



Southbury Package Store Uncorked



SPS 2021 Top Ten Wines of the Year

As we hurdle toward the close of 2021, two things are inevitable: Holiday decorations and lists. Halloween decorations give way to Thanksgiving which quickly yield to Christmas, Hannukah and New Year's trimmings. Christmas lists are prepared for Santa, shopping lists, To-Do lists and the always ubiquitous 'Best Of' and 'Top 10' lists. In an act of shameless self-promotion, we have decided to compile our own 'Top 10 Wines of the Year' list. After putting our collective heads together, James, Jim and I have produced a list of our most memorable wines for 2021. The criteria are simple. Wines that impress! The collection is eclectic. Reds and whites, from five different countries ranging in price from \$15 to \$60. There is something for everybody. Some are great examples of their respective regions; some are incredibly good for the money. ALL are worthy of your attention.

#10 Luigi Oddero Barolo 2016 (\$59.98) opens with a classic Nebbiolo/Barolo nose of perfumed berries, pine-forest, red cherries, bit of leather and a hint of tobacco. Medium-full bodied on the palate with significant but approachable tannins. Classically crafted, savory and complex. A wine that opens in the glass and reveals more of itself with every sip. What more could you desire...except maybe a good Bistecca to accompany?

#9 Chanin Chardonnay 'Los Alamos Vineyard' 2017 (\$34.98) shows aromas of Meyer lemon, golden apple, ripe peach, followed by hints of smoke and toast. It possesses a gorgeous mouth coating texture, rich but not big or fat. The beautiful fruit that is backed by wonderful acidity, keeping it fresh and inviting through the finish. Overall, this Chardonnay is simply delicious now, yet should continue to drink beautifully for years to come.

#8 Alexakis Assyrtiko 2020 (\$15.98) is tank-fermented and aged sur lie for three months. Bright yellow color with green hues. The bouquet displays aromas of passion fruit, mango, and citrus. Balanced taste with crispy acidity and a characteristic minerality around the palate. Long and lasting finish with a unique flinty, saline quality. Try this with any shellfish or simply prepared fish or even by itself. While it's bone dry, the juicy acidity makes this extremely refreshing. Uniquely delicious!

#7 Le Pigeolet des Brunier Vin de Pays de Vaucluse 2019 (\$19.98) is mellow and warm just like a miniature Châteauneuf. It has loads of red fruit, a plush mouthfeel and plenty of backbone provided by round tannins. Although easy to appreciate young, Le Pigeolet 2019 has the stuffing to improve with cellaring for an additional 3 to 5 years, providing you can keep your hands off it...which we doubt you'll be able to do. Probably wise to pick up a case or two.

#6 Chappellet Mountain Cuvée 2019 (\$36.98) is the quintessential Napa Valley red wine. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (44%), Merlot (33%) with the remainder comprised of almost equal amounts of Malbec, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. This blend of Bordeaux grape varieties is well-built and lasting on the palate. Concentrated layers of blueberries, blackberries, red currant as well as some clove and vanilla. Mild tannins from aging in French oak barrels. Subtle hints of chocolate and black pepper as well. Aeration brings in flavors of clove and sage. Great with steak.

#5 Bodegas del Palacio de Fefiñanes Albariño 2019 is a stellar rendition of this wine which has been the benchmark for the grape, Albariño, for the last 100 years. It is without a doubt one of the top Albariño in Spain and you'll find it on many of Spain's top wine lists. Grown on the Atlantic coast at just a few feet above sea level, this wine is as brisk and refreshing. Fermented in stainless-steel, the nose driven by aromas of apricot and peach with notes of lemon and green apple. Dry on the palate, with flavors of orchard fruit, lime blossom and zest, mineral and white melon. The finish is long, stony, and precise with lingering notes of lime. Really impressive. A wine that compels one to taste it again and again. Bivalves and fishes everywhere beware!

#4 Carpineto Chianti Classico Riserva 2016 shows a nose that is deeply perfumed and spicy. Medium to full body in the mouth it

is long, spicy and grippy with a polished, mouthwatering finish. There is modernity with its fruit profile and balanced tannins but there's also an earthy, leathery element that gives the wine an old-world sensibility. Aged for at least one year in a combination of French Barriques and Slovenian oak casks, followed by 6 months in steel and cement vats. It is bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. This wine checks all the boxes for a Chianti Classico Riserva.

#3 Domaine de Dionysos Cairanne 'La Cigarette' 2016 is a red blend of Grenache, Syrah, and a small amount of Mourvedre. After fermentation the wine ages for twenty-four months in concrete vat before bottling. This wine offers both intensity and generosity. You will enjoy the jammy black fruits enhanced by pepper and mint nuances. Rich on the palate with velvety tannins echoing the fruity and spicy character of the nose. There is a finishing note of licorice. Ready for drinking with hearty dishes, charcuterie or by itself in front of a fire.

#2 Calx Primitivo 2020 (\$15.98) has a different take on what Primitivo can do and be! Part of this is the unique limestone soil where the grapes are grown and part of this is the vision of winemaker Filippo. He has opted pick earlier, ferment in only stainless-steel, use only natural yeast and limit the maceration time. The limestone soils impart a freshness and fine acidity to the Primitivo grape, yielding taut wines, with notes of zingy red berries and dried figs. Think of this as the light-hearted, easy-going sibling to Zinfandel's often broody potency. Light enough to enjoy with a slight chill, equally as delicious at room temp. Try with anything off the grill, BBQ, spicy meatballs in tomato sauce, charcuterie, and cheese boards. Versatile, lively, refreshing, and ready to drink now.

#1 Our Number One wine comes from, the Mâconnaise, a wine region often dismissed by wine lovers. This wine astonishes, defies expectations, and shows extraordinarily well. It is the best Chardonnay we have tasted this year. Domaine du Clos des Rocs Mâcon-Loché 'En Près Forêt' 2019 farmer-winemaker-owner is Olivier Giroux. He does not share the work habits of some of his more well-heeled neighbors in Burgundy. He says "it is just me here—I'm a peasant. I tend the vineyards. I make the wine. I take care of the marketing." Olivier's work ethic and dogged self-reliance produce single vineyard wines of stunning purity and character. Giroux farms a total of 8.6 hectares organically, ferments using indigenous yeast and adds nothing to the wine except for a touch of sulfur at bottling. This wine comes from a half hectare parcel of 25-year-old vines, with a southeast exposition. The areas of Mâcon, Fuissé and Loché are blessed with warm sun, limestone-rich soil, and gentle sloping hillsides, perfect for wine growing. Olivier's philosophy of zero pesticides and dedication to biodynamic farming is rooted in his aim of renewing life in his vineyards and producing great wines. Olivier Giroux bought Clos des Rocs about 19 years ago and his hard work and determination to create the best wines has paid off. This wine is fresh and clean, showing a nice bit of richness balanced by bright acidity, and in this excellent vintage shows more depth and complexity than is usual. Medium-bodied, dry, and aged primarily in neutral French oak, "En Près Forêt" is a stunner of a Burgundy for the price. Pears, apples, white flowers, lemon curd, and minerals from the nose through the zingy, rich finish. Some connoisseurs might call this 'poor man's Meursault'. We just call it DELICIOUS...and our WINE OF THE YEAR.

A Special Wine

Pelaverga: mysterious, ethereal and among the rarest wines in the world. There are only 18 hectares (47 acres) of Verduno Pelaverga in existence, making it one of the smallest appellations in Italy. That land is divided up between a dozen producers, collectively making approximately 140,000 bottles every year. The light color of Fratelli Alessandria Verduno Pelaverga 2019 (\$28.98) belies the power within, and one is tempted to think of Pelaverga as another light bodied red wine appropriate for course one, salami and crudo. It is so much more. Try for yourself. A real wine mind opener.



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THE LIST

Just like Santa, my wife Judy always finds it easier to stay organized when she makes a to do list. In her great wisdom, I am offering you a list of wines to aid you for the winter holiday season.

Perfect white wine for the Feast of the Seven Fishes: From a little-known DOC comes a wine heralded in the Lake Garda area for centuries but has barely scratched the US import market. **Domini Veneti Custoza 2020 (\$15.98)** is a crisp blend of Trebbiano, Garganega and Fernanda. Three indigenous varietals that produce an elegant and eminently quaffable white packed full of white peach, herbs with grassy notes and baking spices. Impress the in-laws with this selection.

A gift for the "wine expert" and doesn't cost more than \$50: The **Domaine Simon Blanchard 'Au Champ de la Fenêtre 2018 (\$39.98)** is just such a bottle. Last year I touted the Château Garraud 2010 for this category. While we remain in Bordeaux, the style of wine does an about face. The Garraud was assembled in a much more traditional Bordelaise style. Built for the long haul, which is why the 2010 was and still is singing. This offering from Blanchard is 100% Merlot and while from Bordeaux, it feels more Burgundian in concept. A single parcel of organic, hand-picked grapes, whole berry fermentation with the implementation of only native, wild yeasts are allowed. The result? A stunner of epic proportions for this price. Soft, silky and jam packed with wood tones but not overdone. Absolutely DELICIOUS.

We're going to dinner, and we want to bring something different and good: I'm imaging a "Friends-giving" or maybe even a traditional, family Thanksgiving, but don't narrow the occasion for this bottle. **Jean-Paul Dubost Brouilly 'Pierreux' 2019 (\$26.98)** is far more than the average Gamay-based Beaujolais wine many of us have come to love. No, this wine far exceeds any expectations of that beautiful, light jam-packed fruit bomb known as Beaujolais Nouveau and even classically styled, denser, and more complex Beaujolais Villages. From a single vineyard site in Brouilly this wine rocks (literally – granite soil stones). The mineral component of this wine is intense, and the depth of iris, violet, and ripe red fruits on the palate make this wine a can't miss. Be sure to decant before serving. One bottle is not enough, grab two.

We're doing a grab bag at work, and I want to make it look like I spent more than \$20: This one's an easy one. Our October Wine of the Month **Red Phoenix Red Blend 2018 (\$19.98)** is a real crowd pleaser. The wine is both barrel fermented and barrel aged. The result is a dark colored red, with a nose that 'pops' in the glass and flavor that begins with a capital F. This delightful blend leads with aromas of ripe red fruits and vanilla. On the palate, the wine is concentrated and intense with mouth-coating tannins, layered red fruit, and hints of dark chocolate that make it seem more serious. The oak is not subtle, but it's well-integrated, and the vanilla and caramel notes are very enjoyable on the finish. It's easy to make a wine big; it takes skill to make a wine big, layered, and rich yet, light on its feet, all at once. Try this over-achiever and see if you don't agree!

I need a special bottle for Christmas Day: Bill Harlan is synonymous with high-end, sought-after Cabernet Sauvignon and his three wine estates; Harlan, Bond, and Promontory. A quick Google search on any of these and you'll find some prices that will make you do a double take. No, those prices are correct. However, Mr. Harlan is a man of the people! At first the project started as an experiment with the Harlan family and some very lucky friends drinking the experimental results until Bill was satisfied. After years of blending barrels made

from younger vines of the three previously mentioned power wines, he finally settled on an assemblage and launched The Mascot in 2008. **The Mascot 2016 (\$149.98)** is a powerful expression of Cabernet Sauvignon. Amazingly enough it is not overdone. The fruit, acidity, and oak are well integrated. In a word: BALANCED. You can serve it now after a healthy decanting session, but this wine will age well into the future. ENJOY! – This wine will be open for our December 18th Cru Tasting!

Ho! Ho! Hope this list helps or at least gives you some forethought on the season to come. Of course, we are here to help. We can put together a volume order of gifts on a budget or meticulously aid in your selection of the perfect bottle. Cheers!

Bubbles

Of course, with all the activity, celebrations, parties, and festivities of the holiday season sparkling wine should be a common occurrence and a natural fit. Here are a few selections you should seek out:

Pierre Sparr Crémant d'Alsace Brut Rosé NV (\$19.98) is one of those wines often overlooked in my shop. One of the reasons why it is often passed by is the region in which it comes from: Alsace, France. The wines of Alsace are often conflated with German wines due to their geographical proximity as well as their bottle shape being similar. Too often Alsatian wines are dismissed as sweet like their German counterparts. Nothing could be further from the truth. When you see Alsace, think DRY! This bubbly rosé comprised of 100% Pinot Noir has a flirtatious fruitiness that entices larger sips. Lively acidity frames your palate with delicate bubbles and flavors of raspberry, strawberry, and a touch of peach. A tremendous value for sparkling wine on your holiday table.

Schramsberg is a legacy sparkling winery in Napa, California. Since 1862 the vineyards at the Schramsberg estate have been producing classic California Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to be used in the production of a methode champenoise style. **Schramsberg Mirabelle Brut NV (\$29.98)** is produced using 57% Chardonnay grapes with the balance being Pinot Noir. Coming from cooler grape growing climates helps this bubbly wine offer a fresh and bright touch of acidity followed by fruit aromas of orange cream, peach, melon, apricot, and poached pear. The palate is crisp on entry with a tangy full-bodied finish. YUMMY!

Today's global market is nothing short of baffling to the end consumer. Over-stocked, under-stocked, inflation, over-priced, etc., etc., etc. In the world of sparkling wine, Champagne has taken some of the largest hits with prices and availability being inconsistent at best. To sum it up, finding value has been difficult. Have no fear. At SPS we have tasted through dozens of Champagnes to seek out the best values we could find. **Champagne Charles Mignon Cuvée Comte de Marne Rosé Grand Cru NV (\$59.98)** is the proverbial needle in the haystack. Made from Chardonnay 70% and Pinot Noir 30% and aged for four years, the result is a delicately fizzed, fine glass of rosé. A rich, intense nose with a wide aromatic palate encompassing pears and plums with almond, hazelnut and white blossom, and throw in a honeyed, toasted touch. Don't pass this up. It won't last long.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

LIFE IS SHORT.... DRINK BETTER!

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