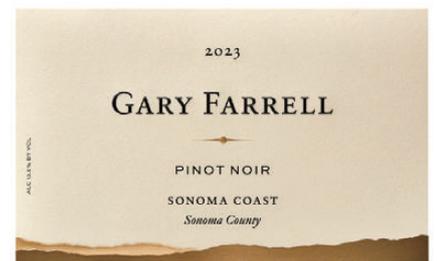
91 Falkner 2023 Sauvignon Blanc (Temecula Valley). The nose on this bottling is quite impressive, full of white flower, blood orange zest and rainy sidewalk aromas. The palate is more smooth and suave in approach, showing grass and guava-peel flavors atop a softer texture. —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$40



91 Falkner 2023 Viognier (Temecula Valley). Clean and delicate aromas of peach and jasmine decorate the inviting nose of this bottling. The palate lands with broad flavors of peach, pear and apple, with a refreshing splash of mandarin orange adding a slight edge. —M.K.
abv: 14.7% **Price:** \$50



91 Gary Farrell 2022 Russian River Selection Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley). This bright Pinot displays aromas of cranberry and dried cherry on the nose. The palate brings fresh berry flavors, savory roasted shiitake, cola spice and sage. On the finish, lively acidity balances an energetic crunch of tannin. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.7% **Price:** \$50



91 Gary Farrell 2023 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast). Aromas of cranberry, raspberry and pine forest dominate the nose of this wine. The palate brings richly structured tannin and flavors of plum, orange peel, anise and black tea with a rich, opulent mouthfeel. This is great Pinot for burgers or ribs on the grill. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.6% **Price:** \$50



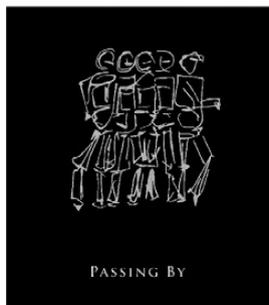
91 Gehrcke 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Knights Valley). This richly extracted wine offers aromas of black plum, cherry and cocoa powder on the nose. These give way to flavors of blackberry compote, caramel, mint and black pepper on the palate before a silky-smooth finish, with echoes of minerality and spice. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$35



91 Indigene Cellars 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Carmel Valley). Cherry and red plum aromas meet with shaved cedar on the nose of this bottling. The palate is chalky in texture and easygoing in flavors of cherry, cinnamon and pepper. —M.K.
abv: 13.8% **Price:** \$50



91 J. Lohr 2023 Arroyo Vista Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco). Aromas of lemon meringue and marshmallow topped with chopped nuts and lime zest make for a compelling nose on this bottling. The palate is both tart and ripe, as flavors of lemon peel and juicy apple lead into a grippy finish. —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$25



91 Jada Vineyard & Winery 2021 Passing By Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Dense cassia aromas are cut by a tart, slightly wild violet tone on the nose of this bottling. Uplifting boysenberry and more purple flower flavors make for a fun sip. —M.K.
abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$92



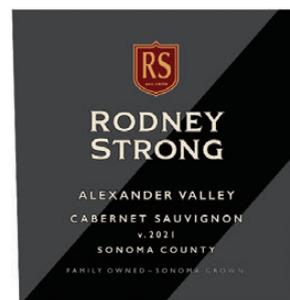
91 Luigi Bosca 2023 De Sangre White Blend (Uco Valley). Allow this wine to breathe to enjoy its tasty character. Subtle notes of honeysuckle and lime show on the nose. The textured palate is energized by lively acidity and delivers vibrant flavors of lemon, thyme and oak spices. Opici Wines. —J.V.
abv: 13.6% **Price:** \$36



91 Mia Marie 2022 Sangiovese (San Diego County). This winery is revealing a much higher level of quality from San Diego County, and this bottling proves that consistency. Aromas of cherry, strawberry and chipped stone lead from the nose into a snappy palate of red cherry, pomegranate, cinnamon and sandalwood. *Editor's Choice.* —M.K.
abv: 14.4% **Price:** \$65



91 Opaque 2021 Zinfandel (Paso Robles). Strong aromas of clove, nutmeg and star anise decorate the rich black plum sauce focus of the nose on this wine. Softer tannins carry creamy and rich flavors of black cherry and ample baking spice. —M.K.
abv: 15.7% **Price:** \$30



91 Rodney Strong 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley). Aromas of black plum, crushed raspberry, black pepper and bitter cocoa jump from the glass on the nose of this wine. The palate gives saturated berry flavors, rich tannin and fresh acidity in a framework of barrel spice. Drink this with burgers. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$35



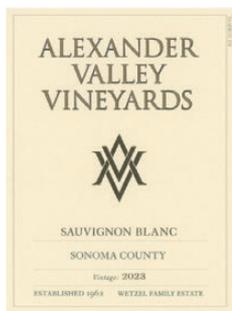
91 Shatter 2022 Grenache (Côtes Catalanes). Purple in color, the wine has perfumed aromas of blackberry and blueberry accented by violet blossom and dried black raspberry flakes. Softened tannins lead on the palate and resolve in juicy fruit. Pair with a cheeseburger, roasted leeks and steak. Shatter. —R.S.
abv: 15.5% **Price:** \$24



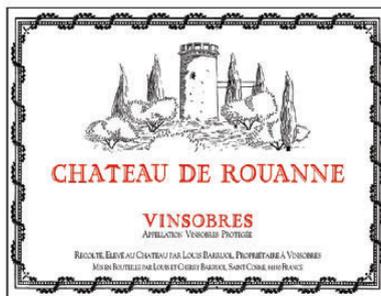
91 Smith & Hook 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Central Coast). Always a solid Cab that works for special occasions but is priced for midweek enjoyment, this bottling offers blackberry, fudge and oak aromas on the nose. The palate's blackberry core is dusted in cocoa and red flower flavors, with feathery tannins pulling into a chalky finish. *Editor's Choice.* —M.K.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$22



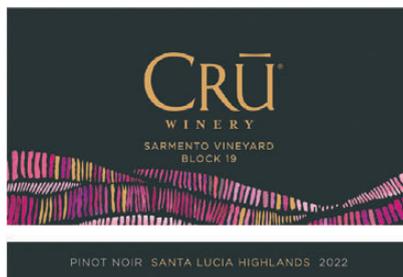
91 Talbott 2022 Sleepy Hollow Vineyard Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands). Toasted pine nut aromas join tangerine flesh and lemon zest on the nose of this wine. The palate is rich with creamy flavors of butter, baked orange and macadamia nut. —M.K.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$45



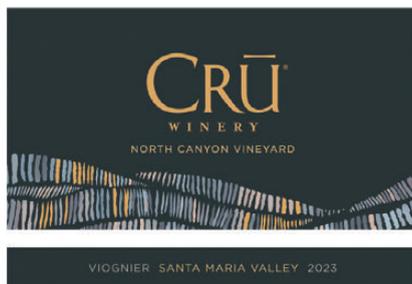
90 Alexander Valley Vineyards 2023 Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County). Clean, fresh and floral, this wine conveys energetic citrus and white flower aromas on the nose. The palate brings a wash of lively lime-tangerine acidity with flavors of pineapple and lemon curd that fade into a lovely herb mélange across the finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$24



90 Château de Rouanne 2021 (Vinsobres). The nose of this wine offers fresh black plums, violets and a hint of smoke. Silky tannins support a vibrant black fruit midpalate, which gives way to a soft, earthy mushroom finish with a stony edge. Bright acidity makes this wine wonderfully accessible and a true pleasure to enjoy. Chateau de Rouanne. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$29



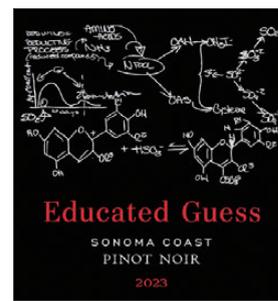
90 CRU Winery 2022 Sarmiento Vineyard Block 19 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands). Tart cherry and strawberry balsamic aromas meet with hints of game on the nose of this bottling. There's a rich, full body to the palate, where tar, game, dank sage and cherry flavors converge. —M.K.
abv: 14.6% **Price:** \$50



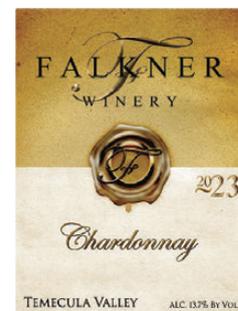
90 CRU Winery 2023 North Canyon Vineyard Viognier (Santa Maria Valley). Peach, tangerine and damp sidewalk aromas show on the nose of this wine. On the viscous palate, flavors of orange, lemon and peach ride a rich mouthfeel. —M.K.
abv: 14.1% **Price:** \$30



90 Dry Creek Vineyard 2023 Fume Blanc Sauvignon Blanc (Sonoma County). This round and fruit-driven Sauvignon Blanc brings aromas of melon, grapefruit and white flowers on the nose. The palate delivers a punch of classic citrus flavors, fresh herbal notes and some richer texture across the finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$21



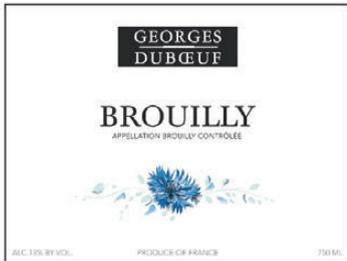
90 Educated Guess 2023 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast). This dark and spicy Pinot displays dramatic black cherry and cola aromas on the nose, while the palate brings rich raspberry, earthy shiitake and cinnamon flavors front and center. Plush tannin and echoes of cigar box and licorice emerge across the finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$30



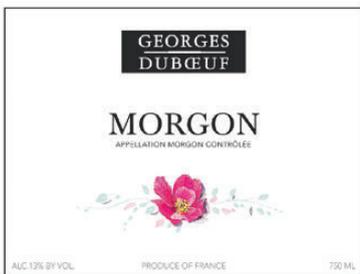
90 Falkner 2023 Chardonnay (Temecula Valley). Sharp grapefruit aromas meet with rounder hints of melon on the nose of this bottling. Ripe yellow apple flavors meet with earth and that edgy grapefruit peel on the palate. —M.K.
abv: 13.7% **Price:** \$50



90 **Fallen Grape Wine Co. 2021 Mother Skin Contact Natural Wine Orange Wine-White Blend (Santa Ynez Valley).** An amber color in the glass, this self-proclaimed “natural wine” smells of trodden lemons, mashed apricot and rust on the nose, with hints of chamomile adding nuance. The palate is quite textural, framed by leathery, chalky elements that present slightly tart flavors of orange peel, lemon vinaigrette and metal. —M.K.
abv: 12% **Price:** \$24



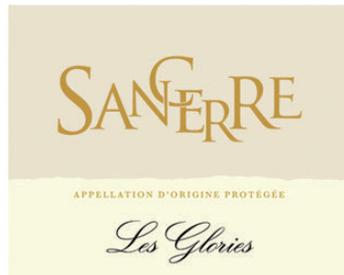
91 **Georges Duboeuf 2022 (Brouilly).** The wine successfully balances youthfulness with evolving maturity. Ripe red raspberry, damp earth and strawberry stem aromas tickle the nose along with rosehip and dried peach skin. Robust in texture, the wine has a playfulness that is tempered by drying tannins. Quintessential Wines LTD. —R.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$24



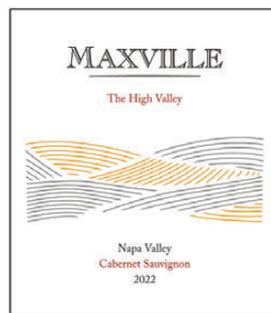
90 **Georges Duboeuf 2023 (Morgon).** The wine is a mixture of black raspberry and black tea lifted by aromas of violet blossom and red cherry flakes. The palate reveals tart, chalk-dusted fruit with lifted acidity on the finish. Drink from 2026 onward. Quintessential Wines LTD. —R.S.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$28



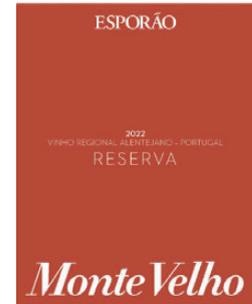
90 **Hahn 2022 Pinot Noir (Arroyo Seco).** Rich aromas of strawberry jam, star anise and licorice make for a ripe nose on this bottling. The palate is bold with baking and chai spice flavors that pair well to the nearly sweet baked strawberry and cherry core. Satisfying for a fair price. —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$22



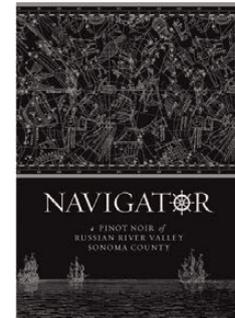
90 **Les Glories 2023 (Sancerre).** This Sancerre shows you it is a Loire Sauvignon Blanc, opening with Anjou pear, Fuji apple, chamomile and star fruit aromas. Steely in texture, crushed stone and orchard fruit give way to a stream of tart acidity that refreshes the palate with hints of dried field grass. Riboli Family Wine Estates. —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$40



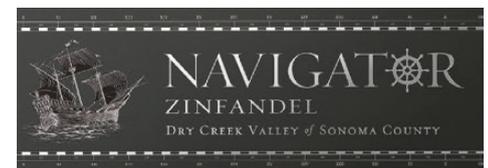
90 **Maxville 2022 The High Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley).** Vanilla, spices, chocolate and mixed dark fruits combine for a Cabernet of bold flavor and rich mouthfeel. Palate-coating, slippery tannins and mouthwatering acidity carry into a long finish. —E.C.B.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$45



90 **Monte Velho 2022 Reserva (Alentejano).** This wood-aged wine with its spice and smoke aromas is finely textured and balanced. It has smooth black fruit tannins and rounded tannins. With its open character, it will be ready from 2025. Herdade do Esporão. —R.V.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$28



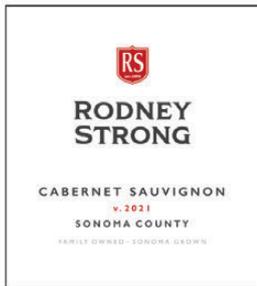
90 **Navigator 2023 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley).** This floral Pinot gives cola spice on the nose, alongside aromas of pomegranate, dried cherry and rose petal. The palate displays flavors of concentrated raspberry, potpourri, cinnamon and anise along the finish. Drink this with pork loin with plum sauce. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$35



90 **Navigator 2023 Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley).** Aromas of tart cranberry, cassis and licorice dominate the nose of this savory Zin. The palate offers flavors of blackberry, plum, cinnamon and cedar, with juicy acidity and some crunchiness of tannin. Especially with a little chill, this will pair beautifully with cured meats or salumi. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$30



90 Orin Swift 2023 Blank Stare Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley). This is a richer, more decadent style of Sauvignon Blanc, featuring aromas of ripe grapefruit, lime pith, white flowers and sage on the nose. The palate is broad and textural, with lots of citrus flavors, bright but soft acidity and echoes of jalapeño along the finish. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$40



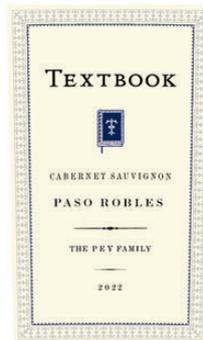
90 Rodney Strong 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County). This fresh and lively Cabernet brings aromas of plum, blackberry and toasted cumin on the nose. The palate gives dark fruit flavors alongside plush tannin, juicy acidity and attractive energetic freshness. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$25



90 Smith & Hook 2020 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles). Charred cherry, toasted herb and loamy earth aromas make for a savory, dried nose on this bottling. The pallet is rounded in strawberry flavors that are cut by pencil lead and light pepper spices. —M.K.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$45



90 Technique 2023 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley). This bright and bombastic Pinot bursts from the glass with loads of candied raspberry and cherry aromas. The palate brings in flavors of berry compote, licorice and violets, with powdery tannin and juicy acidity. Drink now to 2030 to enjoy the fruit-forward charms on display. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$25



90 Textbook 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles). Clean lines of cherry, cinnamon and sandalwood show on the nose of this bottling from the Pey family of wines. Ample tannins show on the palate, where fresh red fruit flavors lightly spiced with mace make for an easygoing sip. —M.K.
abv: 13.9% **Price:** \$27

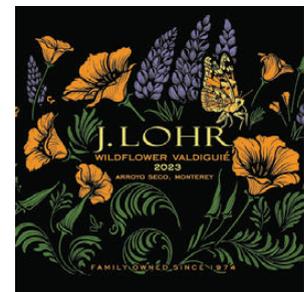


90 Vinum 2021 The Insider Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles). Dusty aromas of cherry and cranberry meet with mahogany and tobacco leaf on the minty nose of this wine. The palate is layered in wild thyme and sage flavors that play up against the baked cherry core, leading to a chalky finish. —M.K.
abv: 14.1% **Price:** \$21

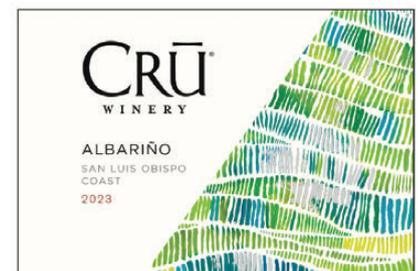


90 Zenato 2020 (Valpolicella Ripasso Superiore). Bright red fruit preserves lead the way on the nose, layered with roasted coffee notes and delicate shavings of chocolate. The palate shows refined tannins that glide across the tongue, while subtle tea-leaf notes emerge on the finish, adding a gentle herbal complexity. Zenato. —J.P.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$24

BEST BUYS

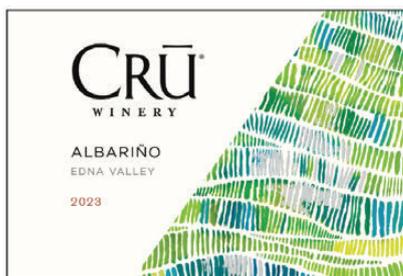


94 J. Lohr 2023 Wildflower Valdiguié (Arroyo Seco). This is always a fun wine, but this potentially landmark vintage amplifies the freshness that's inherent to the bottling. Aromas of cherry, blueberry and wet clay lead from the nose to the tense and direct palate, where raspberry, pepper and a firm tension entertain the mouth endlessly. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$13

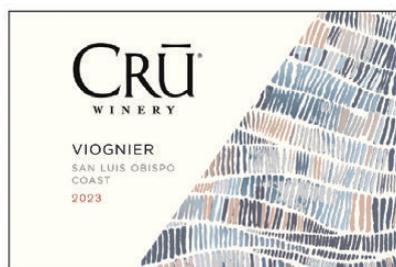


93 CRU Winery 2023 Albariño (San Luis Obispo Coast). Yellow grapefruit and apple aromas meet with grass and nectarine on the dynamic nose of this bottling. There's a firm grip to the palate, which is zesty and bright with fresh yet taut flavors of citrus and apple. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$20

BEST BUYS



92 CRU Winery 2023 Albariño (Edna Valley). Lime, guava peel and wet cement aromas converge on the nose of this bottling. The palate is zesty and lively with fresh citrus flavors that are warmed up by a hint of tropicality. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$20

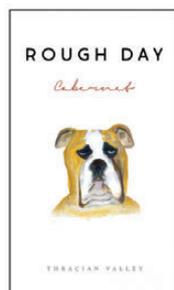


92 CRU Winery 2023 Zepherino Vineyard Viognier (San Luis Obispo Coast). This bottling deftly pairs coastal freshness with the roundness inherent in Viognier. Precise aromas of stone fruit, white flower and chalk lead from the nose into a grippy palate of cantaloupe, apricot and honey-suckle flavors. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 13.9% **Price:** \$20

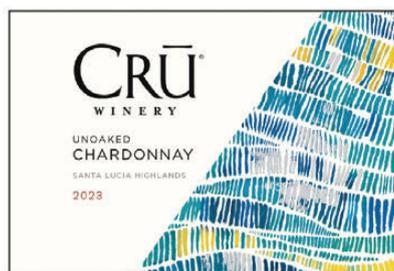


92 Le Moulin Chapitre 2023 (Chinon). This wine is a great expression of what Chinon has to offer as a region. Aromas of juicy black plum play footsie with rhubarb in front of an audience of dried apricot and white strawberry. The mineral-driven palate also brings along pencil shavings and Darjeeling tea, which adds texture and depth. Riboli Family Wine Estates. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$20

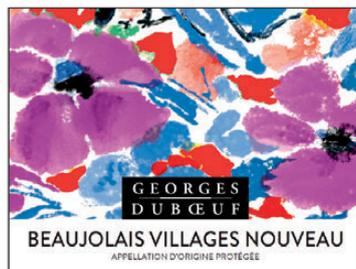
BEST BUYS



92 Rough Day 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Thracian Valley). Crushed blackberry, dried hay, field grass and black cherry aromas waft on the nose followed by thyme, dusted strawberry and just-ripened black plum. Youthful tannins open on the attack followed by silky red fruit that focuses the senses. Pair with duck breast, filet mignon and tuna tartare. Bulgariana. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$18/1L



91 CRU Winery 2023 Unoaked Crisp Cuvée Chardonnay (Santa Lucia Highlands). There's a slight fizz to the glass in this unoaked bottling, which offers clean honeydew and lime sorbet on the sharp, focused nose. The palate is tight and zesty, showing fresh citrus flavors that last into a tense finish. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$20



91 Georges Dubœuf 2024 (Beaujolais-Villages Nouveau). Svelte black fruit wraps around black cherry, blackberry and cocoa-dusted red currant on the nose. Relaxed, well-integrated tannins lead on the palate followed by juicy briary fruit and the slightest hint of banana skin. Georges Dubœuf. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$17

BEST BUYS



91 Veuve Amiot NV Elisa (Crémant de Loire). Freshly picked green-apple aromas open on the nose, buttressed by hints of caramel and Fuji apple. The palate combines young green fruit tending towards maturity with a confident finish. This is a crémant that excels. Compagnie Médocaine des Grands Vins. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 12% **Price:** \$14



91 Vinum 2022 Pinot Noir (Monterey). Generous aromas of baked cherry and strawberry make for a fruit-punch-like nose on this accessible bottling. The palate lands with a clean, joyous expression, as hibiscus, pomegranate and raspberry flavors are elevated by baking spice and wrapped in a chalky grip. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$18



90 Browne Family Vineyards 2022 Red Blend (Paso Robles). Lighter hued in the glass, this wine, which somehow got approval for printing "Do Epic S***" on the label, offers fresh, slightly tart aromas of raspberry and cherry tomato on the nose. The palate is fresh and simple yet very refreshing with strawberry, thyme and fennel pollen flavors. It's a solid choice for pizza, pasta and epic friends. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$20

BEST BUYS



90 Bulgariana 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Thracian Valley). Blackberry, black cherry and cranberry aromas open on the nose followed by bruised strawberry and red cherry skin. The palate is fresh with chalky tannins that resolve in tart, red fruit. This still-youthful bottling can be enjoyed now–2030. Bulgariana. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$16



90 DFJ Vinhos 2021 Portada Reserva (Lisboa). A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah, the wine has a black plum aroma with spice and ripe tannins. It is a firm wine, still developing to reveal further layers of richness. Drink from 2026. DFJ Vinhos. **Best Buy.** —R.V.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$12



90 DFJ Vinhos 2022 Grand'Arte Pinot Noir (Lisboa). This is an intensely aromatic wine, piled high with black cherry flavors. The palate, full and round, offers richness and structure. Drink from 2026. DFJ Vinhos. **Best Buy.** —R.V.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$15

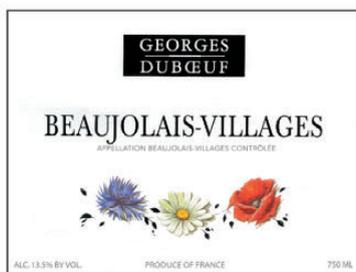
BEST BUYS



90 Frei Brothers 2023 Sauvignon Blanc (Russian River Valley). This wine displays waves of mixed citrus aromas on the nose, with white flowers and fresh-cut grass emerging after a few swirls. The palate is bracing, loaded with energy and tons of lemon and lime pith, pomelo, orange blossom and a whisper of jalapeño on the back end. **Best Buy.** —T.R.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$20

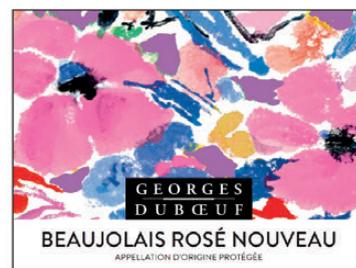


90 Gavioli NV (Lambrusco di Sorbara). Aromas of tart cherries, wild herbs and freshly cut roses lift from the glass of this energetic Lambrusco. Flavors of pickled watermelon and raspberries pop on the palate while the bright acidity keeps the palate fresh. Gavioli Antica Cantina SRL. **Best Buy.** —J.P.
abv: 11% **Price:** \$20



90 Georges Duboeuf 2023 (Beaujolais-Villages). This hand-harvested wine successfully straddles two worlds. Reserved yet layered aromas of black raspberry, black plum and blackberry waft from the glass followed by a smear of strawberry jam on toast. The palate rejoices in restrained black fruit that is simultaneously playful and youthful while honoring its core of moderation. Quintessential Wines LTD. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$19

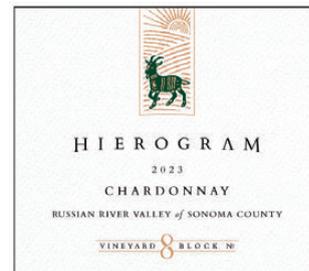
BEST BUYS



90 Georges Duboeuf 2024 Beaujolais Nouveau Rosé (Beaujolais). The wine has a nose of just-ripened red cherry, cranberry and apricot that is dusted with dried white flower. The palate leads with a hint of orange peel, morning forest floor and tangy acidity. Pair this pool-friendly Beaujolais Rosé Nouveau with arepas, scallion pancakes and grilled-chicken salad. Georges Dubœuf. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$16



90 Hartley & Gibson's NV Cream (Jerez). Amber in color, this wine has an aromatic nose of fig, black cherry skin, nutmeg, clove and roasted red apple. The sweet Sherry combines an underlayer of seriousness with an outer layer of frivolity. The wine reminds you why you should be open to enjoying sweet Sherries more often. Jack Poust & Co., Inc. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 18% **Price:** \$15



90 Hierogram 2023 Chardonnay (Russian River Valley). Aromas of roasted apple, pineapple, caramel and white flowers jump from the glass on the nose of this wine. The palate brings minerality, acidity and flavors of nectarine, Meyer lemon and cinnamon across a long finish with balanced structure. **Best Buy.** —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$20

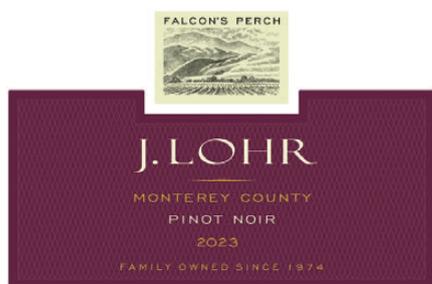
BEST BUYS



90 Iron Side 2023 Chardonnay (Mendocino). Sometimes, the simple pleasures in life satisfy us. This wine is vibrant and lush, with honeysuckle, pear, yellow apple and spearmint aromas on the nose. Flavors on the palate are baked apple, cinnamon, ginger and orange honey, with a creamy finish. Pair with saffron risotto. **Best Buy.** —T.P.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$15

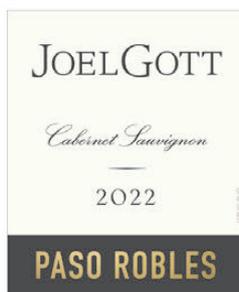


90 J. Lohr 2023 Riverstone Chardonnay (Arroyo Seco). Candied apple and honeysuckle aromas are fresh and clean on the nose of this bottling. The palate is broad with toasted brioche and baked apple flavors that grow a bit more complex by the finish. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$14



90 J. Lohr 2023 Falcon's Perch Pinot Noir (Monterey County). Light colored in the glass, this widely available, reliably satisfying bottling offers pomegranate, tree bark and cinnamon aromas on the simple nose. The palate is pleasantly tart with cherry, cranberry, hibiscus and rose petal flavors. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$17

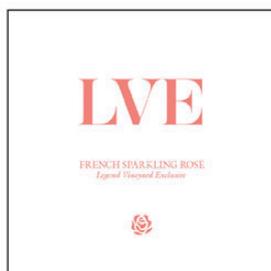
BEST BUYS



90 Joel Gott 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles). Savory, slightly reductive aromas of damp soil, charcoal and tar meet with dark berry on the nose of this bottling, which steadily opens up with air. The palate's asphalt spice gives way to dried plum, dark spice and espresso bean, making for a familiar experience. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 13.9% **Price:** \$20

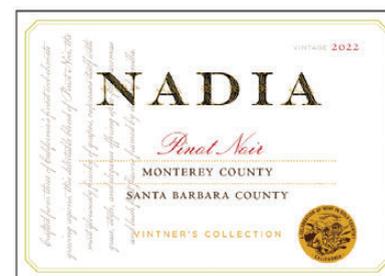


90 LaSelva 2023 (Morellino di Scansano). Aromas of cranberries, orange peel, mulling spices, pine needles and dirt lead into a palate of very crunchy, tart berries, salt and pepper, before the finish brings a bitter bark bite and a cooling minty breeze to contrast with the fiery heat. LaSelva società bioagricola a r.l. **Best Buy.** —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$18

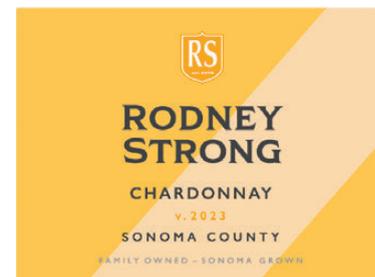


90 LVE NV Brut Rosé (France). Freshness and bubbly acidity are at this wine's core. Salmon in color, it has a perfumed nose of red cherry, cranberry skin, bruised strawberry and pomegranate. Tangy red fruit kicks off the palate, followed by windswept orange blossom and lime zest. Pair with charcuterie, goat cheese and strawberry shortcake. Boisset Collection. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 11.5% **Price:** \$16

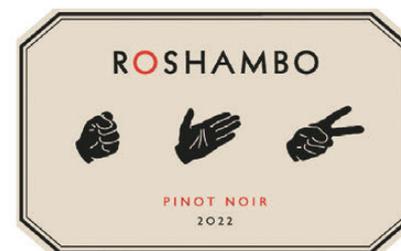
BEST BUYS



90 Nadia 2022 Vintner's Collection Pinot Noir (Monterey County-Santa Barbara County). Raspberry and smashed plum aromas are hit with a pinch of cardamom on the nose of this blend of grapes from two California counties. The palate is soft and creamy, with raspberry, blood orange and rose petal flavors. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$15

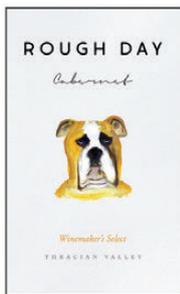


90 Rodney Strong 2023 Chardonnay (Sonoma). Aromas of lemon curd, cinnamon and lemon blossom swirl on the nose of this wine. The palate brings flavors of pear, nectarine and toasted brioche, with a charming balance between acidity and nuances of oak. **Best Buy.** —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$18



90 Roshambo 2022 Pinot Noir (Sonoma County). This softly extracted Pinot brings lovely aromas of candied cherry, strawberry and purple flowers on the nose. The acid-driven palate shows flavors of raspberry coulis, spiced lemon peel and cocoa powder through a long and mouthwatering finish. Massive value here. **Best Buy.** —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$19

BEST BUYS



90 Rough Day 2021 Winemaker's Select Cabernet Sauvignon (Thracian Valley). The wine is filled with blackberry bush and black cherry aromas along with violet blossom, dried herbs and a hint of sagebrush. On the palate velvety tannins are in the lead followed by silky red cherry that rides through to the lingering finish. Bulgariana. **Best Buy.** —R.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$75/3 L

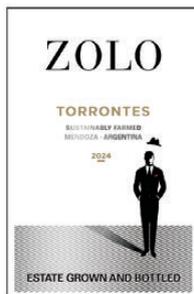


90 Valdo NV Marca Oro (Prosecco). Fresh green apple and ripe pear aromas burst with playful effervescence and citrus zest. Crunchy acidity drives the lively bubbles through crisp fruit flavors, while maintaining a clean, refreshing character that bounces across the palate. C. Mondavi and Family. **Best Buy.** —J.P.
abv: 11% **Price:** \$15

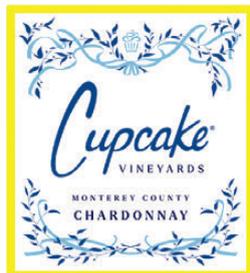


90 Z. Alexander Brown 2023 Uncaged Chardonnay (Monterey). Pleasantly familiar aromas of lemon and melon are simple and easygoing on the nose of this bottling. There's a toastier element to the palate, where sea salt and lemon-glaze flavors lead into a buttery, seared marshmallow finish. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$17

BEST BUYS



90 Zolo 2024 Torrontés (Mendoza). This wine is super aromatic and features inviting notes of grapefruit and orange. Friendly and flavorful, it highlights the citrus and stone fruit notes of Torrontés, alongside good acidity. The palate is fruit forward and offers a hint of green tea in the finish. **Best Buy.** —J.V.
abv: 13.6% **Price:** \$15



88 Cupcake Vineyards 2022 Chardonnay (Monterey County). Sharp lemon aromas meet with lightly earthy tones on the nose of this bottling. The palate is a bit more intense, as a noticeable texture frames the light flavors of lime and more earth. **Best Buy.** —M.K.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$14

CALIFORNIA

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

96 Copia Vineyards and Winery 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Baked cherry and dark cocoa aromas are rich and inviting on the nose of this wine, which is glazed in expertly integrated oak elements. The palate is smoothly polished and yet firm, pairing savory nut and coffee-spice flavors with ripe red fruit and a slowly rising acidity that picks up vanilla on the finish. Drink now–2034. **Cellar Selection.** —M.K.
abv: 15.2% **Price:** \$85

95 Jada Vineyard & Winery 2021 WCS Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Dense and concentrated in the glass, this bottling pairs rich blackberry and loamy soil aro-

mas with nutmeg, clove and gingerbread spices. The palate's fine tannins and subtle spices are suavely integrated into the potent dark-fruit flavors, as the finish winds up firmer than the start. —M.K.

abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$120

94 Darioush 2021 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley). Aromas and flavor complexity in this full-bodied, deeply toned wine showcase lavish spices, dark fruits, fragrant lift and a long, mineral finish. The wine is succulent and robust. —E.C.B.

abv: 15.4% **Price:** \$136

94 LXV 2022 Gateway Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Snappy aromas of red berry and cherry are elevated by hints of cedar, cocoa and espresso on the nose of this bottling. The palate leans toward the heavy side, balanced by fine tannins that aren't intrusive, as red spice and mace flavors slide into the creamy finish. —M.K.

abv: 13.8% **Price:** \$150

94 Red Stitch 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Coombsville). Lush and full of flavor, this brooding and deeply toned wine delivers a basket of dark fruits made savory by tobacco and rich with dark chocolate. Fine while convincing tannins carry into a long finish. —E.C.B.

abv: 14.7% **Price:** \$125

94 Sosie Wines 2019 Charlie Smith Cabernet Sauvignon (Moon Mountain District Sonoma County). This rich Cabernet displays aromas of chocolate-covered cherry, spiced blackberry compote, sage and black pepper on the nose. The palate gives tons of concentrated black-fruit flavor, with layers of leafy tobacco, barrel spice and licorice that linger across the finish. Beautiful now, this wine will age beautifully for a decade or more. —T.R.C.

abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$75

93 Bedarra 2021 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley). Aromas of currant, mint and gravel highlight the nose of this savory and complex Cabernet. The palate feels nimble, with a rush of raspberry-lemon acidity balancing the grip of plush tannin. Juicy berry flavors dance with herbal notes across a long, energetic finish. —T.R.C.

abv: 14.3% **Price:** \$70

93 Cedarville Vineyard 2018 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (El Dorado). This wine is lively, with aromas of mulberry, black plum, cedar, dried florals and Tahitian vanilla on the nose. Flavors on the palate are rich, complex black raspberry, cranberry, clove, allspice and orange zest, layered with mineral and supple tannins on the finish. Decant and enjoy with grilled flank steak. —T.P.

abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$36

93 Darioush 2021 Darius II Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley). Richly spiced and generous, this wine is extravagant and flavorful, filled with

dark, ripe fruits lifted by violets and pleasing cocoa powder through a lengthy finish. —E.C.B.
abv: 15.4% **Price:** \$340

93 Drew Dowsett Wines 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Valley). With a few swirls, rich aromas of caramel, chocolate-covered cherry and tobacco emerge on the nose of this wine. The palate delivers vibrant cherry acidity, dark cocoa and plush tannin. Delicious now, this will evolve nicely in the cellar for a decade or more. —T.R.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$48

93 Ernest Vineyards 2022 Alder Springs Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Mendocino). Alder Springs Vineyard is famous for offering a large selection of grape varieties produced in small quantities. This Cab is robust and savory, offering dark berry, red berry, red plum, dried herbs and dried brush on the nose. Flavors on the palate are similar, delivering bramble fruit, star anise, spearmint and porcini mushroom, with a supple, mouthwatering finish. Decant and drink until 2032. —T.P.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$125

93 Handwritten Wines 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain). Lavish and layered with silken tannins and a long finish, this 100% Cabernet Sauvignon grown at high elevation on Howell Mountain delivers red fruits and rich flavors through a long finish. —E.C.B.
abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$175

93 Madroña 2019 Signature Collection Cabernet Sauvignon (El Dorado County). Established in 1973, this producer still follows its original practices in viticulture and sustainability. Aromas on the nose capture the essence of alpine red fruits, citrus, mineral, rock and dusty tannins. Flavors on the palate are black raspberry, cassis, black strawberry, dried bay laurel and simmering spices, with dusty tannins on the finish. Decant or hold until 2034. Pair with elk and potato leek galette. —T.P.
abv: 14.1% **Price:** \$32

93 Paradise Springs 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara). This bottling explores the lighter side of Cabernet Sauvignon in enlightening ways. Aromas of black raspberry, scarlet-red rose petal and fennel pollen show on the nose. The medium- to lighter-bodied palate offers cherry and strawberry flavors that are dusted in French toast spices. *Editor's Choice.* —M.K.
abv: 12.6% **Price:** \$55

93 Sandar & Hem 2021 Peter Martin Ray Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains). A return to classic Cabernet Sauvignon is indicated in this bottling from a vineyard located 1,300 feet over Silicon Valley. Black raspberry, cedar shavings and cocoa dust aromas lead from the nose into a lightly bodied palate of red cherry, pomegranate and minty herbs, all framed by dusty tannins. *Editor's Choice.* —M.K.
abv: 13.7% **Price:** \$58

93 Vöcal 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon (Carmel Valley). Though picked on Halloween, this bottling from the historic Joullian Vineyard stayed at a lower alcohol despite big flavors. It begins with aromas of baked cherry, herb, pepper and a leathery elegance on the nose. Cherry compote and dried beef flavors make for a savory palate. —M.K.
abv: 13.2% **Price:** \$55

GRENACHE

96 Caliza 2022 Kän-krët Grenache (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Precise aromas of strawberry, rhubarb and hibiscus meet with an earthy beetroot element on the dynamic nose of this bottling, which was aged for 11 months in concrete before finishing seven months in neutral oak. Dark cherry flavors are lifted by elegant lines of violet and rosewater on the palate. —M.K.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$75

94 Copia Vineyards and Winery 2022 The Story Grenache (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). This bottling, which includes 8% Syrah, reveals a darker side to Grenache, starting with blackberry aromas that are enhanced by hints of hot rocks and sage sticks on the nose. The palate is bold with boysenberry and elderberry flavors. Violets pop toward the finish and fine-grained tannins hold it all tight. —M.K.
abv: 15.2% **Price:** \$68

94 Dovecote 2021 Thompson Vineyard Grenache (Alisos Canyon). There's a wondrous combination of raspberry, strawberry, earthy herbs and white pepper on the nose of this bottling from this seminal Alisos Canyon estate, which truly excelled in this vintage. Thyme and tarragon flavors play against richly layered dark-red fruits on the palate, with orange peel giving acidic bite. —M.K.
abv: 14.7% **Price:** \$65

94 Jada Vineyard & Winery 2021 WCS Jack John Grenache (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Bold black-plum fruit aromas meet with sagebrush, woodspice and mint on the nose of this bottling. There's a firm grip to the rounded, even heavy, dark-fruit flavors of the palate, where baking spice rides atop a solid acidity. —M.K.
abv: 15.2% **Price:** \$72

94 Mathis Wine 2022 Mathis Vineyard Grenache (Sonoma Valley). The nose of this wine is an aromatic showstopper, with crushed cherry, raspberry and lemon peel aromas jumping from the glass. The palate offers sumptuous fruit character, velvety tannin and a bouncy acidity that lingers across the finish with echoes of flowers, herbs and citrus. Delicious now, this will evolve beautifully in the cellar. *Hidden Gem.* —T.R.C.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$40

93 Cedarville Vineyard 2023 Estate Grenache (El Dorado). Rhône varieties are alive and thriving in El Dorado County. This bottling is a nod to the Old World in flavor profile. Aromas on the

nose are raspberry, dark plum and dried coriander, with bright acidity. The fruit on the palate is supple, with juicy strawberry, Bing cherry and portobello mushroom, plus grippy tannins on the finish. Decant and pair with shepherd's pie. —T.P.
abv: 14.2% **Price:** \$45

93 Newfound Wines 2022 Cemetery Vineyard Grenache (Mendocino). It is excellent to see high-elevation, old-vine Grenache produced in this region. As winemakers seek out these plantings, more noteworthy fruits will come online. The nose of this wine is vibrant, with aromas of red plum, boysenberry, dried orange peel, star anise and Tahitian vanilla on the nose. Flavors on the palate are ripe strawberry, raspberry, pink grapefruit zest and dried mushroom, all intertwined with minerals and a juicy, dry finish. —T.P.
abv: 14.1% **Price:** \$55

92 Decemil Estate Wines 2022 Grenache (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Bold and ripe aromas of strawberry, baked plum, rosewater and lilac draw the nose into this bottling. The palate is quite fresh with raspberry and cherry flavors that are balanced by tarragon and pepper, making for an elegant and delicious expression. —M.K.
abv: 15.9% **Price:** \$75

92 Mathis Wine 2021 Mathis Vineyard Grenache (Sonoma Valley). This richly extracted Grenache displays intense aromas of kirsch, raspberry, crushed herbs and white pepper on the nose. The palate is fresh and vibrant, with flavors of spiced cherry, sage and anise layered with crunchy tannin and juicy acidity. —T.R.C.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$40

SYRAH

97 Caliza 2021 Reserve Syrah (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Very dark in the glass, this incredibly intense style of Syrah erupts on the nose with cocoa, espresso bean, charred bacon fat, squid ink and grilled boysenberry aromas. There's an iodine streak to the tarry palate, where Sichuan peppercorn, oyster sauce and elderberry jam flavors make for savory harmony. —M.K.
abv: 15.5% **Price:** \$110

97 Epoch Estate Wines 2021 Authenticity Syrah (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Dark and thick in the glass, this bottling mostly comes from Paderewski Vineyard but includes 7% from York Mountain. It entices the nose with aromas of boysenberry, violet and rich spice, expertly woven so nothing sticks out. The palate is creamy and polished, offering blackberry, lavender and light chocolate flavors. It's tense, so drink now through 2039. *Cellar Selection.* —M.K.
abv: 14.7% **Price:** \$105

97 Epoch Estate Wines 2021 Block B Syrah (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Very dark and intensely concentrated in the glass, this block selection from Paderewski Vineyard is layered on the

BUYINGGUIDE

nose with aromas of cassis and violet, like creamy purple clouds. It's rich, soft and enveloping on the palate, as purple-fruit-pudding flavors are cut by steadily rising acidity and subtle spices. Tannins show on the back end alongside bay leaf. —M.K.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$115

97 Epoch Estate Wines 2021 York Mountain Vineyard Syrah (York Mountain). This bottling reveals the magic of York Mountain, where the power of Paso Robles meets the influence of a cooler climate. Aromas of blackberry, elderflower and violet lead from the nose into a tense palate of elderberry jam, charred game and cracked peppercorn. These flavors crave cellar time but are delicious now. Drink now–2042. *Cellar Selection.* —M.K.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$105

96 Dovecote 2021 Noumenon Thompson Vineyard Syrah (Alisos Canyon). This winery's flagship bottle is a stunner in this stellar vintage, beginning with snappy blueberry, black raspberry and baking spice aromas on the nose. The palate is tightly wound yet full of vivid flavors, from lavender and black raspberry to white and black peppercorns. —M.K.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$100

96 LXV 2022 Armaa.N Estate Syrah (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Rich and lavish aromas of baked boysenberry, milk chocolate and violet cream converge on the inviting nose of this estate bottling. The palate is joyously ripe in blackberry and black currant flavors, as hints of caramel add to this hedonistic spin on Syrah. —M.K.
abv: 15.7% **Price:** \$150

95 Dovecote 2021 Thompson Vineyard Syrah (Alisos Canyon). Enticingly floral aromas of violet and scarlet-red rose meet with black raspberry and dark strawberry on the nose of this bottling. The palate is easygoing at first, full of strawberry, cherry and elderflower flavors that pick up chai-like spices by the finish. —M.K.
abv: 14.7% **Price:** \$65

94 Mesa Del Sol 2022 Syrah (Arroyo Seco). Pure aromas of black plum and boysenberry pair with star anise on the nose of this rich bottling from a unique vineyard near the mouth of the Arroyo Seco canyon. Chalky but polished tannins weave through the palate, where fig, roasted apple and dark berry flavors meet with chai spice. A blast of acidity levels the finish. —M.K.
abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$40

94 Robert Renzoni 2021 Federico Riserva Syrah (Temecula Valley). Deep, dark and intense aromas of blackberry, elderberry and violet are cut by smoked meat and damp clay on the nose of this bottling, which includes 13% Merlot and 6% Petite Sirah. The palate pairs elderberry, smoked meat, peppercorn and brighter purple-flower flavors into a complex display. Drink now–2036. *Cellar Selection.* —M.K.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$100

94 Sosie Wines 2021 Vivio Vineyard Syrah (Ben nett Valley). Aromas of black cherry, tart raspberry and cinnamon lift the nose of this vibrant native-fermented Syrah. The palate brings a wash of lively acidity and rich tannin, with flavors of blackberry, violets, black tea and roasted meat. A little time in the cellar will soften this nicely, drink 2028–2040. *Cellar Selection.* —T.R.C.
abv: 15.2% **Price:** \$42

93 Cedarville Vineyard 2022 Estate Syrah (El Dorado). This bottling is a nod to the Rhône Valley in France. It is a high-elevation, dry-farmed planting with low yields. Aromas are fresh and opulent, with black raspberry, lingonberry, black licorice, dried potpourri and toasted vanilla on the nose. Complex flavors on the palate include dark plum, blood orange peel, coriander and sedimentary rock, with a mouthwatering finish. Decant and enjoy with roasted suckling pig. —T.P.
abv: 14.3% **Price:** \$36

93 Copia Vineyards and Winery 2022 The Source Syrah (Paso Robles Willow Creek District). Dark, slightly tart aromas of blackberry are dusted in asphalt and pepper elements on the nose of this bottling. The palate shows a savory side of gamy meats that slide into black- and purple-fruit flavors and a peppery, acid-washed finish. —M.K.
abv: 15.1% **Price:** \$72

93 MacLaren 2021 Dutton-Gregori Vineyard Syrah (Russian River Valley). This beautifully floral expression jumps from the glass with aromas of lilacs, blackberries, caramel and black pepper. A broad palate displays rich texture and flavors of raspberry liqueur, spiced plum, cocoa powder, crushed herb mélange and potpourri. Drink this with roasted lamb. *Editor's Choice.* —T.R.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$62

93 MacLaren 2021 Vivio Vineyard Syrah (Ben nett Valley). This elegant and aromatically complex Syrah offers raspberry, tart cherry, violets and anise on the nose. The palate brings vibrant acid and flavors of crushed Bing cherry, plum skin, tea and black olive. Pair this with roasted lamb or merguez sausage. —T.R.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$62

93 Newfound Wines 2022 Shake Ridge Ranch Syrah (Amador County). This selection is sourced from a leading site for old-vine material. It offers freshness and vibrancy, with aromas of red plum, black currant, boysenberry, cedar, black licorice and lime-vanilla cream on the nose. Flavors on the palate are ripe raspberry, blackberry, coriander, cardamom and Meyer lemon zest, with silky tannins on the finish. Decant or hold until 2032. —T.P.
abv: 13.6% **Price:** \$55

93 Stringer 2021 Alder Springs Vineyard Syrah (Mendocino County). This Syrah comes from high-elevation and extreme growing conditions. Aromas of ripe olallieberry, coriander, dried florals and earth show on the nose. The mouthfeel is lush, and somersaulting flavors of blackberry, red

currant, black tea, clove and star anise coat the palate. Pair with venison and mushroom ragout. —T.P.
abv: 14.8% **Price:** \$56

93 Tablas Creek 2022 Syrah (Adelaida District). Dark red fruit aromas meet with dusty herbs and a rusty minerality on the nose of this bottling, which reveals how Syrah can be balanced and delicate. The palate presents floral tones of scarlet-red rose petals and lavender that decorate the clean cherry and ample baking spice flavors. *Editor's Choice.* —M.K.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$55

BEAUJOLAIS RED WINES

FLEURIE

93 Annick Bachelet 2023 (Fleurie). This is a fun Fleurie to enjoy on the beach. Ripe red raspberry, rhubarb and fresh cranberry aromas mingle with dried blackberry flakes and strawberry puree. Pencil shavings and red plum bounce around on the juicy, lively midpalate. W. Direct. —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$30

93 Château des Jacques 2022 (Fleurie). This svelte, polished Fleurie draws you in to it. Dark-fruit aromas undergirded by red raspberry and a whiff of hibiscus open on the nose along with a hint of strawberry blossom. Well-integrated red and black fruit rides in parallel with silky tannins that caress the inside of your cheek. Pair with filet mignon and choice meat cuts or roasted portobello mushroom. Chateau des Jacques. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$30

93 Gilles Copéret 2023 Les Roches (Fleurie). Complex aromas of black currant, blackberry and a definitive layer of field herbs are this wine's calling card. Slightly grippy tannins take a back seat to bruised raspberry and field grass on the finish. Pair with creamy dishes, sauteed kale and sliders. This is a fantastic Fleurie! Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$23

93 Laurent Perrachon et Fils 2023 Vieilles Vignes (Fleurie). Earthy black cherry and bruised red-cherry aromas fill the nose, followed by late-summer grass frond. The palate boasts juicy fruit that bursts into red cherry. Forest floor elements make this wine an ideal accompaniment with savory dishes. Vins Perrachon et Fils. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$25

92 Domaine André Colonge 2023 (Fleurie). This substantial Fleurie revels in its own complexity. Muddled red cherry, pomegranate, apricot and violet-blossom aromas lift from your glass while dried orange peel joins on the palate. Smile induc-

ing, drink now–2040. Domaine André Colonge et Fils. *Cellar Selection*. —R.S.
abv: 14% Price: \$21

92 Georges Duboeuf 2022 (Fleurie). Red currant and blackberry aromas fill the nose along with red raspberry. Floral on the attack, this energetic wine has still-youthful tannins that portend good things to come with more age in bottle. Decant and drink now, or cellar until 2038. Quintessential Wines LTD. *Cellar Selection*. —R.S.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$28

MORGON

94 Château des Jacques 2022 Côte du Py (Morgon). This wine wins you over with intelligent complexity that abounds on the nose with well-integrated black-fruit aromas that are flexible and relaxed. Flavors of black raspberry, black plum and dried hay come together as a whole and charm the palate. Château des Jacques. *Editor's Choice*. —R.S.
abv: 14% Price: \$42

93 Domaine Ruet 2023 Grands Cras (Morgon). Joyful black raspberry and briary blackberry aromas swell on the nose followed by red

currant, black olive and dried cranberry skin. The wine wallows in black fruit that enjoys a whisper of apricot and soy-sauce-topped sliced strawberry. Drink now–2030. French Libation. *Cellar Selection*. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$25

93 Laurent Perrachon et Fils 2023 Corcelette (Morgon). This wine has a beguiling, herbal edge led by dried field grass and Darjeeling tea aromas along with violet blossom and plump red plum. Muddled black plum and black cherry arrive on the attack followed by flavors of dried olive branch and hibiscus. Pair with herb-led dishes, grilled steak, chicken paillard and lamb chops. Vins Perrachon et Fils. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$24

92 Annick Bachelet 2022 Via Romana (Morgon). This wine is an elixir of blackberry and black plum in a glass. Aromas of hibiscus and rosehip wrap around the fruit core that is elevated by grippy tannins that dominate on the long finish. Decant and drink now, and cellar through 2038. W. Direct. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$28

92 Château des Jacques 2022 (Morgon). This wine engages and enlivens the senses. Rhu-

barb and cherry-cola aromas begin on the nose followed by hints of dried-cranberry skin and forest floor. Tannins are refined and soulful on the palate. Pair with chicken paillard, skirt steak and mushroom risotto. Château des Jacques. —R.S.
abv: 14% Price: \$31

92 Joseph Jacôme 2023 (Morgon). Perfumed aromas of cherry and peach-skin open on the nose followed by dried papaya and black plum. Forest floor and dried-field-grass flavors kick off the palate followed by crushed stone and dried lemon zest. Drink from 2026 onwards. W. Direct. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$28

92 Maison Rémy Passot et Fils 2023 Les Rampeaux (Morgon). Morgon was made to be this good. Plump black plum luxuriates with apricot on the nose that also sees dried orange peel, black olive and black raspberry. Black fruit leads on the palate chased by black plum and supported by slightly-velvety tannins that caress the palate leaving you wanting more. PG Fine Wines. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$23



MOULIN-À-VENT

96 Château du Moulin-à-Vent 2022 La Rochelle (Moulin-à-Vent). This wine has an earthy nose of black cherry and black plum, rhubarb and the faintest suggestion of licorice. On the palate grippy, youthful tannins show their aging potential in the cuvée that still has a lot more to give. Drink now–2040. Wilson and Daniels LLC. *Cellar Selection.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$75

96 Château du Moulin-à-Vent 2022 Les Grands Savarins (Moulin-à-Vent). Red currant, black plum, black olive and white blossom unite on the nose and provide a trilogy of aromas that carry forward. This wine has midpalate concentration and stamina that was meant for the long hall buttressed by still-youthful tannins. When opened make sure the company around you is worthy of the honor. You can drink the wine now, but if you have patience enjoy it from 2028–2040. Wilson and Daniels LLC. *Cellar Selection.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$95

94 Annick Bachelet 2022 (Moulin-à-Vent). This is Moulin-à-Vent at its best. The wine has a nose of black plum, pencil shavings, forest floor and sensual-yet-subtle baking spice. The wine comes alive in 3-D on the palate with complex, chalk-dusted, layered flavors showing their elegance and restraint while pointing towards even better moments ahead. Decant and drink now; the wine will continue to improve with age through 2040. W. Direct. *Cellar Selection.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$31

94 Château des Jacques 2022 Clos du Grand Carquelin (Moulin-à-Vent). This is a charming Moulin-à-Vent. Sun-warmed blackberry, black raspberry and a dash of soy sauce roll around in dried cranberry and black plum on the nose. Relaxed tannins give way to delicate, well-integrated fruit that completes with a bit of bacon fat and tart red plum. Chateau des Jacques. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$42

93 Châteaux des Jacques 2022 (Moulin-à-Vent). Reserved aromas of grilled meat, red currant, black plum, black olive and dried red cherry open on the nose. A chalky palate dusted with graphite shavings is supported by grippy tannins. Decant and drink now, but this still-youthful wine would benefit from additional age in bottle if opened 2026 onwards to give you its best. Chateau des Jacques. *Cellar Selection.* —R.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$33

93 Châteaux des Jacques 2022 Clos de Rochegrès (Moulin-à-Vent). Deep ruby in color, the wine has a nose of black plum, fresh black cherry and tart strawberry puree. Graphite kicks off the palate with slightly-velvety tannins that linger on the finish. This wine has aging potential written all over it. Drink now, and it will also continue to

improve with time in bottle. Chateau des Jacques. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$45

93 Château du Moulin-à-Vent 2022 (Moulin-à-Vent). Black plum and red raspberry fill the nose along with the faintest suggestion of apricot. The velvety palate is sophisticated and pleasurable. This wine is a caress of Moulin-à-Vent in a glass that is worthy of being savored. Wilson and Daniels LLC. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$39

93 Château du Moulin-à-Vent 2022 Couvent des Thorins (Moulin-à-Vent). Elegant red cherry aromas flirt with raspberry and white flower on the nose. The wine is still spry with youthful tannins showing on the palate. The wine will continue to evolve in bottle, and the fruit core fortells an even more radiant future. Wilson and Daniels LLC. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$25

93 Laurent Perrachon et Fils 2023 Terres Roses (Moulin-à-Vent). This wine is a beguiling mix of youth and seriousness. Black raspberry rubs up against freshly-picked red cherry that flirts with cranberry skin and dried field grass. The palate is defined by a red-fruit-led freshness that washes over wet stone and gives whispers of Darjeeling tea on the finish. Drink now–2035. Vins Perrachon et Fils. *Cellar Selection.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$25

JULIÉNAS

93 Laurent Perrachon et Fils 2023 Roche Bleue (Juliénas). This bottling embodies what people don't yet know they can expect from Beaujolais. Muddled blackberry fraternizes with black cherry, dried cranberry, grass stalk and strawberry aromas on the nose. Attractive herbal notes kick off the palate with a well-integrated character that lets the purity of the fruit shine. Vins Perrachon et Fils. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$23

LOIRE VALLEY WHITE WINES

MUSCADET SÈVRE ET MAINE

94 Domaine des Tilleuls 2022 Les Vénérables Vieilles Vignes (Muscadet Sèvre et Maine). This cerebral Muscadet presents an alluring, dried-herb-filled cacophony of aromas that is different from anything you've likely experienced. The nose bathes in crab apple, yogurt, white peach, singed sagebrush and brioche, while the palate largely abandons the herbal character in favor of sun-kissed orchard fruit. The wine is a chameleon in a glass that would pair well with herb-leaning and

hearty dishes such as Shepherd's pie. SAS des Tilleuls. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 12% **Price:** \$22

94 Domaine des Tilleuls 2019 Vallet (Muscadet Sèvre et Maine). This bottling is for wine lovers who appreciate thoughtfully made, aged Muscadet. Complex, well-integrated-fruit aromas seduce on the nose. Golden apple and bread dough form the spine of the wine, fleshed out with ripe, bruised orchard fruit. A silky acidity kicks off the palate with reserved flavors of green pear and toasted lemon-peel that linger on the finish. SAS des Tilleuls. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 12% **Price:** \$34

92 Bedouet 2023 Clos de Grands Primos Sur Lie (Muscadet Sèvre et Maine). Orange blossom and white-rose petal aromas frame Bosc pear, green apple and a faint suggestion of lemon curd. The palate vibrates with chalky, orchard-fruit flavors and animated acidity and finishes with a citrus lift. Pair with grilled calamari, French fries and the freshest seafood. French Libation. *Best Buy.* —R.S.
abv: 12% **Price:** \$20

92 Bedouet 2023 Le Domaine Sur Lie (Muscadet Sèvre et Maine). Yellow-gold in color, the wine has a fragrant nose of honey-drizzled baked apples and bread dough that pulls you into fresh croissant, orange peel and a whisper of white peach. The rich, fulsome palate bathes in just-ripened fruit flavors with a tail of white tea and citrus. This substantial wine delights. Pair with hearty and buttered dishes. French Libation. *Best Buy.* —R.S.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$18

91 Domaine des Tilleuls 2023 Essentielle (Muscadet Sèvre et Maine). Lively, confident and lemon in color, this wine has a mineral-driven nose of crushed stone, golden apple, muddled Anjou pear and dried lemon peel. A stream of wet rock carries flavors of white rose petals that embrace playful, palate-cleansing acidity. SAS des Tilleuls. *Best Buy.* —R.S.
abv: 12% **Price:** \$18

POUILLY-FUMÉ

94 Domaine Tinel-Blondelet 2023 Arelles (Pouilly-Fumé). This wine combines a subtle yeasty character with a pleasing core of vibrancy. The wine has a fragrant and perfumed nose of baked green apples, brioche, yogurt and Anjou pear. The palate opens with a burst of dried lemon peel and lively acidity that is invigorating and that runs through the length of the taste. Domaine Tinel Blondelet. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$57

92 Domaine Tinel-Blondelet 2023 Génomine (Pouilly-Fumé). Aromas of golden apple and dried field grass open on the nose along with green plum and white blossom. The mineral-driven fruit core is framed by a thin complementary layer of savoriness that gives the wine added dimension.

Pair with goat cheese and salmon-topped Cobb salad. Domaine Tinel Blondelet. *Editor's Choice*. —R.S.
abv: 12.5% Price: \$33/75 ml

92 Joseph Mellot 2023 Le Chant des Vignes (Pouilly-Fumé). Restrained aromas of golden apple, quince and honey-coated green pear play alongside dried white blossom and dried hay. Round on the palate, the wine brings additional flavors of dried field herbs along with wisps of white peach. This wine would pair well with oysters, seafood and goat cheese. IT Public Relations. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$63

92 Joseph Mellot 2023 Le Troncsec (Pouilly-Fumé). This wine is bottled pleasure. Fragrant aromas of juicy green apple, white peach and gooseberry fill the nose alongside orange blossom and white rose petal. The wine is built around a backbone of vibrant, tart acidity that gives the bottling verve along with lemon citrus. Albert Bichot USA. *Editor's Choice*. —R.S.
abv: 12.5% Price: \$43

91 Domaine La Croix Canat 2023 La Chantepleure (Pouilly-Fumé). This is a solid Pouilly-Fumé. Aromas of chalk-dusted green apple slices and Bosc pear skin aromas begin are followed by Baby's Breath and citrus blossom. The palate is fresh with a steely texture and gree orchard-fruit persistence. Domaine Tinel Blondelet. —R.S.
abv: 10% Price: \$38

91 Joseph Mellot 2023 Domaine des Mariniers (Pouilly-Fumé). This wine has a subtle, attenuated opening and a lingering finish. The wine has a reserved nose of crushed stone and chamomile framed by green apple and dried white blossom. The palate opens with a wave of soft, tart acidity that plunges into a shore of rugged slate. IT Public Relations. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$60

91 Marius César 2023 Fluvium Ligerim (Pouilly-Fumé). The wine opens with yellow apple and sun-kissed white peach aromas that are framed by orange blossom. The palate begins with wet stone and brings along a whisper of dried hay on the finish. Pair with bouillabaisse, fresh anchovies and a toasted baguette. Domaine Tinel Blondelet. —R.S.
abv: 12.5% Price: \$45/75 ml

90 La Rive de Loire 2023 (Pouilly-Fumé). This bright, fresh wine has a comforting earthy undercurrent. Playful white peach and golden apple aromas are accented by lemon peel and a dusting of white blossom. Mineral driven, the palate is draped in and balanced by chalk-dusted acidity that finishes long. City Moonlight W&L LLC. —R.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$54

BORDEAUX RED WINES MARGAUX

96 Château d'Issan 2022 (Margaux). Impressive is the word for this fine wine with its ancient estate and moated château. Solid tannins and fragrant black fruits are backed by a dense texture and richness. The black-coffee aroma and richness are developing well, but need time. Drink from 2029. Château d'Issan. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14.5% Price: \$74

96 Château Giscours 2022 (Margaux). This great estate, with its mix of park, woods and vines, is reliably producing a very fine wine. Ripe, succulent, with powerful tannins cushioned by solid fruit, the wine's toast and spice aroma and firm structure are impressive. Drink from 2029. Château Giscours. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$69

96 Châteu Brane-Cantenac 2022 (Margaux). This is a very fine wine. It has a stylish balance and richly textured fruits. Backing this richness up is a tobacco and spice aroma along with dense tannins, succulent black fruits and a powerful, long-lasting aftertaste. Drink from 2029. SV Henri Lurton. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14% Price: \$98

95 Château Cantenac Brown 2022 (Margaux). From its magnificent chateau, this estate is powering ahead. The wine is full of dark chocolate flavors and concentrated tannins. A richly structured wine, there is good potential. Drink from 2029. Château Cantenac Brown. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14% Price: \$76

95 Château Dauzac 2022 (Margaux). A ripe, smoothly textured wine, fermented in wood with dense black fruits, this is powerful and concentrated. It has a tobacco and dark pepper aroma and ripe berries and spice from wood aging. The estate is obviously on a high. Drink the wine from 2029. Chateau Dauzac. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14% Price: \$65

95 Château Kirwan 2022 (Margaux). Owned by the Bordeaux negociant firm Schroder and Schÿler, this estate has produced a massive wine. Full of rich tannins and layers of black fruits and a firm core, the wine has a long-term future. Drink from 2029. Schroder & Schÿler. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14% Price: \$53

95 Château Lascombes 2022 (Margaux). This large estate is now settled well into its elegant style. This new release is lifted with a licorice aroma and dense texture. It is juicy, packed with chocolate flavors and ripe tannins. The wine has a

fine future. Drink from 2029. Château Lascombes. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14% Price: \$80

95 Château Rauzan-Gassis 2022 (Margaux). One of many classed growths at the heart of Margaux, the team has produced a powerful, polished wine. It is rich, both in its chocolate aroma and its dense black fruits. It should age well. Drink from 2029. SCEA Château Rauzan -Gassies. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14.5% Price: \$74

95 Château Siran 2022 (Margaux). Known for its unique labels, this one commemorates Queen Elizabeth II. This wine comes from an estate in the south of Margaux. It is rich, packed with black fruits and dense tannins. The wine has a licorice aroma, great fruitiness and good potential. Drink from 2029. SC Château Siran. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14% Price: \$45

94 Château Boyd Cantenac 2022 (Margaux). This classed-growth estate in the village of Cantenac has produced a wine rich in tannins and black fruit. With a dark berry aroma and black currant and spice flavors, the wine is rich, structured and ageworthy. Drink from 2028. SCECH-Boyd Cantenac & Pouget. —R.V.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$60

94 Château d'Arsac 2022 (Margaux). One of the vineyards away from the Gironde estuary has produced a richly structured wine. It has dense tannins and layers of black fruits and structure. Blackberry and black-coffee aromas, and juicy black fruits give a wine that has space to develop. Drink from 2028. Château d'Arsac. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$30

94 Château du Tertre 2022 (Margaux). This is a fine estate producing wines with a great future. This release has a dark-chocolate aroma and some powerful tannins. Structured, rich and concentrated, it should be ready from 2029. Château du Tertre. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14% Price: \$47

94 Château Malescot Saint-Exupéry 2022 (Margaux). Bottled without fining or racking to preserve all its fruit, the wine is dense and powerful. It is a very fine wine, the black-currant aroma and powerful tannins giving an impressive appearance. Drink the wine from 2028. Château Malescot Saint-Exupéry. *Cellar Selection*. —R.V.
abv: 14.5% Price: \$70

94 Château Marquis de Terme 2022 (Margaux). This classed growth estate has produced a balanced, fruity wine. Juicy and full of black currant fruits, with a crushed blackberry aroma, its straightforward blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot gives a wine with intensity and

BUYINGGUIDE

concentration. Drink this wine from 2029. Château Marquis de Terme. —R.V.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$66

94 **Château Labégorce 2022 (Margaux).** A rich wine from the central plateau of Margaux, this is marked by its tobacco aroma and its rich tannins. It is a generous wine, full of black fruits and ripe acidity. With its fine future of ripe concentration, the wine will be ready from 2029. Château Labégorce. —R.V.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$42

93 **Château Chantelune 2022 (Margaux).** A vanilla aroma, spice and black-plum fruits give the wine a balanced, full character. It is spicy from wood aging, with rich tannins and a structure for aging. Produced by José Sanfins on his six-acre property. He is also winemaker for classed growth Cantenac Brown. This wine is richly textured. Drink from 2027. Château Chantelune. *Cellar Selection.* —R.V.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$60

93 **Château Desmirail 2022 (Margaux).** A blueberry aroma and a creamy texture give this wine a gentle character. It is balanced with tannins that are already integrated. Drink this classed growth wine from 2028. Château Desmirail. —R.V.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$40

93 **Château Deyrem Valentin 2022 (Margaux).** With its wood aging, the wine is toasty and full of black fruits. It is a generous wine, its richness is matched by its structure. Drink the wine from 2028. Château Deyrem Valentin. —R.V.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$30

93 **Château Marquis d'Alesme Becker 2022 (Margaux).** With its impressive new winery, this classed growth estate has developed its own personality. The wine is richly endowed, full of luxurious black fruits and ripe black tannins. With a dark-chocolate aroma, it is a full-bodied wine that should be ready from 2029. DOMAINES PAUL MAS. —R.V.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$52

93 **Château Monbrison 2022 (Margaux).** A fine wine, with dark chocolate density and ripe tannins, this is juicy and structured. Its black coffee and licorice aromas are intense, leading to succulent black-currant fruits and ripe, firm tannins. Drink the wine from 2029. Château Monbrison. —R.V.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$55

93 **Château Pavé de Luze 2022 (Margaux).** The estate, close to many of the classed growth Margaux chateaus, has produced a firmly structured wine. It is concentrated as well as juicy. The toast and spice aroma, and rich fruits and tannins promise some good aging. Drink from 2029. Château Pavé de Luze. —R.V.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$30

93 **Château Prieuré Lichine 2022 (Margaux).** The estate, in the village of Cantenac, is now performing well. This new release is full of fresh fruits, mingling with dark tannins. The black-fruit aroma is immediately attractive. Drink the wine from 2028. SAS Prieuré-Lichine. —R.V.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$50

93 **Clos Dufourg 2022 (Margaux).** Christophe Landry has created a wine from this small property that breaks many norms. A blend of five varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, Petit Verdot and Carmenère, it is a perfumed wine with some solid tannins and a spice aroma. Drink the wine from 2028. Organic and biodynamic. Clos Dufourg. —R.V.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$35

PROVENCE ROSÉ WINES

COTEAUX D'AIX-EN-PROVENCE

93 **Château Vignelaure 2023 (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence).** The nose of this wine is like fresh rainfall sweetened by orange blossom and peach. The palate opens with a pleasant bitterness that evolves into a spicy peach finish that lingers in this mouthcoating rosé. Monsieur Touton Selection Ltd. —C.W.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$NA

92 **Moncigale 2023 Villa Moncigale Cicada la Légende (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence).** Floral in character, the nose is complex with aromas of melon, peach, mint and wet stones. The wine is crisp and silky on the palate, with tart flavors of green apple and grapefruit. Boisset Collection. —C.W.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$NA

90 **Commanderie de la Bargemone 2023 Libre (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence).** Lively aromas of strawberry bubblegum, green apple and mint are present on the nose of this pale rosé. The palate presents more red fruits—cooked strawberries and red apples combine with more elegant notes of tangerine and rose water. Hand Picked Selections. —C.W.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$42

90 **Domaine la Cadènière 2023 Vallon d'Escalè (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence).** This super-pale rosé has a subtle nose of lemon and white flowers with a touch of ripe apple. Complex minerality with a pleasing lemon pith bitterness lead into a long peppery finish. Wine Wine Situation. —C.W.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$36

90 **Sarl vignobles Paradis 2023 La Danse du Du Paradis (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence).** Complex minerality and earthy aromas define the nose of this wine with stone fruit and melon hiding in the background. It has a fleshy texture with flavors of strawberry, cherry and lemon pith. The wine ends

with high acidity and a long peppery finish. Sarls Vignobles Paradis. —C.W.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$20

90 **Sarl vignobles Paradis 2023 Paradis Le Domaine (Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence).** Cooling aromas of menthol, wet stones and turned earth are followed by warmer notes of melon and peach. On the palate is a nice balance of herbal flavors and minerality against the citrus and red fruits. Sarls Vignobles Paradis. —C.W.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$17

CÔTES DE PROVENCE

90 **Château de la Galinière 2023 (Côtes de Provence).** This pale-pink rosé has a cool refreshing nose with aromas of strawberry, blueberry, bubble gum and peach. The palate has a strong minerality and a complex combination of red fruits and citrus. Advantage International. —C.W.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$21

90 **Château de la Galinière 2023 Le Cengle (Côtes de Provence).** Rich aromas of vanilla and peach pie lead this super-pale rosé. The palate is like eating a meal at the beach, fruit forward with salt and pepper and lots of acidity to boot. Advantage International. —C.W.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$18

90 **Château de Saint-Martin 2023 Cuvée de la Chapelle (Côtes de Provence).** This super-pale rosé has rich aromas of blueberry, pear and juicy ripe peaches, with a subtle floral hint of rose. The fruit does not overwhelm the palate and flavors of strawberry, pear and lemon pith are paired with good acidity and a long peppery finish. Fine Terroir Selections. —C.W.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$NA

90 **Château Roubine 2023 Forever Young (Côtes de Provence).** Light and refreshing this rose-gold rosé has a fruit forward nose with aromas of peach, strawberry and melon. The palate is similarly bright with tangerine notes and hints of peach and pear. Lots of minerality and salinity on the finish this wine is perfect for the beach. MS Walker. —C.W.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$26

90 **Château Roubine 2023 Forever Young Cru Classé (Côtes de Provence).** This pale-pink rosé opens with an inviting nose of candied apple, pear and tangerine. The palate is herbaceous with flavors of mint and tea underscored by melon and red apples. The wine has great texture and a long pleasant finish. MS Walker. —C.W.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$40

90 **Château Sainte Roseline 2023 Le Cloître (Côtes de Provence).** The nose of this fruit-forward lively rosé is a mix of candied fruits combined with herbal notes and fresh-cut grass. Mouthcoating and well balanced, the palate shows

classic Provence flavors of grapefruit and white pepper. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —C.W.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

90 **Figuère 2023 Magali Signature (Côtes de Provence)**. Refreshing aromas of wet stone, blueberry and cooked apple are backed by classic peach. The palate is well balanced, dancing between minerality and salinity with pops of citrus. Winebow Imports. —C.W.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$22

RHÔNE VALLEY RED WINES

VINSOBRES

93 **Château de Rouanne 2021 Les Cotes (Vinsobres)**. This wine impresses with its range and depth of aromas, offering rich dark fruits alongside beefy and leathery aromas. The palate is concentrated and balanced, with a silky black-fruit midpalate that carries through the finish, supported by vibrant acidity. Silky tannins and its refined nature make it enjoyable now, though it has excellent cellaring potential well into 2035+. Chateau de Rouanne. —A.C.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$80

92 **Château de Rouanne 2021 Rouanne et les Crottes (Vinsobres)**. This wine offers an alluring mix of cassis, leather and violet aromas with smoky, earthy undertones. Dark fruits and olives fill the palate, leading to a vibrant finish. Its bright acidity and evolving complexity benefit from a proper decant, revealing the wine's full depth and character. Chateau de Rouanne. —A.C.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$80

92 **Domaine Jaume 2019 Clos des Echals (Vinsobres)**. The nose reveals impressive depth and concentration, with notes of meaty richness, dark plums and a hint of smoke. On the palate, it's wonderfully generous, full bodied and brimming with dark fruit that lingers through the finish. Though delightful now, it should be promising with an additional 5-7 years in bottle. Petit Pois. —A.C.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$53

91 **Domaine Autrand 2023 (Vinsobres)**. This is a more serious and concentrated GSM, with aromatics of blackberry, black olives, licorice, thyme and violets that expand beautifully in the glass. Structured with silty tannins and balanced by lively acidity, the palate is savory, with fine herbs and a brambly midpalate. Dark and alluring, it's ready to enjoy now, especially paired with a meaty burger. SommSelect. *Best Buy*. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$17

90 **Domaine Autrand 2023 Famille Autrand (Vinsobres)**. This delightful expression opens with aromas of freshly picked black cherries and overripe strawberries, gently nestled in warm earth. The palate highlights the Grenache, with

notes of red licorice and cherries, complemented by a complex layer of black olive, wild thyme and spice. Straightforward and friendly, it's ready to enjoy immediately with a gentle decant. SommSelect. *Best Buy*. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$15

90 **La Ferme du Mont 2020 Saint Pierre (Vinsobres)**. This wine begins with an aromatic lift of high-toned florals, intertwined with delicate red fruits and a subtle touch of spice and flint. On the palate, the fruit is pristine, displaying perfect concentration and graceful poise. With its impressive depth and satisfying finish, it's a delight to enjoy now. Broadbent Selections, Inc. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$32

COSTIÈRES DE NÎMES

93 **Domaine Gassier 2017 Syrah de Brousson (Costières de Nîmes)**. Big and bold with a commanding presence, this wine demands aeration before enjoying. The nose bursts with vanilla, oak spice and dense black cherries. The palate follows suit, with intense clove and black-cherry flavors, finishing with a touch of black licorice. After aerating, it transforms, revealing the elegance of the Rhône, balancing its heat with subtle meatiness and floral finesse. Decant or hold well through 2035+. W. Direct Imports. *Cellar Selection*. —A.C.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$85

92 **Château Vessière 2020 (Costières de Nîmes)**. Rich and rustic, this wine offers aromas of sun-baked bramble, sweet rhubarb, terracotta, spice and a touch of white pepper. On the palate, it's beautifully balanced, with a lingering sweetness on the midpalate and soft, unobtrusive tannins. A perfect match for a juicy burger, Korean BBQ, or wings—ideal for immediate enjoyment. Wine Wine Situation LLC. —A.C.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$24

92 **Domaine Gassier 2021 Notre País (Costières de Nîmes)**. This blend of 60% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 15% Syrah and 5% Carignan bursts with aromas of red-fruit leather, deep raspberry and jammy strawberries—rich and juicy, almost begging to be bitten into. The palate is beautifully balanced, delivering soft, sweet red fruit flavors with a candied edge that's incredibly easy to enjoy. Nothing about this wine feels forced—it's pure and drinks effortlessly. W. Direct Imports. *Editor's Choice*. —A.C.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$25

92 **Domaine Gassier 2016 Grenache de Bek (Costières de Nîmes)**. The nose is a classic expression of the Southern Rhône, with sour cherry, sanguine notes, red licorice, saffron spice, violets and an abundance of garrigue. The palate follows suit, offering good structure that would benefit from a little aeration. A lovely balance of fruit and spice with a lingering black tea leaf finish—power-

ful, lifted and elegant. A classic! W. Direct Imports. —A.C.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$85

91 **Château de Nages 2021 Héritage (Costières de Nîmes)**. This blend of Mourvèdre and 15% Syrah opens with high-toned aromas of strawberries, black plum, thyme and a touch of clove. On the palate, vibrant acidity brings harmony and accentuates soft red fruits and delicate layers of spice. Silky tannins accentuate a gentle minerality and leads to a graceful finish. Saranty Imports. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$20

91 **Château de Nages 2017 Vox (Costières de Nîmes)**. With aromas of cherry liqueur, cassis and blackberry, this wine seems concentrated, but maintains a beautiful lift that avoids any medicinal notes. The palate is layered and elegant, with lively acidity balancing black cherry, mushroom, clove, tea leaf and cocoa dust. Each sip reveals a new layer—this is an engaging, fun wine to explore. Saranty Imports. —A.C.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$85

91 **Domaine de Poulvarel 2020 (Costières de Nîmes)**. Deep and rich, with a core of black cherries and raspberries, this wine smells perfectly ripe, sweet with an accent of black olive. The palate is vibrant, with plenty of minerality that amplifies the black fruit and subtle tea notes. The midpalate trails off gently, like an ocean wave with dynamic acidity, making for an enjoyable experience between each sip. DHI Selections. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

91 **Domaine de Poulvarel 2020 Les Grès (Costières de Nîmes)**. It's like sinking into a bowl of fresh black plums with sprigs of wild mint—concentrated yet fresh aromas. Silky tannins and vibrant acidity keep the flavors moving across the palate, unveiling stewed blackberries, stony graphite minerality, black olive and a hint of clove on the finish. A fantastic match for steak au poivre. DHI Selections. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

91 **Domaine de Poulvarel 2020 Les Perrottes (Costières de Nîmes)**. A vibrant nose of black cherries, plums, thyme, lavender-violets and a handful of wild mint fills the glass. The wine is lively, with plenty of acidity to balance the youthful, round tannins that grip the roof of the mouth. Flavors of soft black licorice and plum emerge across the midpalate, leading into a long, spiced-clove finish. Skip the fruit and pair this with cheese instead. DHI Selections. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

91 **Domaine Gassier 2021 Fleur de (Costières de Nîmes)**. The nose is focused with fresh black plums, a meaty core and a hint of violet. On the palate, it's round, with smooth, grippy tannins clinging to flavors of licorice and black plum. Its acidity adds a refreshing lift, leading to a subtle black-tea

BUYINGGUIDE

leaf finish. A wine that's both satisfying and easy to enjoy. W. Direct Imports. —A.C.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$20

91 Mary Taylor 2020 Pierre Vidal (Costières de Nîmes). Fresh and heady, this wine melds sour black cherries, eucalyptus and fresh rose aromas. Round tannins support a midpalate of soft black fruit, while mouthwatering acidity accentuates a vein of minerality that persists through the finish. A perfect brunch pairing especially with a savory frittata or sausage with spinach and peppers. Mary Taylor Wine. *Best Buy.* —A.C.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$20

91 Vignoble Francois Boyer 2021 (Costières de Nîmes). Headly with dense aromas of black cherry, purple plums, wet clay and a hint of smoke—this wine delivers a striking palate. A subtle vein of minerality enhances the dark fruit flavors, while a touch of white pepper adds complexity. With great balance in texture and acidity, it remains engaging and harmonious. Enjoy now. Soilair Selection. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$20

91 Vignobles & Compagnie 2022 Château des Sources (Costières de Nîmes). High-toned white strawberries lead the nose, complemented by red cherries, red licorice and a touch of light baking spice. It's inviting and pure. On the palate, the wine showcases balance and an impressively long, persistent finish, brimming with red fruit and a lingering note of red licorice. A delightful and approachable wine. Vignobles & Compagnie. —A.C.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$25

90 Château Beaubois 2023 Expression (Costières de Nîmes). Aromas of white peach, Bosc pear, Meyer lemon and honeysuckle mingle with a chalky, clay-like minerality in this wine. Bone dry on the palate, yet vibrant acidity carries out soft citrus notes long through a gentle, lingering finish. This crisp, refreshing wine should pair effortlessly with soft sheep's cheese. Winc. —A.C.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$NA

90 Château Beaubois 2022 Expression (Costières de Nîmes). Delicate aromas of Meyer lemon, lime juice, white flowers and stone greet the nose. On the palate, the wine is dry with a lovely texture, leaving a hint of sweet Meyer lemon that's quickly refreshed by vibrant acidity, inviting another sip. A fine minerality clings to the sides of the mouth, sticking to the cheeks, making this wine both refreshing and delightful. Winc. —A.C.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$17

90 Château de Nages 2022 Buti Nages (Costières de Nîmes). The nose of this wine presents overripe citrus enveloped in florals: lemon verbena, honeysuckle, lilac and jasmine, along with fresh lime. The palate is refreshing, with hints of quince and tangerine, balanced by a soft yet pronounced stony minerality that adds depth to

the fruit. A charming, elegant wine to enjoy now. Saranty Imports. —A.C.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$15

90 Château de Valcombe 2021 Les Sentiers de Septembre (Costières de Nîmes). Aromas of fresh pear, peach blossom, chervil and a hint of wet clay grace create a fresh nose. On the palate, it's refreshingly textured with lively acidity, revealing notes of yellow grapefruit pith, white-pepper spice, and a touch of light vanilla. Delicately complex, enjoy on its own or as an aperitif. Cognac One, LLC. —A.C.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$NA

90 Château Mourgues du Grès 2021 Capitelle Blanc (Costières de Nîmes). The nose is bright with fresh orchard fruits, acacia flowers, and a hint of white pepper spice. On the palate, it's round and textured, with notes of fresh almond, white mushroom and a stony finish. This would make a delightful pairing with flaky steamed cod with leeks or lemongrass. Château Mourgues du Grès. —A.C.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$30

90 Halos de Jupiter 2022 (Costières de Nîmes). The nose bursts with lemon verbena, tangerine, orange blossom and geranium aromas. On the palate, vibrant acidity provides lift to light, zesty citrus, pith and straw. The finish lingers with the richness of lemon oil and a stony minerality, offering a refreshing, elegant balance. Saranty Imports. —A.C.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$17

CROZES-HERMITAGE

94 Yann Chave 2022 (Crozes-Hermitage). A powerful yet refined expression, this wine opens with floral aromas of violets and lavender, leading into a pure core of black cherry, boysenberry and a subtle hint of white tea. The palate is silky, showcasing a refined balance with layers of black raspberry, plum, and a savory midpalate. A finish of fine salt, dark chocolate, and pulverized stone adds depth and complexity. Enticing now, but can be cellared through 2035+. Weygandt-Metzler. *Editor's Choice.* —A.C.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$33

93 Domaine Belle 2022 Cuvée Louis Belle (Crozes-Hermitage). Powerful and aromatic, this wine opens with an intriguing veil of bacon fat, smoke, tobacco, tarragon and cypress, all atop ripe black plums baking on terracotta. The palate is complex and focused, with a vein of granitic minerality and smoke. Tannins cling to the sides of the mouth and accentuate black tea and a soft cocoa nib finish. Cellar through 2030+ to fully unveil its beauty. Petit Pois. —A.C.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$50

90 Alain Jaume 2022 La Butte D'or (Crozes-Hermitage). With beautiful aromatic concentration, this wine reveals deep red cherries, wild

strawberries and earthy notes of cypress, meaty herbs and a hint of lavender. Easy-drinking yet structured, it offers refreshing acidity that gives lift to its red-fruited palate, while adding a touch of white pepper and fine granitic minerality. Perfectly suited for lamb meatballs or a classic moussaka. Enjoy now for a crowd-pleasing experience. Kysela Père et Fils Importer. —A.C.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

HERMITAGE

96 Delas Frères 2022 Ligne De Crete (Hermitage). Elegantly decadent, this wine reveals a powerful aromatic core of black cherry, cassis and black olive intertwined with violets, wild herbs and a meld of dark chocolate and cocoa nibs. Full bodied yet elegant, it delivers a round and lush palate of black plums, black cherries, dried herbs and flint. A beautiful espresso note lingers over soft minerality, finishing with satisfying depth. Ideal for New World drinkers making their way into the Rhône and craving bold, fruit-driven expressions. Cellar through 2035+ before revisiting. Maisons Marques & Domaines USA. *Cellar Selection.* —A.C.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$266

92 Vidal-Fleury 2021 (Hermitage). This wine impresses with powerful, sophisticated aromatics of violet, fine herbs that gently frame a dense core of blackberry and olive. Polished and enticing, it reveals refreshing acidity that lifts the concentrated dark midpalate and a fine vein of graphite that persists through its long finish. Cellar through 2035+, or enjoy now with a proper decant. Frederick Wildman & Sons Imports. —A.C.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$99

90 Cave de Tain 2022 Nobles Rives (Hermitage). This wine bursts with opulent aromas of dense red cherries, black olives and terracotta—rich and meaty on the nose. On the palate, it strikes a beautiful balance, with mouthwatering acidity that effortlessly lifts the flavors and softens any rustic tannins. A wine with power and restraint, it's ready to enjoy now with a proper decant. Fruit of the Vines, Inc. —A.C.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$80

TUSCANY RED WINES

BRUNELLO DI MONTALCINO

96 Fattoria La Lecciaia 2019 Vigna Manapetra (Brunello di Montalcino). Hot tar, wild thyme and oregano give way to dried figs and rose petals on the nose. Juicy but lively wild strawberries and fresh raspberries take over the palate, then grow more indulgent with chocolate-covered dried cherries. Polished, sleek tannins ensure a mouth-filling, luxurious experience. Fattoria la Lecciaia. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$50

96 Pietroso 2020 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose is delicate and inviting, with aromas of flowers, fresh berries and a bit of milk chocolate. Sweet cherries and citrus blossoms bloom on the palate, while a sprinkle of salt provides balance and electric acid buzzes around tannins which are firm, but polished and flexible. Azienda Agricola Pietroso. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$120

96 Poggio di Sotto 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose opens peppery and flinty, with aromas of damp soil and wild thyme, before Bing and black-cherry notes eventually emerge. Those cherries stretch out on the palate, over a slather of bitter orange jam, held in place by firm yet flexible tannins. Collemassari. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$320

95 Canalicchio di Sopra 2019 Vigna La Casaccia (Brunello di Montalcino). Savory and spicy on the nose with wild thyme, wild oregano, sun-dried tomato, balsamic, hot tar and crushed rocks. The palate continues to be savory and meaty, but adds the crunch and juice of sweet but tart berries, pinned into place by weighty tannins and lifted by abundant acid. Canalicchio di Sopra. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$249

95 Canalicchio di Sopra 2019 Vigna Montosoli (Brunello di Montalcino). Old leather, top soil and hot pavement set a savory tone at first on the nose, before aromas of vanilla, dried cherries and fresh brewed coffee emerge. Cherries, with coffee and chocolate and that warm the leathery embrace linger on a palate and through a finish with lots of heat. Canalicchio di Sopra. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$249

95 Caparzo 2019 La Casa (Brunello di Montalcino). Caparzo's trademark blend of sweet fruit and savory earth reveals itself on a nose of vanilla bean and black cherries, root beer, fennel and wild mint. The palate remains classic, indulgent but not excessive, like cherry cola, effervescent with acid and brightened with a peel of orange. Borgo Scopeto e Caparzo Srl. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$93

95 Col d'Orcia 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). In every way, this is benchmark Brunello from the dark cherry, vanilla, hazelnut, orange peel and sage on the nose to the cherries and strawberries made lively with citrus and flinty earth on the palate, before an indulgent salted hazelnut finish. Tannins persuade rather than insist. It's rigorously itself and marvelously convivial. Taub Family Selections. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

95 Fuligni 2018 (Brunello di Montalcino). The warm, sweet nose features aromas of milk chocolate, freshly brewed coffee, vanilla bean and Luxardo cherry, while the palate is a cascade of dark, sweet berries, with a spicy, invigorating earthiness

that recalls a developed savory mole. Empson USA Ltd. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$140

95 Il Poggione 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). On the nose, licorice bridges aromas of sweet cherry candy and the savory tang of crushed rock, earth and bergamot. On the palate, chocolate lifts the sweet cherry notes, while bitter citrus peel carries through a chili pepper finish. Bouncy acid spotlights saline overtones. Terlato Wines International. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$100

95 La Casaccia Di Franceschi 2017 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino). The evocative nose unfurls with aromas of hot tar, crushed flower petals and berries smashed in dirt under tires, as well as the sweet, tacky automotive scents of new leather seats and hot coffee in the cup holder. On the palate, the fruit and flowers bloom and join deeper savory notes, while tightly wrought tannins provide both a tensile strength and elegance. La Casaccia di Franceschi. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$170

95 Patrizia Cencioni 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose is cool and salty, but with a softness, like new leather or rose petals in a clay pot, and the energy of wild fennel and citrus. On the palate, cherries and strawberries bring out a warmer citrus element, while balance comes from solid yet flexible tannins that fortify continuing earthy, metallic notes. North Berkeley Imports. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$70

95 Tenuta di Sesta 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Dewy rose petals, peonies and fresh figs on the nose contrast with weightier notes of wild fennel and potting soil. The palate presents the sweet intensity of wild cherries and strawberries, before a pyramid of rigid, etched tannins ignites into a spicy, chili pepper blaze. Tenuta di Sesta. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$60

94 Abbadia Ardenga 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose balances the subtle sweetness of dried cherries, figs and hibiscus with savory aromas of mixed herbs and damp soil. On the palate, a pomegranate current lifts more concentrated notes of cherry and fig, and citrus notes add energy. Tannins form a solid, tensile foundation. S.E.P.D. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$50

94 Abbadia Ardenga 2019 Vigna Piaggia (Brunello di Montalcino). Umami, earthy and saline on the nose, this also delivers old leather, underbrush, wild oregano and thyme, before a pop of tart blackberries. Blackberries turn sweet and ripe and mix with black cherries on the palate, and gleamingly polished tannins lend a silken mouthfeel. S.E.P.D.. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$65

94 Agostina Pieri 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Damp earth and underbrush join blackberries on the nose, and then more tart and sweet blackberries merge with black cherries on the palate. A cool, damp earthiness pushes back against a peppery heat on the palate before a finish lit up by acid. Agostina Pieri. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$52

94 Canalicchio di Sopra 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). A decadent nose is redolent in macerated berries, vanilla, clove and sweet tobacco. A hint of tartness is coaxed out of the berries on the palate, emphasizing an earthy, flinty, salinity that carries through the finish. Tannins are secure, and the acid is vigorous. Canalicchio di Sopra. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$129

94 Caparzo 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Earthy and floral on the nose, it comes with delicate rose petals, flinty top soil, pencil shavings, Bing cherry and fresh, wild fennel. A warm, cherry-berry compote on the palate is bright and sweet, but polished round tannins give a slick mouthfeel. Borgo Scopeto e Caparzo S.r.l. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$54

94 Castello Finoto 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Warm, sunny, bright and salty on the nose, this has hibiscus, cranberries, fresh figs and blood orange. Wild cherry and cranberries, plus lots more citrus, construct a high-toned palate, vibrant with acid. Castello Finoto SRL. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$75

94 Castello Tricerchi 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose is full of cherries and berries, but also lots of earth and spices, plus pepper, pencil shavings, sage and wild thyme. On the palate, the cherries are bright and red, and lifted by red plums just bursting with juice through snappy skin. Chalky tannins have a bite to them. Castello Tricerchi SRL. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$NA

94 Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose features savory, umami aromas of tar, dirt, crushed rock, leather and spices, plus a hint of black cherry for pop. On the palate, that interplay between tangy cherries and dense earthiness intensifies, as a smoldering heat burns in the background lit up by acid on the finish. Indigenous Selections. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$65

94 Corte Pavone 2019 Corte Pavone (Brunello di Montalcino). Aromas of red-apple candy, peonies, wild cherry and fennel create a nose that's fresh and crisp, with just enough sweetness. The palate is consistent, with strawberries lifting the cherry element and mint bringing out the subtle medicinality of the fennel, although a squeeze of Cara Cara orange keeps you on your toes. Waves of acid crash against lithe, flexible tannins. Loacker Tenute S. S. Soc. Agricola. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$60

94 Corte Pavone 2019 Fior di Melilotto (Brunello di Montalcino). Medicinal herbs and cherries on the nose bring to mind a root-beer float. More berries and blackberries on the palate (plus sarsaparilla) continue to deliver that unexpectedly delightful and sophisticated balance of sweet, spicy and medicinal through a long finish. Loacker Tenute S. S. Soc. Agricola. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$80

94 Crocedimezzo 2018 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose expertly balances the dense, savory feel of hot tar with the gentleness of roses, while undertones of burnt orange peel, sage and dried figs add further nuance. The palate brings a new energetic tension, between sweet berries and savory, bitter herbs and earth, while textured, substantial tannins provide structure. BPW Merchants. —D.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

94 Fanti 2019 Vallocchio (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose is a decadent blend of vanilla bean, cinnamon, cherry syrup and malted chocolate, with wild mint and eucalyptus popping through. Cherries and more chocolate swirl on the palate, with more fresh, cool mint and a pinch of salt on the finish. Fanti Elisa e Elena s. s. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$70

94 La Poderina 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Warm, earthy aromas of potting soil, sage and drip coffee headline the palate, while clean, fresh notes of blood orange and fennel provide balance. The palate brings cherries and cranberries, as well as more earth and herbs and a soft, unifying mocha note on the finish, all beneath a blanket of carefully stitched tannins. La Poderina. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$70

94 Luciani 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). Savory and hot on the nose, tar, leather and mixed herbs are followed by sunny hibiscus and raspberry. Sweet and dense berries flood the palate, with everything from cherries and raspberries to blackberries before smooth tannins carry a mocha finish. Cantine Luciani 1888. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$60

94 Pian delle Vigne 2019 Pian delle Vigne (Brunello di Montalcino). An indulgent nose smells like warm baked goods, with vanilla, clove, cardamom, cookie crust and dried cherries. The palate is more like a cardamom bun studded with more dried, dense and sweet berries and washed down with an espresso. Pian delle Vigne. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$80

94 Poggio Landi 2018 Riserva (Brunello di Montalcino). The classic, comforting notes of old leather, mulling spices, black cherries and damp underbrush roll seamlessly from the nose to the palate, where still-vibrant acid lifts and energizes tannins that are just beginning to unwind and become more welcoming. Poggio Landi. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$130

94 San Lorenzo 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). The perfumed, delicate nose features aromas of vanilla, cherry blossom, wild strawberry and raspberry jam. The palate is a berry medley, plus slightly denser notes of chocolate shavings and sambuca with espresso. The tannins are firm and careful. San Lorenzo Winery. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$NA

94 Sasseti Livio 2019 (Brunello di Montalcino). New leather, car tire and No. 2 pencil mark a savory nose, with violets and crushed rocks. Dark berries and dark chocolate give sweetness to a palate that's still earthy, meaty and savory, with toothsome tannins. Sasseti Livio. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$64

94 Tassi 2019 Vigna Colombaiolo (Brunello di Montalcino). This is savory, umami and even leathery on the nose, with hot tar, lots of spices and herbs and the tang of tart cherry and red plum. That cherry sweetens and swirls with raspberry and dark chocolate on the palate, carried through the finish by solid, substantial tannins. Tassi. —D.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

94 Tenuta San Giorgio 2019 Ugolforte (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose is savory and crisp, with aromas of top soil, new leather, mixed herbs, black cherries and tart blackberries. The fruit turns sweeter and juicier on the palate, creating a pleasing contrast with chalky, insistent tannins. Winebow Imports. —D.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$NA

94 Tiezzi 2018 Vigna Soccorso (Brunello di Montalcino). A fresh, floral, saline nose starts with salt air, fennel, mint, rose water and crushed rocks, then warms, with citrus and hints of coffee and dark chocolate on the back. The cool, fresh, rocky elements dominate the palate, as the tangy, tannic skin of red fruit pairs with studied, precise tannins. Skurnik Wines, Inc. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$62

93 Baricci 2019 Montosoli (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose is layered with sweet yet tangy aromas of Bing and wild cherry, strawberry and citrus blossom, while an undertone of damp earth provides balance. The palate brings the richness of ripe cherries, figs and plums, before a hot, peppery finish. Tannins are fine grained, but still structured. Vias Imports. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$100

93 Collemattoni 2018 (Brunello di Montalcino). The nose balances perfumed aromas of cherry blossom and warm citrus with savory notes of soil and herbs. The palate stays mostly even-keeled, with more cherries and citrus, plus a dark chocolate anchor, but a crackle of pepper and fierce tannins add some verve. Vignaioli Selection. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$82

CHIANTI CLASSICO

95 Mazzei 2021 Gran Selezione Vicoregio 36 (Chianti Classico). The epochal leaps that have been made in Chianti Classico over the last several years are never more apparent than in the Gran Selezione category, but there's something even more exciting about the Vicoregio 36 which seems designed to raise the bar yet another level. Incredibly satisfying. Demeine Estates. —D.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$35

94 Castello La Leccia 2020 Gran Selezione Buciagna (Chianti Classico). Earthy, umami aromas of old leather, crushed rocks, black olive and balsamic open the nose, then notes of vanilla, fresh cherry and even wild strawberry come through. The palate inverts, with the warm brightness of cherry and citrus peel arriving first, then more earth. Tannins are finely tuned, and acid is vibrant. Castello La Leccia. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$55

94 Mazzei 2020 Castello di Fonterutoli Poggio Badiola Gran Selezione Red Blend (Chianti Classico). A sanguine, umami nose is highlighted by a stony earthiness, but red and black cherries provide a spark of sweetness that turns into a blaze on the palate, where enduring notes of earth and metal, ripping acid and a bitter curl of orange peel act as firefighters. *Best Buy.* —D.C.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$14

93 Quercia al Poggio 2021 (Chianti Classico). The nose introduces you to damp earth, underbrush, mixed berries and black pepper, while on the palate, the berries are macerated and warmed with citrus, beneath a crackle of more pepper. Firm tannins structure a hot finish. QUERCIA AL POGGIO. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$26/075 ml

92 Castello La Leccia 2021 Annata (Chianti Classico). Aromas of peonies, rose petals, citrus blossoms, new leather and fresh fennel swirl together on a floral, saline nose, before a palate where wild cherries, strawberries and more citrus notes join the fun. On the finish, herbs take over for the flowers and work with taut tannins for a savory effect. Castello La Leccia. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$25

92 Castello La Leccia 2021 Riserva (Chianti Classico). The nose is a savory crackle of tar, hot tires hitting pavement, mixed wild herbs, black olives, balsamic and pomegranate syrup. On the palate, plums and dark chocolate accentuate the pomegranate element, but that earthy herbaceousness also remains undeniable. A hot, acidic stream flows all the way through the finish and down the throat. Castello La Leccia. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$35

92 Quercia al Poggio 2022 (Chianti Classico). The nose is a savory, umami swirl of coffee grinds, low tide, mixed herbs, old leather, tart black-

berries and plums, while sweeter blackberries and dark chocolate define the palate, even as the tangy salinity of cool, brackish water persists. Sleek tannins create a silky but substantial mouthfeel. Quercia Al Poggio. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$26

MORELLINO DI SCANSANO

94 Podere 414 2018 (Morellino di Scansano). An earthy but aromatic nose opens with crushed rocks and soil, then brings rose petals and tart blackberries, and finishes with dark chocolate. The textured palate is simultaneously sweet and savory, with crushed cherries, untempered Modica chocolate and bitter orange jam. The tannins are substantial but sleek. Cantiniere imports. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$65

94 Terenzi 2020 Madrechiesa Riserva (Morellino di Scansano). Tart and bright on the nose, it has aromas of top soil, salt, wild cherries and new shoes. The palate stays crisp, with cranberries, sour cherries and grapefruit, before a finish of gentian root and licorice. It features polished, pebbly tannins. Terenzi. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$42

94 Val delle Rose 2021 Morellino di Scansano Riserva Poggio al Leone (Morellino di Scansano). Alluringly savory on the nose, with aromas of liquid tar, *espresso ristretto*, crushed wild herbs and gunpowder, before a similarly tempting palate that's reserved at first and reveals flavors slowly, giving you the sense that there is much more to discover with time. Casa Vinicola Luigi Cecchi. —D.C.
abv: 15% **Price:** \$36

93 Castello di Montepò di Jacopo Biondi Santi 2021 (Morellino di Scansano). An athletic nose bounces between sour cherries and tart raspberries, then peonies and irises, before arriving at malted chocolate. The palate opens with more cherries and raspberries, then evolves into earth, mixed wild herbs, licorice and coffee grinds, before a deep, simmering heat emerges on the finish—an expression that thoroughly undermines the idea that Morellino isn't for aging. Castello di Montepò di Jacopo Biondi Santi. —D.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$50

93 Fattoria Le Pupille 2021 Riserva (Morellino di Scansano). I have high hopes that Morellino will return to center stage performing as the lean, agile, crowd-pleasing version of Sangiovese that it is. If the comeback is successful, it will be in large part thanks to Le Pupille's work polishing this grape's natural talents. Ethica Wines. —D.C.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$20

92 Erik Banti 2019 Ciabatta (Morellino di Scansano). Opening with saltwater, wet sand and seaweed, the nose then crosses into a forest of mixed dark berries and underbrush. Chewy, toothsome tannins structure a palate of iced tea, bitter

citrus, sea-salted dark chocolate and dried cherries. Societa' Agricola Erik Banti SRL. —D.C.
abv: 14.3% **Price:** \$40

92 San Felo 2021 Lampo (Morellino di Scansano). A layered, profound nose oscillates between floral and fresh, then juicy and warm, then savory and saline. The palate similarly reveals a lot of depth, as very approachable fruit receives a savory contour, before a lingering finish that pays dividends on the complexity of the nose. Fattoria San Felo Soc. Agr. A r. l. *Best Buy.* —D.C.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$14

92 Terenzi 2022 Purosangue (Morellino di Scansano). Blood orange, cranberries, hibiscus, pomegranate and bricks on the nose foreshadow a warm, sunny palate with lots of citrus fruit and pith, more crunchy fresh cranberries and tart cherries, but also strikingly silken tannins. Terenzi. —D.C.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$23

ISRAEL

CHARDONNAY

94 Golan Heights Winery 2022 Yarden Katzrin Chardonnay (Galilee). This substantial, mature Chardonnay abounds with complexity. Shimmery gold in color, the wine has an alluring and powerful nose of freshly baked apple pie, vanilla-and-cinnamon baking spice, bread dough, charred wood, pear compote, dried mango and orange peel. Flavors of freshly toasted brioche abound on the palate with orchard fruit in the lead of the taste. Yarden Wines, Inc. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$40

93 Golan Heights 2022 Yarden Chardonnay (Galilee). This is a delicately balanced wine. Regally gold in color, the wine opens with a nose of baked golden apple, pear compote, dried pineapple and orange peel with just the faintest suggestion of sweet baking spice. Orchard fruit wrestles with lightly toasted oak on the palate with bright acidity and honeysuckle blossom cheering all the way to the lingering finish where the fruit-character prevails. Serve with toasted bread, charcuterie and avocado toast. Yarden Wines, Inc. —R.S.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$NA

93 Sphera 2023 White Concepts Chardonnay (Judean Hills). This is a complex Chardonnay perfect for those who adore classically made Sauvignon Blanc. Savory dried grass and Provençal herb aromas open on the nose of the perfumed wine alongside bruised yellow apple, lemon pith and dried papaya. Ripe fruit flavors dominate on the palate with herbal elements receding while providing subtle, background-singer depth that doesn't overshadow the star of the show. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$57

90 Dalton 2023 Estate Unoaked Chardonnay (Galilee). This is an electric and lively, unoaked Chardonnay. Brilliant lemon in color, the wine has a nose of white peach and Meyer lemon that is buttressed by tropical fruit aromas including pineapple, honeydew melon and young green apple. Mouthwatering acidity fills the palate with a stream of river stone minerality gliding to the citrusy finish. The wine craves to be paired with food including falafel and vegetable tempura. Allied Importers, USA, Ltd. *Best Buy.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$18

WHITE BLENDS

94 Hayotzer 2021 Danza Waltz White Blend (Galilee). Dab a bit of this white blend behind your ear, and reap the benefits of this delicious perfume. Lemon gold in color with a perfumed nose of gardenia blossom, bruised red apple, jasmine, honeysuckle and caramelized sugar, the wine rouses the senses in the best of ways. The palate flirts with yeast and brings along crushed stone while being true to its soul of florality. The bottling is a blend of Viognier (38%), Chardonnay (22%), Gewürztraminer (20%) and Marsanne (20%). Allied Importers, USA, Ltd. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 14% **Price:** \$30

94 Sphera 2023 White Signature Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay (Judean Hills). This wine has a charming herbal character. The savory wine opens with beautiful, nuanced aromas of bread dough, yogurt, sun-kissed golden apple, dried hay and biscuit. Additional flavors of butter, toasted brioche and leavened bread round out the palate. Pair with dishes where herbs such as parsley, cilantro or rosemary figure prominently. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$68

94 Sphera 2022 White Signature Chenin Blanc-Chardonnay (Judean Hills). This wine has a nuanced, autolytic character that shines. The wine opens with a perfumed nose of quince, pear tart, bread dough and butter-topped biscuit. The palate is round with an understated fruit character that is undeniably yeast enabled. Save this wine for contemplation and deep conversations with friends and family whom you actually like. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. *Editor's Choice.* —R.S.
abv: 13% **Price:** \$68

91 Sphera 2023 White Concepts First Page White Blend (Judean Hills). Bruised Bosc pear, white button mushroom, dried field grass and white peach skin aromas open on the nose followed by dried lemon shavings. Tart acidity kicks off the palate followed by a mineral undercurrent that completes with citrus uplift in the blend that is comprised of 50% Chenin Blanc, 40% Roussanne and 10% Sémillon. Pair with seafood sautés and fried dishes including onion rings and latkes. Dreyfus, Ashby & Co. —R.S.
abv: 12.5% **Price:** \$54

SPIRITS



96 The French Connection Rye Whiskey (USA; Two James Spirits, Detroit, MI). Finished in Cognac casks, this rye has a rich caramel scent. Each sip opens with caraway, anise and cayenne, fading into caramel and roasted grain, with a long and powerful finish.
abv: 60% **Price:** \$90



95 1816 Indiana Rye (USA; Fenwicks Distillery, Rensselaer, IN). Proof that not all great spir- its are inside splashy packaging. The rich vanilla aroma beckons. The brisk palate opens with a flurry of peppery spice, finishing rounded and warming with vanilla and pecan pie, plus a curl of lemon peel.
abv: 50.8% **Price:** \$48



94 Browne Rye Whiskey (USA; Browne Family Spirits, Spokane, WA). “WTF whiskey” should be coined for this confounding but delicious rye. It’s oddly fruity on nose and palate, suggesting a brandy. Coconut, espresso, cinnamon and clove wind into a notably long and complex finish with a mulled cider exhale. Yes, we checked the label. Twice. Aged minimum four years. **Best Buy.**
abv: 45% **Price:** \$45

RYE WHISKEY

Give the spirit some respect—it’s earned it.

It may seem hard to imagine, but just a couple of decades ago, good rye whiskey was hard to find.

It was considered a pre-Prohibition relic—if you were drinking American whiskey, it was corn-fed bourbon for you, buddy. But bartenders led the charge to bring it back; after all, rye whiskey was a key component for making classic cocktails like Manhattans and Sazeracs.

As the cocktail revolution gathered speed, so did the rye revival.

Over time, farmers and agricultural specialists planted heirloom rye varieties, replenishing access to flavorful grains that had been nearly forgotten. In turn, distillers turned those ryes into special whiskeys.

Today, rye whiskey is plentiful. A vast and growing number of American distilleries turn out rye (where the grain mixture includes at least 51% rye—but often ranges much higher, even up to 100%). It’s also produced in Canada, Denmark and beyond, where the hardy

grain thrives in cooler climes.

Add to that limited-edition bottlings and cask finishes that rival any other type of whiskey: Some of the top-scorers here include resting time in barrels that previously held Cognac, sherry, Barbados rum and port.

And just as the bar pros of the aughts envisioned, rye’s crackling spice and toasty grain lend backbone to an ever-expanding range of new and classic cocktails.

For example, on the opening menu of Dear Irving on Broadway, the Grand Central Smash centers New York Distilling’s Jaywalk Rye, a bottling emblematic of Empire Rye, a regional variation made with

at least 75% New York State-grown rye grain, fermented, aged and distilled within the state. Filled out with strawberry amaro (from Long Island’s Matchbook Distilling), lemon and cinnamon, the finished drink is a crisp, autumnal ode to New York.

And it just wouldn’t be the same made with Kentucky bourbon. —Kara Newman

If you were drinking American whiskey, it was corn-fed bourbon for you, buddy.



94 Bulleit Rye 10-Year-Old (USA; Bulleit Distilling, Lawrenceville, IN). This is made with a 95% rye recipe and aged 10 years. Expect bold oak and allspice aromas, while vanilla sweetness and peppery spice mingle on the palate. Distilled in Indiana, bottled in Kentucky.
abv: 45.6% **Price:** \$50



94 Sagamore Double Oak Rye (USA; Sagamore Spirit, Baltimore, MD). This is a blend of four- to five-year-old ryes aged an additional 18 months in barrels with toasted staves. Expect a notably deep, ruddy hue and bold oak and red fruit on nose and palate. Adding water coaxes milk chocolate and vanilla, finishing long with fruit leather, cinnamon red-hots and clove.
abv: 48.3% **Price:** \$70



93 Catcher's Rye (USA; Two James Spirits, Detroit, MI). Made from 100% Michigan rye, this Manhattan-worthy whiskey offers cream soda-like vanilla and allspice aromas, accented by tobacco leaf. The palate echoes the dry tobacco note, winding into peppery allspice and cayenne. Hints of red fruit and vanilla surface on the exhale. **abv:** 49.9% **Price:** \$55



93 High West Rendezvous (USA; High West, Park City, UT). This is a blend of high-rye whiskeys, meaning plenty of spice from start to finish. Maple and pecan on nose and palate wind into drying oak midpalate, finishing with a flurry of allspice and a nutty hint on the lip-smacking exit. Batch No. 23C10. **abv:** 46% **Price:** \$80



93 Oaklore Distilling North Carolina Rye (USA; Oaklore Distilling, Matthews, NC). Rich caramel delivers on nose and palate. Salted vanilla, cracked black pepper and lemon peel fade into a long, mouthwatering finish. Made with local grain. **abv:** 46% **Price:** \$79



92 Minden Mill Nevada Straight Rye (USA; Minden Mill Distilling, Minden, NV). Caramel and allspice aromas lead into an invitingly light and bright palate framed by red fruit, allspice and vanilla. A splash of water adds toasty oak and hint of nutmeg. Made with estate-grown grains and aged four years in new oak. **Best Buy.** **abv:** 47% **Price:** \$45



92 Sagamore Small Batch Rye (USA; Sagamore Spirit, Baltimore, MD). A blend of ryes aged four to six years, this whiskey offers a cedar aroma accented with orange peel. The brisk palate opens lightly with nuanced grapefruit peel and spice. Mild almond and vanilla sail right into the white pepper and ginger finale. Batch 51. **Best Buy.** **abv:** TK% **Price:** \$40



90 Sagamore Cask Strength Rye (USA; Sagamore Spirit, Baltimore, MD). A blend of high-rye and low-rye whiskeys aged four to seven years. Vanilla and allspice aromas segue into a bold, oak-driven palate. A splash of water unlocks hints of espresso and baking spice. The drying, walnutty finish includes a burnt orange peel note. **abv:** 56.1% **Price:** \$60

96 Stauning Sherry Cask Finish Rye (Denmark; Park Street Imports, Miami, FL). This is a Danish rye finished in PX and Palo Cortado Sherry casks; a U.S. limited edition. Look for a deep amber hue with a ruddy tinge, and a hint of red fruit on the nose. The palate opens with oak, cherry leather and plenty of peppery spice. Orange peel and caraway emerge on the drying finish. **abv:** 50% **Price:** \$75

95 Brixeur Frey Family Reserve Rye (USA; Frey & Co. Spirits, Newberg, OR). This soft, fruity take on rye would be welcome in a Manhattan. Oak and red fruit aromas lead into a mouthwatering sip showing cherry and blackberry, and winding into flickers of black pepper and clove. Blended rye whiskey is aged in a combination of Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and late-harvest Riesling casks. Blender's Edition No. 1 **abv:** 50% **Price:** \$75

95 Woodford Reserve Rye Whiskey (USA; Woodford Reserve, Versailles, KY). Caramel and vanilla aromas introduce this rye. The bold palate opens with plush, concentrated caramel accented by espresso, winding into lip-smacking clove and black pepper on the exhale. **Best Buy.** **abv:** 45.2% **Price:** \$35

95 Bulleit Rye 12-Year-Old (USA; Bulleit Distilling, Lawrenceville, IN). Made with a 95% rye grain recipe and aged 12 years, this whiskey offers allspice and sarsaparilla on nose and palate. A hint of salinity adds lingering salted caramel and vanilla cookie with sea salt vibes, winding into a hint of orange peel on the long, lively finish. Distilled in Indiana, bottled in Kentucky. **abv:** 46% **Price:** \$55

95 A Midwinter Night's Dram: Act 12 (USA; High West Distillery, Park City, UT). A blend of ryes finished in port barrels, this annual limited release has a deep russet hue and subdued almond and red fruit aromas. The palate offers cocoa, leather and dried cherry, finishing long and drying with a swirl of cinnamon and clove, plus an orange oil hint. **abv:** 49.3% **Price:** \$150

95 Old Elk Rum Cask Finish Rye (USA; Old Elk Distillery, Fort Collins, CO). Caramel and oak on nose and palate wind into brown sugar and a faint touch of salted caramel. The finish is long and spicy, ignited with cayenne and cinnamon heat. Distilled in Indiana and finished in barrels that previously held Barbados rum. **abv:** 50.5% **Price:** \$100

94 Frey Ranch Single Barrel Rye #1182 (USA; Frey Ranch, Fallon, NV). Add plenty of water to this cask-strength sipper. Amaretto and vanilla aromas entice, though alcohol intensity is evident on nose and palate. Adding water (and lots of it) tilts the balance to reveal spicy Mexican chocolate, roasted nuts and a hint of oak char. Cinnamon Red Hots warm the long exit. **abv:** 64.18% **Price:** \$60



DANGER AWAITS YOU IN THE DEPTHS OF THE WINE CAVES!

You and your tour guide, a chipper wine educator named Cody, are helplessly lost in some of the longest and largest wine caves in the world, stretching for miles under the ground. You walk for hours while Cody drones on about oak from different forests and a laundry list of various aging times. But then Cody goes silent—rounding a corner of a long tunnel after opening a creaky wrought-iron gate, you happen upon a pile of bones.

What should you do? If you decide to play it safe and go right back to the entrance at the mouth of the cave, turn to page 43. But Cody has told you about one of the rarest and most exquisite aged wines in the world that lays ahead. If you choose to keep going deeper into the cave, turn to the cover of this magazine. But be careful, you never know what page could lead to a 100-year-aged botrytized wine and what page could trap you forever in a dangerous cave!

What happens next on this wine trip? It all depends on you and the choices you make. Where does the journey lead? Only you can find out. And the best part is, you can keep reading and rereading until you've had not one, but many incredible wine adventures.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE®



UK £0.95

WINE ENTHUSIAST

Introducing the
Better, Faster, Trackable
Way to Submit for Ratings

The all-new Wine Enthusiast Ratings Platform employs technology for ease of submission, score tracking and a guaranteed rating from the illustrious Tasting Panel.

For more than 35 years, Wine Enthusiast continues to uphold blind tasting protocols and maintains the utmost credibility in the market with reputable scores

Start your submission at wineenthusiast.com/submit-for-rating

LEARN HOW TO SUBMIT
YOUR WINE OR SPIRIT TODAY





OUR COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

- 99% RECYCLED CARDBOARD
- 80% RECYCLED GLASS
- POWERED BY SUNSHINE WITH 3,200 SOLAR PANELS

CAVIT

COLLECTION

BETTER TOGETHER.



AMERICA'S ORIGINAL* IS STILL ITS FAVORITE

PALM BAY
INTERNATIONAL



CAMPAIGN FINANCED ACCORDING TO EU REG. N. 2021/2115



MINISTERO DELL'AGRICOLTURA DELLA SOVRANITÀ ALIMENTARE E DELLE FORESTE

