

FOOD & WINE

THE WINE LOVER'S ISSUE

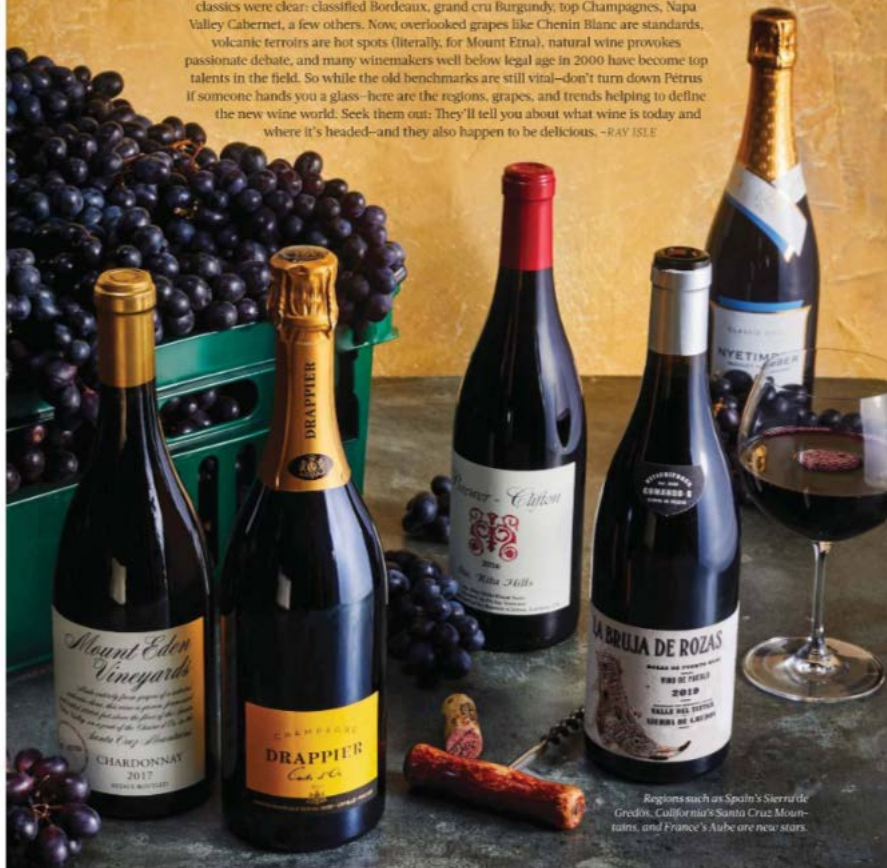


**GARLIC-CAPER LAMB
CHOPS WITH SALSA VERDE**
*paired with 2017 Ferraton
Père & Fils La Matinière
Crozes-Hermitage Syrah*
P. 40

BOTTLE SERVICE

The 2021 Wine Lover's Guide 61 bottles, regions, and winemakers you need to know now

THE PAST TWO DECADES have seen vast changes in the world of wine. Before 2000, the classics were clear: classified Bordeaux, grand cru Burgundy, top Champagnes, Napa Valley Cabernet, a few others. Now, overlooked grapes like Chenin Blanc are standards, volcanic terroirs are hot spots (literally, for Mount Etna), natural wine provokes passionate debate, and many winemakers well below legal age in 2000 have become top talents in the field. So while the old benchmarks are still vital—don't turn down Pétrus if someone hands you a glass—here are the regions, grapes, and trends helping to define the new wine world. Seek them out: They'll tell you about what wine is today and where it's headed—and they also happen to be delicious. —RAY ISLE



Regions such as Spain's Sierra de Gredos, California's Santa Cruz Mountains, and France's Aube are new stars.

Many of the Republic of Georgia's wines come from vineyards in the Kakheti valley, under the peaks of the towering Caucasus Mountains. *ovosviti*: Spain's Sierra de Gredos region under snow; its ancient Grenache vines have survived 70 or more winters like this one.



10 NEED-TO-KNOW REGIONS

MOUNT ETNA SICILY

Make wine on an active volcano? Great idea, if you're after the particular character that volcanic soils give to wine (up until the thing erupts, of course). Etna is one of Italian wine's recent success stories, producing aromatic, detailed reds and stony whites unlike anything else from Sicily—or from Italy at all for that matter. Passopisciaro, an early star, remains so on the strength of wines like its ruby-hued, red currant-rich **2018 Passopisciaro Passorosso** (\$39).

BEKAA VALLEY LEBANON

Lebanon's wine culture is ancient, but American awareness of it has only just started to rise. About time: the Bekaa Valley is an ideal place to grow grapes, with warm days, cool nights, and rocky limestone soils. Start with the **2017 Domaine des Tourelles Red** (\$20), its succulent black currant and mint notes wrapped up in fine-grained tannins, and then explore other names like Ixsir, Château Kefraya, Château Ksara, Château Marsyas, and of course the groundbreaking Château Musar.

THE ROCKS DISTRICT OREGON

If there's an award for most appropriately named wine region, the Rocks District wins it. The surface of this subsection of the Oregon side of the Walla Walla Valley AVA is covered in fist-size stones. But give Syrah vines a chance to take root and you'll get magic in return—black-peppery, powerful, savory reds. Buty Winery blends that Syrah with Cabernet Sauvignon for its alluringly spicy **2016 Buty Rediviva of the Stones** (\$60).

Young vintners in Spain's austere Sierra de Gredos region took inspiration from France's legendary Château Rayas to focus on the Grenache variety's transparency and grace.

STA. RITA HILLS CALIFORNIA

The first significant vineyard was planted here in 1971, but budding awareness of how great its Pinot Noirs could be hit in the early 2000s, and now its wines are cool-climate benchmarks. Try the **2016 Brewer-Clifton Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$40) to taste the brambly wild berries and faint salinity that characterize these wines.

GEORGIA

Archaeological findings near Georgia's capital city of Tbilisi show wine being produced here nearly 8,000 years ago; on the other hand, U.S. awareness of Georgian wines dates more to, say, 2010. Traditionally made in huge clay *qvevri*, these skin-contact whites (i.e., orange wines) and vivid reds thrilled sommeliers when they started to appear here. Track down the savory, amber-hued **2019 Orgo Dila-O Rkatsiteli-Mtsvane** (\$17) to see why.

SIERRA DE GREDOS SPAIN

Mountainous and austere, the Sierra de Gredos region west of Madrid started to gain acclaim 10 years or so ago as a source for gorgeous cool-climate Grenache, as young vintners took inspiration from France's legendary Château Rayas to focus on the variety's transparency and grace. The **2019 Comando G La Bruja de Rozas** (\$30) is characteristic, with its translucent ruby hue and herb-scented wild strawberry flavors.



SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS CALIFORNIA

The Santa Cruz Mountains have a storied winemaking history, but it seems only in recent years that wine lovers have realized how amazing the vineyards are. Whether the region does Pinot, Chardonnay, or Cabernet better is an open question, but there's no doubt that the lemon blossom-scented **2017 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Chardonnay** (\$60) is as age-worthy and complex as any great white Burgundy.

THE AUBE CHAMPAGNE, FRANCE

For a long time, the Aube's grapes were used as anonymous components in big-name brands. But recently, this region in Champagne's far south has exploded into view. The Drappier family, which has been here since 1808, provides a great introduction to the Aube's strengths with the Pinot Noir-driven, nonvintage **Champagne Drappier Carte d'Or** (\$49).

SWARTLAND SOUTH AFRICA

Lying along South Africa's western coast, this region of rolling scrubland is also home to extraordinary old-vine Chenin Blancs, Syrahs, and field blends. The Swartland Revolution group of winemakers ignited awareness, pushing a more elegant style that thrilled wine lovers around the world. Founding members Andrea and Chris Mullineux's **2017 Mullineux Syrah** (\$38), meaty and white peppery, speaks of the place brilliantly.

ENGLAND

Fifty years ago, southern England was too cold to ripen Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, the varieties used for great sparkling wine. Thirty years ago? Not true anymore. And about 15 years ago, English sparkling took off. The best have thrilling acidity and incredible focus, like the **Nyetimber Classic Cuvée Multi-Vintage** (\$55). It isn't inexpensive, but it rivals similarly priced wines from, you know, those French fellows across the Channel.

5 WINES THAT ROCKETED TO POPULARITY

Once ignored, now powerhouses: these are today's super-successes.



2001

MALBEC

Argentina turned Malbec, once a forgotten variety, into one of the world's most popular wines. The U.S. boom started around 2001. The peppery **2018 Catena Malbec** (\$24) makes it clear why.



2005

PROSECCO

Champagne, elegant; Prosecco, fun (and far less pricey). There's the recipe for a jet-powered ascent in popularity. The citrusy **NV Nino Franco Rustico** (\$20) is one of the best around.



2007

GROWER CHAMPAGNE

Grower Champagnes (single-estate, family-owned) hit wine lists in the mid-2000s and have never left. **Champagne Larmandier-Bernier Rosé de Saignée** (\$210) is a stellar example.



2008

ROSÉ

Imagine: Before the mid-2000s, dry rosé wine was a thoroughly dead category. **Whispering Angel Rosé** (\$25), its 2019 vintage juicy with wild strawberry notes, helped change that forever.



2014

RED BLENDS

Juicy, ripe, and often with a faint hint of sweetness, red blends stormed supermarket shelves in the 2010s. **The Prisoner** (\$40) is the archetype—and far better than many of its imitators.

4 BIG DIVES INTO THE PAST

ONE MAJOR WINE trend over recent years has been what could be called a love affair with the distant past. Sometimes that means rediscovering older winemaking approaches; sometimes, vintners rescuing forgotten grape varieties from near extinction. These four wines are star examples of cutting-edge winemakers using the best of ancient techniques to make brilliant and boundary-pushing bottles.



ORANGE WINES

When white grapes ferment on their skins, you get the amber hue and tannic notes of orange wines. In the early 2000s, this ancient approach was picked up by vintners in Italy's Friuli region—the savory **2016 Dario Princic Sivi Pinot** (\$57) is one stellar example.



PÉT-NATS

Gently sparkling, often cloudy with yeast particles, and usually lightly sweet, these quaffable bubbles burst back into view in the 2010s, first from France (pét-nat's homeland) and now from everywhere—even Texas, with the lively **2019 William Chris Pétillant Naturel** (\$25).



FORGOTTEN GRAPES

Greek Malagousia, Spanish Godello, Italy's Nascetta: these nearly extinct grapes have all been rediscovery success stories, thanks to enterprising wine growers. Try the stony, fragrant **2019 Elvio Cogno Anas-Cetta** (\$39) to see what drives the desire to save these varieties.



HISTORIC VINEYARDS

Morgan Twain-Peterson has been at the forefront of a movement to save California's historic vineyards from being plowed under. Visit historicvineyard.org for a list of these sites, maybe while sipping a glass of his luscious **2019 Bedrock Old Vine Zinfandel** (\$28).



Loire vintner Nicolas Joly is a leading figure in biodynamic agriculture, which treats the vineyard and everything around it as one ecological whole.

3 WAYS WINE WENT GREEN

In the realm of agricultural products, vintners throughout the world have been at the forefront of environmental awareness.

BIODYNAMICS

This organic, quasi-spiritual farming approach, which also produces some very good wines, arrived in the wine world in the late 1960s. But it took the magnetic Loire vintner Nicolas Joly's founding of the Return to Terroir group in 2001 to bring broad awareness to it. His gorgeous, mineraly **2016 Nicolas Joly Clos de la Coulée de Serrant** (\$122) is arguably still the defining biodynamic wine.

NATURAL WINE

Wine's most controversial topic in the past decade, natural wine's credo is best described as "nothing added, nothing removed," meaning as little human intervention as possible. It's a walking-on-the-cliff's-edge approach; when things go wrong, weirdness results. But when things go right, as with the **2019 Arianna Occhipinti SP6 Rosso** (\$36), full of intense wild-berry energy, the results can be brilliant.

GREEN WINERIES

In 2006, Oregon's Stoller Winery earned the first LEED Gold certification in the world, a groundbreaking step in the movement toward sustainable, eco-friendly winery structures—a direction soon followed by many others. Plus, the winery's **2018 Stoller Dundee Hills Pinot Noir** (\$35), with its lovely raspberry fruit and silky texture, shows that doing ecological good is no impediment to making excellent wine.

5 GRAPES THAT BROKE THROUGH

GRÜNER VELLTLINER

Austrian Grüner shot to visibility in the early 2000s but then took a back seat to other hot new varieties. In the 2010s, it rose again. The best Grüners are world-class, and even entry-level wines from top producers, like the flinty, spicy **2019 Alzinger Ried Mühlpöck Federspiel** (\$29), can be sublime.

ALBARIÑO

Minerally, even saline, with flavors that shift with the vintages between riper pineapple and sharper grapefruit, Albariño is one of the world's greatest seafood wines and, at this point, Spain's signature white grape. The **2019 Pazo Señorans** (\$24)—floral, citrusy, vivid—is a benchmark example.

CHEMIN BLANC

Never has a grape so consigned to the realm of "eh, whatever" so completely about-faced into being obsessed over by sommeliers and wine lovers alike. To see why, check out the **2019 Domaine de la Taille Aux Loups Remus** (\$31), with its stony green-apple fruit, from France's Loire Valley.

ASSYRTIKO

A wave of ambitious winemakers changed the face of Greek wine in the 1990s, but it took the U.S. until the late 2000s to catch on to exactly how good those wines have become. Try the **2019 Domaine Sigalas Assyrtiko** (\$42), the tart citrus flavors contain a hint of seaside salinity. You'll be a convert.

DRY RIESLING

No, Riesling is not new. But U.S. awareness of the fact that it is not always sweet, sure is, is no. Head to Germany for affordable bottles from great producers, like the taut, focused **2019 Robert Weil Rheingau Riesling Trocken** (\$28).





Andréa and Robin McBride of *Black Girl Magic Wines* (LEFT) and Rolando Herrera of *Mi Sueño* (MIDDLE)



7 NEW STAR WINEMAKERS

RAÚL PÉREZ

No winemaker in Spain has drawn more acclaim in recent years than Raúl Pérez. From his home base in Bierzo, he makes wine throughout northwest Spain to Portugal and beyond, working winemaking magic with Spanish varieties such as Albariño, Godello, Mencía, and more. His **2018 Raúl Pérez Ultraie Saint Jacques** (\$20), made from the Mencía grape, is one of the best values in wine, period.

NTSIKI BIYELA

A college scholarship led Ntsiki Biyela, who grew up in the small village of KwaZulu-Natal, to study winemaking; that led to a part-time job at a winery and a post at Stellenbosch as the first Black woman winemaker in South Africa. There, her wines began to win awards, and today, she runs her own brand, Aslina; seek out the cedary, cassis-rich **2019 Aslina Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$30).

ROLANDO HERRERA

Rolando Herrera makes excellent wine, and he also embodies the American dream. After emigrating from Mexico as a teenager, he got a job as a vineyard worker at Stag's Leap Wine Cellars; soon, he was cellar master, and soon after that, he was a winemaker. Today, he owns his own winery, Mi Sueño; to taste his work, seek out the lemon-creamy **2017 Mi Sueño Los Carneros Chardonnay** (\$42).

SEBASTIÁN ZUCCARDI

Think Argentine Malbec has to be big and heavy? Sebastián Zuccardi thinks otherwise. Zuccardi has pushed his family's winery toward using high-altitude vineyards, giving a newfound freshness to their wines, and engaged in exhaustive vineyard studies to allow for distinctive single-vineyard reds. The **2019 Zuccardi Concreto Malbec** (\$40), floral and peppery, gives a sense of his vision.

CRISTIANA TIBERIO

Abruzzo may be Italy's least known but most exciting wine region; one reason for that is Cristiana Tiberio. Her wines have become wine list must-haves in the past few years, particularly her long-aging, single-vineyard Fonte Canale Trebbiano d'Abruzzo. That wine is pricey, but her basic, citrus-scented **2019 Trebbiano d'Abruzzo** (\$20) is also superb and a steal.

ANDRÉA AND ROBIN MCBRIDE

Here's a fairy-tale: Half sisters Andréa and Robin McBride grew up separately in Marlborough, New Zealand, and Monterey, California; when they met, they found a mutual interest in winemaking. What's no fairy-tale is making it in a business dominated by white men as two Black women: That's where talent, ambition, and incredible drive come in. Seek out their lively **2019 Black Girl Magic Rosé** (\$20).



1 FRENCH REVOLUTION TO SALUT!

TODAY IN CHAMPAGNE, there are more women *chefs des caves* and CEOs than ever before, and that's partly thanks to groups such as La Transmission Femmes en Champagne. As Anne Malaisange of Champagne A.R. Lenoble, one of the group's cofounders, says, "I took over our estate from my father in 1993. [and] I had to fight for many years to acquire legitimacy and to gain credibility. It seemed obvious to me that [I had a responsibility to help other women in Champagne." She's joined in La Transmission by Vitale Taittinger, co-owner of Champagne Taittinger; Maggie Henriquez, CEO of Champagne Krug; and many others. Check out their organization at la-transmission-champagne.com, possibly while sipping a glass of the minerally **NV Champagne A.R. Lenoble Rosé Terroirs Chouilly-Bisseuil** (\$63)—an inspiring wine, for sure.

4 WAYS BIG WINE GOT SHOWN THE DOOR

IF THERE'S ONE stylistic trend that has marked the past seven or eight years, it's a turn away from high-alcohol, super-ripe wines—red or white—toward lighter, more savory styles. Cooler-climate regions; earlier harvesting; renewed attention paid to wines like Beaujolais, once out of fashion for its lightness, and classic Napa Valley producers known more for balance than massiveness ... well. Elegance is in, as these four paradigm-shifting categories amply demonstrate.

COOL-CLIMATE CHARDONNAY

Cooler regions make Chardonnays that tend to be lower in alcohol, with bright acidity and less overtly ripe fruit. Chablis is the touchstone, but regions like Australia's Yarra Valley, where the vibrant **2020 Giant Steps Chardonnay** (\$36) comes from, are rising fast.

CALIFORNIA RE-ENVISIONED

Winemakers Alex Krause and John Locke are emblematic of a cadre of California vintners who started aiming for elegant, lighter styles in the past decade. Their violet-scented **2019 Birichano Bechthold Vineyard Cinsault** (\$26) captures this sensibility perfectly.

CRU BEAUJOLAIS

Cru Beaujolais all but vanished under an ocean of Beaujolais Nouveau before sommeliers fell newly in love with them in the mid-2000s. The silky **2019 Jean-Paul Thévenet Morgon** (\$40) feels so vibrantly alive that it's impossible not to ask for another glass.

CLASSIC NAPA COMES BACK

In the early 2000s, Napa Cabernet went ultra-ripe; the most bloated were like a wine version of Juggernaut from Deadpool 2. But some winemakers stuck to their love for power balanced with elegance, as the **2017 Corison Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon** (\$100) shows.

