

Top 5 Wines

Choosing top five wines from the past year is tougher than you might imagine. I have the good fortune to try many wines that are not readily available, like the 1908 Australian Seppeltsfield Port. I only had an ounce of this majestic, concentrated, full of life, fortified wine, but it was an ethereal experience. Then there was 2003 Domaine de Chevalier Blanc from the Bordeaux region of Pessac-Leognan. It was crisp with wet stone, citrus and unusual depth for a white wine. I finally narrowed it down to the following wines that have their own special qualities. Some may be difficult to find and their price may relegate them to special occasions, but top wines should be drunk on special occasions whenever possible.



◀ **Carignan Domaine Du Gravillas "Lo Vielh" 2005 (Vin de Pays des Côtes de Brian, France)**

The grape Carignan is starting to get more widespread respect. Once thought of as a grape that can produce quantity not quality, it has proven that old vines and low yields can make a special wine indeed. Nicole and John Bojanowski are the people behind this wine. Nicole is from Languedoc, France and John is from Louisville. Nicole started making wine in 1999 and John joined her full time in 2001. They are a small domaine producing wine organically and pretty much by hand. The quality shows the individual care of the owners producing wines of elegance as opposed to power. The wine possesses black fruits, baking spices, a medium body with the flavors of black licorice and violets. Also try their white Menervois "L'in attendu." Around \$35.00



◀ **Châteauneuf-du-Pape Domaine Clos du Mont-Olivet 2007 (Rhône, France)**

If I had to list one wine region for my top wine for the last year it would be the Southern Rhône region of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. With a great string of vintages from 2003 to 2007, it is hard to pick a poor wine. With exceptional producers like Domaine Giraud, Domaine Des Senechaux, Domaine Le Vieux Donjon, Domaine Chapoutier and Chateau Fortia to mention only a few, it seems that the region is going from strength to strength. The name Châteauneuf-du-Pape means "new castle of the Pope" and refers to the time when there were two Popes, one in the Vatican and one near Avignon, where this wine comes from. The wine is mostly Grenache with small parts of Syrah and Mourvedre and has the delicious flavors of kirschwasser, red licorice, herbs de Provence and red cherries all in a silky full body. Under \$40.00

▶ **Tignanello Antinori 2006 (Tuscany, Italy)**

The Antinori family has made wine for over 600 years in Italy; they are true Tuscan royalty and now make wine in several regions of Italy and in other parts of the world. Made since 1971, Tignanello was a forerunner in the renaissance of Italian wine, removing the white grapes from the typical blend and making Tignanello from a single vineyard that started out as Chianti and then evolved into the first wine to age the Sangiovese grape in small oak barrels. The Antinori's continually increased quality and now Tignanello is considered one of the finest Italian wines made. Tignanello is made from a blend of 85% Sangiovese, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc. The wine is full-bodied but surprisingly approachable with the flavors of blackberry, black cherry, coffee, spice and red flowers. The wine is concentrated and age worthy. Around \$110.00



◀ **Chambertin Clos de Bèze Gérard Raphet 2002 (Burgundy, France)**

The greatest Pinot Noir on earth comes from Burgundy. The hierarchy of quality follows a geographic region resembling a bull's-eye target, going from a larger area to the smallest area. So, the hierarchy of Burgundy is Regional, Village, Premier Cru and Grand Cru (the last two designate vineyards). This Chambertin Clos de Bèze is one of only 39 Grand Crus of Burgundy. Gérard Raphet is a small domaine making extremely high quality wines. The wine comes from a half-acre of 75-year-old vines, a minute production that is worth seeking out. It is medium-bodied, aged in 100 percent new oak but you can't tell as the crisp bright raspberry and cherry fruit is not overwhelmed by heavy oak flavor. Though a medium-bodied wine, it has all the aromatic complexity and layered flavors of a much beefier wine. Expect elegance with flavors of baking spices, minerals, light smoke and earth all in an absolutely beguiling silky texture. Around \$400.00



▶ **Shiraz Penfolds Grange 2004 (South Australia)**

Penfolds has produced Grange since 1951 and it is generally considered the most legendary wine of Australia. Grange is a blend of multiple vineyards and multiple districts all in South Australia, proving that the sum of the parts may be better than the individual parts. Penfolds adds a small percentage of Cabernet Sauvignon to Grange and ages the wine in 100% new American oak barrels. Penfolds makes a huge quantity and variety of wine and is owned by the gigantic company Foster's, but still manages to keep the quality of Grange very high. This is a mouthful of opaque purple wine with the flavors of vanilla, oak, baking spice, currant, plum and cherry. It is forward and powerful, smooth in texture but with a couple more years of aging will be a supple, full-bodied, rich wine. Around \$350.00



USA
Flowers Pinot Noir
Joel Gott Chardonnay

Australia
Two Hands Bella's Garden Shiraz
Marquis Phillips Sarah's Blend

France
Santa Duc Cotes du Rhone
Chateau Guilot Rose'

New Zealand
Cloudy Bay Sauvignon Blanc
Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc

Argentina
Tikal Patriota
Burgans Albarino

Spain
Mas Doix Salanques
Artazuri Tinto Navarra



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