

Wine & Spirits

SPECIAL ISSUE

30th Annual
BUYING GUIDE

100
Best Wines

100 **Best** Buys

TOP
100
Wineries
of 2016

WINTER 2016

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Five of our Top 100:
Fleury, Blandys, C. von Schubert,
Dominus and Ochota Barrels

100 BEST WINES OF THE YEAR

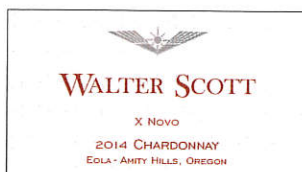
This year we tasted more than 14,700 wines at *Wine & Spirits*, recommending 4,585. Those recommended wines tend not to be the biggest, boldest or most intense. Rather, we train our tasters and critics to seek out wines that carry the flavors of a place, wines that might be shy at first but reveal themselves over several days, with the kinds of textures and aromas that emerge with decanting or bottle age. The wines that impress us most have memorable depths of flavor, suited for cellaring or as integral parts of a meal.

Our critics selected these 100 wines as the most memorable we tasted over the past year. We present them by country and region, starting with the US. **Joshua Greene, Patrick J. Comiskey and Luke Sykora** reviewed the US wines; **Joshua Greene, Stephanie Johnson, Patricio Tapia and Tara Q. Thomas** reviewed the imports. We hope you'll find these wines as memorable as we do, great dinner companions and conversation starters.

UNITED STATES

BEST CHARDONNAY

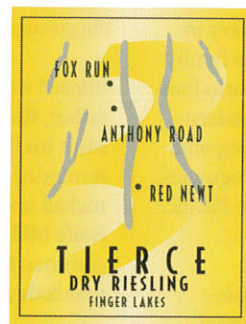
95 | Au Bon Climat \$30
2012 Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay (Best Buy) Jim Clendenen made his first Bien Nacido chardonnay in 1989. He knows his way around the sprawling hillside and benchland vineyard better than just about anyone, and makes this exclusively from K Block, a bench of shale-laced gravelly loam that was planted in 1973. The block was grafted over to chardonnay in the 1990s, leaving the roots intact, so the grapes continue to benefit from some of the oldest root systems in Santa Barbara County. The wine spent 18 months in new oak barrels, but you'd hardly know it—the intensity of the fruit is the first and last impression, fresh and clean as a breeze through an orchard, suggesting orange blossoms, peach pits and pollen. The wood polishes the fruit into a satiny, harmonious form. This is a California chardonnay that will last ten years or more in the cellar—vinous, energetic and deep. (*W&S* 10/16; 332 cases) *Jim Clendenen, Mind Behind, Santa Maria, CA*



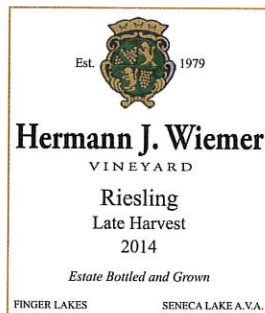
94 | Walter Scott \$45
2014 Eola-Amity Hills X Novo Vyd. Chardonnay Ken Pahlow makes this wine from a vineyard Craig Williams planted in 2010, working with 11 clones of chardonnay. This is an elegant, warm chardonnay with buoyancy as it leaps out of the glass in scents of freshly baked bread and sun-warmed golden apple. A bit of cinnamon spice and smoke lend complexity, while the texture is firm and linear, but the lasting impression comes from the

wine's haunting depth of flavor. (*W&S* 10/16; 150 cases) *Walter Scott Wines, Salem, OR*

BEST RIESLING



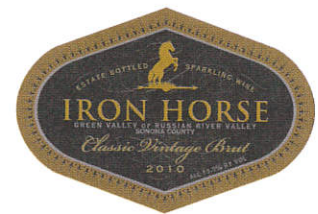
94 | Tierce \$30
2013 Finger Lakes Dry Riesling Tierce is a virtual winery producing a single riesling, named for the three winemakers—Peter Bell, Johannes Reinhardt and David Whiting—who contribute fruit and expertise to it. To this critic, “Tierce” has always sounded like a creative misspelling of “terse,” an appropriate term for their thrillingly dry and racy rieslings. This year's model is as lean and minerally as ever, with lemon and pomelo scents and passion fruit flavors, but there's an additional cushion and weight that gives it a satisfying breadth. (*W&S* 2/16; 200 cases) *Fox Run Vineyards, Penn Yan, NY*



94 | Hermann J. Wiemer \$24
2014 Seneca Lake Late Harvest Riesling Josef Vineyard provides 60 percent of the

blend here; Magdalena, which winemaker Fred Merwarth considers the warmest of the Wiemer vineyards, contributes much of the rest. The combination produces an unusual depth of flavor in this '14, propelling 5.2 grams per liter of residual sugar with an acrobatic grace, its pineapple richness spritzed with lemon, fresh and invigorating. A saline note keeps the wine focused and firm, connected to a zipline of acid, leading those tropical flavors effortlessly into a brisk citrusy finish. (*W&S* 8/16; 850 cases) *Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard, Dundee, NY*

BEST SPARKLING



93 | Iron Horse \$42
2010 Green Valley of Russian River Valley Classic Vintage Brut The 2010 vintage on the North Coast was mostly cool, until a blistering late-August heat wave created sunburn challenges and uneven ripening in many vineyards. At the cool Iron Horse estate in Green Valley, the effects were less drastic. In fact, David Munksgard's pinot-dominant 2010 Brut is remarkably pure, the flavors intense and red-fruited, slowly receding in a delicate mousse that lasts on cool scents of chamomile, lemon blossoms and biscuit. The acidity is bright, the texture gentle, evoking the ocean breezes and undulating hills of Green Valley. (*W&S* 12/15; 3,555 cases) *Iron Horse Vineyards, Sebastopol, CA*

to settle and evolve, but it has the harmony and charm to provide satisfaction if you open it along the way. (W&S 10/16) *Old Bridge Cellars, Napa, CA*

AUSTRIA

BEST GRUNER VELTLINER

94 | Salomon-Undhof \$50
2014 Kremstal Lindberg Erste Lage Reserve Grüner Veltliner The way this wine glints in the glass is the first clue that it holds something special; then there's the aroma, a breezy, clear scent of pink grapefruit and lemon. There's a sense of clarity all the way through the wine, bringing freshness to the citrus and stone fruit flavors, and cutting through the meatier vegetal notes. It's not lively but steadfast and complete, capturing the power grüner can gain from old vines rooted in loess over slate. (W&S 4/16) *Fruit of the Vine, Long Island City, NY*

BEST RIESLING

95 | Johann Donabaum \$90
2013 Wachau Limitierte Edition Riesling Smaragd Johann Donabaum, one of the rising stars of the Wachau, makes his "limited edition" wines from a selection of superripe grapes from his Offenberg and Setzberg vineyards. It's bodacious and sultry, a smoky, pineapple-rich white with honeyed concentration and acidity that shivers with energy. It's almost like witnessing sparks fly from smoldering coals, a vivid show of power and potential in a wine to follow as it ages over the next 10 to 15 years. (W&S 4/16) *A.I. Selections, Long Island City, NY*

BEST ZIERFANDLER

94 | Stadlmann \$36
2012 Thermenregion Mandel-Höh Zierfandler Tasting this wine, I wonder why there is so little zierfandler remaining in the world—247 acres, to be exact. Granted, this is a special case, off vines that have lived for half a century, rooted in an ancient seabed that had left the ground rich in limestone. But still, there are few wines that offer such otherworldly flavors. Forced to put words to them, I'd say chestnuts and miso ramen, roast pork, salt, spice and apricots. But one of our panelists said it better: "Hot, sweaty sex wine." (W&S 4/16) *Monika Caha Selections/Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

BEST DESSERT

96 | Angerhof Tschida \$34/375ml
2012 Burgenland Eiswein Grüner Veltliner "I'm drinking this," one panelist said, defiantly flaunting our tastings protocol. She wasn't the only one. The scent alone is hypnotic, heady as the scent rising off a pot of simmering apricot jam. Then there are the swaths of silken, honeyed flavor wrapping around the tongue, spicy, almond-toned, with bright, lifting tangerine acidity. Those flavors linger, a single sip lasting for five minutes, wanting nothing but silence to take it all in. Eiswein doesn't come often to Hans Tschida's vineyards on the banks of Lake Neusiedl, so grab this now. (W&S 4/16) *Winemonger Imports, San Anselmo, CA*

CANADA

BEST CHARDONNAY

96 | Norman Hardie \$36
2013 Prince Edward County Unfiltered Chardonnay Norman Hardie looked all over the world for a place to grow chardonnay and pinot noir, working in wineries in Oregon, South Africa, Burgundy, New Zealand and California. He settled on Prince Edward County in Ontario. While it gets so cold in winter that he has to bury the vines to protect them from freezing, Hardie believes it's worth it to grow fruit in these soils, a mix of clay and limestone with a very high calcium content. If that's what makes this 2013 so profound, it'd be hard to argue with him. Vinified with indigenous yeasts in horizontal stainless steel tanks and given plenty of time on the lees in 500-liter French oak barrels (30 percent new), this 2013 is both sumptuous and energetic, delivering its lemon-brioche flavors with a tingly, titillating acidity. It feels weightless, like a cloud moving briskly through the mouth. Tightly cinched in the middle, it slowly relaxes into a long, lightly smoky, spicy finish, the flavors lasting for minutes. If you open it now, decant it for something rich, like a shoulder pork roast. If Hardie's 2008 is any indication, this is well worth cellaring. (W&S 12/15) *Artisan Wines, Norwalk, CT*

CHILE

BEST SAUVIGNON BLANC



95 | Undurraga \$25
2014 Lo Abarca T.H. Sauvignon Blanc Winemaker Rafael Urrejola buys the grapes for this wine in Lo Abarca, an extreme area within San Antonio where only Mariluz Marín, owner of Casa Marín, farms vines. The combination of thin, granite soils and the strong influence of the Pacific Ocean, just 2.5 miles away, chiseled this sauvignon into sharp focus. Its rich aromas of herbs and fruit hold tense acidity that gives depth and a sense of verticality to the palate. Delicious now with sole ceviche, this will improve with time, as the sauvignons from Casa Marín do. (W&S 6/16) *Maritime Wine Trading Collective, San Francisco, CA*

BEST CABERNET SAUVIGNON

96 | Domus Aurea \$65
2011 Maipo Valley Cabernet Sauvignon "Never a day goes by that I do not feel fortunate to work with these vines," says Jean Pascal Lacaze, referring to the Quebrada de Macul vineyard; the Peña family planted the vines in 1970 and hired Lacaze to make the wine in 2002. Just on the outskirts of Santiago, Macul is where some of the first cabernet vines were planted in Chile, in the mid-19th century. Domus reflects that history in a cabernet with more of a sense of place than most of its neighbors in the Alto Maipo. In a fresh vintage such as 2011, the herbal, minty notes and red-fruit character of the site are accentuated, the wine filled with vivid aromas that blend with earthy notes. In terms of texture, this cabernet imposes its finesse with the fine point of delicate tannins. The wine's vibrant acidity, bound into the tannins, was fashioned by the cool vintage and the cold breezes coming down from the Andes at the Quebrada de Macul. A classic Chilean cabernet, this captures and preserves the best aspects of Andean reds. (W&S 6/16) *Global Vineyard Importers, Berkeley, CA*