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The Ten Best Wines of 2015

Another year of drinking amazing wine reminds me that we have so many hard-working winemakers to be thankful for in this world. Each time I open a bottle of wine that gives me a thrill I offer up a silent word of thanks to the individuals who labored over the vine, who pruned, picked, hauled, loaded, stirred, schlepped and tasted, tasted, to make something of beauty. Each bottle that thrills me gets recorded in my book of tasting notes and at the end of the year I review them all. This is a “highlights” list of 365 days (well, minus a few days off for beer) of tasting wine. These wines made the cut because they rose to the top on the day I tasted them. Wine, like all things, has good days and bad days. I only wish I had space for the many other amazing wines I tasted this year. (Note: the list is in no particular order and prices vary.)



2010 Yangarra Estate High Sands Grenache: This Australian wine is so compelling, both in taste and in story. Crafted from a single, lonesome plot of old vine Grenache that dates back to 1946, the wine shows a sour cherry over dried herbs on the nose. It’s silky but not simple. We served a bottle at a big dinner party and the whole table loved this wine, both before and during dinner. (\$75 - \$100)

2010 Marques de Riscal Rioja Baron de Chirel Reserva: This (mostly tempranillo) wine is proof that Rioja is region to watch for ultra-premium wines. Decadent spice on the nose complimented by a satiny texture with great structure. The dried cherry, tobacco, forest and dark chocolate notes are sublime. Guzzle it now, or age for a decade or two. Wonderful with roasted lamb. (\$75)

2003 Tenute Silvio Nardi Brunello di Montalcino: The 2003 vintage of this elegant wine is in its prime—scrappy and voluptuous at the same time with weight and seriousness but dancing fruit too. For interesting background on the winery, read my story on winery owner, [Emilia Nardi HERE](#). (\$45 - \$55)

Red Wine Value of the YEAR: 2012 Aia Vecchia “Lagone” Toscana IGT: This blend of merlot, cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc hails from the Bolgheri region of Tuscany. It’s a happy wine with abundant black cherry, dried herbs and spice over vanilla. Pop and pour this tonight and raise a glass to finding a delicious bargain. (\$15)

White Wine Value of the YEAR: 2014 Cowhorn Vineyard Spiral 36 Southern Oregon: This beguiling blend of viognier, roussanne, and marsanne yields a ripe and succulent wine with notes of hazelnuts and lemon cream. Tropical fruits on the palate with good acidity to keep things intriguing. Made from Demeter Certified Biodynamic and Stellar Certified Organic vineyards. Will age beautifully too, you’ll get a lot of wine for \$28.

2011 Suavia Le Rive Bianco Veronese IGT: This white wine is juicy and lush with peach notes, cardamom, exotic fruits and mineral threads. Made from over-ripe 100% Garganega grapes, the wine has some residual sugar, but it’s not obvious or cloying because of the good natural acidity. It was perfect with a spicy pepperoni pizza. (\$35)

2012 Buty Rediviva of the Stones, Rockgarden Estate: Buty was one of the first wineries in [Washington](#) state to blend interesting combinations of syrah and cabernet sauvignon. Cultivated from certified organic grapes in the Walla Walla appellation, this wine has lacy notes of lavender folded into rich earth and dark cherry notes. It’s pure elegance in the glass with a supple texture, complexity and richness. (\$60)

2011 Don Melchor Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon: Wines from Chile don’t cross my path often enough, but this one did, and with the recent release of the movie about the Chilean miners, *The 33*, it seems quite fitting to recognize an emblematic wine of Chile. The wine is named for the founder of Concha y Toro winery, Don Melchor, and is styled like a French Bordeaux—intense and fragrant with black cherry and mocha on the palate. The sculpted and precise tannins and can easily tolerate a decade or more of aging. (\$125)

2010 Fasi Crest Syrah, Private Reserve: This silky syrah made from 100% organic grapes was a nice surprise from a relatively unknown region in California: Madera. The San Joaquin River offers cooling influence on the vineyards, keeping the ripe blackberry fruit fresh and elegant. Loved the anise and tobacco notes too. Rich and complex with a nice freshness and long finish. (\$29)

1994 Taylor Fladgate Vintage Port: The 1994 vintage has been universally declared by growers and producers as one of the finest of the last century, and it also happens to be the year I married my husband of 21 years—so I'm a trifle biased. The wine earned 100 points from The Wine Spectator and shared the title of Wine of The Year in 1997. She's waited 19 years in bottle and is ready for prime time enjoyment. (\$400)