

OUR NEW TEST GARDENS, REVEALED!

Sunset

WINE LOVER'S GUIDE

WHERE TO GO, WHAT TO SIP, AND THE \$11 BOTTLE TO BUY NOW

FRANCIS
FORD COPPOLA &
GRANDDAUGHTER
GIA TALK FAMILY
AND VINES

FALL'S BEST
COMFORT FOOD

HAWAII
DREAM TOWN

18 SPECTACULAR
SPOTS TO CELEBRATE
SONOMA COUNTY
WINE MONTH



THE WINE TO BUY THIS YEAR

No matter where your wine taste trends in the next 12 months, we've vetted the best bottles to put in your shopping cart. *By Sara Schneider*

Recently, I dipped into my local BevMo on a mission to find a specific bottle. As I zeroed in on the right aisle, a woman hovering there looked to me and said, "Any chance you could help me find a good bottle of red wine?"

The complexity of her seemingly simple problem stopped me in my tracks. There's no easy answer, even for me, *Sunset's* wine editor. A series of questions ("What's the occasion? What are you eating with the wine?") and investigations ("What's on the shelf here today? What's a good value?") are required to get from "good red wine" to a specific brand, varietal, region, and year. Pretty daunting.

My hat is off to those skillful sommeliers and wine-shop clerks who navigate that path for their clients every day. But most often, folks find themselves with wine decisions to make sans expert at elbow. No matter where you are on the knowledge scale, given the dizzying range of choices available, that can be a challenge. And that is exactly why *Sunset* holds an annual wine competition—to do the work for you. To taste and compare a huge number of wines in the marketplace, so you can be sure you're getting great wines in every price range.

The work itself is done by about 50 of the West's best wine tasters: sommeliers and retailers, wine writers, educators, and makers (learn about the process on page 100). From the results, trends emerge that represent smart buying opportunities of the moment. I've pulled together a few collections of gold medal winners that are especially promising. You can consider it—along with our full list of gold and silver medalists starting on page 102—your no-fail wine-shopping guide for the year.

BE A SMART CABERNET SHOPPER



The king of reds still reigns (we drink more Cabernet Sauvignon than any other red)—and Napa Valley holds court. But other regions in California and Washington are going head-to-head with Napa's high-scoring Cabs, and many are great values. Our judges also discovered that, even in Napa, you don't have to empty your wallet to taste a gold medal winner.

Black Stallion 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon
(Napa Valley; \$30)

Chateau Ste. Michelle 2013 Canoe Ridge Estate Cabernet Sauvignon
(Horse Heaven Hills; \$28)

Frei Brothers Reserve 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon
(Alexander Valley; \$27)

Katherine Goldschmidt 2013 Crazy Creek

Cabernet Sauvignon
(Alexander Valley; \$22)

Laurel Glen 2013 "Counterpoint" Cabernet Sauvignon
(Sonoma Mountain; \$40)

L'Ecole No 41 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon
(Walla Walla Valley; \$40)

Louis M. Martini 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon
(Alexander Valley; \$34)

Mettler Family 2013 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon
(Lodi; \$25)

Obsidian Ridge 2013 Obsidian Ridge Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon
(Red Hills, Lake County; \$30)

Rodney Strong 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon
(Sonoma County; \$20)

UPGRADE YOUR CHARDONNAY

Chardonnay is easy to come by—it's our most popular wine by a wide margin. But don't say, "I'll have a glass of Chardonnay," unless you mean it—and make sure that glass earned gold. Life's too short to dip into a sea of unremarkable Chard.



Bouchaine 2014 Bacchus Collection "Chene d'Argent" Estate Chardonnay
(Carneros, Napa Valley; \$30)

Dancin 2015 "Chaine" Chardonnay
(Southern Oregon; \$29)

Dutcher Crossing 2014 Chenoweth Vineyard Chardonnay
(Russian River Valley; \$36)

Graton Ridge 2014 Chardonnay
(Russian River Valley; \$34)

Hughes Family 2014 Chardonnay
(Sonoma Mountain; \$40)

Hungry Blonde 2014 Chardonnay
(Carneros, Napa Valley; \$30)

La Chertosa 2014 Reserve

Chardonnay
(Sonoma Valley; \$25)

Lynmar 2014 Chardonnay
(Russian River Valley; \$35)

MacMurray 2014 Chardonnay
(Russian River Valley; \$20)

McKahn Family 2014 Chardonnay
(Knights Valley; \$27)

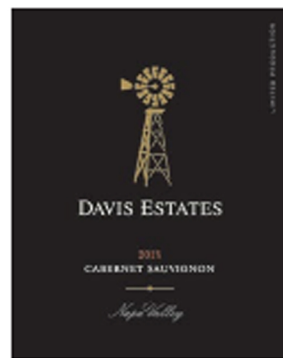
Scott Family 2014 Dijon Clone Chardonnay
(Arroyo Seco, Monterey; \$25)

Trione 2014 River Road Ranch Chardonnay
(Russian River Valley, Sonoma County; \$36)

Virginia Dare 2014 "American" Chardonnay
(Russian River Valley; \$25)

White Oak Vineyards 2014 Estate Grown Chardonnay
(Russian River Valley, Sonoma County; \$26)

NEW WORLD REDS (continued)



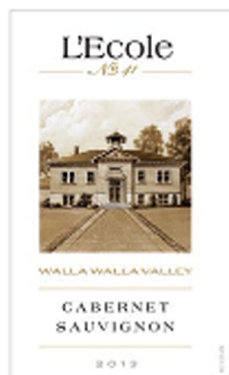
davisestates.com

Davis Estates 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley; \$60). Exotic coconut and vanilla aromas from oak aging add intrigue to this wine, with intense dark fruit, hints of cedar and forest floor, and big, youthful tannins that lend it cellaring potential.

Frei Brothers Reserve 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley, Sonoma County; \$27). This classic Sonoma Cab has a slight herbal component to lush, round blackberry flavors and supple tannins. It closes brightly, with excellent acidity.

J. Lohr 2013 Carol's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena, Napa Valley; \$60). Concentrated blackberry and plum fruit is backed by pleasantly dusty tannins and a plush, seamless finish.

Katherine Goldschmidt 2013 Crazy Creek Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley; \$22). Gentle vanilla from oak wraps around bright, juicy dark cherry and plum fruit, with just a hint of blueberry. Supple, sweet tannins and a palate-refreshing finish complete the pretty picture.



lecole.com

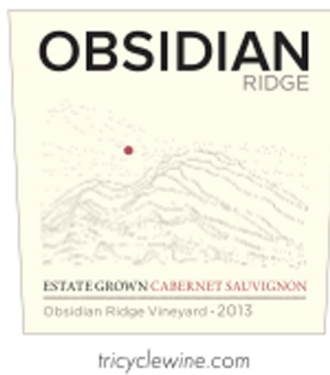
L'Ecole No 41 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley; \$40). There's great intensity of dark fruit here without being too powerful. Creamy oak is a fine foil for the concentrated and ample tannins, and the finish is brisk and slightly mineral.

Laurel Glen 2013 "Counterpoint" Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma Mountain; \$40). Superbly balanced from start to finish, with subtle oak and juicy dark cherry and pomegranate character. This is a Cab with great verve and palate-cleansing freshness.

Louis M. Martini 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley; \$34). An intense wine with ripe dark fruit, smoke, bittersweet chocolate, and licorice character, it finishes with excellent freshness.

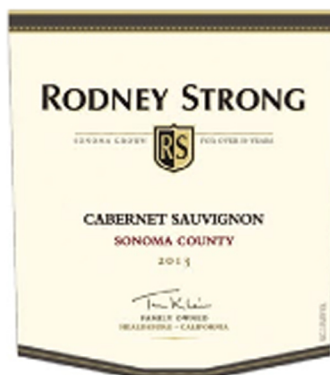
Louis M. Martini 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Alexander Valley, Sonoma County; \$34). Succulent blueberry and blackberry flavor is balanced by firm yet supple tannins, mocha and spice notes, and a finish that's energetic and crisp.

Mettler Family Vineyards 2013 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Lodi; \$25). Generous, mouth-filling black cherry and blackberry flavors star in this full-bodied wine. Its tannins are ripe and polished, with oak as an accent rather than a major player.



tricyclewine.com

Obsidian Ridge 2013 Obsidian Ridge Vineyard Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Hills, Lake County; \$30). Firm mountain tannins and a minty aroma show now, but this youthful wine has luscious blackberry and cassis lurking underneath, just waiting for a few more months in the bottle.



rodneystrong.com

Rodney Strong 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma County; \$20). Two Hamiltons buy an outstanding bottle from this venerable Sonoma producer. The wine is round, rich, and highly drinkable, with juicy red and black fruit, spicy oak, and a long, generous finish.

Sea Bird 2013 Broken Rock Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley; \$45). Small amounts of Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Petit Verdot join Cabernet Sauvignon in this layered wine, with cassis, black cherry, and cola notes; vanilla; and firm yet supple tannins.

Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 2013 "Artemis" Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley; \$60). Intense black fruit, powerful tannins, and toasty oak are prominent now, but this wine is made to be enjoyed after five or more years of cellaring and has a track record for achieving spectacular results.



summerswinery.com

Summers 2013 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (Calistoga, Napa Valley; \$65). This one is plump and round, with ripe plum and blackberry fruit. It's medium-bodied, with soft tannins bolstered by crisp acidity. Excellent with hearty stews.



bnawinegroup.com

Volunteer 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley; \$28). Elegant, rich, and savory, with succulent red berry and cherry flavors, a light touch of spicy oak, and polished tannins. Excellent balance.

Whitehall Lane Winery & Vineyards 2013 Leonardini Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley; \$85). Dark, dense black fruit is nonetheless sweet and juicy, coated in creamy vanilla. While the tannins are muscular now, this red's a fine fit for medium-rare rib-eye. One judge noted: "I'd love to taste this in 2020."

14 Hands Winery 2013 "The Reserve" Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills; \$30)

Adelaida 2013 Viking Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Adelaida District, Paso Robles, California; \$80)

Antica 2013 Antinori Family Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley; \$55)