

# The most exciting wines of 2016

Decanter experts around the world named the five bottles under £55 that impressed them most this year. After tasting and rating the 195 nominated wines, and assessing them on harmony, complexity and wow factor, our three judges compiled the ultimate top 75 across all styles. Christelle Guilbert reports

THIS YEAR, INSTEAD of simply pulling together the top-scoring wines from our 2016 panel tastings, features and appetizers, we have cast our net wider, by asking our in-house team, regular contributors and Decanter World Wine Awards Regional Chairs which five bottles, under £55, they enjoyed most over the past 12 months.

Our experts provided a brilliant selection that showed real diversity, both geographically and stylistically. While classic regions were represented, we also had wines from Cyprus, Canada, Israel and Japan, as well as a surprisingly high number of orange and amphora wines.

Over two very enjoyable days in October, I was joined by Sarah Jane Evans MW and Andy Howard MW (see below) to taste through the 195 nominations. As with all Decanter panel tastings, the wines were tasted blind; only the grape variety and vintage were disclosed.

This year, we wanted to pay particular attention to

wines with 'wow factor'. As Evans summed up: 'We were looking for the most complete wines, the most individual, fascinating and the most genuinely enjoyable. They did not have to be classically perfect wines, just memorable.'

And memorable they certainly were, with more than 97% hitting the Highly Recommended mark (90 points or more). And as most of the wines are available at independent merchants rather than supermarkets, this offers Decanter readers a great opportunity to seek out new wine shops and build relationships with local wine retailers.

So if you are looking for exciting and delicious wines, this festive season – wines that have been recommended personally by a Decanter expert and further endorsed for their wow-factor in our blind tasting – you're guaranteed to find it here in one of our two lists: the top 50 still wines and the top 25 sparkling, off-dry, sweet and fortified wines.

We hope they'll become some of your favourites too.

## The tasters

**Sarah Jane Evans MW**  
Is chair of the Institute of Masters of Wine and the Decanter World Wine Awards Regional co-Chair for Spain and Sherry

**Christelle Guilbert**  
Is Decanter's international tastings director, with more than 21 years' experience in the wine industry in France and the UK

**Andy Howard MW**  
Is a wine consultant who writes and judges regularly for Decanter. He has 30 years' experience as a buyer for retailer Marks & Spencer

**5 De Martino, Viejas Tinajas Muscat, Itata Valley, Chile 2015**  
£17.49 Les Caves du Pyrene, Toasted  
A remarkable ochre hue in the glass gives way to vibrant grapey aromas, floral notes and hints of honey. There is an impressive weight and on the palate, where the tantalising Muscat character comes through, followed by a touch of earthiness on the finish. So expressive and inviting with a nice tannin structure. This has real potential as an alternative aperitif or as an accompaniment for cheese. **Drink 2017-2022 Alc 13%**

**6 Famille Hugel, Riesling Grossi LaDe, Alsace, France 2010**  
£49.99 Berry Bros & Rudd, The Vineyard, Vivino  
A classic example of a beautiful Riesling, roasted peach and lime on the nose translate smoothly onto the palate. The touch of residual sugar is the perfect balance to the mineral acidity and ripe apricot. Fruit, providing the wine with great precision and tension. There's a plumy, fleshy charm here that is refreshing, lively and long, finishing on a pleasing honeyed tone. **Drink 2017-2025 Alc 13%**

**7 Eggo, Tinto de Tiza, Gualtallary, Tupungato, Argentina 2014**  
£17.95 Hallgarten Ouitit  
A very complex, beautifully balanced blend with vibrant red and blackcurrants combined with dark plums and a lean, mineral finish. The fruit character is extremely rich but is also bright and buoyant, adding freshness. Refined and with lovely purity, this has green, sweet less on the finish and a lifted hint of violets. Grown-up and very well done. **Drink 2017-2022 Alc 13.5%**

**11 Susana Balbo, Signature Malbec, Altamira, Uco Valley, Argentina 2014**  
£25.40 Humpthris, Field & Faucit, Hangingditch, Secret Cellar  
A refreshing Uco Valley Malbec: dark plum fruits, a hint of violets and crisp acidity with racy, feely tannins to balance. Refined, classy and drinkable with a long, off-taste tinged with spices and floral notes. It is lively and vivid so should certainly age gracefully. **Drink 2017-2022 Alc 14.5%**

**12 Vincent Caillé, Domaine le Fay d'Homme, Monnières-St-Fiacre, Muscadet Sèvre et Maine, Loire, France 2010**  
£20 Carte Blanche  
Superb complexity, great freshness and real depth of dried herbs crisp apple, lemon and fennel. Amazingly fresh for a 2010, the creamy mouthfeel from the lees and a long, luxurious texture make for a wonderful experience. **Drink 2017-2020 Alc 12%**

**13 Two Paddocks, Proprietor's Reserve The Fusilier Pinot Noir, Bannockburn, Central Otago, New Zealand 2014**  
£40-£45 Haynes Hanson & Clark, Vagabond  
Wild strawberry and raspberry fruit backed by restrained, savoury oak and delicately chewy tannins. Eramble fruit and autumn leaves give a complex and vibrant structure: just what one wants from a Pinot Noir. **Drink 2017-2021 Alc 13.5%**

**14 Wein- und Sektgut Barth, Schönherr Riesling Grosses Gewächs, Rheingau, Germany 2011**  
N/A UK www.wein-gut-barth.de  
A stunner of a Riesling! Lots of ripe apple fruit on top of dried apricot, lemon curd, beeswax and honey. The crisp acidity and lemon zest character give a silky, mouthwatering palate and a pure, elegant, long finish. **Drink 2017-2025 Alc 12.5%**



**8 Domaine Cazes, Frenage, Côtes du Roussillon, France 2014**  
N/A UK www.cazes-vinsantes.com  
This elegant Syrah has ripe red cherry aromas with hints of licorice. The palate is stylish with great finesse of fruit and lively acidity offset by the black fruit concentration. The hint of tannin on the finish adds even more complexity. This is drinking well now but will evolve further over the next few years. A great wine. **Drink 2017-2022 Alc 13.5%**

**9 Jean Foillard, Côte du Fu, Morgon, Beaujolais, France 2013**  
£12-£16.49 Halford, Highbury Vineyard, Les Caves du Pyrene, Soleim Cellar  
A lovely Gamay, made in a very precise, natural style. Lots of complexity, interest and purity, along with an appealing farmyard character plus sweet and sour red and black cherries. The fruit is plump and juicy, and there is a great balance between acidity and minerality so this age very well. What an interesting wine! **Drink 2017-2022 Alc 13%**

**10 Zuccardi, Erna Zuccardi Bonarda, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina 2013**  
£24.50 Cambridge Wine Merchants, Strongwell Wines & Spirits  
Very well made with complexity, depth and concentration. There is a lovely note on the nose and palate, along with sweet fruit, vivid acidity, crunchy tannins and integrated oak. The purity of fruit is electrifying – this is a teenager full of energy and character. Like a Beethoven on steroids! An excellent example of an often challenging variety. **Drink 2017-2021 Alc 13.5%**

**15 Family Vayron, Château Bourgneuf, Pomerol, Bordeaux, France 2012**  
£35 Direct Wines  
Concentration and complexity shine in this classy, Merlot-led blend. Green pepper and a touch of herbaceous leafiness is on show which gives a fresh, clean edge to this refined, plummy wine. Well-integrated oak and glossy tannins characterise this classic. Old World style. **Drink 2017-2022 Alc 14%**

**16 Weingut Bernhard Ott, Fess 4, Wagram, Niederösterreich, Austria 2015**  
P.O.A. Savage Selection  
True balance between purity, concentration and precision. This has all the classic Grüner Veltliner characteristics: white pepper, ripe apricots and white peach in a stylish, squeaky-clean style. There is a fleshy and textured charm here, finishing with some lovely green apple acidity. **Drink 2017-2021 Alc 12.5%**

**17 Palmetto Costanzo, Bianco di Sei, Etna, Sicily, Italy 2014**  
£30 Bat & Bottle  
What a splendid discovery! Mostly from the Carricante grape, aromas of sciacca honey plus apricot and ripe melon sing out. The palate is fresh and speaks of lemons and herbs, with ripe tropical fruit notes balanced by driving acidity. An attractive savoury complexity on the finish really completes this wine. **Drink 2017-2021 Alc 13%**

**18 Verdier-Lagel, La Volcanique, Côtes du Forez, Loire, France 2015**  
£12.49 Les Caves du Pyrene  
We have that classic red fruit and meaty nose that can only be Gamay. Such an elegant example, showing subtle hints of violets and roses, followed by crunchy blackberry and cherry fruits. Complex and pure, this is a calling card for the underrated charms of good Gamay. **Drink 2017-2019 Alc 13%**

For full details of UK stockists, see p104

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## TRADUCTION :

Superbe complexité, grande fraîcheur et de belles touches d'herbes sèches, de pommes croquantes, de citron et fenouil. Incroyablement frais pour un millésime 2010, une sensation onctueuse en bouche apportée par la lie ainsi qu'une longue et riche texture rendent l'expérience gustative exceptionnelle.