



December 2017 Grapevine

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Revel in the Holidays... Give the Gift of Wine

Holiday shopping is back, and we are here to for you. Whether to ease the mania of to-dos by opening a bottle with dinner or to make shopping the simple affair it should be, the gift of wine is a compass in the dark winter of *what-to-buy*. We strive to make shopping for wine a pleasant experience for you anytime; and because the holidays can be such a bustling time of year, we have a sleigh full of ideas and a holiday gift center to ease your shopping woes.

Single bottle gifts are wrapped in a complimentary gift bag. This year's edition of **Rudolph's Reds**, two 90-rated reds, or **Frosty Whites**, two 90-rated whites — are put into festive, bow-tied baskets, ready to go from our gift center. \$24.99 each

And if you'd like a custom-made gift basket, we can help with that, too. Large or small, special orders don't upset us. You tell us what wines you'd like, and we'll make the basket for you, to be picked up later. For a truly special gift, consider a personalized basket featuring bottles from **Wine Spectator's Top 100 for 2017**, with an issue of *Wine Spectator Magazine* tucked in amongst the bottles. That'll leave 'em breathless. We have built a Top 100 display in the store with a



A sample of our Wine Spectator Top 100 2017 selected wines.

revolving selection of 25 or so wines from this year's list, with rankings, making it simple and fun to choose the bottles for your special gift. Many are in limited supply, so don't delay.

About this list: In a nutshell, Wine Spectator's tasting panel tastes and reviews 15,000 wines a year in blind tastings, scoring them and writing reviews that function as sophisticated cliff notes so that we the people can filter our choices. Wines are always tasted blind, revealing only the varietal, vintage and appellation; winery, bottle, cork or cap, label, price and all identifying information is concealed.

Since 1988, Wine Spectator editors have compiled wines reviewed over the previous 12 months to select their Top 100 for that year. In essence, they boil down a list of 15,000 bottles to 100, all rated 90 points or more; so even the lowest ranking on that list of 100 is going to be stellar. Factoring in quality, value, availability and enjoyment of the wine, there are rigorous standards to be met in qualifying for this prestigious, much-awaited annual list that includes wines from all over the world.

Origins among the top 20 this year include California, Washington, France, Italy, Spain and Argentina, in

varying price point points, though there is a cost-limit in order to make the list. **Clos des Papes Chateaufu-Papes**, from Rhone Valley, for example, is #14, rated 98 points, and is \$108; and **Volver Alicante Tarima Hill Old Vines** from Spain, #17 with 92 points is \$15.29. The #1 wine is not necessarily the highest rated because value is a factor in the equation.

A few others from our display are the **NV Roederer Estate Brut Sparkling Wine**, 92 points at #25 from Anderson Valley for \$20.99. **The Calling 'Dutton Ranch' Chardonnay** from the Russian River Valley, 91 points, #67 is \$22.99. **Oberon Merlot** from Napa Valley, awarded 90 points and rated #77, is \$16.49.

Though it is a wonderful time of year, it can be harried. Wine is always a thoughtful gift, but at this time of year, it's a gift to yourself, too, to lose the stress and enjoy the giving. *Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.* ♦

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Did you know... Editors also review unfinished wines in barrel tastings. These wines are scored in ranges (eg. 85-88 points) to indicate that the ratings are still preliminary.

Wine Tastings Fri, 4-7 & Sat, 2-5

Days not mentioned will feature New Arrivals.

Fri 12/8: 90s Value Wines

Fri 12/15: December Staff Picks

Fri, Sat & Sun 12/22-12/24: Wines for Last Minute Shopping, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day dinner

Fri, Sat & Sun 12/29-31: New Year's Eve Party Wines and Sparklers for your festivities

Fri 1/5: Rest and Recovery Whites and Reds

Roasted Grape Crostini

1-2 baguettes, about 8 oz
2 cups seedless red grapes, halved
1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 Tbsp olive oil
1/2-1 cup ricotta
Fresh sprigs of thyme or rosemary,
sesame seeds and cracked pepper to top, optional



Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. In a small bowl, whisk vinegar and olive oil together. Add grapes and toss to coat. Put grapes on a small foil- or parchment-lined baking sheet.

Bake for 20 minutes. While cooking, slice baguette into 1/2 inch slices (should make about 22 rounds, depending the size and amount bought). Lay the bread slices on a large baking sheet and spray tops with cooking spray.

Place bread slices on other rack in oven to toast at the same time as grapes, for the last 10 mins. Remove grapes and bread from oven after 10 minutes and when baguette slices are lightly toasted and grapes are just starting to wrinkle and burst. Spread about 1 tablespoon ricotta onto crostini and add several grape halves to each crostini. Sprinkle fresh cracked pepper and sesame seeds over top and garnish with thyme or rosemary sprigs.

Serve with Sheila's staff pick, below, or Christmas Sangria.

News & Events

More Gift Ideas and Goings-On This Month

Gift Samplers in 6-bottle carry totes of *Killer Cab* and *Perfect Pinot* can be found in our holiday gift center. Price reflects our 15% discount. No further discounts.

Bottle engravings on Gentleman Jack Tennessee Whiskey and Woodford Reserve Bourbon in store for purchased bottles the weekend of 12/22 and 12/23.

In addition to our wine tastings this month, we'll have:
12/8 — Albany Distillery Tasting
12/9 — Crown Royal Vanilla and Apple Tasting
12/16 — Josh Wines Tasting with personalized labels
12/23 — Santa Bob will be here to greet the little ones with Christmas cookies.

The store will be open until **6 pm on Christmas Eve** and **9 pm on New Year's Eve**. *See you soon!*

Christmas Sangria

Adapted from Cake 'n Knife

Rosemary, cranberries, and apple make this sangria the perfect Christmas drink that goes with any wintry holiday meal.

2 bottles Bonterra Organic Chardonnay
3/4 cup Nine Pin Hard Cider
1/4 cup cranberries, halved
3/4 cup cranberries, whole
1 Granny Smith apple, chopped
3 rosemary sprigs

Combine all ingredients in a large pitcher and stir. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours before serving. Serve chilled or over ice.

Sangria Party Packs will be available from our holiday gift center for \$29.99. Everything you need to serve 10-12 people will be included. Just take it home and put it together. Cheers!



December 2017 Staff Wine Picks

Sheila: 2016 Joseph Carr Chardonnay (Carneros) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) Barrel fermentation and sur lie aging in 20% new French oak contribute a creamy texture and complexity. *Roasted grape crostini, shown above

Joe: 2016 90+ Cellars Lot 148 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) Aged 12 months in oak cask, it has bold notes of black currants, cherries and black pepper, with a long, smooth finish. *Grilled porterhouse

Max: 2016 Twenty Rows Cabernet Sauvignon (North Coast) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) Blended with Merlot and Petite Sirah, grapes are sourced from diverse regions, lending complex aromas, rich structure and velvety tannins. *Prime Rib

Ian: 2016 Equis 'Equinoxe' Crozes-Hermitage (Rhône Valley) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) From the northern reaches of the Rhône Valley, it is made from 100% Syrah, fermented in concrete and aged in wood. *Roast chicken

Bill: 2015 Mocal Rosso di Montalcino (Tuscany) \$16.99 (reg \$19.99) 90 WS Made from 100% Sangiovese Grosso, it is fermented in stainless steel, sees malolactic fermentation and is aged 11 months in French-oak. *Lasagne

Brian: 2014 Whitehall Lane Tre Leoni Red (Napa Valley) \$19.99 (reg \$23.99) 90 WC Each varietal in this blend of (mostly) Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah and Zinfandel was aged separately in French and American oak for 15 months. It has dense flavors of blackberries, blueberries and licorice. *Braised short ribs