

THE TOP TEN

99 POINTS

1

CHÂTEAU D'YQUEM 2001, 1er Grand Cru Classé, Sauternes Bordeaux

Many pundits, including Sandrine Caraby, the woman who made the 2001, think this could be one of the greatest d'Yquems ever produced. "It takes concentration to a new level" she says. We concur: the finish never does seem to end. It is not yet ready to drink and somewhat reserved, but has pitch perfect acid-sugar balance, harmony and complexity. Descriptors like tangerine, pineapple, apricot, fig, honey, pine, smoke and vanillin from barrel ageing, can only grapple to describe it. Stunning, \$650-\$800

98 POINTS

2

PENFOLDS 2004 Block 42 Kalimna Cabernet Sauvignon Barossa Valley, South Australia

Block 42 is hallowed vineyard ground. First planted in 1886, it is the oldest cabernet sauvignon vineyard in Oz and is said by Penfolds to contain vines of "ancient genetic disposition". For over 110 years the vines planted on their own rootstock have given some of the most flavourful mineral rich fruit seen anywhere in the world. In 2004 Block 42 sings again: black fruits, chocolate, grip, power and gobs of weight and length. This is a blockbuster cabernet. Think Latour or Ridge Montebello, with a long life ahead. \$330

97 POINTS

3

CHÂTEAU DE BEAUCASTEL 2001 Hommage à Jacques Perrin Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Southern Rhone Valley, France

The Hommage à Jacques Perrin is a 60/20/10/10 blend of mourvèdre/grenache/counoise/syrah and in the case of the mourvèdre it is all extremely old, low-yielding vines. To say this is a cult wine is an understatement. Just finding some is an accomplishment. But unlike too many 'cult' wines, Hommage delivers. The '01 is just losing its baby fat and sweet edge as the mourvèdre begins to dominate. Rich, dense, clean and with peppery, savoury meaty flavours and soft supple tannins. A monster in waiting that should sleep comfortably for a decade or more in bottle. Drink it if you must but cellar if you can. Approximately, 5,000 bottles produced. \$200 - \$250

97 POINTS

4

PENFOLDS BIN 60A 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon - Shiraz South Australia

The latest reincarnation of Bin 60A began with select parcels of Coonawarra cabernet mixed with Koonunga Hill and Magill shiraz. The finished wine holds 56 per cent Block 20 Coonawarra cabernet and 44 per cent shiraz from Kalimna Blocks 4 and 14 and 44 and Koonunga Hill Block 53G all hand-picked and fermented in stainless steel and open top vessels before finishing the process in 300-litre new French oak barriques for 15 months. The nose is young and powerful, showing predominately dark fruit (plums) and raisins with black pepper, macchiato and nutty leather nuances. Fabulous structure and weight and no doubt destined for greatness. \$330

97 POINTS

5

GLAETZER 2004 Amon-Ra Shiraz Barossa Valley, South Australia

Amon-Ra, the King of all Gods, is Ben Glaetzer's moniker for his best shiraz. After a difficult '03 vintage, where a single day's rain wiped out most of the crop, the '04 Amon-Ra is all it can be and more. Glaetzer is all about the purity of the fruit and with overnight temperatures in the 18 to 25 C range, he appears to have a handle on the acidity question as well. The 105 to 115 year-old vines are situated in the Northern Ebenezer region of Barossa. Dense rich and powerful this is a considerable jump in quality and quantity over the '03. We love the savoury undertones and the supple fine-grained tannins. Very hedonistic but not over the top. There are only 12,000 bottles for the world. A bargain among top end Barossa shiraz. \$72-\$100

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6 **95 POINTS**

CHÂTEAU DE BEUCASTEL 2003 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Southern Rhone Valley, France

The vieilles vignes are 75 years old and reside in a three hectare property between Orange and Avignon. Half the wine is fermented in wood, the other 50 per cent in stainless steel. Of the juice in wood only 50 per cent goes into barrique, the rest in old vats. The result is a stunning white wine that is made from 100 per cent roussanne. As expected, it is super ripe but there are plenty of floral notes and orange spice to keep its honeyed nose and flavours fresh and lively. Tomas Perrin warns that you must drink this wine now when it is young, or wait until its 8 to 10-years old before you return to it. I vote for now. \$119-\$125



7 **95 POINTS**

QUINTA DO VALE MEÃO 2003 Douro Red Douro Superior, Douro Valley, Northern Portugal

Wow! What a fabulous bottle of wine. It's not very often you come across a wine like this and the fact that it comes from the Douro justifies all the work and energy of a handful of Douro producers who have put the upper Douro's dry red wine on the map. Look for savoury mouth-watering black fruit with hints of chocolate and impeccable balance. Now tasted twice in the last six months, this is the real deal. Floral, peppery, black raspberry jam, black tea, cassis, dry stones, garrigue, licorice, aromas with a creamy vanilla note. Rich, ripe, round and suave with supple tannins and some warmth. Intense black cherry jam, kirsch, licorice, vanilla, pepper, cardamom and orange peel flavours with a floral, black plum, chocolate finish. Long, dry and intense with great balance. Will improve for 3-7 years. A joy to drink or to keep. \$70-\$110



8 **94 POINTS**

TORRES 2001 Grans Muralles Conca de Barbera, Catalunya, Spain

Gran Muralles is a blend of ancient Catalan grape varieties including monastrell, garnacha tinta, garrò, samsò and carifena from a single pago. A deep brooding red with a peppery, coffee, licorice, black cherry jam. On the palate the wine is very rich, fat, dry but supple and with excellent intensity. A powerful, fruity wine with some warmth but plenty of finesse and length. This is a good bet for the wine cellar to drink through 2020. \$85-\$105



9 **94 POINTS**

HIGHLAND ESTATES 2004 Camelot Highlands Chardonnay Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County, California, United States

Another first rate release from KJ's Highland Estate series. The Camelot Highlands Chardonnay 2004 from Santa Maria Valley in Santa Barbara County is stunningly rich and sophisticated, it's 100 percent barrel fermented but by using only 35 per cent new French oak it has both power and elegance wrapped about a tropical fruit tour de force of pineapple, mango, baked apple pie and spicy vanilla. This is the full meal deal without being over the top. One of the best California chardonnays on the market, at a highly attractive price. \$36-\$49



10 **94 POINTS**

LA SPINETTA 2003 Barbaresco Vigneto Staderi Piedmont, Italy

Made from old vines in the Neive area. Warm nose with floral, strawberry, vanilla, spicy, rose, barriard, black pepper, cumin, leather and tar aromas. Rich, ripe, round tannins but big and concentrated. Lots of spicy, smoky, coffee, black cherry, strawberry jam, peppery, resin, licorice root flavours, with some tobacco, cumin and chocolate on the finish. Big aromas, big flavours, big structure but has fine balance. Needs 7-10 years but designed to age 25 to 30 years. \$160

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