

Wine Spectator

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**100
TOP VALUES**

THE **TOP 100**

THE MOST EXCITING WINES OF 2020

WINE REPORTS

- U.S. SPARKLERS
- ARGENTINA
- BEAUJOLAIS

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100 TOP VALUES

A year-end roundup of great wines for \$25 or less

During this tumultuous year, we have all looked for comfort wherever we can find it. Because of the emphasis on home due to the pandemic, it has been our closest family and friends who we've relied on most to get us through. There's no better way to connect than with good food and wine, making it as important as ever to have affordable, go-to bottles we can count on.

Yet being at home doesn't mean we can't try new flavors, experience different cultures and expand our senses. That's another way that value-priced wines have been a source of pleasure this year, by allowing us to travel the world from our kitchens. The diverse selection in this year's annual roundup of 100 top values covers six categories—Light

Whites, Rich Whites, Elegant Reds, Big Reds, Rosé and Sparkling—and spans every corner of the globe. All of the wines are rated 88 points or higher, priced at \$25 or less and made in large enough quantities to be widely available. (Another 22 wines in this year's Top 100 also represent exceptional value. See page 64 for a complete list.)

Producers in both established and emerging regions have made an ongoing commitment to delivering high quality wines at prices that allow for exploration. In the pages that follow, you'll find plenty of your favorites—from vivid Sauvignon Blancs to refined Pinot Noirs—but also less-familiar offerings. Even in well-traveled regions such as Italy and Spain there are discoveries to be made. All you need is a guide to show you the way.

BY KEITH NEWTON

79 Light Whites

80 Rich Whites

82 Elegant Reds

85 Big Reds

86 Rosé

86 Sparkling



ROSÉ

The traditional rosé appellations of France, Spain and Italy have always produced a delicious array of styles at very affordable prices. Now, with the whole world thinking pink, producers across the globe are trying to match those classic examples in both quality and value. California and Washington, in particular, are producing a stream of vibrant, refreshing versions from grapes such as Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc.

91 \$20 LES VIGNERONS DE TAVEL Tavel Les Lauzeiraies 2019 | FRANCE | Big and bracing, with racy edges to the mix of cherry, bitter plum and blood orange flavors. Stony minerality frames the finish. (J.M.)

90 \$22 ETXANIZ TXAKOLINA Getariako Txakolina Rosado Txomin Etxaniz 2019 | SPAIN | Lightly spritzzy, with a sea breeze aroma weaving through blood orange and pink grapefruit flavors. Hondarrabi Zuri and Hondarrabi Beltza. (G.S.)

90 \$22 GRACI Etna Rosato 2018 | ITALY | There's a lovely creaminess to the delicate flavors of nectarine, white cherry and lemon thyme in this pale rosé, with a tangy streak of stony mineral on the lively finish. (A.N.)

90 \$23 GÉRARD BERTRAND Languedoc Rosé Hampton Water 2019 | FRANCE | A creamy rosé, with hints of richness to the ripe melon and tangerine flavors Grenache blend. (G.S.)

89 \$12 BODEGAS BRECA Vino de España Rosé 2019 | SPAIN | A smooth minerality marks the creamy white raspberry, ripe white peach and tangerine zest flavors of this supple and engaging rosado. (G.S.)

89 \$13 MARQUÉS DE CÁCERES Rioja Rosado 2019 | SPAIN | Bright, firm and savory, with herbal and briny notes framing berry, cherry and watermelon flavors. Tempranillo and Garnacha Tinta. (T.M.)

89 \$15 MARTIN RAY Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Rosé 2019 | CALIFORNIA | Vibrant and supple, with floral strawberry and orange zest accents. (T.F.)

89 \$17 JOEL GOTT Rosé Central Coast 2019 | CALIFORNIA | Zesty and refreshing, with jammy raspberry and strawberry flavors laced with orange zest and rose petal notes. Grenache blend. (T.F.)

89 \$18 SEVEN HILLS Rosé Dry Columbia Valley 2019 | WASHINGTON | This lovely rosé shows structure and refinement, with orange peel, watermelon and apricot accents. Cabernet Franc blend. (T.F.)

89 \$20 CHÂTEAU DE BERNE Côtes de Provence Rosé Inspiration 2019 | FRANCE | Juicy acidity marks the elegant tangerine, white blossom and cantaloupe flavors of this creamy rosé, with accents of spice, anise and mineral. Grenache blend. (G.S.)



Dear Dr. Vinny.

Why are red wine grapes fermented with the grape skins but white wine grapes aren't?

—Marshall, Kingston, Pa.

Dear Marshall,

Grape skins are a source of tannins, phenols and color pigments in wine. You're correct that the production of a typical white wine involves separating the white wine grape juice from the solids of the crushed grapes (and fermenting just the juice), while red wines go through maceration, when the crushed grape solids (skins, stems, seeds) are allowed to steep in the juice for a period of time, imparting color, flavor and texture.

In addition to red wine, rosé is also produced through maceration. Red grapes are crushed, and the juice is allowed to sit in contact with the skins, as in red wine production. After several hours or days, but before fermentation, some or all of the juice is drained from the skins, transferred to a new tank and fermented sans skins. The juice is able to pick up some of the pigments, phenols and tannins from the skins, but not to the extent of a red wine.

The reason that winemakers don't use the skins to make most white wines is that doing so would add characteristics that they (and wine drinkers) don't usually want in a white wine, such as tannins or darker color, and the wine would no longer have that crisp and refreshing character that so many white wines provide.

There's another category, however, called skin-contact wines that are made from white grapes. They're often referred to as "orange wines," because the added color of the skins lends the wines a coppery appearance. Not only their color but also their textures and flavors can be a worthwhile learning experience.

—Dr. Vinny

SPARKLING

The production of sparkling wine is as labor-intensive as winemaking gets, yet that hasn't stopped vintners from turning out affordable options in a range of styles. Italy and Spain have long been leaders in keeping quality high and prices low, yet California has come on strong in recent years in delivering bright, flavorful examples.

90 \$20 EL CEP Brut Cava Gelida Gran Reserva 2015 | SPAIN | Apricot and tangerine flavors are set on the fine mousse of this expressive Cava, with pastry cream, toasted almond and candied ginger hints. (A.N.)

90 \$21 LOUIS POMMERY Brut California NV | CALIFORNIA | Steely and vibrant, this combines the best of Old and New World styles, with fresh lime, kiwifruit and blanched almond flavors. (T.F.)

90 \$25 DECOY Brut California Cuvée NV | CALIFORNIA | Snappy and fresh, with layered and steely lemon and orange zest flavors accented by floral vanilla notes. (T.F.)

90 \$25 JOSEP MARIA RAVENTÓS | BLANC Brut Blanc de Blancs Vino Espumoso 2017 | SPAIN | Sleek and finely knit, with flavors of crunchy green pear, salted almond and dried white cherry. (A.N.)

89 \$18 CANTINA MONTELLIANA Extra Dry Asolo Prosecco Superiore 57 NV | ITALY | Subtle, with crisp acidity married to delicate notes of Anjou pear, blanched almond and blood orange sorbet. (A.N.)

89 \$19 DOMAINE CHANDON Brut California NV | CALIFORNIA | An easygoing sparkler, with appealing honeysuckle, apple and roasted nut tones. (T.F.)

89 \$20 ROTARI Brut Rosé Trento 2014 | ITALY | A lively rosé, with a delicate mousse carrying flavors of black currant, apricot and blanched almond. (A.N.)

89 \$25 CONTADI CASTALDI Brut Franciacorta NV | ITALY | Lightly creamy and fresh, this is Franciacorta in an aperitif style, offering notes of white cherry, candied lemon zest, anise and toast point. (A.N.)

88 \$16 LINI ORESTE & FIGLI Lambrusco Emilia Rosso Labrusca 910 2019 | ITALY | This aromatic sparkling red is fresh and balanced, offering flavors of crushed blackberry and black cherry. (A.N.)

88 \$19 GRUET Blanc de Blancs American NV | NEW MEXICO | A brisk and refreshing sparkler, this offers tart apple and lemon verbena accents that finish on a vibrant note. (T.F.)