

WINE News

Top picks for gifting and hosting in the holiday season.



NOVEMBER 27, 2017 FEATURES

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Our 10 Best Holiday Picks of 2017

Some of these 10 holiday picks are among the top-selling products of 2017 at K&L. Some are newcomers to our inventory. From \$13 to \$80, they offer something for every pocketbook.

2014 La Massa “La Massa” Toscana (\$14.99) The 2013 was one of our biggest sellers last year and this beauty will be big in 2018. Pure flavors of blueberry and blackberry ride integrated tannins with just a touch of earthy savoriness. The finish keeps that dark-fruited sensation going and going!



2016 Domaine Louis Moreau Petit Chablis (\$16.99) We tasted this beauty on our March trip to Burgundy and bought it on the spot. This crisp and focused wine is a superb value for those who like Chablis but can't afford it daily.

2008 Bodegas Puelles Rioja Reserva (\$12.99) The vintage highlights the Puelles style, creating a Reserva that is delicious now and should improve in the cellar for at least another several years.

2015 Fromm “Quarters Vineyard” Pinot Noir Marlborough (\$39.99) Balancing wild, brooding brambleberry fruit with savory earthy tones, clove and sage, this medium-bodied wine has super-fine tannin and a lifted acid line.

2015 Kalinda Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon (\$27.99) We can't tell you the source of this beauty, but we can tell you this wine is lush and quite rich, with tons of cassis on the nose and palate. Cellar for five years, but if you must drink it, decant at least one hour and serve with a hearty meat course.



2016 Franck Millet “Insolite” Sancerre (\$24.99) This reserve cuvée is made from Millet's chalkiest limestone soils. The wine is intensely charged with stone fruit, minerality and bright citrus notes.

2008 Fallet-Dart Vintage Brut Champagne (\$39.99) One of our best sellers of 2017, this fantastic bottle has something for everyone. This 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir blend has the energy and minerality that this vintage is famous for, but also high-quality, subtle toast from long aging on the lees. Drinking fabulously right now, it will age effortlessly.



2015 Château de L'Ou “Velours Noir” Côtes Catalanes (\$24.99) From some of the best soils in Roussillon, and one of our most exciting new direct import relationships, this expressive 100% Syrah has the richness and weight we expect from Syrah, but balance thanks to the deft hand of winemaker Séverine Bourrier. A guaranteed pleaser. **94 RP**

2012 Pauillac de Latour, Pauillac (\$79.99) We were blown away by this third wine of Château Latour when we tasted it at the château in April. Spicy on the nose with red currant aromas and flavor, it is even better than their outstanding 2009 and 2010. No hard edges—pure fruit with a bit of tannin on the back end, so decant one hour. A must-buy for Bordeaux lovers.



Four Pillars “Faultline” K&L Exclusive Gin (\$34.99) Our buyer David Driscoll flew out to Australia to work on this special distillation and stood side-by-side with distiller Cameron MacKenzie in the lab, tasting through botanicals and fleshing out the concept.



Clyde's Picks for Holiday Gifts in Bordeaux

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

2014: Value Vintage

This may be the last excellent Bordeaux vintage that affords great wines with low prices. Thanks to the strong dollar and the properties having lowered their prices, we have some superb wines for your holiday gifts.

2014 Domaine de Chevalier Rouge, Pessac-Léognan (750ml \$49.99; 1.5L \$99.99) Clyde's pick of the vintage. Textbook Dom de Chevalier! Pure, upfront red fruit with hints of minerals and earth, elegant, and as usual, perfectly balanced. Lovely wine. Also available in wooden cases of six—a great Christmas gift! **94 JS, 93 RP**

2014 Barde-Haut, St-Emilion (\$29.99) A fabulous value from one of the best mid-range-priced châteaux in St-Emilion. Hélène Garcin-Lévêque has fashioned a soft, elegant, fruit-forward beauty here. Very aromatic and chalky on the nose with blackberries and black currants. Licorice, too. Bar none, one of the best bangs for your buck in all of Bordeaux. Especially seeing as you can drink it tonight or 10 years from now. **94 JS**

2014 Fleur de Clinet, Pomerol (\$29.99) The second wine of the famous Clinet property is quite rare. We tasted it and loved it on our April 2017 Bordeaux trip. Quite plummy aromas and still elegant on the palate. Superb balance and lingering finish. Try it.

2014 Fombrauge, St-Emilion (\$29.99) Bernard Magrez has another winner here. Oaky and spicy, but in perfect balance. A sweet, new wave entry that needs a year or two in the cellar.

2014 Larrivet Haut-Brion, Pessac-Léognan (\$37.99) Nice, lifted aromatics of cherries and other red fruit, followed by a floral note that makes it a very attractive wine. Good tannin and acid structure, along with its fruit, lend this wine a nice balance. I would enjoy now after decanting, but it can be cellared for sure. **92 JS**

2014 Les Tourelles de Longueville, Pauillac (\$37.99) Few wines express more clearly the incredible quality of the 2014 vintage in Bordeaux than this estate label from Château Pichon-Baron in Pauillac. **92 JS**

2014 Malartic-Lagravière, Pessac-Léognan (\$44.99) The 2014 Malartic-Lagravière is right there with the Domaine de Chevalier, in my book, for value of the vintage. This wine has equal amounts of dark cassis, herbaceous character, and fine tannic structure, but it still needs time to congeal. Big scores from many of the scorers. **95 WE**

2014 Giscours, Margaux (\$49.99) Alexander Van Beek has these people producing outstanding Margaux wines. Some violets on the nose; blueberries, tar and licorice also. Full-bodied, solid and dense. Velvety tannins. Long finish. Fantastic. **95 WE, 95 JS**



2014 Langoa-Barton, St-Julien (\$49.99) This great 2014 has an explosive nose of red fruit with bonbon cerise and extraordinary purity on the palate. The length is striking, as is the focused acidity. This will prove to be one of the great Langoas in time, if we can keep our hands off it! **94 JS, 93 RP**

2014 Léoville-Barton, St-Julien (\$69.99) This is expressive and bright with violet aromas and spicy, crunchy berry fruit that is already gaining complexity. There is great balance and freshness to this big, dry wine that is already hard to resist. **94-95** points from everyone.

2014 Grand-Puy-Lacoste, Pauillac (\$69.99) **97 JS:** "This red shows lots of red currants and fresh flowers on the nose. It's full-bodied with juicy tannins and a long, flavorful finish. Needs three or four years to resolve some of the tannins. Beautiful Cabernet character, but already a joy to taste."

2014 Haut-Bailly, Pessac-Léognan (\$79.99; 6-pack OWC \$468.00) Véronique Sanders can do no wrong at Haut-Bailly and this property is a star in Bordeaux. A very well-made wine with ripe cherry and cassis notes. Bright fruit and lively acidity balance the tannins very well, and the finish is long and complex. One of the truly great 2014s. **96 VN**

2014 Montrose, St-Estèphe (\$129.99; 6-pack OWC \$768.00) Saturated, sweet black-red fruits with hints of black licorice. Features a powerful attack of fruit, with great texture and a long finish. Much better than their 2015. A must for the serious Bordeaux collector. **97 VN, 96 RP**

2014 Margaux, Margaux (\$499.99) Treat yourself to a few bottles.



Stickies for the Holidays

1989 Suduiraut, Sauternes (\$59.99) **92 WS:** "Exotically perfumed violet and rose petals burst on your palate, accompanied by dried apricot, lemon and honey flavors. Gorgeous and subtle, glowing on the finish."

1997 Suduiraut, Sauternes (\$49.99) Robert Parker: "The 1997 Suduiraut reveals surprisingly crisp acidity for its weight, as well as excellent richness. An intense, weighty, moderately sweet feel in the mouth, with copious quantities of buttery, honeyed fruit, impressive power, and a corpulent style, characterize this well-delineated wine."

2001 Guiraud, Sauternes (\$59.99) One of the great buys in Sauternes. The best vintage in stickies in the twenty-first century. The bouquet reveals aromas of quince, fig and hazelnut. **96 WS, 95 JS**

2014 d'Yquem, Sauternes (375ml \$169.99; 750ml \$339.99) Fabulous wine. When only the best will do. Very limited availability. **98 WS**





'Tis the Season for Our Very Best Champagne

By Gary Westby

This holiday season, I would like to introduce some of our very best Champagne, at a variety of different price points. Not only do we carry iconic tête de cuvée Champagne that is world-famous, but we also have fantastic values in top-quality bottles. I hope that you will find the right wine for your gifts and for your entertaining here.

When I think of icons in Champagne, the first thing I think of is the **2009 Louis Roederer “Cristal” Brut Champagne (\$Inquire)**. Not only is Cristal a name that always makes a huge impression, it is also a spectacular wine made with incredible integrity. Cristal is an estate-grown Champagne, made entirely from the best, old-vine, mid-slope, chalkiest parcels of Roederer’s Grand and Premier Cru holdings. The 2009 vintage was the first that they farmed organically in these plots, and the results are fabulous. The blend is about 60% Pinot Noir and 40% Chardonnay, but the wine has purity and focus that fooled me for a higher percentage of Chardonnay. If you value stark purity and an endless finish, this is a truly great Cristal that drinks now, and will hold for generations to come. **97 DC, 96 VN, 95 WS**

Naturally, we also have a great price on the **2009 Dom Pérignon Brut Champagne (\$149.99)**, which, like the Cristal, has come out ahead of the 2008. Both houses are still holding back their 2008 for longer aging on the lees. Stay tuned next year for their releases—you haven’t missed them! **97 JS, 96 WS**

Of the big house tête de cuvées, my very favorite is the **Laurent-Perrier “Grand Siècle” Brut Champagne (\$109.99)**. This has the one thing that none of the others have: the perfect texture of long aging on the lees. This current batch is based on 2002, and has reserves from the 1999 and 1998 harvests. The array of subtly complex flavors are too numerous to list in this spectacular Champagne. The balance between

high-quality brioche and refreshing minerality is struck perfectly in this bottle, and the bead of tiny bubbles gives the wine a texture that is unforgettable. I could never get bored of this! **97 WE**

The **Fallet-Dart “Clos du Mont” Brut Champagne (\$79.99)** is certainly among the best we have at any price, but I am hesitant to write about it, as there is preciously little to be had. This is from one walled estate vineyard in Drachy on the western edge of Champagne and is composed of 70% Chardonnay and 30% Pinot Noir. It is entirely barrel fermented and based on 2002, with reserves from 1999. We had this at a dinner at my home next to the Clos du Mesnil, Clos des Goisses and Clos-St-Hilaire, and although it was less than one-tenth the price of the most expensive wine, it more than held its own. If you like nutty, powerful Champagne that still has grace, don’t miss it.

I don’t think one can praise the 2008 vintage enough, and one of the most spectacular, focused, chalky and long wines in the building is the **2008 Launois “Spécial Club” Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne (\$59.99)**. Made from two parcels planted in the early 1950s in the mid-slope of the Grand Cru of Mesnil, this has the laser-beam excitement and length that one would expect from a top Blanc de Blancs in this vintage. The surprise is the doughy breadth that surrounds the core minerality. A top pick for an aperitif, or better yet, a pairing with crab!

With five years of aging on the lees, great croissant-like toast and citric zing, the **Ariston Aspasie “Carte Blanche” Brut Champagne (\$27.99)** deserves its place among our best. Don’t let the low price fool you—this all-estate gem is made meticulously by Paul Vincent Ariston and his family, and the quality is top-notch. This inexpensive Champagne will leave you wanting for nothing!

Sure to Please at the Party: California Wines for the Holidays

By Mari Keilman

It's *that time of year!* That time when you'll need to find a wine that won't empty the wallet but will be a crowd-pleaser for all the diverse palates at the holiday party—not to mention something that you find enjoyable, too! While the tastes and preferences of your guests should always take center stage, finding a wine that will appeal to everyone can be quite difficult. That's where the **2014 Von Strasser “Rudy” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99)** enters the equation. We “discovered” this Cab quite a few years ago on a buying trip to Napa, and this magical little gem won over even the most discerning palates on the K&L staff. The collective reaction was of sheer amazement and then utter enjoyment. Full of dense, lush purple fruit like blackberry and currant, this wine continues to please as interlaced spices like cedar and clove seduce you into almost overlooking how powerfully structured and balanced this budget-friendly Cab presents itself. It's deceptively inexpensive—your guests will think you spent a fortune on this wine.



Another wine that is sure to fool yet simultaneously please your guests is the **2016 Field Recordings “Wonderwall” Edna Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.99)**. Winemaker Andrew Jones may have only started making wines for his own label a decade ago, but his prior knowledge and experience working in and around almost every Central

Coast vineyard has clearly given Andrew a leg up on the competition. Super soft and charming up front, the Wonderwall slowly reveals its complexity in layers of baking spice and sweet earth that come to the forefront with just a slight amount of air. This is another nicely priced wine yet a good choice for those fastidious guests who expect the best.

And while my pocketbook can't handle pouring the **2015 DuMol Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$68.99)** at all my holiday parties, sometimes the occasion calls for a step up to the next level. The DuMol Pinot Noir is the whole package. While previously the wines were about oak and extraction, today, it's all about balance, ageability and structure, without losing their signature fruit component. There are some elegant juxtapositions in this wine: the ripe approachability with the lifted, refined palate; the deep-seated black cherry and raspberry with the bright cranberry and pomegranate; the fragrant florality with the savory spice and sweet scorched earth aromatics. This is an exceptionally beautiful Pinot Noir that is sure to please at every holiday festivity.



Red Burgundy: From Great Value to Grand Cru

By Alex Pross

Christmas has come a bit early this year in the form of the fantastic 2015 red Burgundy vintage! This vintage is loaded with exceptional quality from top to bottom—you can easily find a great everyday red Burgundy as well as a great gift or special occasion wine from our current inventory.

One of the best value producers in all of Burgundy is Frédéric Esmonin, and we have two stellar wines that are guaranteed to put a smile on your face while not maxing out your credit. The **2016 Frédéric Esmonin Hautes-Côtes de Nuits Rouge (\$23.99)** gives you an early glimpse into what looks to be another spectacular red Burgundy vintage. Loaded with red and black fruits, this impeccably balanced and nuanced Burgundy is a great introduction and an example of what a Hautes-Côtes de Nuits can and should be. Paired with that is the **2015 Domaine Frédéric Esmonin Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos Prieur” (\$39.99)**, a mind-blowing value for under \$40 a bottle. It is virtually unheard of to find quality Gevrey-Chambertin for under \$50, and this wine at only \$39.99 made me do a double-take. Dark purple fruits, notes of cola and spice mingle flawlessly with mineral and slight oak notes. Perfectly balanced, showing impressive complexity and a long finish, this may be the Burgundy deal of the year.



On our last trip to Burgundy we were introduced to a new winery that absolutely took my breath away. As far as tasting appointments go, only Armand Rousseau and Dujac have impressed me as much as our tasting appointment at Taupenot-Merme. The wines are not inexpensive but they are incredible, and for Grand Crus are very fairly priced.

We have a trio of Grand Crus in limited quantities available for purchase. The **2015 Taupenot-Merme Corton Grand Cru “Rognet” (\$149.99)** displays ample dark fruits, cassis notes as well as mineral and earth accents, all wrapped up in a seamless package. **93-95 RP, 91-93 VN**

A slight step up, the **2015 Taupenot-Merme Mazoyeres-Chambertin Grand Cru (\$199.99)** is silky-smooth and nimble on the palate with dark fruits, spice, chocolate notes and hints of fresh-picked flowers, all gracefully flowing over the palate. **94-96 RP, 91-93 VN**

Last, but most certainly not least, is the **2015 Taupenot-Merme Grand Cru Charmes-Chambertin (\$199.99)**, an absolute blockbuster! Teeming with gorgeous, pure berry fruit, spice and subtle cola and bitter chocolate notes, this seductive red is irresistible. If you haven't yet discovered the wines of Taupenot-Merme, you are in for a treat! **93-95 RP, 92-94 VN**

Double Barrel: Exclusive Single-Barrel Tennessee Whiskeys

By David Driscoll

In today's market for bourbon, where bottles sell out in minutes if not seconds, you have to grab every opportunity for something special. For example, if a producer offers you nine-year-old single barrels of 100-plus proof bourbon that you can sell for around forty bucks, you say yes! You say yes as many times as they'll let you. You take as much of it as they'll sell you and you ask for seconds, thirds, fourths and fifths.

Sure, Dickel is Tennessee whiskey, not labeled as bourbon, but there are plenty of people out there buying it independently and selling it as bourbon, because technically it is bourbon. Just don't tell that to anyone in Tennessee.

Back to my original point: these single barrels of Dickel are older, richer, tastier and sweeter than any whiskeys available in any other distillery-direct single-barrel program right now. Yet somehow, they're around \$20 less expensive per bottle than similarly aged casks from Four Roses or the Elijah Craig barrel proof. I dare you to do a comparison, side by side, of our latest Four Roses barrel with one of these two new arrivals from Dickel. I did it blind for fun this past week and I had a rough time figuring out which was which.



George Dickel "K&L Exclusive" 9 Year Old Single Barrel #L7233K1008" Tennessee Whiskey (\$44.99) Barrel 1008 is like a big bag of toasted caramel corn with power and intensity from the bold proof. Those who love the sweetness of classic Tennessee whiskey with the punch of cask-strength bourbon will be elated with a finish of sweet vanilla and hearty baking spices.

George Dickel "K&L Exclusive" 9 Year Old Single Barrel #L7234K1004" Tennessee Whiskey (\$44.99)

Barrel 1004 has strong aromas of herbaceous, peppery spices on the nose with heavy pencil shavings and toasted oak. It's decidedly less sweet than all of the other Dickel barrels we've featured in 2017, with a robust richness that finishes like a fine bottle of Four Roses. Basically, if you're looking for a nine-year-old bottle of cask strength OBSV for \$20 less per bottle, this is fine substitute. For serious bourbon fans.



Good, Old Sherried Island Whisky—*from a West Pacific Island*

By David Othenin-Girard

Over the last decade the world has fallen in love with whisky.

Whether it's American craft, Kentucky bourbon, straight rye, Irish pot still, Scotch single malt or Japanese, there's just no stopping the category. Everybody wants to make it and even more people want to drink it. At times over the last 10 years, this development has been a roller coaster. Our favorite distillers are selling out to the highest bidder, underwhelming whiskies are winning top honors from the whisky world's elite critics and craft whisky has entered into the everyday lexicon of many average Americans. Historians will argue about the how the whisky boom affects society, what it means for the economy, the environment or the future. This incredible cultural phenomenon is not unprecedented, but never before has the world been so connected. That's why it shouldn't shock anyone that the most exciting new development over the past decade comes from a large island in the Pacific Ocean. No one could have known at the turn of the century that this tropical island would be home to one of the world's great single malts.



Kavalan Distillery has taken the whisky world by storm. Upstaging great old Scotch distillers has become a matter of course for the little operation on the northern part of the island of Taiwan. The whiskies are so good, and roundly regarded as excellent, that they're now being unofficially banned from tasting competitions because it's simply too easy to love these malts. The only drawback to this special whisky is that it's almost unavailable on a regular basis. Their flagship offering, the Solist sherry cask, has been unavailable for nearly a year, and when it arrives we typically get six bottles at a time. So when we get offered one of the two casks for California this year, we *jump* at the opportunity. The local distributor bottled the other cask for themselves.

If you're looking for the most powerfully sherried whisky available, the **Kavalan Solist Sherry Cask K&L Exclusive Cask Strength Single Barrel Taiwanese Single Malt Whisky (\$209.99)** is the monster cask for you. There is and likely never will be anything quite like it: dark like coffee, dense like chocolate syrup, mind-numbingly powerful and a grand way to warm up on a cold winter night.

(Pictured: the 2016 exclusive Kavalan sherry cask.)

Italian Wines for the Holiday *Tavola*

By Greg St. Clair

Buon Natale! America's favorite bubbly is fast becoming Prosecco, and we have a few that will tickle the tinsel on your tree: **2016 Silvano Follador Prosecco Valdobbiadene Superiore Brut Nature (\$19.99)** is a bone-dry, mineral-driven marvel, touted by Vinous as "the single best producer of Prosecco today," but if you like your Prosecco just a little softer, the **Sorelle Bronca Prosecco di Valdobbiadene Extra Dry (\$17.99)** is your best bet! **90 VN**

We've just tasted a pair of newly arrived wines from the incredible 2016 vintage in the Alto Adige: **2016 Abbazia di Novacella Pinot Grigio (\$17.99)** and **2016 Abbazia di Novacella Grüner Veltliner Alto Adige (\$17.99)**. Both wines are aromatic, have superb body and are balanced while showing great minerality. The Pinot Grigio has a bit more fruit and the Grüner is a bit spicier. They both are some of the best I've tasted.

One of the greatest Chianti Classico I have ever tasted, **2013 Felsina "Rancia" Chianti Classico Riserva (\$39.99)** is a wine of power, depth and complexity, and a rarity—one that you can drink now or the next 20–30 years. **96+ VN, 95 RP**

The 2012 vintage in Montalcino is superb: wines of balance and elegance, perfect for gift-giving, capable of drinking now or aging for another decade.

We have a bevy of 95 point or more options for you, like the **2012 Abbadia Ardenga "Piaggia" Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 95 WE**, **2012 Armilla Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 95 WE**, **2012 La Magia Brunello di Montalcino (\$39.99) 96 JS**, **2012 Sesta di Sopra Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99) 95 JS**, **2012 Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona Brunello di Montalcino (\$44.99) 95 WE** and **Cordella Brunello di Montalcino (\$54.99) 95 JS**.

Your cellar is probably ready for some 2013 Barolo. Try these: **2013 Brezza "Cannubi" Barolo (\$79.99) 98 WE**, **2013 E. Pira Chiara Boschis "Cannubi" Barolo (\$94.99) 96 WE** or the **2013 Elvio Cogno "Cascina Nuova" Barolo (\$49.99) 97 JS**.

The holidays offer opportunities to sit with family and friends just to experience a wine, and one of my favorites for this is Amarone, a wine for contemplation, friendship and, when you taste this one, expanding your mind. The **2007 Bertani Amarone della Valpolicella (\$94.99)** is an incredible wine, something you probably haven't experienced before. It spends seven years in large oak casks developing complexity, texture and balance. Not the sweetish versions of the past, this wine is dynamic, layered and an experience you should have. **94 RP**



Red, Sparkling and Vintage: Iberia and Chile

By Joe Manekin

Back by popular demand, my top picks for the holidays! Kidding aside, this is always one of my favorite assignments of the year: picking some of my favorite bottles to enjoy with friends and family or to give as a gift.

2005 Bodegas Puelles Gran Reserva Rioja (\$19.99) Here's the simple breakdown for this wine: Great vintage—check; fantastic producer—also check; carefully bottle-aged by our DI partners and eighth-generation vineyard owners in the Puelles clan—yes! The result is a wonderfully savory, sumptuous, beautifully balanced Rioja that is delicious now and will continue to drink well for years ahead. This might be our best value in aged red wine in the store. **90 RP**

2013 Raventos i Blanc "de la Finca" Gran Reserva Conca del Riu Anoia (\$29.99) Though it is not their least expensive wine, this could well be the best value of the Raventos stable. It is of course all organically cultivated estate fruit, but in this case the vines are grown on an especially calcareous portion of their property, rich in marine fossils. The result is a sparkling wine with delicious yellow and citrus fruit, quite powerfully flavored, but with a chalkiness that combines with the bubbles to refresh the palate. There is such impressive length and purity here, that I think we can honestly pour this side by side with our favorite Champagnes and have the wine more than hold its own. Simply a great bottle of bubbles from one of the world's more serious sparkling wine producers. **93 RP**

2014 Garage Wine Company "Vigno" Carignane Maule Valley (\$39.99) Vigno represents an association of growers who source old-vine Carignane from Chile's Secano interior section of the Maule Valley, an area which, for Carignane lovers (count me in) arguably produces the best examples of this grape variety in the world, right up there with bottlings of Priorat which often sell for nearly three-figure prices. Winemaker Derek Mossman's 2014 Vigno is a masterpiece of the genre. The palate shows incredibly energetic, lively black cherry and wild berry fruit flavors, a freshness that betrays the low 3.2 pH, as well as the granite, quartz and red clay soils in this section of Chile's coastal range. It is one of the few wines I've tasted recently that I simply could not spit out—it's that good. **95 RP**

1977 Dow's Vintage Port (\$149.99) It's not the holidays without Port, and if you have some latitude to splurge, you will be greatly rewarded by this fine vintage. For many, 1977 gets the nod as one of the best post-war Port vintages (time will tell for the much-heralded, but still quite young, 2011). Tasted with a number of colleagues during a thorough vintage Port lineup back in October (1963, 1970, 1977, 1985 and younger vintages were all well represented), this wine was one of our favorites. A gem, and for anyone celebrating a fortieth, a no-brainer. **92 WS**



Good Things Come in 750ml Packages

By Ryan Woodhouse

As we head into another holiday season—I know, hard to believe, isn't it?—I'm going to keep things simple and present a range of bottles I'll be gifting to people this holiday season.

For a work colleague, you don't want to break the bank, but you do have to work with them every day, so it had better be something decent: **2015 Te Mata Estate Bordeaux Blend Hawke's Bay (\$19.99)** This is a smoking deal in the world of Bordeaux-style blends, produced from estate-grown fruit from the most highly regarded red wine-focused producer in New Zealand. Their flagship wine, Coleraine, regularly receives 100-point scores and is considered the most collectable wine in the country. Think of this wine as a "baby Coleraine"—same estate vineyards, same winemaking team.

For the mother-in-law, you're gonna need to step it up—major brownie points on offer: **2016 TWR (Te Whare Ra) Chardonnay Marlborough (\$24.99)** TWR Chardonnay has become a perennial favorite with our staff—it's what we drink with our friends and families. This stunning wine comes from just six rows of Chardonnay vines that were planted back in 1979 (the oldest in Marlborough, New Zealand). Packed with ripe orchard fruits, yellow plum, riverstone minerals and freshly baked bread. Thanks to the old vines and healthy soils of this organically farmed block, the wine is brimming with flavor and has beautiful weight and texture on the palate. **93 JS**



For your boss, keep it simple—let the wine do the talking: **2012 Leeuwin "Art Series" Cabernet Sauvignon Margaret River Western Australia (\$39.99)** This wine is sure to impress. In the glass, it sits squarely in between classic Bordeaux and more modern Napa Valley Cabernet—it has the power and fruit purity that Napa is known for, but also incorporates the structure and more savory, earthy, cigar box notes that Bordeaux lovers can't get enough of. The best part is that this wine can be drunk tonight or cellared for your holiday table in 2027! **97 JS**



For your loved one, bubbles all the way: **2010 Wiston Estate Brut Blanc de Blancs West Sussex (\$39.99)** I think bubbles are the best vinous gift anyone can give. I've met very few people who don't enjoy a glass of fizz. You can start the night with bubbles or finish the night with bubbles (or both). Sparkling wines are incredibly versatile, refreshing and invigorating; they speak of celebration, luxury and vivacity. This stunning Blanc de Blancs sparkler from Wiston Estate in England is the very essence of this. Rich and toasty from six years resting on the lees, zesty and vibrant from England's very cool climate, it's bone-dry and mouth-wateringly "moreish." If you haven't tried any of the English sparkling wines that are creating so much buzz right now, this is a great opportunity. **94 DC**



Try Châteauneuf for the Holidays

By Keith Mabry

Whether to drink, cellar, or give as a gift, **Châteauneuf-du-Pape** covers all your bases. There is something seriously satisfying about these rich, savory reds from one of the Rhône Valley's most recognizable growing regions—even popularized in a Beastie Boys song circa 1990s. The 2015 vintage continues to over-deliver for cost-to-quality, and there is so much to enjoy now as well as in the future, making it ideal for the season.

For your meal: the **2015 Domaine Giraud "Tradition" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$36.99)** offers voluptuous red fruit and forward-drinking aromas of potpourri and incense. It is an exquisite red that opens quickly and begs to be paired with the classic roasted meats of the season like rib roast and leg of lamb. **93 RP, 93 WS**

For the classicist: the **2015 Domaine de Marcoux Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$44.99)** delivers on the complex palate and flavor profile one associates with the region. Clove, allspice, roasted cherries and cigar box aromas erupt from the glass singing with merriment. This terrific wine wants to slow things down, so pair it with the hearty dishes of



winter like braised short ribs or easily put it away for a few years and enjoy a few Christmases down the road. **93 RP**

For the collector: I can think of nothing better than the exquisite **2015 Château de Vaudieu "l'Avenue" (\$89.99)**. This is all from a single plot of 100% Grenache. It encapsulates the essence of the terroir with its panoply of ripe, red fruit and spices. The finish is long, but this is a wine meant for some time in the bottle, and with its stellar reviews, it is sure to please the most particular of collectors. **96 WS**

The "can't miss" bottle for anyone and everyone is the **2015 Clos Saint-Jean Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes (\$39.99)**. This is by far the best young expression of this wine I have ever tasted. It offers a level of hedonism that is immediately appealing. The tannins are smooth and sweet, and just present enough that it should evolve for a decade. If you aren't sure of your audience's tastes, this is the slam-dunk stocking stuffer and sure-to-please-all-palates of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. **94 RP, 93 WS**



Exquisite Old and Rare Bordeaux for the Holidays—2007 and Older

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

Whether you want to drink a nice red with your hamburger tonight or buy the best Bordeaux available, we have a huge inventory of all vintages and price levels. Here are my picks for the cellar or the table, from \$15 to \$200.

2004 La Tempérance, Haut-Médoc (\$14.99)

Now mature, this is a powerful wine for the vintage. It has a spice note, plus tannins that are still present and likely to develop further. The flavors of truffle, gamy beef and beet are testaments to the age of this wine.

We have sold 5,000 bottles of this gem over the last three years. This is the last batch.

1990 (\$34.99) and 1997 Bel Air Lagrave, Moulis-en-Médoc (\$19.99)

This little-known property makes super-value old-school wines. Several vintages have surfaced recently and they are quite good. They have a nice sweetness on the palate. We sold out of the 1996 quickly and just received these two vintages. The 1990 is full of life, with a great aroma of red berry and spice, while the 1997 is soft and elegant.

2005 Coufran, Haut-Médoc (\$24.99) One of our standby favorites for value. Robert Parker: “Medium-bodied, with a long, heady power and richness, this is a seriously endowed, much bigger than usual Coufran to drink over the next decade or more.”

2007 Labégorce Zede, Margaux (\$29.99) This property does not exist anymore, as it was swallowed up by Labégorce and Marquis d’Alesme. We sold our first 50 cases quickly and just received a bit more. Soft and elegant with violets on the aroma. Red fruit flavors. These 2007s are showing quite well these days.

2006 Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$44.99) This was the best recent vintage (since 1970) of Cantemerle until the 2010 came along. A fabulous wine in all respects. 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Merlot and 8% Petit Verdot.

Château Poujeaux

From the property. We just received about 40 cases of old Château Poujeaux wines from the property: limited amounts of **1970, 1983, 1985, 1991** and **1998**. Check our website. Large formats available.



2005 Langoa-Barton, St-Julien (\$69.99) This wine was a star at the 2017 Fête de Bordeaux dinner. **93 RP:** “The Château Langoa-Barton 2005 offers plenty of concentration on the nose: blackberries, blueberry, a touch of cedar and tobacco emerging from the glass, opening and gaining intensity all the time. The palate is medium-bodied with fine tannin. This is beautifully balanced in the mouth.”

2000 Clos du Marquis, St-Julien (\$89.99) We tasted this wine on our April 2017 trip and bought a bunch. **94 WS:** “The nose shows loads of plum, spice and meat aromas, as well as hints of licorice. It’s full-bodied, with firm, yet velvety textured tannins. It’s big and rounded.”

2007 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$89.99) Sweet and lovely. Top-flight. Boysenberry aromas. I love it. Black licorice nose and some earthy notes. Lush on palate, long and sexy.

1989 Dauzac, Margaux (\$99.99) Old-school Margaux wine from the great 1989 vintage for under \$100. We tasted it in April 2016 and bought all we could find on the spot. If you like old-school Bordeaux without all the oak and extract, try this one. Some violets on the nose and palate. A food wine for sure—try it with a piece of prime rib.

1998 Gruaud-Larose, St-Julien (\$99.99) Dark purple color; big, peppery, spicy, rich and sweet fruit. The tannin is very well integrated, giving this large-scaled wine outstanding aging potential. Decant and enjoy.

2001 Brane-Cantenac, Margaux (\$99.99) What a lovely-drinking wine right now! 92 points Neal Martin: “I have always adored this wine and it is showing extremely well with 14 years on the clock. This is quite simply superb.” Actually, I think it is better than 92 points—I love the 2001s.

2006 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$119.99; 6-pack OWC \$1,439.00) Robert Parker was 95-plus on this wine in his initial review of the finished wine: “The 2006 is a wine to stockpile, especially for those in their thirties and forties as it needs another decade to reach maturity, after which it should keep for 30+ years.” I totally agree.

2005 Lynch-Bages, Pauillac (\$209.99) Fabulous wine. I have a case in my cellar. This will cellar well for many, many years. Cedar and pencil shaving aromas with cassis flavors. The finish lasts a minute. **96 WE**



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