

BY THE GLASS

This year's list of top pours by the glass is more diverse than ever: Three of the brands in the top ten are imported wines, and while it's not unusual to see Italy there, Greece and Rioja have never appeared this high in the category.

Rioja is riding the popularity wave of Spanish wines that we've seen across this year's poll results, with strong showings by the glass for La Rioja Alta and Ramirez de la Piscina. Customers may be a little less familiar with Greek wines, requiring more guidance from sommeliers. Jeff Berlin's top-selling wine at À Côté in Oakland was the 2012 Methymnaeos Chidiriotiko from Lesbos, which he sold as part of a flight: "To be perfectly honest, they make an orange and a red, and I called it the 'Lesbian flight.' And that had a lot to do with the sales. But they're amazing wines."

Many sommeliers are using flights and pairings to broaden their by-the-glass lists and encourage customers to be more adventurous. "If you count everything, we offer about sixty wines by the glass,"

says Cedric Nicaise of NYC's *Eleven Madison Park*. "We offer pairings with our prix fixe dinners, which change a lot. That helps us offer more wines by the glass, because we'll pour those wines for other guests who request it. Some of those are wines I couldn't put on the by-the-glass list because they're so limited in quantity."

Ben Teig of LA's *Redbird* notices that customers, especially younger ones, are seeking more adventurous choices on the glass list: "Generally people are asking more and more for nontraditional varieties." But even so, California cabernet, chardonnay and especially pinot noir continue to dominate glass pours. Meiomi Pinot Noir held the top position for the second consecutive year after chardonnay's long domination of that spot. Adriana Camacho of *The Palm* in Las Vegas finds that Meiomi's name recognition drives sales: "People here, at least, have gotten it into their heads that Meiomi is a starter wine, to have by the glass. It's a really affordable wine, and people see it everywhere, so they order it."

"People are more reluctant to throw down for a big bottle, but they're still buying really good glasses. We want it to be motivational: 'Oh shit, \$18 a glass—I have to get that!'"

—Louis Moskow,
315 Restaurant and Wine
Bar, Santa Fe

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	Meiomi	California Pinot Noir	\$14
2	Copain	Anderson Valley Tous Ensemble Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Tous Ensemble Chardonnay	\$17 \$16
3	Justin	Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon	\$16
4	Heitz Wine Cellars	Napa Valley Chardonnay Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	\$18 \$24
	Sandhi	Santa Barbara Chardonnay Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir	\$20 \$20
6	Banfi	Toscana San Angelo Pinot Grigio Rosso di Montalcino Centine	\$8 \$16
7	Avalon	California Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	\$9 \$11
	Kourtaki	Attica Retsina White Blend Nemea Apelia Rosé	\$10 \$7
9	Ferrari-Carano	Sonoma County Chardonnay Sonoma County Fume Blanc	\$12 \$9
	La Rioja Alta	Rioja Reserva Viña Alberdi Rioja Reserva Ardanza	\$14 \$21
	Hess Collection	Napa Valley Chardonnay North Coast Sauvignon Blanc	\$12 \$7
11	Raventós i Blanc	Conca del Riu Anoia Brut L'Hereu Conca del Riu Anoia Brut Rose L'Hereu	\$13 \$16
	Catena	Mendoza Alamos Malbec Mendoza Malbec	\$8 \$11
13	Domaine Eden	Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon	\$15 \$25
15	Sonoma-Cutrer	RRV Russian River Ranches Chardonnay Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$14 \$16
	Lucien Crochet	Sancerre La Croix du Roy Sauvignon Blanc Sancerre Sauvignon Blanc	\$20 \$19
16	Raymond Vineyard	Monterey R Collection Chardonnay Napa Valley Chardonnay	\$17 \$19
	Bench	Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir	\$15 \$15
18	Villa Maria	Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough Cellar Select Sauvignon Blanc	\$9 \$9

	DeLoach	California Heritage Reserve Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$12 \$16
	Joel Gott	Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon California Unoaked Chardonnay	\$8 \$8
20	Lieu Dit	Santa Ynez Valley Sauvignon Blanc	\$17
	Louis Martini Winery	Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	\$11 \$18
	Maison Joseph Drouhin	Mâcon-Villages Chardonnay Chablis 1er Cru Chardonnay	\$12 \$22
24	Ramirez de la Piscina	Rioja Reserva Rioja Crianza	\$16 \$13
	Canyon Road	California Chardonnay California Cabernet Sauvignon	\$8 \$10
26	Duckhorn Vineyards	Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc Napa Valley Merlot	\$17 \$20
	Laetitia	Arroyo Grande Valley Chardonnay Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir	\$8 \$16
	Drusian	Prosecco	\$14
	Elk Cove	Willamette Valley Pinot Blanc Willamette Valley Pinot Noir	\$10 \$16
29	Mirassou	California Moscato California Pinot Noir	\$8 \$8
	Ruffino	Toscana Lumina Pinot Grigio Chianti Classico Aziano	\$10 \$11
	14 Hands	Columbia Valley Merlot Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	\$10 \$9
33	Argyle	Willamette Valley Brut	\$13
	Granbazán	Rías Baixas Albariño	\$16
	Chateau Ste. Michelle	Columbia Valley Cold Creek Vineyard Riesling Horse Heaven Hills Sauvignon Blanc	\$6 \$8
36	La Marca	Prosecco	\$9
	Unti	Dry Creek Valley Barbera Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel	\$11 \$13

SPARKLING WINES

It was only last year that sparkling wine saw a sudden jump in mentions on respondents's list, after a decade or more of gradual growth. It now accounts for 6.4 percent of the most popular wines in US restaurants, with Champagne taking four of the top five spots. Changes are afoot in the category, though, as Billecart-Salmon dislodged Veuve Clicquot from its 19-year lock on the top spot, and growers continued to surge, with Chartogne-Taillet coming in at number five. Sommeliers are offering a wider range of choices and it's resonating with their customers. "People's experience with Champagne so often is Veuve Clicquot or Moët Chandon, which tend to be more expensive and not like a wine," says Jack Mason of *Marta* in NYC. "When they have something

that's less expensive with more interesting flavors, they get it."

Gains among other sparklers show a broadening of the category beyond Champagne and Prosecco. Oregon makes its first appearance in a decade, and Cava's two top-ten placements reflect Spain's strong showing in this year's poll results.

In follow-up interviews, many sommeliers talked up *petillant naturel* wines, or "pét-nats." Bryan Flewelling of *Eventide Oyster Co.* in Portland, Maine, is just one fan: "Pét-nats go well with our cuisine because they tend to be simple, crisp and fresh," he notes. "They don't get to the table and demand all the attention. They are one player in the drama of the meal."



"I'm really happy selling more and more Champagne. We've had high sales for years, and it's only gotten better."

—Henry Beylin, *Gjelina*, Venice, CA

MOST POPULAR SPARKLING WINES

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	Billecart-Salmon	Champagne Brut Réserve Champagne Brut Rosé Champagne Extra Brut	\$111 \$164 \$130
2	Veuve Clicquot	Champagne Brut Yellow Label Champagne Brut Rosé	\$131 \$125
3	Argyle	Willamette Valley Brut Willamette Valley Rosé	\$62 \$70
4	Krug	Champagne Grand Cuvée	\$192
5	Chartogne-Taillet	Champagne Cuvée Ste-Anne	\$99
6	Raventós i Blanc	Conca del Riu Anoia Brut L'Hereu Conca del Riu Anoia De Nit	\$60 \$65
7	Schramsberg Vineyards	Napa Valley Blanc de Blancs	\$75
8	Avinyo	Cava Cava Rosat	\$35 \$60
9	Bérêche et Fils	Champagne Brut Réserve	\$124
10	Bruno Paillard	Champagne Première Cuvée	\$122
	Cima di Conegliano	Prosecco Conegliano Extra Dry	\$68
12	Domaine Ste. Michelle	Columbia Valley Brut	\$28
13	Naveran	Cava Brut Nature Cava Reserve Blanc de Blanc	\$43 \$43
14	Roederer Estate	Anderson Valley Brut	\$49
15	Laurent Perrier	Champagne Brut	\$95
	Pol Roger	Champagne Brut	\$94
17	J. Lassalle	Champagne 1er Cru	\$100
	Drusian	Prosecco	\$56
19	La Marca	Prosecco	\$23

PINOT GRIS & GRIGIO

Pinot grigio's popularity continued to slide this year, accounting for less than two percent of the most popular restaurant wines. In Denver, Ryan Fletter at *Barolo Grill* finds that "it's almost as if pinot grigio is like merlot. People ask, 'Do you have anything like that, but not that?'"

Even when customers do ask for pinot grigio, many sommeliers are less inclined to offer it. At *Amali* in NYC, Francine Mace offers Terradora Fiano di Avellino instead. "It's not pinot grigio at all, but it has a lot going on, and guests just see 'Italian white.'"

The push-back is clear in the Most Popular list: After 18 years leading the category, Santa Margherita is now at number five, while Jermann's full-bodied Friulian pinot grigio rose to the top.

MOST POPULAR PINOT GRIS & GRIGIO

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	Jermann	Friuli	\$51
2	Cielo	Toscana	\$28
3	Alois Lageder	Alto Adige	\$42
4	Scarpetta	Friuli	\$36
5	Santa Margherita	Alto Adige	\$60

SPAIN

This year, **La Rioja Alta** rose to fourth place in the Restaurant Top 50, the first time a Spanish winery has reached the highest echelons in our poll results. With the dollar surging, Rioja's stock of well-aged wines looked remarkably attractive to restaurant-goers in 2015. Juliette Pope at NYC's *Gramercy Tavern* says her sales of La Rioja Alta Reserva Viña Ardanza are an ongoing phenomenon: "We've had it on all year solid by the glass and that drives the bottle sales. People know Rioja, and people who know Rioja better know that 2005 is a great vintage. It's ten years old and well priced and delicious."

"Rioja has been shining" for Yana Volfson at NYC's *Cosme*, as well, particularly R. López de Heredia's 2003 Viña Tondonia. "It's so juicy and bright, with much more acidity than I'd expect from that vintage. Watching people go \$100 on Rioja instead of \$100 on Burgundy has been fun." Commenting on the range of popular wines, from mencia in Bierzo to garnacha in Montsant, Arthur Hon at *Sepia* in Chicago told us, "I love Spain for the American palate. With riper fruit, more showy and supple, it's a good transition to drinking something with an Old World perspective."

Cava helped drive Spain's leap to 7.5 percent of the most popular wines in the poll this year, as did more esoteric wines. Jeff Berlin at Oakland's *À Côté* has seen "an explosion of smaller artisanal farmer wines from Spain. One of my top sellers was the 2012 La Zorra Salamanca Rufete—from steep, rugged, granite mountains west of Madrid. It's the red rufete—it spent a bit of time in new French wood but was not by any means overoaked. Man, that was a great find."

MOST POPULAR SPANISH WINES

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	La Rioja Alta	Rioja Gran Reserva 904 Rioja Reserva Ardanza Rioja Reserva Vina Alberdi	\$115 \$76 \$50
2	R. López de Heredia	Rioja Reserva Vina Tondonia Rioja Vina Gravonia Blanco Rioja Crianza Vina Cubillo	\$96 \$72 \$75
3	Do Ferreira	Rias Baixas Albariño Rias Baixas Reisaca Blanco	\$64 \$48
4	Muga	Rioja Reserva	\$55
5	Hermanos Peciña	Rioja Señorío de P. Peciña Crianza Rioja Señorío de P. Peciña Reserva	\$54 \$68
6	Gorrona	Txakoli de Vizcaya	\$44
7	Ameztoi	Getariako Txakolina Getariako Txakolina Rubentis Rosé	\$51 \$45
8	Raventós i Blanc	Conca del Riu Anoia Brut L'Hereu Conca del Riu Anoia De Nit	\$60 \$65
9	Marqués de Riscal	Rioja Rioja Reserva	\$54 \$36
10	Avinyo	Cava Cava Rosat	\$35 \$60
11	Granbazán	Rias Baixas Albariño	\$52
12	Ramírez de la Piscina	Rioja Reserva	\$68
13	Sierra Cantabria	Rioja Rioja Reserva	\$69 \$60
14	Beronia	Rioja Gran Reserva	\$78
15	Naveran	Cava Brut Nature Cava Reserve Blanc de Blanc	\$43 \$43
16	Cillar de Silos	Ribera del Duero Crianza Ribera del Duero Torre Silos	\$38 \$65
	Pardevalles	Tierras de Leon Albarin Blanco	\$37

GREECE

Greece hit an all-time high this year, earning just under 2 percent of the wines in respondents' top-selling lists. That places it fifth in overall popularity by country, just behind Argentina (which is a fraction above 2 percent). And while Santorini still draws the most mentions, there's a vast amount of diversity in this Top 10 list. Part of this has to do with increased familiarity, but, as David Schneider at Taxim in Chicago points out, it's also because they are getting easier to find in more markets. "I brought a lot of new wines in this year," he says. "It's been good for the consumer, to have this wonderful array of options—real options."

MOST POPULAR GREEK WINES

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	Domaine Sigalas	Santorini	\$52
2	Alpha Estate	Amyndeon Hedgehog Xinomavro Florina Malagousia	\$59 \$52
	Tselepos	Mantinia Brut Amalia Moschofilero Nemea Driopi Agiorgitiko	\$52 \$40
4	Domaine Costas Lazaridi	Drama Oenodea Cabernet Sauvignon- Agiorgitiko-Syrah Macedonia Amethystos Sauvignon Blanc	\$40 \$52
	Gala Estate	Nemea Agiorgitiko Santorini Wild Ferment	\$89 \$80
6	Mercouri	Ilias Folio Letrini Domaine Mercouri	\$52 \$60
7	Domaine Skouras	Nemea St. George Nemea Grand Cuvée Agiorgitiko	\$32 \$82
8	Thymiopoulos Vineyards	Naoussa Uranos Xinomavro	\$68
9	Kourtaki	Attica Retsina	\$26
10	Boutari	Greece Elios Red Naoussa Grand Reserve	\$28 \$60
	Lafkiotis	Mantinia Archaes Kleones Moschofilero Nemea Agiorgitiko	\$32 \$32

NEW ZEALAND

Whether listing sauvignon or chardonnay, sommeliers who count New Zealand wines among their top sellers cite value, as Jin Ahn from NYC's *Nor-eetuh* states: "The Kumeu River 2014 Chardonnay speaks for itself. It drinks like a Chablis—a great alternative to a California chardonnay and it costs a lot less." New Zealand reached a high point of 2.5 percent of the most popular wines in the poll in 2007, and has dropped back to 1.3 percent this year.

MOST POPULAR NEW ZEALAND WINES

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	Craggy Range	Martinborough Te Muna Road Sauvignon Blanc Martinborough Te Kahu Red	\$51 \$64
2	Kim Crawford	Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc	\$44
3	Whitehaven	Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc	\$41
4	Villa Maria	Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc	\$36
5	Brancott	Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc	\$38
6	Cloudy Bay	Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc	\$70