

Geoff Last: Top wines from 2016 that can be enjoyed now



GEOFF LAST

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Wines featured in Geoff Last's top ten list for 2016. -

If my math is correct — and it seldom is — this will be my 16th year submitting a Top 10 list. The challenge with creating a wine list is making sure they are still available to purchase around town otherwise the whole

thing is a moot point. My standard disclaimer is that these may not be the finest wines I tasted last year (I am quite spoiled in that regard), but they represent a selection that I turned to many times over the course of the year because they offer a lot of pleasure for the buck.

Manoir du Carra Coteaux Bourguignon 2014 – \$24

This well-respected Beaujolais producer always delivers well-made wines for not too much money. This one is a blend of Pinot Noir (60 per cent) and Gamay, a style that is also known as Passetoutgrains, and it offers a big core of juicy red fruits with lively acidity and a little minerality. It is a versatile red that goes well with almost everything other than steak and lamb. A great everyday drinker.

Vietti Perbacco Nebbiolo 2013 – \$39

Vietti produces some of the finest wines in Italy's Piedmont region, most notably its excellent Barolos, although they tend to be on the pricey side (like most Barolo). This wine offers a serious Barolo taste profile minus the face-ripping tannins that accompany young Barolo. There are some tannins along with a classic profile of roses, minerals and smoky cherry fruit. Decant it for an hour and serve it with roast lamb. This combo will make you very happy.

Prieure de Montezargues Tavel 2015 – \$30

You can buy decent rose for about half this price but this is a benchmark example of the dry rose style. The Tavel appellation is dedicated only to rose and as such the French take it seriously. The domaine is owned by the Richard family who also own and operate Chateau la Nerthe (in Chateauneuf du Pape) and Domaine de la Renjarde, all three of which are situated in the southern Rhone valley. It is predominantly Grenache and

Cinsault displaying notes of red berries, stone fruits and spice, a delicious, full-bodied style of rose that deserves to be drunk year-round, not just in our all too brief summer months.

Raventos I Blanc L'hereu Blancs de Blancs 2014 – \$30

Raventos has been producing sparkling wine from local indigenous grapes for generations and they have evolved to the point that their wines now rival many much more expensive Champagnes, which is quite a feat. I visited the winery last year and all I can say is that every now and then — as a wine writer and merchant — you visit a property where the combination of quality, hospitality and dedication to a craft renews your faith in your chosen profession; this was one of those visits. If there is a better \$30 sparkling wine in the world I have yet to taste it.

Lini 910 Lambrusco Rosso – \$20

Lambrusco is a sparkling wine — usually made from red grapes, but there are other iterations — produced in the Emilia-Romagna region, Italy's culinary capital. The wine received a bad rap many years ago, thanks to some nasty brands; remember Riuniti on ice! The only way you could get this stuff down was to get it so cold it numbed the tastebuds. There is great Lambrusco however, and this one of them. In Italy this is picnic wine, the ideal companion to a panini or a simple bowl of pasta with fresh tomatoes and basil. It is light in alcohol with a nice grapey character, all in all the perfect lunch wine.

Chateau Ollieux Romanis Corbieres Cuvee Prestige 2014 – \$28

This Languedoc producer ranks among the very best from the south of France and its wines offer remarkable value. Their entry level red sells for \$22 (sold out now but more on the way) and is excellent but things get serious with the Cuvee Prestige. It is a blend of Carignan, Grenache, Mourvedre and Syrah from vines with 40 to 80 years of age. It is a brawny wine with great

structure and character. I have some of this aging in my own cellar, it should be perfect in about five years although you can drink it now with a decant and some red meat.

Terra Viva Pinot Grigio 2015 – \$17

I don't know this to be fact but I would be willing to bet that Pinot Grigio (aka Pinot Gris) is second only to Chardonnay in terms of its white wine popularity. And like Chardonnay there is an ocean of nondescript, mass-produced versions out there that sell by the boat load. Here is nice, crisp, well-made example that is certified organic and well-priced. It displays some citrus and green apple notes and I am willing to go out on a limb and say that you can't buy a better Pinot Grigio for under \$20, especially one that is certified organic.

Gricos Aglianico del Vulture 2013 – \$21

The Aglianico grape from Italy's Basilicata region can be a tannic monster in its youth but this one — from Grifalco della Lucania — displays the typical notes of the varietal minus the face-numbing tannins. This full-bodied red has loads of character showing black fruits, dried figs and a touch of balsamic. A great daily drinker with things like burgers and steaks.

Novellum Chardonnay – \$23

Much like Pinot Gris, finding Chardonnay in this price range that rises above the merely acceptable is always a challenge. This wine is produced in the Cotes Catalanes region of the Languedoc/Roussillon region and offers notes of white peaches, brioche and minerals with a nice level of acidity. It may not be Grand Cru Burgundy but it is a seriously good bottle of Chard for the price.

Remelluri Reserva Rioja 2010 – \$46

Last but certainly not least is a stellar red wine from one of Spain's most dynamic winemakers, Telmo Rodriguez. He has

projects on the go all over Spain, but Rioja is his home base and it is a classic example of the more modern regional style. It is ripe and polished but still very youthful despite being seven years old. You could drink it now but it will benefit from another two to five years of cellaring.

The wines listed here are in “open stock,” which means any store can order them. If you are looking for any wine in Alberta, you can go to <http://www.liquorconnect.com> (<http://www.liquorconnect.com>).

Geoff Last is a long- time Calgary wine merchant, writer and broadcaster and a regular contributor to City Palate Magazine and other publications. He instructs on food and wine at the Cookbook Company Cooks and was recently awarded a fellowship to the Symposium of Professional Wine Writers based on his articles in the Calgary Herald and City Palate.