

Wine Spectator Insider

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THRILLING REDS AND LIVELY BUBBLIES LEAD THE WAY in this week's *Wine Spectator Insider*, with wines from Australia, California, France and Italy, up to 96 points. This is a report of the most exciting wines our editors have discovered in the tasting room in recent weeks.

There's always an excuse to drink Champagne with these beautiful sparklers around, from top houses like Krug and Bollinger. Big names Penfolds, Hickinbotham and Torbreck from Australia show off the country's heights, 2012 Brunello di Montalcino bottlings offer years of drinking pleasure, and California Chardonnays from Pahlmeyer and Peter Michael hit the spot. Among these gems you'll find a whopping 17 wines scoring 95 points or more, and a 93-point Cabernet Sauvignon for just \$20. Turn to page 4 for the six Hot Wines.

AUSTRALIA

HICKINBOTHAM

Shiraz McLaren Vale Brooks Road 2015
94 points | \$75 | 235 cases imported | Red

Polished and elegant, with refined raspberry and wild strawberry flavors and an edge of matcha. Velvety tannins and bass notes of sage, cedar and black pepper showcase a wine of power and restraint. Drink now through 2028.—*M.W.*

PENFOLDS

Shiraz Barossa Valley RWT Bin 798 2015
94 points | \$150 | 348 cases imported | Red

Tremendously deep and dark, with concentrated notes of wild blackberry, blueberry and huckleberry at the core, showing details of black licorice, gunpowder tea and black pepper that linger on the finish. Appealing for the density and focus. Long finish. Drink now through 2028.—*M.W.*

TORBRECK

The Laird Barossa Valley 2013
94 points | \$700 | 40 cases imported | Red

Expressive, plump and velvety, with extremely concentrated flavors of blackberry, kirsch and cassis at the core, with accents of Earl Grey Tea, dark chocolate, fresh peppermint and gingerbread. Despite all the rich flavors, this has plenty of elegance, polish and freshness, revealing notes of sage on the epic finish. Shiraz. Drink now through 2028.—*M.W.*

HICKINBOTHAM

Cabernet-Shiraz McLaren Vale The Peake 2015
93 points | \$150 | 190 cases imported | Red

Vibrant and juicy, with blueberry and raspberry flavors that sing out amid a chorus of espresso, green tea, white pepper and sage details. Spice notes linger on the long, expressive finish. Drink now through 2028.—*M.W.*

OCHOTA BARRELS

Syrah Adelaide Hills I Am The Owl The Gorgeous Sector 2017
93 points | \$50 | 150 cases imported | Red

Fragrant and effusive, this supple red features white pepper and violet notes leaping out of the glass. Wild strawberry, cherry and sage flavors are fresh and vibrant, with terrific acidity that accentuates the complexity and verve. Drink now through 2028.—*M.W.*

PENLEY

Cabernet Sauvignon Coonawarra Phoenix 2016
93 points | \$20 | 4,300 cases imported | Red

Dense, with sink-your-teeth-into-them tannins and concentration to the plum, cassis and blackberry flavors. Sage and rosemary accents linger in the background. Strikes the right balance between power and elegance, with grace notes of eucalyptus, black tea and tobacco lingering on the velvety finish. Drink now through 2030.—*M.W.*

HICKINBOTHAM

Cabernet Sauvignon McLaren Vale Trueman 2015

92 points | \$75 | 235 cases imported | Red

Bold and savory, with smoke and teriyaki to the concentrated cassis and blackberry flavors. Gains momentum on the finish, with Earl Grey tea and sandalwood accents. Spice and licorice details linger amid the dense tannins. Drink now through 2028.—*M.W.*

TORBRECK

The Struie Barossa 2016

92 points | \$50 | 250 cases imported | Red

Shows an appealing floral overtone to the polished blueberry and blackberry flavors at the core, highlighted by black tea, sandalwood and Kalamata olive notes, lingering on the long, fragrant finish. Shiraz. Drink now through 2028.—*M.W.*

CALIFORNIA

Chardonnay

PAHLMAYER

Chardonnay Napa Valley 2016

94 points | \$75 | 1,900 cases made | White

Rich and generous, offering an outlay of fig, honeydew, anise and light apricot flavors. Shows a measure of finesse and grace. Given the full body, this is quite elegant. Drink now through 2023.—*J.L.*

CHATEAU ST. JEAN

Chardonnay Alexander Valley Robert Young Vineyard Single Vineyard Reserve 2015

93 points | \$50 | 1,028 cases made | White

Beautifully crafted, with a wealth of flavor and complexity, starting with tight peach, nectarine and tangerine flavors before gliding to smoky, toasty oak and fig notes and floral scents. Drink now through 2023.—*J.L.*

MERRY EDWARDS

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Olivet Lane 2015

93 points | \$66 | 727 cases made | White

Charming, offering a rich, delicate core of citrus-infused white peach, nectarine, green apple and pear notes, with textural nuance. The flavors are spot-on, notable for their refinement. Drink now through 2023.—*J.L.*

FROSTWATCH

Chardonnay Bennett Valley 2015

93 points | \$30 | 665 cases made | White

Delightfully rich and lively, medium-weight yet packed with flavors highlighting tangerine, nectarine and spicy oak, with a long, layered aftertaste that keeps you coming back for more. Drink now.—*J.L.*

PETER MICHAEL

Chardonnay Knights Valley Point Rouge 2015

93 points | \$215 | 292 cases made | White

Opens with strong smoky, toasty oak before easing into a glide, where the texture softens, revealing rich flavors of pear, fig, melon and hazelnut. The more you sip the more this grows on you. Drink now through 2024.—*J.L.*

SHIBUMI KNOLL

Chardonnay Russian River Valley Buena Tierra Vineyard 2015

93 points | \$90 | 550 cases made | White

Fresh and vibrant, with a snappy edge to the green apple, pear and honeydew melon flavors that dance on the palate, ending long and clean. Drink now through 2023.—*J.L.*

VINEYARD 7 & 8

Chardonnay Spring Mountain District Estate 2016

93 points | \$95 | 275 cases made | White

Creamy textured, rich and full, with fig, melon, butterscotch, anise and smoky, toasty oak notes that linger and add texture and dimension. Drink now through 2023.—*J.L.*

J

Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2016

92 points | \$31 | 8,000 cases made | White

Rich white peach, nectarine, fig and melon flavors are full and extracted, ideal for drinking over the next few years. Drink now through 2023.—*J.L.*

TAMBER BEY

Chardonnay Yountville Sans Chêne 2017

92 points | \$36 | 1,500 cases made | White

Aromas of fresh Key lime give this a zesty persona, with a vibrant core of lively flavors that dance on the palate. Drink now.—*J.L.*

FRANCE

Champagne

BOLLINGER

Brut Rosé Champagne La Grande Année 2007

95 points | \$205 | 99 cases imported | Sparkling

Fragrant, with notes of chalk and spring blossom on the nose, this fresh and focused version offers a finely detailed, lacy palate of white raspberry, peach skin, toast and candied ginger flavors. Long and creamy on the spice- and smoke-laced finish. Disgorged November 2016. Drink now through 2030.—*A.N.*

KRUG

Brut Champagne Grande Cuvée 165ème Édition NV

95 points | \$170 | NA cases made | Sparkling

Vivid acidity drives this richly expressive Champagne, while wild cherry, blood orange sorbet, lime blossom, spun honey and spice notes play on the fine, satinlike mousse. It's tightly-knit and racy, with the lasting finish echoing the expansive flavor range. Disgorged fall 2016. Drink now through 2023.—*A.N.*

KRUG

Brut Rosé Champagne 21ème Édition NV

95 points | \$260 | NA cases made | Sparkling

Aromatic, with orchard blossom, ginger and kumquat hints, this vibrant rosé shows a beautiful marriage of intense acidity and flavor range, allowing notes of peach skin, blood orange granita, toasted coconut and Marcona almond to play and expand on the palate as they ride the lovely, lacy mousse. Offers a lasting, racy finish. Disgorged spring 2016. Drink now through 2025.—*A.N.*

MOËT & CHANDON

Extra Brut Champagne Grand Vintage 2009
94 points | \$65 | NA cases made | Sparkling

A sleek, creamy Champagne, with an expressive range of toast, apricot, candied Meyer lemon zest, cassis and pastry cream set in a tightly-knit and racy frame. This offers personality now, but the focus and concentration recommends it to the cellar as well. Disgorged February 2017. Drink now through 2030.—A.N.

MOËT & CHANDON

Extra Brut Rosé Champagne Grand Vintage 2009
94 points | \$70 | NA cases made | Sparkling

A firm, tightly meshed rosé Champagne, with a powerful frame of smoky mineral and acidity swathed in a fine range of wild strawberry, whole-grain toast, kumquat and exotic spice notes that linger on the racy finish. Disgorged February 2017. Drink now through 2030.—A.N.

DOYARD

Extra Brut Rosé Champagne Oeil de Perdrix 2013
93 points | \$90 | 100 cases made | Sparkling

Finely balanced by vibrant acidity, this pale and elegant rosé opens with rich accents of pastry cream, ground ginger and grated coconut that lace flavors of baked peach, candied orange zest and grilled nut. A crowd-pleaser, with a long and creamy finish. Drink now through 2028.—A.N.

MOËT & CHANDON

Brut Champagne MCIII 001.14 NV
93 points | \$650/1.5L | NA cases made | Sparkling

A rich, layered Champagne, offering a lovely range of toasted brioche, passionfruit, espresso crème, spice and candied kumquat on a detailed and creamy mousse, while vibrant acidity provides a fine, lithe frame. The long finish echoes hints of smoke and pastry cream. Drink now through 2023.—A.N.

ITALY

Brunello di Montalcino

VALDICAVA

Brunello di Montalcino Madonna del Piano Riserva 2012
96 points | \$198 | 300 cases imported | Red

This is opulent and powerful, offering black cherry, black currant, plum, leather, iron and tobacco flavors boosted by the racy acidity. Overall, this feels firm and complex, with a long finish. Not your typical style from the northern part of the Brunello di Montalcino zone, yet compelling. Best from 2022 through 2038.—B.S.

ARGIANO

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2012
95 points | \$300 | 300 cases made | Red

Classic aromas and flavors of leather, iron and tobacco mingle with cherry and plum fruit in this brooding red. Offers a core of ripe fruit, supported by lively acidity and dense tannins. Long and multifaceted, showing the potential for a long evolution. Best from 2023 through 2037.—B.S.

BARICCI

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva Nello 2012
95 points | \$150 | 50 cases imported | Red

Offers aromas of macerated cherry and plum, with iron, sanguine, leather, wild herb, spice and earth notes. Intense, long and chewy on the mineral finish. Traditional style. Best from 2022 through 2035.—B.S.

CAMIGLIANO

Brunello di Montalcino Gualto Riserva 2012
95 points | \$101 | 200 cases imported | Red

Sweet cherry, iron, leather and sanguine aromas and flavors highlight this supple, vibrant Brunello. Features a firm backbone of tannins and finishes with tobacco, underbrush and mineral notes. Best from 2021 through 2035.—B.S.

CAPRILI

Brunello di Montalcino AdAlberto Riserva 2012
95 points | \$100 | 200 cases imported | Red

Ripe and juicy, boasting cherry, strawberry, floral and spice aromas and flavors. Good underlying structure keeps this balanced and the overall impression is one of harmony. Firm but not aggressive tannins add grip. Best from 2021 through 2035.—B.S.

SILVIO NARDI

Brunello di Montalcino Vigneto Poggio Doria Riserva 2012
95 points | \$115 | 150 cases imported | Red

Supple, laced with cherry, strawberry, floral and graphite flavors, this is elegant and harmonious, with a solid base of tannins for support. Still needs time to resolve itself, yet finds a nice balance in the end. Best from 2021 through 2036.—B.S.

SIRO PACENTI

Brunello di Montalcino PS Riserva 2012
95 points | \$170 | 25 cases imported | Red

A modern style, exuding coffee, vanilla, cherry and tobacco flavors. Vibrant, offering grip and picking up mineral accents as this winds down on the finish. An elegant, mineral red under the oak. Best from 2021 through 2035.—B.S.

POGGIO ANTICO

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2012
95 points | \$110 | 75 cases imported | Red

This is plush, boasting cherry, plum, leather, mineral and tobacco flavors. Vibrant and solidly built, with a long, expansive and spicy aftertaste. Needs some time, but this should come together nicely in three to five years. Best from 2022 through 2038.—B.S.

HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator Insider*. They are high-scoring wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

BOLLINGER

Extra Brut Champagne R.D. 2004

96 points | \$300 | 301 cases imported | Sparkling

The lovely nose of acacia blossom, toast and graphite leads to flavors of poached quince, fleur de sel, white cherry, lemon pith and almond skin in this dry and harmonious Champagne. Almost airy and ethereal in texture, yet the finely woven flavor range goes on and on, echoing on the finish. Disgorged June 2017. Drink now through 2034. From France.—A.N.

CANALICCHIO DI SOPRA

Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2012

96 points | \$140 | 200 cases imported | Red

A ripe, macerated version, displaying plum, cherry, tobacco, earth and spice flavors. A beam of lively acidity in the middle elevates this. Ends with elegance, supporting tannins and fine length. Best from 2022 through 2036. From Italy.—B.S.

COLLEMATTONI

Brunello di Montalcino Vigna Fontelontano Riserva 2012

96 points | \$125 | 50 cases imported | Red

Saturated flavors of cherry and plum mesh nicely with the dense tannins in this intense, energetic red. Balanced, if a bit angular now, with the component parts needing time to integrate. Finishes with a firm grip and lingering tobacco and mineral accents. Best from 2022 through 2038. From Italy.—B.S.

KRUG

Brut Rosé Champagne NV

96 points | \$260 | NA cases made | Sparkling

A lovely, creamy rosé Champagne, seamlessly layering vivid acidity with dried fig, poached apricot and Mandarin orange peel fruit notes, offering exotic accents of grilled nut, curry spice and dogwood blossom that expand and echo on the finish. Disgorged winter 2015. Drink now through 2025. From France.—A.N.

SAN FILIPPO

Brunello di Montalcino Le Lucére Riserva 2012

96 points | \$170 | 350 cases imported | Red

A broad, mouthfilling style, boasting black cherry, plum, leather, chocolate and spice aromas and flavors. A riper style, yet not soft, with more support from dense tannins than acidity. Finishes with a dusty aftertaste of tobacco and graphite. Best from 2021 through 2034. From Italy.—B.S.

LIVIO SASSETTI

Brunello di Montalcino Pertimali Riserva 2012

96 points | \$120 | 400 cases imported | Red

Firm and dense, this red sports cherry, leather, cigar box and sweet spice flavors. A juiciness midpalate adds depth. Finishes with tannins and a combination of earth, mineral and tobacco notes. Best from 2022 through 2038. From Italy.—B.S.

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

The Most Experienced Team of Wine Journalists in the World

Wine Spectator's tasting staff includes 16 tasters and tasting coordinators in two offices. They work together to review more than 16,000 wines each year; more than 360,000 reviews are available in our online database. Together, our 11 tasters count more than 235 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind, in our offices in Napa and New York. This is your guarantee that our reviews are fair and objective, and that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; initials appended to the review identify the taster of each wine. We score wines using the 100-point scale (see green box).

James Laube Senior editor, Napa
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: California

Harvey Steiman Editor at large, San Francisco
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1984. Tasting beat: At large

Kim Marcus Senior editor, Napa
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:
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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:
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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Austria, Burgundy, Italy

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Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale	
95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very good
80-84	Good
75-79	Mediocre
50-74	Not recommended