ITALY

TUSCANY

Sangiovese, Brunello, 2016 (all from Chianti Classico, this is genuine through and through, like vino della tradizione) 36
Sangiovese-Chianti, Felsina, 2014 (year in year out, Felsina always delivers classic, uplifting Sangiovese) 52
Vino Nobile di Montepulciano, Villa Sant'Anna, 2015 (mostly Sangiovese; great business but also good Chianti classic) 55
Brunello di Montalcino, Il Colle, 2015 (mastery of Terre di Siena cherry/raspberry) 120
Brunello di Montalcino, Casanuova di Neri, White Label, 2013 (CEN seems to only put out hits these days) 160

PIEDMONT

Denticello di Dogliani, Francesco Boschis, Pianezzo, 2015 (this is the best Dolcetto out there?) 142
Barbera d'Alba, Grassi Fratelli, 2014 (Barbera planted in the Barbaresco zone by two brothers who entered those 50s vintage) 44
Langhe Nebbiolo, 2017 (God damn, this is delicious—but also a 30-year vintage) 78
Langhe Freisa, Giacomo Borgogno & Figli, 2014 (a Barbaresco gesture of this uptickVintage) 60
Gattinara, Travaglini (merged in a northern simile, Trattinico is king of Gattinara) 72
Barbaresco, La Morra, 2016 (outstanding value with major traditional, leading, vintage) 78
Barbaresco, Bruna Grimaldi, Camilla, 2015 (Bruna's rich nut-butter-style achievement from her home area of Gattinara's home) 99
Barbaresco, Produttori del Barbaresco, 2015 (one of our earth's great wines and always a great 105)
Barbaresco, Oddero, 2015 (a stirrings, but not hardrocks, great family operation, great CQW) 145

OTHER ITALIAN REGIONS

Nebbiolo, Pasqua, Bolgheri, 2017 (this spicy, tobacco-y version of this earthy southern style is making grade above every even) 44
Aglianico, Vincus, Cirò, 2015 (the noble grape of the South like black cherry and Malvasia) 45
Cerasuolo di Noto, Sicily, 2014 (the pick of CUS bar and bar for bar of earth's mildest wine regions) 72
Etna Rosso, Terre Nere, Giardino, 2011, (we have a Marc de Grada mania) 99
Sanzioa Verdicchio, Podere Orte, Tuscan, Italy, 2015 (OUTSTANDING mix of Sangio/Greci/Chard/riesgo from near Rome) 115
Arborio Andrea Frisoni, Carpanico, L'Acce, Italy, 2015 (outsize protégé of Quintarelli, now in the best of Arman) 235

SOUTHERN RHONE

Ventoux, Domaine du Bon Remede, Signature, 2017 (eaux & fresh version of good rhone Grenache & Syrah) 52
Cotes de Rhone Villages, Mas de Boislaury 2016 (grown within feet of their CDP Impressive style at this level) 44
Valette, Domaine la Garrigue, France, 2016 (Virginia, years ago, this confidence little heavy admires immense) 52
Gigondas, Saint Damien, Vieilles Vignes, France, 2015 (classic produced wine that wears like the Gigondas prototypes) 65
Cotes du Rhone AOP, Chateau des Brusquieres, 2015 (trademark with the chateau, Grenache can be glorious) 120
Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Domaine Charavin, France, 2013 (expert with little cluster stunner, Grenache can be glorious) 120
Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Le Vieux Donjon, France, 2014 (one of the true greats in CDP; showing great red) 135

NORTHERN RHONE

Syrah, Grosperrin, Chateau de Beaucastel, Hermitage, 2017 (Kermit Lynch knows where to find your new wine hero) 48
Chambertin, Alain Graillot, 2014 (yes you're hearing that right, 8 years ago) Graillot, one of the greats 85
St. Joseph, Bernard Girard, 2012 (delicious, important Syrah from on of its JY's forefathers) 110
Cotes-du-Rhones, Michel Vaillant 2016, (the top form, Syrah like a wine, heart of heart) 120
Cote-Rotie, Eric Tisseret, Vieilles Vignes, 2013 (Eric is a retired nuclear scientist, but his wines are works of craft art) 165
Cote Rotie, Domaine Jamel, France, 2015 (one of the most profound after strains of planet earth) 295

THE AMERICAN WEST

California, Domaine Seghesio, Frederich's Vineyard, 2017 (Kermit Lynch knows where to find your new wine hero) 48
Chardonnay, Alain Graillot, 2014 (yes you're hearing that right, 8 years ago) Graillot, one of the greats 85
Pearl River, Domaine la Garrigue, France, 2016 (Virginia, years ago, this confidence little heavy admires immense) 52
Gigondas, Saint Damien, Vieilles Vignes, France, 2015 (classic produced wine that wears like the Gigondas prototypes) 65
Cotes du Rhone AOP, Chateau des Brusquieres, 2015 (trademark with the chateau, Grenache can be glorious) 120
Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Domaine Charavin, France, 2013 (expert with little cluster stunner, Grenache can be glorious) 120
Chateauneuf-du-Pape, Le Vieux Donjon, France, 2014 (one of the true greats in CDP; showing great red) 135

BOURGOGNE & SOUTH WEST FRANCE

LEFT BANK

Merlot, Chateaume Clement St. Jean, Cu Bourgeois, 2012 (such an awesome performer at this level, '12 showing great) 44
Saint-Julien, Chateau Lalande, 2016 (one of the best villages in Bordeaux for under a coin) 75
Poujeaux, Pradelle a Grand Puy Ducasse, 2016 (outstanding wine from a very promising little neighborhood) 82
Martillac, Chateau Carbonne Bascau, 2016 (total, Merlot, big, bangs with all on this level) 142
Saint-Estevre, Chateau Meyney, 2006 (it's such a pleasure to smell age on St. Estephe, here, it's mushroom and leathers 125
Possol, Clos Sainte Marie, Chateau Des Brouillards-Ourthe, 2015 (velocity and classics, hard to avoid with Clos) 150

RIGHT BANK

St. Geoge嘴口, Chateau St. Andre-Corbin, 2016 (an always dependable expression of the smallest appellation in Bordeaux) 44
Chateau Margaux, Chateau Margaux, 2015 (this is a true presence of the Margaux house) 150
Pezenas, Clos Sainte Anne, 2011 (4th Right Bank often remembers the curve, this is already doing that Lovely Violet thing) 89
St. Emilion, Chateau Des Charmes, 2015 (very great classic, grown flood, serious business) 125

SOUTHWEST

Cahors, Chateau du Cayrou, 1985 (YES you read that right, 80s, Cahors right here at ESS, Call up the BR Pack, get nasty burning) 125

SOUTH AMERICA

Malbec, Ernesto Catena, Patagonia, Mendocino, Argentina, 2018 (Ernesto, I would like to see more of this) 36
Malbec, Susana Balbo, Argentina, Mendocino, 2016 (Sisana & Mendoca's great Malbec) 62

(len for footnotes)
bubbles

Cava, Naveran, Brut Nature, Penedés, Spain, 2017 (lemon and classic; Naveran raises the bar) 40. Vertical, Biju, Domaine de Vodandas, Lison, France, NV (awesome sparkles from land that used to be Hunt) 46. Sparkling Wine, Schlosskirch Project, ‘Blauart’, CA (2017s are mind-blowing—this time in finding Guerrier/Velardi/Linouère) 56. Champagne, Gaston Chiquet, Tranquility, Brut, Vallee de la Marne, France, NV (one of the best growers champ! Classic and balanced) 68. Champagne, Nonino-Renard, Brut, Côte de Blancs, France, NV (this is very clean/minium/straw sweet spot) 84. Champagne, Etienne Calsac, 7 Échantilles Belle, Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut, Cote des Blancs, France, NV (young growers on the rise) 99. Champagne, Rene Geoffroy, Expression, Brut, Premier Cru, Vallee de la Marne, France, NV (some stuff rubs me the right way) 90. Rosé, Chandon, Stag Medeville, Extra Brut 1er Cru, France, NV (married couple, both from wine royalty; this one’s all romance) 120. Champagne, Moussy Folies, L“You Eux Deux—Perpetuelle Blanc de Noirs”, Brut, Vallee de la Marne, France, NV (Cromin is a master mind) 125. Champagne, Henri Goutorbe, ‘Special Club’, Brut Grand Cru, AL, France, 2004 (not sure staying to sign of cities and breaks) 180.

rose

Figuero, ‘St. Ambré Provence, France, 2018 (that perfect sea breeze feels) 80. Getaway. Tuxacina Rose, Gaintza, Spain, 2018 (basque thrills and chills in a pure state with a tenny pickled feel) 86.

chardonnay from France


west coast, u.s.a.

Pinot Gris, Eyrie Vineyards, Dundee Hills, Oregon, 2016 (one of America’s great wine stories: we have Eyrie to thank for Oregon wine) 48. Chenin Blanc, Division Villages, T. Dale Verlet, Columbia Valley, WA, 2016 (crazy old vine site interpreted by Portland’s Tom Nose) 52. Chardonnay, Mount Eden, Edna Valley, CA, 2015 (Eden is one of CA’s OG boutique producers and this is as classic as it gets) 60. Chenin Blanc, The Ojai Vineyard, Shirot Hai, Santa Maria Valley, CA, 2016 (corresponding balance & shine with just a kiss of new wood) 68. Chardonnay, Lolo, ‘Gavar’, Russian River Valley, CA, 2015 (these guys are blowing the lid off California, like daily) 82. Chardonnay, Peay, Sonoma Coast, CA, 2013 (we love these bros and the raucous al-Qaeda glory of their site) 99. Riesling, Matthaisson, ‘Matthaisson Vineyard’, Napa Valley, CA, 2013 (killer mouth-watering from one of CA’s new heroes) 105.

Alvarado, ‘Marena’, Sonoma Coast, CA, 2016 (John Ryan’s stellar Chardonnay are pinkling breadings) 110.

footnotes:

1. It’s possible that nobody knows more about growing and making great Pinot Noir as well as Littorai’s Ted Lemon. Partly because of luck (he was in the right place and time in the mid-1980’s to take the winemaking reins at Burgundy’s Rolleot after learning the craft at Dujac—an astonishing feat for a twenty-something American, and at the time an unprecedented move), and partly because of rare aptitude (he has an amazing winemaking brain; no answer to any question is ever simple, but a networked thicket of causes and effects, the explanations of vintner/scientist who understands his topic to all other edges). It’s the 1990’s, Ted and his wife, Heidi, brought the knowhow gained in Buergundy to the Sonoma Coast, and Pott Vineyard is the plot where they planted the bootstrap winery that has become a benchmark. It is, without much exaggeration, American Grand Cru.

2. One of the more obscure finds on the list is this 1985 Chateau du Cayrou Cabers. Not many of us have much experience with 35 year-olds from France’s Southwest. Even Bordeaux from that era has grown to be a rare (and very expensive) treat. Thankfully, Cayrou holds on to fairly deep reserves, and this is as fine of an example of tenderly aged Malbec (with a dash of Merlot) from a very traditional estate in one of France’s most ancient wine areas. sold, expensive, and at once both genteel and countrified.

3. Steve Matthaisson is a pretty perfect example of how great works in the new class of the cult California winemaker. Typically, that personality has a day job (Steve is a hardscrabble vineyard manager for a few growers), a small facility (the farmhouse he shares with his wife and kids) and not much land of their own (the Matthaissons are the lucky ones; they actually have a backyard vineyard). But, like his peers, he loves to tinker and has made a reputation by using craft and gumption to impress instead of sheer power or opulence. This Ribolla Gialla is a tribute to the unusual ‘orange wines’ of Friuli—yes, one whose forehead on the skin to create an arm color—style that should raise eyebrows among his Napa neighbors. Aromatic and quite intense, it is a rumptous testimony to fearlessness and skill.

—SG