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THE TOP 100 WINES OF 2016



What a time to be a wine critic. I can't think of many years more exciting to be one than 2016. We rated no less than 20 perfect wines after tasting more than 10,000 bottles, and our Top 10 are all rated 100 points. All the wines in our list were tasted from bottle, so barrel samples were not included. That's why we didn't include categories like 2015 Bordeaux, which is a fantastic vintage but not available in bottle until 2018. Most of the tastings were done in the region themselves. And with the help of contributing editors Nick Stock and Stuart Pigott, JamesSuckling.com rated wines from Argentina, Australia, Austria, California, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Oregon, and Spain.

In a departure from last year's emphasis on top-scoring value wines, we focused strictly on pure quality for this year's Top 100. Most of the 100-point wines were from Italy and Napa Valley, and I believe that 2013 could be the latter's greatest vintage. Napa produced rich and structured cabernet sauvignon-based wines, while the 2010 vintage in Tuscany made phenomenal Brunello di Montalcinos. Wines like these will serve as reference points for wine lovers around the world and will be benchmarks for generations to come. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for 2013 Bordeaux, which was a disappointing vintage and didn't come close to cracking the Top 100 with the exception of dry and sweet whites.

Our Wine of the Year — Opus One Napa Valley 2013 — is a point of reference for America's greatest reds. It's a wine that waves the Stars and Stripes around the world from San Francisco to Seoul with as much as 40 percent of its production sold outside of the United States. This is particularly important to me as most American wines have little to no international distribution. Beyond its impressive availability, the 2013 Opus One is of superb quality and character.

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The balance and density of the wine harkens back to classics like Heitz Martha's Vineyard 1974 and Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 1958. The Opus One 2013 is a shining star for Napa Valley and proves why this place is one of the most exciting winemaking regions in the world. No longer is the region obsessed with crude power and muscular wines. Napa has instead turned towards a new classicism of vibrant fruit and tension. Opus has all that and more.



The JS.com team prepares the blind tasting for James in Napa Valley.

My No. 2 Wine of the Year shares much of the same energy as Opus One. The Viñedo Chadwick Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 shows the incredible beauty, harmony, and character that the best wines of Chile possess. Produced in the historic Maipo Valley, the Chadwick cab mesmerizes you the moment you stick your nose in the glass. It is truly a subtle elixir with incredible complexity and elegance.

Italy came in at No. 3 this year with the Renieri Brunello di Montalcino Riserva 2010, which showed a similarly harmonious and understated character as Viñedo Chadwick. The Renieri owes its success to a superb vintage and the deft winemaking of Marco Bacci, the owner of the estate. Marqués de Murrieta Rioja Castillo Ygay Gran Reserva Especial 1986 by comparison at No. 4 is a historically unique wine from Spain's greatest wine region. The ancient wine underlines the region's great tradition of making well-aged whites in barrel and reminds me of the legendary 1963 R. Lopez de Heredia Viña Tondonia Rioja Gran Reserva Blanco (also 100 points).

At No. 5, Catena Zapata Adrianna Vineyard Malbec Mendoza Fortuna Terrae 2012 is a wine with just as much history. Today it represents a new wave of Argentine malbecs that emphasize finesse and terroir. Its balanced, elegant and intense character has no equal in Mendoza. Coming in at No. 6 is Dominus Napa Valley 2013, another wine full of finesse and power. It is definitely the greatest Dominus ever made since the first vintage in 1983.

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Visiting a small winery in Rías Baixas, Spain, during massive tasting sessions this summer.

At No. 7, we have the 2002 Krug. It's hard to say if this is the greatest Champagne ever made, but it is clearly a phenomenal wine and likely the best of the legendary 2002 vintage. Australia came in at No. 8 this year with Tyrrell's Old Patch Shiraz 2014. It may be one of Australia's greatest reds, produced from vines planted in 1867 and saturated with incredible depth and richness, while still remaining agile and vivid.

The No. 9 Riesling Wachau Singerriedel Smaragd 2015 is equally persuasive, even if it's not made from ancient vines. It underlines the greatness of riesling in Austria as well as the incredible viticulture and winemaking in the Wachau. Finally, our No. 10 wine of the year is the Gaja Barbaresco Sori San Lorenzo 2013 — an amazing red that highlights the family's return to labeling their wines Barbaresco after more than a decade. It's something we believe strongly about, and we applaud this change.

In fact, we applaud all the 100 producers in this year's Top 100 list, a number of which were made from either organically or biodynamically farmed grapes. Two were even made without sulfur. You'll see (and taste) soon enough. There are so many great wines to choose from, and I know that you're going to love drinking them.

(You will need to be a premium subscriber to read the tasting notes.)

—James Suckling, CEO/Editor

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93. Oddero Barolo Villero 2012

ODDERO BAROLO VILLERO 2012

Country Italy
Region Piedmont
Vintage 2012

Score
97

Ripe and rich aromas of dried strawberries and plum that are always fresh. Full-bodied, chewy and powerful. This shows incredible depth and power. Try in 2021.