Our Holiday Best to You and Yours

Picking a favorite wine is, for our wine buyers, like picking a favorite child. Not an easy task. Yet they have done just that, all in the name of great holiday drinking! Here are our top nine wines for the holidays, the best of the best for gifting—and receiving!

Damien Hugot Grand Cru Brut Blanc de Blancs Champagne $34.99 If the crazy price increases by most of the big-name Champagne producers have you down, we have a solution: this fabulous bottle of creamy, toasty, yet refreshing and dry Blanc de Blancs. Savor the class of 100% Grand Cru, purchased directly from the producer!

2018 Hendry “Estate” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon $59.95
95WE 93JS One of the last true family owned and operated wineries in Napa. From old vines dating back to the 70s, this is an under-the-radar gem that I can’t recommend highly enough. A classic Napa Cab with bold flavors of cassis, mulberry, crushed rock, and unsmoked cigar. Luxuriously fruited but with plenty of structure and varietal character.

2016 Château Tronquoy-Lalande, St Estèphe $36.99 (Elsewhere $50.00) 94WA 93JS This 2016 is a stunner—perhaps even better than their 2009. In 2010 Château Montrose bought one of the best parcels from neighbor Phélip Ségur, and this 2016 has a lot of that juice in it. Super sweet, intense black fruit with some black cherry flavors and nuances of oak. Very vibrant and not as sweet as was the 2009, but with more structure and length. Will cellar well for 15 years.

2019 Wrath “Pommard 4/777” Monterey Pinot Noir $19.99 (Elsewhere $35) 93WE At more than 40% off the release price, this is the best deal I’ve seen in a while! The Wrath Pommard Clone 4/777 bottling exudes ethereal complexity, a bouquet of black cherries, pomegranate, black tea, and incense. Light and nimble, the wine embodies racy finesse. Wrath is a winery on the rise!

2018 Produttori del Barbaresco Barbaresco $37.99 93JS 93WA Produttori del Barbaresco is one of Italy’s most iconic wine producers, and this wine consistently outperforms its price. In this vintage, all of the Cru wines were declassified and blended into this wine making it a stunning choice for delicious drinking now or aging for a decade!

2015 Remelluri Reserva Rioja $49.99 94WA 94JS 94TA The 2015 is the breakout vintage for Remelluri, where all of the changes they implemented in 2009 are paying off: using only estate fruit, organic viticulture, and changes in the aging regimes and oak. This is a wine of purity, intensity, a deep sense of place, and harmony.

2020 Vins Auvigue Pouilly-Fuissé “Les Villages” $29.99 94WS 92DC Pouilly-Fuissé is the new ground zero for Burgundy values, and the 2020 Vins Auvigue Pouilly-Fuissé Les Villages is a beauty loaded with tons of orchard fruits and citrus flavors as well as subtle spice and saline notes.

2020 Xanadu “Estate” Chardonnay Margaret River Western Australia $24.99 97JS 96WA 94JH The 2020 vintage was an absolute breakthrough for Xanadu’s Estate Chard. In the prized Wilyabrup region of Margaret River, Xanadu has quickly risen to becoming one of Australia’s marquee producers. Aromas of lemon curd, jasmine, and apricot—an inviting Chardonnay with complexity and charisma in spades. On the palate there is luxurious weight with grapefruit, spiced apple and praline, cut by brilliant acidity.

2001 Xavier Vignon “Cuvée Ange” Châteauneuf-du-Pape $89.99 96JD 95JS This may be our last pass at one of the coolest bottles of Châteauneuf we have seen in the last few years. An assemblage of wine from top producers was procured and held in tank by Mr. Vignon to bottle for his son’s 18th birthday. It’s drinking like a dream with flavors of crushed red berries, potpourri, and incense spice. So elegant!

Key: 90 Critic Score on 100-Point Scale: CG Connoisseurs’ Guide to California Wine DC Decanter JD Jeb Dunnuck JG John Gilman JS James Suckling WA Robert Parker Wine Advocate VN Antonio Galloni’s Vinous We&S Wine & Spirits WE Wine Enthusiast WS Wine Spectator
**Ex-Château Langoa and Léoville Barton Spanning 15 Vintages**

*By Clyde Beffa Jr, Bordeaux Buyer*

We purchased 15 vintages of Langoa and Léoville wines. They arrived on December 8th and have perfect provenance as the wines have never left the properties. Here are a few of my favorites.

**2009 Langoa Barton, St-Julien** $99.99

I love 2009 Bordeaux wines as they are rich and round, fruit forward and utterly delicious—and they will age for years. This wine is stunning, and earns 94VN and praise: “What a gorgeous and utterly seductive St-Julien.”

**2010 Langoa Barton, St-Julien** $89.99

I love this wine as much as I love their 2009. Both are great values, with the 2010 a bit more structured for a long cellar life. 94WE: “A classic black-curcquant note that’s balanced by the firm tannins of the vintage.”

**1999 Léoville Barton, St-Julien (Elsewhere $150)** $109.99

I love the 1999 Bordeaux wines, and many are at their peak after 23 years. A value wine here for sure: ripe red rose aromas and red berry fruit flavors. Perfect now for your holiday Prime Rib or cellar a few more years.

**2000 Léoville Barton, St-Julien** $219.99

Still young and lively—decant and serve with rack of lamb. 96JS: “Decadent aromas of strawberry tart, earth, meat, spices, that give way to flowers and currants. Full and very soft, with refined tannins with a very long finish.”

**2009 Léoville-Barton, St-Julien** $169.99

Great vintage and great property—you can’t miss here. 98WE: “A major success of the vintage. *#3 Top 100 Cellar Selections of 2012* (RV)”

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**Oldies but Goodies: Restaurant Bordeaux**

*By Clyde Beffa Jr (CB), Bordeaux Buyer, and Jacques Moreira (JM), Bordeaux Specialist*

It is very frustrating to go to a nice restaurant and order a fabulous meal, only to find a wine list with only young red wine vintages for sale. Bring your own bottle, pay the corkage, and enjoy a mature wine with your meal—a wine that actually tastes good with the fare. Here are a few of our favorites.

**1996 Citran, Haut-Médoc** $39.99

This wine is showing particularly well right now and is in that perfect drinking spot. Quite alive and elegant. The earth and leather notes, along with delicate plums and olives, deliver a beautiful, aged Bordeaux experience. I did not decant it, as I did not find it necessary. A beauty. JM

**1997 Fourcas Dupre, Listrac 1.5L** $44.99

Our very good friend the late Anthony Barton always said: “The magnum is the perfect size for a dinner party of two—if one does not drink!” An attractive wine with plenty of black currant fruit, this 1997 provides a ripe entry on the palate, good purity, medium body, and nice length. An old-school property with a soft, elegant vintage—great wine and it is under $50 for a magnum! CB

**1998 Peyrabon, Haut-Médoc 1.5L** $39.99

Wow—this wine just arrived, and it will sell out quickly. Just sweet and sexy as the Merlot grape did very well in 1998. Ripe blackberry fruits and elegant finish. A 24-year-old magnum for $40? Crazy great value!

**1999 Bel Air Lagrave, Moulis-en-Médoc** $29.99

This little-known property makes super-value, old-school wines. Perfect now after 23 years—that’s less than $1 a year! Black fruit aromas that follow to the palate.

**2001 de l’Ile Margaux Rouge, Bordeaux Superieur** $29.99

As the name implies, this domaine is located on an island in an estuary of the Gironde and has been owned by the same family since 2001. Grapes have been grown on the property since at least the 18th century. The island was at one time part of Château Margaux. We love 2001 Bordeaux—most are perfect to drink right now; this one is a steal! CB

**2007 Barde-Haut, St-Émilion** $39.99

From a vintage that’s drinking nicely today, the 2007 Château Barde-Haut offers a medium- to full-bodied, rounded, plush and supple style to go with the classic dark fruits, spice, leather, and tobacco notes that always seem to be present in the wine. While fully mature, the tannins are polished, and it has plenty of mid-palate depth and a great finish. (03/2020) These value 2007s are coming along wonderfully. CB

**2009 La Cabanne, Pomerol** $38.99

This Pomerol property makes big, powerful wines—more old-school than modern in style. The richness and sexiness of the 2009 vintage blends perfectly with this property. By far the best La Cabanne I have ever tasted. Gorgeous nose of blackberries and violets. Plump rich fruit has softened over a decade in bottle. It is just a juicy, rich wine that is packed full of Pomerol seduction. Bravo! A must-try, but decant one hour if possible, and have with venison or a juicy steak. CB

**2009 Sarget de Gruaud Larose, St-Julien** $49.99

“ ‘The Sarget is a classic example of the 2009 vintage, with its soft tannins, and perfect ripened fruit, but there’s more... I thoroughly enjoy the developed notes of leather, and tobacco along with a delicate floral touch.” JM
2019 was a headline vintage for value since the En Primeur season landed right in the midst of the pandemic. Attention-grabbing, market-low prices set the stage for an engaging campaign in the middle of a chaotic world. During the last few years, the undeniable quality has become apparent, and many prices have caught up with the stature of the wines. But for those who are looking for a top-tier value, there are still a ton of simply stunning high-upside wines available, many of which are in-stock at K&L. As we’ve seen time and time again, this is the perfect moment in a campaign to find values—right as our first stocks land. It is doubly true for a vintage like 2019, and it comes at a perfect time for those looking to find a crowd-pleasing gift that delivers way over its modest price point.

My value of the vintage goes to 2019 Dalem, Fronsac $25.99 94VN 94JD. This gem came on our radar a few years ago with the landmark 2016 vintage—we could not get enough of it, as it flew out of stock in quick order. The 2019 takes it to another level by demonstrating remarkable range—this is one that will thrill Bordeaux enthusiasts as much as fans of New World Bordeaux blends—a remarkable balance to strike. We also have magnums (2019 Dalem, Fronsac 1.5L $54.99) in stock. Considering its nearly unicorn status with this kind of press, quality, and value, it is one to go big on now while it is available.

Rauzan-Ségla 2016

As Jeb Dunnuck says in his 98-point review, 2016 Rauzan-Ségla, Margaux $129.99 98JD 98JS 97WA is “a thrillingly complete, flawlessly balanced, and borderline perfect Margaux that should be snatched up by readers.” We’ve adored it since release—this effortlessly complex wine delivers on every level and shouldn’t be missed by any Margaux enthusiast. Even better: the 2016 Rauzan-Ségla delivers this elite experience at a fraction of the price of its Left Bank peers. Add that to a vintage that has nearly consensus status as the top growing season of the past decade, and you have an age-worthy gem that is not only a reference-point for the property, but one of the best high-upside collectibles you’ll find on today’s market. It is the perfect gift, centerpiece for any celebration or cellar, and a wine that’s just a few clicks away with our perfect-provenance, in-stock parcel now available at K&L.

2010s: Rounding into Form

The 2010s have always been discussed in similar tones: they will be masterpieces, but only when these deeply structured wines start to unwind a bit. Over the past decade-plus, we’ve begun to see just that, and the promise we expected is starting to arrive. Lucky for us, that comes with multiple ready-to-deliver options on our shelves. 2010 Bellefont-Belcier, St-Emilion $59.99 93WS 93JS 92WA is a great place to start, as it has been one we’ve gone back to time and time again after tasting it. And don’t overlook 2010 Latour-Martillac, Pessac-Léognan $34.99 96JD 95JS that also had us raving about its quality when we tasted it in bottle this year. For under $35, it is a nearly unparalleled bargain for the region.

On the Right Bank, St-Émilion delivered one irresistible wine after another. 2019 Barde-Haut, St-Émilion $36.99 95AG 95NM received 95-point scores from both Vinous reviewers, despite the fact that the wines are priced lower by multiples than its peers. Anybody who has shopped a bit with us at K&L knows how much we adore nearly every vintage of Barde-Haut, but this is a not-to-be-missed, quintessential rendition.

2019 Fleur Cardinale, St-Émilion $38.99 95JS 94DC is already joy to drink, made all that much easier by its sub-$40 price. It has all the poise, balance, and quality that made previous vintages like the 2005, 2009, and 2010 famous, but is still available at near first-tranche pricing, while it lasts.

The Left Bank doesn’t lack for opportunity either. A tremendous vintage in St-Éstèphe left us with a landmark 2019 Lafon-Rochet, St-Éstèphe $44.99 95JD 95VN that is another example of why the bright yellow label is one to look for in any modern vintage. Blending precision and structure, it is one that will age brilliantly, but already has a lot to give at this early stage.

And don’t overlook 2019 Lagrange, St-Julien $79.99 96JD 95JS that has quietly become a St-Julien classic, and one that many consider their best-ever vintage. We jumped at this in stock for the holidays.

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The same can be said for a signature rendition of 2010 Domaine de Chevalier Rouge, Pessac-Léognan $119.99 96JS 95WA that speaks loudly to the depth, detail, and flat-out delicious qualities that make Domaine de Chevalier a go-to, year after year. Whether it is one of these selections, or dozens more that you’ll find in stock on our shelves this holiday season, the time is now to revisit the 2010 vintage, and it is all-too-easy to do so at K&L.
Champagne: The Best Ingredient for the Holidays!

By Gary Westby, Champagne Buyer

This year I believe we have our all-time best Champagne selection for you at K&L. I would like to point out two highlights of this selection: one is our best deal in grower Champagne, Gilbert Jacquesson, and the other is Le Brun de Neuville, our only cooperative and specialist in long-aged vintage Champagne. These days, prices for everything seem to be going up, but we beat that trend with both of these producers. Their wines are not only high quality and distinctive, but also offer some of the most bang for the buck in the entire Champagne market.

**Gilbert Jacquesson**

Champagne Gilbert Jacquesson is located in the village of Troissy, on the banks of the western Marne, just 15 minutes west of Épernay. Jean-Baptiste Jacquesson, the current generation, is an “RM,” meaning an entirely estate-grown producer, with a certification for “HVE” or high environmental value. He works primarily with Meunier, although he also grows Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and a little bit of Meslier as well. He is almost a one-man show and does everything from the pruning to the racking, the tractor repair to welding the tanks. Jean-Baptiste is a hardworking man who is dead serious about his Champagne, and we are very proud to work with him directly. It is hard to believe that in 2022 he can still deliver his Gilbert Jacquesson “Cuvée Tradition” Blanc de Noirs Brut Champagne at just $24.99 a bottle. This wine is aged three years on the lees, the current batch is based on 2018 with 50% reserves from 2013 through 2017. This clean, 100% Meunier is loaded with pastry crust toast framed by subtle pear fruit. The texture is creamy, the bubbles compact, the finish dry—you won’t believe how little money you spent! The Gilbert Jacquesson “Cuvée Eugénie” Brut Rosé Champagne $29.99 is also all Meunier, and has about 10% old-vine red wine for color and aroma. Great fresh strawberry aromas go with the warm baguette toast and surprisingly light and dry finish.

**Le Brun de Neuville**

Le Brun de Neuville is located in the gorgeous, sloped village of Beton, and most of their production is sold to the big houses. They keep the very best of their Sézanne fruit for their own wines and wait longer than most before releasing them. With almost all the great wines from the 2008 and 2012 vintage already sold out, we are thrilled to offer the 2008 Le Brun de Neuville “Grand Vintage” Brut Champagne and 2012 Le Brun de Neuville “Grand Vintage” Brut Champagne for just $49.99 for either vintage. Both are composed of 96% Chardonnay and 4% Pinot Noir from old vines in Beton and both show immense class, elegance, and poise. While the 2008 has the fantastic drive, acidity and minerality of that vintage, the 2012 has more white fruit and a silkier, creamier finish. Neither will last long as they are priced lower than most big house non-vintages!
Stocking Stuffers from Burgundy, Alsace, and Austria

By Alex Pross, Burgundy, Alsace, and Austria Buyer

The holidays are here and in full swing, and, luckily for everyone, we have had a bunch of shipping containers land just in time to give you a plethora of wonderful holiday selections to choose from.

A great place to start is with an amazing deal on two sparkling wines from Alsace. The Pierre Sparr “Réserve” Crémant d’Alsace Brut $16.99 92WE is a great wine for only $17! Loaded with fruit and subtle mineral and spice notes, this perfectly balanced offering is a great alternative to more expensive sparkling wines from other regions, including Champagne, and stands toe-to-toe with anything in its price range. Not to be outdone, the Pierre Sparr Brut Rosé Crémant d’Alsace $16.99 93WE has tons of cinnamon and bright cherry flavors. With a fresh and energetic palate, this lovely rosé is simply stunning and brings a festive feel to any holiday occasion. These two Alsatian sparklers are perfect for holiday celebrations or gifts and won’t scrouge your holiday budget.

Values abound in our current red Burgundy inventory, and thanks to the recent trio of great back-to-back vintages—2018, 2019, and 2020—you cannot go wrong. The 2020 Frédéric Esmonin Côte-de-Nuits-Villages “La Belle Vue” $32.99 comes from a perfectly nestled vineyard site that produces exceptional fruit. The high quality of the fruit has made a wine that drinks way above its village designation. Red fruit, spice, and mineral notes seamlessly flow across the palate of this delicious offering showcasing the greatness of the 2020 vintage.

The Domaine Jean-Michel Giboulot Savigny-lès-Beaune 1er Cru Aux Gravains $39.99 is easily the best rendition of Gravains I have tasted from Jean-Michel Giboulot. The wines are always loaded with fruit, and the 2020 has impeccable balance and complexity with perfect integration of oak. This wine leans towards red and dark red fruits, and, while in previous vintages it may have felt over extracted, the 2020 feels light and fresh with energy.

One of the best buys we have on the shelf in red Burgundy is the 2020 Charles Pére et Fille Volnay 1er Cru “Fremiets” $49.99 91WE. It’s a dream to get a 1er Cru from Volnay for under $50. Showing beautiful red fruit and layers of complexity, it has a regal feel and the excellence of Volnay for an unbeatable price.

A producer you need to know about is Domaine Parent and their amazing lineup of red Burgundies. The 2020 Domaine Anne Parent Ladoix 1er Cru “La Corvée” $59.99 90-92VN is a great introduction to the house style. It displays gorgeous notes of boysenberry and cranberry fruit with hints of spice and mineral notes, leading to a palate with great energy and verve. Domaine Parent has an enviable stable of wines, and, if you love the Ladoix, be sure to check out their 1er Cru and Grand Cru offerings as well.

If there is one overlooked region that needs to get more attention it is Austria. There are so many fantastic, affordable wines made here that deserve your attention. Grüner Veltliner is one of the main varietals, and the 2020 Schloss Gobelsburg “Gobelsburger” Grüner Veltliner Kamptal $14.99 91JS 90WA is packed with citrus and stone fruit flavors, racy acidity, baking spices and wet stone. Perfectly balanced and flat-out delicious, this is a great introduction to how wonderful Grüner Veltliner is as well as its tremendous versatility.

Bourbon Multi-Packs

By David Othenin-Girard, Spirits Buyer

The white-hot bourbon market shows no signs of cooling. While there’s plenty of gorgeous bourbon in the shop every single day, it’s the rare, limited releases that really get everyone out scouring the shelves.

Because K&L has made a commitment to sell hard-to-get bourbons at the suggested retail price (we never gouge, even on the rarest products), we’ve also become the first stop for rare bourbon shoppers. That means we sell out quickly! We don’t like the idea of speculators taking advantage of our exceptional pricing, but prefer to sell to the thousands of great customers who actually want to drink the stuff. In other words, we want you drinking this bourbon! Why? Cause it’s dang tasty.

But when we only get a handful of bottles, it’s not realistic to expect that everyone will get one. Our solution? The Bourbon Bundle. We’ve only bundled products that we would happily sell to our customers every day of the week. These bundles do not increase our margins in any way. In fact, some of these rare whiskies are actually cheaper when purchased together. There’s simply no reason not to load up!

Buy a great bottle for your best bro or your tire guy. Grab a legend for your yuletide celebrations, have a bottle for the punch on Boxing Day. If you’re the type of bourbon lover we love, we know you’ll dig our big, beautiful bundles.

John E. Fitzgerald Larceny Barrel Proof A122 and Small Batch 2 pack (2x750ml) $89.99

John E. Fitzgerald Larceny Barrel Proof B522 and Small Batch 2 pack (2x750ml) $89.99

John E. Fitzgerald Larceny Barrel Proof C921 and Small Batch 2 pack (2x750ml) $89.99

John E. Fitzgerald Larceny Barrel Proof C922 and Small Batch 2 pack (2x750ml) $89.99

Elijah Craig Barrel Strength B522 and Toasty Goodness Pack (4x750ml) $159.99

The Classic Elijah Craig Pack (3x750ml) $125.00

Get complete tasting notes at KLWines.com
Old Friends and New Favorites from California

By Ryan Woodhouse, Domestic Buyer

Helping people select wines during the holiday season is one of my favorite parts of my job. It’s a chance to share my excitement about wines and hopefully find a memorable bottle for someone to enjoy with friends and family around the holiday table. However, recommending wines can be tricky. It’s often hard to get a feel for what someone is looking for if you don’t know their tastes. Let’s face it, wine is complicated; it’s highly subjective and always evolving.

Thankfully here at K&L we have some of the best staff in the business, not to mention a wonderful customer base that has come to know and trust our recommendations over many years. One thing I have learned during my 11 years at K&L is to start by asking a customer what wine or winery they have enjoyed in the past. Often the name of a well-known producer will give me a better idea of what to recommend versus trying to decipher a description of flavors or style. For example, when someone says “I love Caymus Cab,” I know right away several other wines I can put in their hands. Established brands and the marquee producers are core wines for us, staples that we have had on our shelves for decades as they’re known for dependable quality.

However, we very much pride ourselves in being a true wine merchant; helping people find new and exciting wines is what drives us and sets us apart from many of our competitors. So, for this Holiday Buying Guide, I decided to pair up some well-known “safe choices” with lesser-known wines that are at least in the same general realm so you can experiment without going too far off the beaten path. I hope you have fun with it and find something new!

2020 Caymus Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon $84.95

Still a benchmark wine for that big, lush, rich style of modern Napa Cabernet. Lots of generous, suave fruit; toasty oak; ripe, smooth tannins; and loamy earth. This wine continues to sell out every year, and no doubt 2020 will be the same.

2019 Chappellet “Signature” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon $89.95 94JD

I love recommending Chappellet’s Signature Cab to folks looking for a big, bold Napa Cab. Bolstered by incredible fruit from their estate on the prestigious Pritchard Hill, this wine is dense, muscular, and powerful but also balanced and girdled by refined structural tannins. Jeb Dunnuck sums it up nicely in his review: “It’s a candidate for the best Napa Cabernet under $100.”

2021 Far Niente Napa Valley Chardonnay $59.95

An iconic Napa Chardonnay since its first release in 1979, Far Niente continues to be a bestseller in the holiday season at K&L. Some folks are surprised to learn that Far Niente Chardonnay is actually only partially fermented in oak barrels. Some is aged in stainless steel, and the entire wine is prevented from going through malo (the main process that makes Chardonnay taste “buttery”). Despite its power and concentration the wine has more focus and linear shape than one might think.

2020 Frog’s Leap “Shale and Stone” Napa Valley Chardonnay $34.95

This was a real revelation for me this year. Back in the summer I took a team of colleagues on a visit to Frog’s Leap that was truly eye opening. This wine really made an impact on me that day, and I’ve drunk several bottles since. It continues to impress. Sourced from old vines planted in 1979 at Truchard Vineyard in Carneros, what really sets this wine apart is its unusual élevage. The freshly pressed juice is sent to new French oak barrels; however, right when the fermentation gets going, it’s racked from barrel to concrete tank where it spends the rest of its upbringing. The results are stunning: focused, mineral, flinty, textural. Such a complex wine with linear intensity rarely found in Napa Chardonnay.

2020 Goldeneye Anderson Valley Pinot Noir $42.95

Goldeneye is a fantastic winery in Anderson Valley. When it was built it represented the cutting edge of modern, gravity flow, pristine, micro-lot winemaking. The wines crafted here reflect that with their wonderfully pure fruit flavors and refined, silky textures. These wines have been hugely influential in putting Anderson Valley on the map for world-class Pinot Noir and continue to be favorites at K&L.

2021 Bravium Anderson Valley Pinot Noir $29.95

93WE *Editors’ Choice* One of the more delicious Pinot Noirs I’ve drunk this year. I was really wowed by this bottle. Coming in large part from 40 year-old vines in the renowned Wiley Vineyard of Anderson Valley’s cool “Deep End.” A supporting role is played by Helluva Vineyard, a site true to its name and a favorite of top producers in the region. Wild brambly fruits, dark cherry, Asian spices, dried flowers, hibiscus, undergrowth. Fine grained tannins, great lift and vibrancy. A real classic Anderson Valley Pinot.
2021 Cakebread Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc $31.99
For much of 2022 we were entirely out of Cakebread Sauv Blanc. Historically low yields of SB in Napa and Sonoma have created a widespread shortage. Thankfully, we now have a good supply of this timeless staple. Crunchy, vibrant, zesty, wonderful fruit purity. Subtle lees notes from neutral oak aging gives great texture and length.

2021 Brander Los Olivos District Sauvignon Blanc $18.95 92WE When I don’t want to shell out $30+ for a bottle of crushable Sauv Blanc, I look to Brander to deliver top quality SB at a super affordable price. Brander just celebrated their 45th harvest and is well known as a Sauv Blanc specialist. This bottle really packs a punch: vibrant crystalline citrus notes, chopped herbs, and salty minerals. It goes down like water but there’s depth and complexity there too, if you care to look!

2018 Talley “Estate” Arroyo Grande Chardonnay $14.95 (Elsewhere $25) 92VN 92WE
It’s no secret that Talley Vineyards is arguably the top winery in the Edna Valley. These are some of the best wines from California’s Central Coast. They have a history of being quite age worthy (yes, even the Chardonnay!) and always satisfy at every level. At $14.95, this is my staff pick as the best deal in Chardonnay at K&L!

2020 Roserock (Drouhin) Eola-Amity Hills Chardonnay $34.95 95JS 94WS I love the Pinot Noirs from Drouhin’s Oregon estate. However, it’s their Roserock Estate Chardonnay that’s really caught my attention of late. The critics agree! The Roserock estate is turning out head-turning, award-winning wines vintage after vintage. This is a prime demonstration that Chardonnay might be the most exciting thing happening in the Oregon world of wine. This represents tremendous value.

2014 Joseph Swan “Great Oak Vineyard” Russian River Valley Pinot Noir $29.95 (Elsewhere $45) From one of the most iconic, historic wineries in California, whose wines continue to be fashioned in the classic “old-school” style that made them famous in the first place. There’s elegance, grace, and just a touch of evolution on this ‘14 vintage single-vineyard wine. With six-plus years of bottle age, this is drinking particularly well right now. We’ve got an amazing price!

2018 Etude Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon $39.95 (Elsewhere $50+) 95JS Cabernet is king, and Stags’ Leap Winery is synonymous with the best Cab that Napa has to offer. Named for the famed AVA, Stags’ Leap Winery has a long history for producing wines of great structure, richness, and authority. At just under $40 it’s a veritable steal. You’d be hard pressed to find a comparable wine of this quality and name recognition. The 2018 vintage was hugely successful for producing Napa Cabs with lush fruit and ripe tannins. This truly is a pleasure to drink.

2018 Domaine Carneros (Taittinger) Brut Sparkling Wine $34.95 93WS 93JS Big-brand Champagne prices have skyrocketed…but fear not: Domaine Carneros (part of Champagne Taittinger) continues to supply us with top-quality fizz at a very fair price. With extensive estate vineyards in prime locations plus centuries of experience, these folks really have the quality dialed in—as reflected by consistently high scores and repeat customers!

Happy Holidays K&L shoppers! Here’s my short list of six brilliant wines that’ll get you through the holiday season. They’re all best-in-class, great values, and made in the U.S.A. Your friends and family will be delighted to receive them as gifts or to share at the dinner table.

2020 Kosta Brown “Gaps Crown Vineyard” Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir $139.95 Few names get the hearts of Pinot lovers beating faster than Kosta Brown. We just received our last shipment of the year and it’s perfectly timed for the holidays. The Gaps Crown vineyard is a jewel-in-the-crown source for Pinot Noir. Few can match the plush complexity found in this KB bottling. When you care to give (or serve) the very best, this would be my go-to Pinot.

2018 Stags’ Leap Winery Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon $39.95 (Elsewhere $50+) 95JS Cabernet is king, and Stags’ Leap Winery is synonymous with the best Cab that Napa has to offer. Named for the famed AVA, Stags’ Leap Winery has a long history for producing wines of great structure, richness, and authority. At just under $40 it’s a veritable steal. You’d be hard pressed to find a comparable wine of this quality and name recognition. The 2018 vintage was hugely successful for producing Napa Cabs with lush fruit and ripe tannins. This truly is a pleasure to drink.
The holidays are always a time of special feasts and special wines. Whether you’re trying to pair wines with your Feast of the Seven Fishes menu, the Christmas prime rib, or braised tofu, Italy has the answers for you. Italy has such an array of styles, grape varieties, and unique terroir that there is something for everyone. This is a great time to stretch the envelope a bit and expand your horizons—and the Italian aisle is the perfect place to do it!

The 2020 Antonella Lombardo “Pi Greco” Calabria $35.99 is one of the most intriguing white wines I have had in some time. It’s luscious and alluring with a nose full of Middle Eastern spice and sandalwood. Yet it isn’t overwhelming; it lies swirling beneath the surface, a sort of siren song beckoning you ever closer. The wine shows superb balance, excellent length, and a whole lot of wow. Everyone should try this wine, as it is the best thing I have ever had from Calabria.

If you have some less adventurous family at dinners, you can always go with the classic 2021 Cantina Terlano Pinot Grigio Alto Adige $21.99. It shows the Alpine fruit of the Alto Adige, but its dry minerality and richly textured body makes it a wine for all.

Looking for that white to show your neighbors just how good Italian white wine is (Clyde loves this wine)? The 2020 Marisa Cuomo “Furore Bianco Fiorduva” Costa d’Amalfi $84.99 95+RP is a taste of the Amalfi Coast. The wine is a richly textured blend of indigenous varieties that shows incredible complexity without any wood flavors. It’s powerful and bold on the palate while enticing and exotic—impossible to resist.

Looking for that super drinkable, complex and delicious red? The 2020 Produttori del Barbaresco Nebbiolo delle Langhe $24.99 offers all of that and at a super price.

If Barolo is your game then the 2017 Fratelli Barale Barolo $36.99 93WE is one of our best sellers, it so outperforms the price point that it’s crazy. My favorite East Bay Italian restaurant Belotti has it by the glass because it is so drinkable now. The 2017 Massolino “Parussi” Barolo $79.99 95VN 95DC 95JD is the estate’s first non-Serralunga Barolo, and they’ve knocked it out of the park. The wine shows sweet aromatics, subtle leather, and spice with porcini notes, all wound in a more classic Barolo structure. Powerful and long, decant this one a couple of hours ahead of time. Perfect for your Brasato al Barolo.

Jonesing for Tuscany? The 2019 Felsina Berardenga Chianti Classico $19.99 94WE 94JS is luscious and so drinkable. We have the best price in the state! Your holiday dinners always go better with a Brunello, and we have a couple of real winners. The 2016 Albatreti Brunello di Montalcino $49.99 is supple and savory, with an incredible balance and finish. One of my personal favorites, and a bottle that has a brighter, more lifted feel, is the 2017 San Polino Brunello di Montalcino $59.99 94JS.

If you feel like splurging or are giving a special gift, the highly rated Super Tuscan, all-Sangiovese 2015 San Giusto a Rentennano “Percarlo” Toscana $149.99 98VN 97WA is outstanding and will be sure to make it that special gift.

One of Italy’s real treats is Vin Santo—not the kind you dip biscotti into, but real, honest-to-God Vin Santo that is meditation in a glass. The 2011 Rocca di Montegrossi Vin Santo (375ml) $84.99 97VN is one of the most amazing wines you will ever have—sweet, yes, there is a lot of residual sugar—but so exceptionally balanced it is brilliant. Get a copy of an Umberto Eco book, listen to some Puccini, or watch Stanley Tucci traipse around Italy while you sip. To enjoy it by yourself is a delicious pleasure.

Give the Gift of Rhône

By Keith Mabry, Rhône Buyer

A plethora of Rhône wines has arrived and nothing fits the season of fall transitioning to winter like a good hearty Southern Rhône red!

Based on Grenache with a dollop of other grapes thrown in for good measure, these fruit-filled yet savory giants often overdeliver for their price points. Also, everyone gets Cabernet or Bordeaux as a gift, so why not try something a little different for your friends and family. From values for entertaining to office gifts to special collectibles for the hard-to-shop-for wine nerd, Rhône sticks the landing every time. The 2019 Domaine de Verquieres Côtes-du-Rhône Villages Sablet $14.99 91JS covers all your bases from office gifts to your next big party wine. There are few places you can find an organically certified producer who makes estate-grown wines at such an affordable price. And when you factor in the complexity this bottle delivers alongside crowd-pleasing fruit, you have an undeniable winner. All from the sandy soiled vineyards in Verquieres’s holdings, this wine is abundant with red fruit flavors of strawberry and raspberry. The Fourth-generation at Domaine de Verquieres, Tibault Chamfort.
subtle notes of anise and baking spice round out the flavors. A grand “Huzzah!” will cry out at all gatherings at first sip of this tasty wine.

The 2017 Château de Montfaucon “Baron Louis” Lirac $24.99; also available in magnum 2017 Château de Montfaucon “Baron Louis” Lirac 1.5L $49.99 95DC 92WS remains a perennial staff favorite. A notch up in price brings you to the region of Lirac, which is close stylistically to Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Though it sits just across the Rhône River from Châteauneuf, it delivers similar wines but at half the price! Blackberry, blackcurrants, a smattering of fennel seed and a touch of tobacco leaf make for an inviting and generous wine. This still has lots of mouthfeel and texture and will impress that friend who knows Rhône wines but doesn’t know as much about Lirac. The magnums are even more impressive sitting on a dinner table!

Also, just in time for the holidays a smattering of 2016 Châteauneufs have arrived! One of the best vintages in the last decade saw some iconic wines produced up and down the price spectrum. These wines are just starting to really open up, so whether you drink them or gift them, now’s a great time to fill someone’s stocking with one of these gems!

Our friends at Chante Cigale opened their cellar to us and released a small allocation of the 2016 Domaine Chante Cigale Châteauneuf-du-Pape $39.99 91WA 91VN. Winemaker Alexandre Favier has grown as a winemaker every year we have worked with him; his wines have always been impressive, but they are now phenomenal. A classic blend of Grenache with bits of Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Cinsault make for a wine driven by plentiful fruit and a juicy mid-palate. I actually had a mag of this in the cellar and opened it recently, and it was spectacular! The 750s are even more open and ready to go.

The 2016 Château Gigognan “Clos du Roi” Châteauneuf-du-Pape $34.99 95WE 94WS is one of our best-selling wines of the 2016 vintage. Every time I have brought this in, it sells out quickly. Sadly, these are our last drops of this delicious nectar before we transition to the new 2017 vintage. Superb finesse and sweet silky tannins show off the rich fig and cherry fruit. It has an almost creamy texture now with flavors of crème de mûre coming through. An absolute beauty that will bring tears to my eyes when I have no more of this wine to drink!

Another of our direct import producers was kind enough to open his library to us, Xavier Vignon. The 2016 Xavier Vignon “Cuvée Anonyme” Châteauneuf-du-Pape $49.99 95WA 95JD was the first wine we bought directly from Vignon, one of the most prestigious producers in our Direct Import program. This inky bold wine has always been a Parker favorite, and the 2016 vintage is no exception. It is a densely packed wine filled with black fruit and the concentration one expects from this great year. A saturated yet savory wine, this has begun to open and layer its flavors, stacking blackberry over chocolate over spice. As it unfolds in the glass, it keeps you coming back again and again. Xavier’s Anonyme is never overbearing, and I find it extremely refined, especially since it has had a few years to settle. This is a superb wine that will continue to evolve for many more years to come.

Xavier Vignon has many very special cuvées, and if you’d like to really knock it out of the park, you can gift a piece of vinous history. The 1972 Xavier Vignon “1972” Châteauneuf-du-Pape $150 is an incredible find. Aged Châteauneuf is a rarity in and of itself, but, thanks to his many connections in the region, Vignon discovered this wine aging for nearly 50 years in its original concrete tank by the winemaker. It’s impeccably aged, gorgeously mature, and a wine geek’s dream gift!

Rudy des Pins, longtime K&L friend, in his vineyards at Château de Montfaucon. You can see the famous rolled-stone soils called galets that help make the wines from this region so special.
Travel Inspiration in a Glass from Spain

By Kirk Walker, Spanish Buyer

I don’t know about you, but I get a lot of various catalogs. I love getting inspired by them—rarely by what they are actually selling, and more by the settings of the photoshoot or an essay. I see those places, and I want to go there. My travel wish list is way bigger than my list to Santa was when I was eight! OK so what does this have to do with wine? Wine can do what a photo can. It can do way more—you cannot get a buzz from a photo! The aromas and flavors of wines are capable of unlocking feelings and memories of things completely separate from wines themselves. They inspire curiosity. That is one of my favorite things about wine. All the questions: Where? Who? How? Why? Even When? A bottle of wine is capable of inspiring so much.

Mas Codina Cava Brut Reserva Penedès $13.99 The first place I want to go to is a little outside of Barcelona. Mas Codina is a grower producer, if we can borrow the term from Champagne. They source all of their fruit from their own 40ha of land that has been in the family since the 17th century. All the grapes are grown organically. This is a blend of the traditional Cava varieties of Macabeu and Xarel-lo with a small portion of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. This is not a typical Cava. It finishes dry and clean. It has good intensity and a nice bead. Most importantly, and why it is such a favorite—it has body and depth, which is surprising for any sparkling wine at this price point, but especially from Cava. This is not a Cava for cocktails—it would be great in one, but this is a delicious glass of sparkling wine so there is no reason to hide it behind mixers.

2021 Zudugarai “Amats” Getariako Txakolina $14.99 and 2021 Zudugarai “Amats” Rosé Getariako Txakolina $15.99 San Sebastian has been a culinary destination in Spain for decades. I remember hearing our Bordeaux buyers talking about traveling to Spain while on a buying trip, not to try any wines but to spend an evening in San Sebastian. The traditional wines from the region are Txakolina, and they may be one of the most versatile food wines in the world. Made from the local varietals of Hondarrabi Zuri and Hondarrabi Beltza (the red one), their names speak to their Basque origin. These are lighter-bodied wines with refreshing acidity and an even more refreshing hit of trapped CO2. They are not sparkling per se, but that extra CO2 gives the wines a unique vivacity. Grown on the hills that face the Bay of Biscay, there is an almost salty minerality to these wines. I like to think of the flavor as a delicate flake of finishing salt. The core fruit tones you’ll find in the white are apple and citrus; the rosé has a delightfully tart berry tang. These are wines that effortlessly sit on the dinner table—they refresh the palate and help accentuate flavors. The weather is cooling down but sometimes the best wine for dinner, no matter how rich the food is, is a Txakolina.

Then there are those of us that just want red wine at dinner, I understand. The classic holiday meals, while they can easily be washed down with a white, are sometimes best paired against a hearty red. Some of the heartiest reds of Spain come from the Ribera del Duero region. While it is not a highly traveled tourist destination it was an ideal location that started a revolution in Spanish wines. The extremely old vines from the smaller villages were the spark that ignited the growth of Ribera del Duero in the late 1980s.

Several decades later, after the spark had traveled all over Spain, it was those same old vines that inspired Jorge Monzon Pascual of Dominio del Aguila. Jorge, who is native to the region, interned at Domaine de la Romanée-Conti and worked at Vega Sicilia, started this project to save those old vines. The 2019 Dominio del Aguila “Picaro" Tinto $34.99 94WA is mostly Tempranillo, with some Garnacha and Bobal. This is a wine that speaks of the hearty old vines that can survive the coldest winters and hottest summers, yet never seem to complain. It is dark and aromatic. It has a ripe and bright core of fruit, dark berries at that perfect point of ripeness. It is framed with the gentlest touch of French oak, and it has a subtle earthy undertone. It has weight and power that builds as the wine opens. The finish is long with the fruit and the earthy elements playing against each other. This is a wine for roasts and braises of beef, lamb, or your favorite game. This wine effortlessly combines sophistication, purity, and intensity at a reasonable price.

There is one place in Spain where the complexity and diversity of the culture and the complexity and the diversity of the wine are perfectly entangled—Jerez. Specifically, Flamenco and Sherry. I love both. And I find it incredibly hard to describe both in a manner that does justice to them. I have yet to make it to Sherry country. I am a little concerned that if I go, I might not ever want to return home. Sherry is kind of magic, kind of alchemy. To describe the process of making this elixir takes too many words for the space that I have, so I will highlight: The grapes are harvested, and then allowed to dry in the southern Spanish sun. The grapes are then pressed, but there is so much sugar that it is toxic to the yeast. All the alcohol in the wine comes from the fortification process. Then the wine enters the solera for years and years of fractional aging (go online if you are curious).

While I drink more dry sherry than I do sweet, ’tis the season to indulge. The Alvear “Solera 1910” Pedro Ximénez Montilla Moriles 375ml $49.99 98WA is just that; bottled indulgence. This wine comes from a Solera that was established in 1910. This is where the alchemy occurs: young wine is mixed with older wine, all the while oxidizing in partially filled barrels. The final product is beguiling. Viscous. You just need a little bit of this, swirl it around the glass and observe the slow dance of this wine. Praline, maple, and sotolon are the words that jump to mind when I’m asked to describe the flavor of this wine. It is here where words fail in a way that they do not with other wines. It is sweet, but decadent and indulgent are better words to use than sweet. The depth to this is the most sweet of all.
There’s nothing wrong with paying less and getting more, especially during the holidays. Of course, this is the time of year when we are more likely to splurge on that special bottle we’ve been eyeing for months. But as much as I love Napa Cult Cabs or Grand Cru White Burgundy, there is no shortage of wines that hit all the same notes at a price that doesn’t require checking your banking app first. This holiday season let’s remember this credo: just because a wine is expensive doesn’t necessarily make it great.

If you’re looking for value wines that punch high above their price, one rule of thumb is to look in unexpected places. Margaret River Cabernet? Absolutely stunning. Martinborough Pinot Noir? Some of the best in the world. New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa are the best places to find delicious, modern, and fruit-forward wines that can go toe-to-toe with wines made anywhere, and often at half the price. Here are some of the excellent values from the Commonwealth that I’ll be picking up this season.

First up is the 2020 Matt Connell “Rendition” Pinot Noir Central Otago $21.99 (Previously $30) 95SK 93BC. This is the wine that won Matt the title of New Zealand Winemaker of the Year in 2021. Sourced from some of the best vineyard sites throughout Central Otago, the 2020 Rendition is simply outstanding fruit-driven Pinot Noir. With flavors of cranberry, blackberry, and black cherry above a silky tannin profile and bright, crunchy acidity, this is one of the best values that New Zealand, or anywhere else has to offer.

The gorgeous vineyards—and wines—of South Africa will cure your winter blues.

The 2020 Matt Connell ”Lowburn” Chardonnay Central Otago (Previously $30) $20.99 is full bodied and richly textured, countered by bright acidity. This is my favorite vintage of this wine so far, and I know in Matt’s capable hands, the sky’s the limit for his wines.

One of my favorite wines in the store right now is the 2020 Xanadu “Estate” Cabernet Sauvignon Margaret River Western Australia $24.99 95WA 95JH Cabernet from Margaret River is exceptional. With a climate that strikes a balance between Napa and Bordeaux, Margaret River produces Cabernet that is aromatic and balanced with a generous fruit profile. The Xanadu is an absolute steal at its price. Powerful and structured with flavors of cassis, blackberry, and graphite, 2020 was a standout vintage from this rising star in Margaret River.

The 2020 Ata Rangi “Crimson” Pinot Noir Martinborough $24.99 94SK is another unbeatable value. Ata Rangi is New Zealand’s best producer of Pinot Noir, and although their flagship 2018 Ata Rangi Pinot Noir Martinborough $59.99 97SK 96JS is unbelievably good, their entry level “Crimson” is outstanding at its price. With bright, crackling wild strawberry and Bing cherry red fruits, the Crimson is harmoniously balanced with drive and detail. It’s plain to see why wine critic James Suckling declared this “the best value-wine on the planet.”

Lastly, one of my favorite wines this year was from South Africa’s Minimalist wines. Winemaker Sam Lambson—young, skilled, non-interventionist—is definitely a winemaker to watch. I’ve loved everything he’s released. He has sought out some of the coldest, most inhospitable sites in the Western Cape to craft his Côte-Rôtie-inspired Syrahs. The 2020 Minimalist Wines “Connect the Dots” Syrah Western Cape $21.99 (Previously $30) is one of his best efforts yet. With plum, violets, and of course, crushed black pepper, Sam is crafting some of the most audacious and exciting Syrah to be found anywhere on the planet.
Give the Gift That’ll Send Them Love Month After Month: Wine Clubs!

By Thomas Smith, Wine Club Manager

The holidays are here again, which means one thing: searching for the perfect gift. At K&L, my go-to gift for everyone is a subscription to K&L Wine Clubs. Each month, our team of specialists selects their favorite wines from across the globe and offers them to our Club members at below-retail pricing. The first Wednesday of each month, members receive two wines, a newsletter sharing the stories of the people who make them, and available discounts on any wines from our previous and current Club selections. We offer six different Clubs, so there’s a perfect fit for any palate.

The Best Buy Wine Club $19.95/month is geared for folks who appreciate getting a lot of bang for their buck. Members receive two monthly selections that represent our best values in the entire store. From Côtes-du-Rhône to Australian Cabernet, the Best Buy Club is filled with delightful surprises from unexpected places and great deals.

The Premium Wine Club $29.95/month is my personal favorite. With reds, whites, and rosés from each corner of the globe, the Premium Wine Club offers the chance to explore the world of wine, two wines at a time, every month of the year.

Our most popular club is the Signature Red Collection $49.95/month. We select two reds that represent the best of their region. If you have someone in your life who loves full-bodied reds like Napa Cabernet, Brunello di Montalcino, or Bordeaux—this is perfect.

In addition, we offer three Clubs that focus solely on specific countries or regions. Le Club Français $59.99/month features touchstone wines from across the French countryside. From Burgundy to Bordeaux and everything in between, Le Club Français clearly shows that France remains the world’s finest wine producer, bar none.

However, if you’re shopping for someone who loves the wines of Italy, Il Club Italiano $39.95/month is definitely the right move. Curated by our legendary Italian buyer Greg St. Clair, Il Club Italiano will walk you through the vast world of Italian wine regions and styles. If you love discovering exciting new varieties and wines that speak to the people and places who make them, there’s no better Wine Club to join.

If you’ve spoken to any of our sales staff, you’ll know that every one of us at K&L adores Champagne. That’s why it’s probably safe to say that our staff favorite is the Champagne Club $69.95/every other month. With shipments every other month, you’ll have bubbles on hand for any occasion to celebrate—even if it’s just finishing up your work week.

Finally, for those looking for something a little more tailored to their tastes, we offer our Personal Sommelier Service. Want to explore Spanish wines? No problem. Shopping for someone who loves Bourbon? We can do that. Our Personal Sommelier Service allows you to set personalized criteria for each month’s subscriptions from our wide selection of wine and spirits. Every subscription is paired with one of our staff sommeliers who will work with you to find that perfect bottle.

If you find yourself looking for the perfect gift this year (even for yourself!) consider a subscription to K&L Wine Clubs, a gift that gives the whole year round. If you need any assistance to sign up, or have any questions about the program, please reach out to clubs@klwines.com or K&L Customer Service. Happy Holidays!