

WINE News

In our first issue of the year, the forecast is for mid-to-high 90s, with some 100s. This one's all about the critics' points.



January 5, 2015 Features

- 2 Classic Bordeaux for the Patient Collector
- 3 The A Group: 94-plus Around the World
- 4 Value Wines Scoring 91-plus Points

39 New Years and Counting—A Look at the Points

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

There have been so many changes in the retail wine and spirits business over the last 38 years since we opened the first K&L in December, 1976. Wine drinking in the United States was just gaining popularity. “Jug” wines had the strongest following, but varietals were getting popular, and the “fighting varietals” would not hit the U.S. market for another five years. Liquor sales were the king during the 1970s—mainly big brand names. Then liquor sales dropped in the 1980s and 1990s, only to spring back to life in the 2000s. Big brands were, and are, replaced by niche products, and today liquor is back on top of the alcoholic products sales. I guess, “what goes around, comes around.”

This issue will concentrate on wines and their “scores.” Liquor products are now starting to receive scores by the spirits raters, but many of our great spirits are hand-picked by our buyers David Driscoll and David Othenin-Girard and are not in general distribution.

In 1976 there were very few wine publications, and wine writers were a select few. There was Robert Lawrence Balzer’s *Private Guide to Food and Wine*, *Vintage Magazine*, Michael Broadbent’s *Great Vintage Wine Book*, and Robert Finigan. There was the 20-point UC Davis scoring system or the Michael Broadbent five-star system. Now there are a plethora of wine writers and raters. Some big publications such as *Wine Spectator* and *Wine Advocate* have many writers specializing in certain regions of the wine world. Most of the writers now use a 100-point scoring system that was really pioneered by Robert Parker at the end of the 1970s.

Today, scores rule for many wine lovers and consumers, so I decided to dedicate this issue to the points. There are 100-point wines in this issue that are very expensive, and there are superb values—90-plus point wines priced less than \$40. Since I am a *little* prejudiced toward Bordeaux, the first two pages will be from that most famous region in the wine world.



100-point Pontet-Canet

2010 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$299.99 PA) 100 points RP. Why not start out with a perfect 100-point wine? In fact, why not two perfect wines, including the **2009 Pontet-Canet (\$299.99)** as we may have a few bottles of this one also available. “Back to back 100-point wines” are as rare as any 100-point wine was in 1986. Cellar these beauties.



Classic d'Yquem

2011 d'Yquem, Sauternes (375ml \$219.99; 750ml \$429.99) 99 points WS: “A lovely, creamy, tropical style, with mango, papaya and guava notes lending a caressing feel, while singed almond and warm piecrust accents blossom through the lush finish. Just when you think that’s all there is, toasted coconut, fig, orange blossom and persimmon details kick in, lending length and dimension. The finish is ridiculously long.”

CLASSIC BORDEAUX *For the Patient Collector*



1995 Calon-Ségur, St Estèphe (\$149.99) A 20-year-old wine and well-priced. 95 points *Wine Spectator*: “Incredible nose of crushed berries, flowers, spices and nuts. Full-bodied, with velvety tannins and a long, long finish. Powerful and solid. Builds on the palate.”

2006 Pichon-Lalande, Pauillac (\$149.99) My all-time favorite property in Bordeaux in the 1980s, and now this 2006 is at the top again. 95 points Robert Parker’s *Wine Advocate*: “...A return to the velvety-textured, rich, sexy style most readers would associate with Pichon Lalande...This is a 21st century version of the brilliant 1996.”

2010 Cantemerle, Haut-Médoc (\$46.99) A truly great wine for your cellar—and so inexpensive. 94 points RP: “The wine needs a good 7-10 years of cellaring and should keep for 30 more years, but this is the finest Cantemerle I have encountered.”

2011 Léoville-Las Cases, St-Julien (\$159.99 PA) 95 points *WS* and ranked #10 of Top 100 Wines of 2014: “This has some toast to shed, but retains a terrific core of crushed plum and blackberry confiture.”

2010 Canon-La Gaffelière, St-Emilion (\$139.99) 96 points *WS* and ranked #2 of Top 100 Wines of 2013: “This takes the power of the vintage and puts it in its pocket for later, preferring instead to let mouthwatering briar, loganberry, mulberry and blackberry fruit strut its way forward...Should cruise for two decades.”

2005 Valandraud, St-Emilion (\$199.99) 95 points RP: “This is one of the most riveting examples of Valandraud Jean-Luc Thunevin has made over the last fifteen years.”

2011 Cos d’Estournel, St-Estèphe (\$159.99) 95 points JS: “A dense, refined wine, with blueberries, blackberries and spices. Full body with integrated tannins and a polished texture. Love the mouthfeel to this.”

2006 Pape Clément, Pessac-Léognan (\$129.99) 95 points RP: “The dense purple-colored 2006 boasts an extraordinary perfume of lead pencil shavings, creme de cassis, and burning embers...Full-bodied, extraordinarily textured, and multidimensional with an amazingly long finish of nearly 60 seconds.”



2009 Nairac, Sauternes (\$39.99) 95 points RP: “Nicolas Tari oversaw a sensational 2009 Chateau Nairac. It has a richer bouquet compared to the 2010 with exuberant, explosive scents of acacia honey, dried apricot and a hint of petrol that transposes the exoticism of the vintage...Stack this high in your cellar.”

2011 Pontet-Canet, Pauillac (\$109.99) 96 points *WE*: “So smooth, this is a rich, grandiose wine. Although it is full of black currant fruits and spice flavors, the texture is most impressive. Dusty tannins are integrated with juicy fruits seamlessly.”

2011 Smith-Haut-Lafitte Rouge, Pessac-Léognan (\$89.99) 94 points JS: “A wine that has a beautiful depth of fruit, with currants, minerals and dried flowers on the nose and palate. It’s full-bodied, with super-integrated tannins that last for minutes.”

2011 Clinet, Pomerol (\$89.99) 95 points RP: “Clinet has produced a blockbuster wine...It reveals a dense purple color as well as an abundance of black cherry, black currant and blackberry fruit intermixed with licorice, incense and a touch of camphor.”

2009 Grand Corbin Manuel, St-Emilion (\$24.99) 92 points *WE*: “One of several châteaux in Saint-Émilion with the name Corbin attached, this is a finely made, ripe, dusty wine. It conveys a southern French feel with its rich fruitiness and powerful dry tannins. It has concentration and power, and will develop well over the medium-term. Drink from 2016.”

2009 La Cardonne, Medoc (\$19.99) 89-92 points *WS*: “Pretty blueberry and flowers on the nose. Full-bodied, with chewy tannins and a long finish. Lots going on. Big wine for the appellation. Best in a long time from here.”

2012 Kirwan, Margaux (\$39.99) 92-94 points *WE*: “This solidly tannic wine is powerful and firm. It’s a very complete wine, showcasing fruit and tannin elements to give a complex, structured whole. A wine that is for long-term aging.”



2010 Malescot-St-Exupéry, Margaux (\$99.99) 95 points JS: “A wine with beautiful strawberry and chocolate with hints of pie crust. It’s full-bodied with super integrated tannins and a long, long finish.”

1990 Léoville-Barton, St-Julien (\$249.99) 93 points RP: “Believe it or not, the 1990 Leoville Barton can actually be drunk—something that cannot be said about the broodingly backward, still excruciatingly tannic 1982.”

2009 Pauillac de Latour, Pauillac (\$99.99) 92 points James Suckling: “Juicy and rich, with a velvety tannins. Full and round, with lots of juicy fruit and meat, blackberries and currants. Classified growth quality. Broad shoulder. Third wine of Latour.”

2006 Les Forts de Latour, Pauillac (\$229.99) 92 points RP: “... A dense ruby/purple color, a beautiful bouquet of asphalt, cassis, cedar, truffles, and earth, and a full-bodied, dense, beautiful style that is similar to a 1996 Pauillac. It will age effortlessly for 15 years.”

2004 Latour, Pauillac (\$599.99) 95 points RP: “A terrific effort from Administrator Frederic Engerer and owner Francois Pinault, the dark ruby/purple-tinged 2004 Latour exhibits a strong cassis character intermixed with notes of crushed rocks, earth, cedar, and forest floor.”

—Clyde Beffa Jr.

THE A GROUP *Around the World in 94-plus Points*

When I was in high school and college (many years ago), we were graded on a 100-point system in most classes. A score of 94 to 100 was a solid “A” for a test or class. Well, the 100-point system for wine is in full swing these days thanks to Robert Parker, who popularized it in the early 1980s. Below are some in-stock selections that have scored 94 points and above. I present the A group:



Spain, Argentina and Chile

2009 Bodegas Muga “Selección Especial” Reserva Rioja (\$39.99) 95 WS: “Powerful yet harmonious, this rich red delivers black cherry, licorice, fresh herb, smoke and mineral flavors that mingle seamlessly over firm, well-integrated tannins, while balsamic-tinged acidity drives the flavors through the long, spicy finish. Drink now through 2025.”

2001 Faustino I Gran Reserva Rioja (\$29.99) 97 points and *Decanter* Wine of the Year 2013: “Restrained, mineral style with elegant tannins. Youthful and fresh, feminine and complex. Deliciously decadent, with extraordinary vitality in the palate and a long unique, finish. A jewel at this price.”

Australia and New Zealand

2011 Kumeu River “Mate’s” Chardonnay Kumeu New Zealand (\$39.99) 97 points and #19 of James Suckling’s Top 100 Wines of 2014: “The weight is staggering but the poise and balance makes it all seem effortless. Ripe peach and pear, citrus and gently toasty oak, with chalk and nougat, too.” Also 94 points RP.

2010 Leeuwin “Art Series” Chardonnay Margaret River Western Australia (\$69.99) 97 points JH: “Bright yellow-green; the sheer purity and intensity of this wine is remarkable; it has its own flavour and tactile characters stemming from the perfect balance between the white peach and grapefruit flavours carried through the very long and detailed palate by bright acidity.” Also 95+ points RP.



2005 Branson Coach House “Coach House Block Rare Single Vineyard” Shiraz Barossa Valley South Australia (\$49.99) 96 points RP: “It reveals aromas of cedar, wood smoke, cassis, blackberry, and blueberry compote. Full-bodied, thick, and rich, this opulent wine is nearly over the top.”

2012 Tongue in Groove “Clayvin Vineyard” Pinot Noir Marlborough New Zealand* (\$29.99) 96 points Bob Campbell, in *Gourmet Traveler*: “Dense and quite structured Pinot with black and red cherry, plum, spice and a hint of dark chocolate. A firm backbone of soft, rich tannins suggests cellaring potential. Richly textured wine with a very lengthy finish.”

California

2012 Varner “Home Block” Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay (\$47.99) 94 points AG: “Apricot, peach, mint, chamomile and lightly honeyed overtones take shape as the 2012 Chardonnay Home Block shows off its considerable power and breadth. There is a real sense of phenolic weight in the Home Block.”

2012 Sbragia “Gamble Ranch” Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$34.99) 96 points RP: “...A spectacular perfume of unbuttered popcorn, caramelized citrus, white peach and honey. This gorgeously textured, opulent, full-bodied Chardonnay offers terrific freshness, precision and length. It can be enjoyed over the next 3-5 years.”

2006 Roederer Estate “l’Ermitage” Anderson Valley Brut (\$39.99) 97 points WE: “All the benefits of maturity come through in this deliciously complex flagship sparkling wine of the French-owned estate. It shows very minute, slow-rising bubbles and a beautiful bouquet of ginger, cinnamon, cherry and fresh croissants. The flavors are layered, intricate, subtle but somehow rich.”



Italy

2010 Oddero Barolo (\$44.99) 95 points JS: “Very pretty aromas and flavors of dried strawberries and plums follow through to a full body, with velvety tannins and an intense finish.”

2006 Castello di Monsanto “Nemo” Cabernet Sauvignon Toscana (\$39.99) 95 points RP: “Sweet scents of French oak meld into blackberries, blueberries, licorice and grilled herbs. The fruit remains extremely primary, while the oak is a touch prominent, both of which suggest further cellaring is needed for all of the elements to come together. A rich, textured, creamy finish provides the final exclamation point to this superb, pedigreed Nemo.”

Rhône

2011 Clos des Papes Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$99.99) 96 points RP: “...A full-bodied, seamless effort that exhibits copious kirsch, ground pepper, dried flowers and underbrush as well as incredibly fine tannin, great mid-palate concentration and ample length on the finish.”

2012 Vincent Paris “Granit 60 Vieilles Vignes” Cornas (\$59.99) 94-97 points RP: “...Incredible notes of black raspberry, powdered rock, graphite, licorice and liquid violets. Also full-bodied, with superb concentration and depth, as well as a firm tannic spine, this gorgeous effort should be given 4-5 years of bottle age and consumed over the following 10-15 years.”

2012 Domaine de la Mordorée “Reine des Bois” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$69.99) 95 points RP: “One of the blockbusters in the vintage...fantastic richness and depth in its blackberry liqueur, graphite, wood smoke and crushed-rock-like aromas and flavors. An elegant, stylish and polished example of this cuvée...”

—Clyde Beffa Jr.

A FOR EFFORT *Value Wines that Earned 91-plus Points from the Critics*

Heck, 91 points was a good score for me on a test. The wines below scored at least that and they are all under \$30 a bottle.

Spain, Argentina and Chile

2005 Bodegas Casa Juan Señor de Lesmos Reserva Rioja* (750ml) (\$19.99; 1.5L \$39.99) 92 points JS: “This has a beautiful depth of fruit with spice and dark fruits. Hints of parsley and cilantro. Full and super silky with a long and beautiful finish.”

2012 Susana Balbo “Signature” Malbec Mendoza (\$19.99) 93 points JS: “A fresh, balanced and harmonious red with cherries, berries and hints of nutmeg character. Full and super integrated with fine tannins and a long, flavorful finish.”

2011 Bodegas Norton “Privada” Mendoza (\$19.99) 93 points and one of *Wine Enthusiast’s* Top 100 Wines of 2014: “Privada displays qualities beyond its price point. This version of Malbec, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon is smoky on the nose, with charcoal, minerals and toast capping crusty berry aromas. The palate is super ripe and healthy in feel, with baked blackberry flavors smothered in toasty oak and chocolate.”

2012 Celler de Capcanes “Mas Donis Barrica – Old Vines” Montsant (\$12.99) 94 points RP: “It is difficult to find a better value than this incredibly rich effort. The bouquet offers up a smorgasbord of aromas, including crushed rocks, spring flowers, kirsch liqueur and blacker fruits. Full-bodied with a velvety, voluptuous texture, and admirable opulence, density, purity and texture.”

Australia and New Zealand

2012 Elderton “Estate” Shiraz Barossa Valley South Australia (\$19.99) 92 points RP: “Deep garnet-purple colored and just gorgeous on the nose, with intense floral and black fruit notes plus some menthol and dusty earth nuances... It finishes long.”

2013 Grey’s Peak (Greystone) Sauvignon Blanc Waipara Valley New Zealand* (\$14.99) 92 points JS: “Textured and creamy on the palate, which shows a raft of tropical fruits and defined, stony acidity.”

2012 Jim Barry “Lodge Hill” Shiraz Clare Valley South Australia (\$15.99) 95 points JH; 91 points *W&S* and a Year’s Best Australian Shiraz: “This grows in a warm spot in a high-elevation vineyard otherwise planted to Riesling. It’s clean, fragrant and relatively light in weight; the purple plum fruit has a tart acidity, creating a peppery crush of flavor.”

2013 Mount Trio Sauvignon Blanc Great Southern Western Australia* (\$11.99) 92 points and *Special Value*, JH: “Simple stainless steel fermentation at a relatively low temperature has thrown all the emphasis on the very attractive array of fruit aromas and flavours spanning snow pea, citrus and passionfruit, and doing so without assaulting the senses.”

Domestic

2010 Northstar Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$23.99) 93 points *WE*: “Consumers may find it difficult to differentiate this from the 2010 Ste. Michelle version of the same wine—both are 100% Cold Creek vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon. But this one, bottled under the Northstar label, has more muscle, more power and more depth. Tannic, thick and darkly fruited, it’s a tightly-wound yet expressive effort.”

2010 Prospect 772 “The Brat” Sierra Foothills Rhône Blend (\$29.99) 92 points *WE*: “Concentrated and bright, this blend of 63% Grenache and 37% Syrah has deep flavors of strawberry and licorice. Ready to age for several years, it has a mountain’s worth of tannins, and yet it is incredibly light on its feet.”

Italy

2010 Frescobaldi Nipozzano Chianti Rufina Riserva (\$18.99) 92 points *WS*: “Black cherry, spice, tobacco and earth flavors prevail in this dense red. The tannins verge on being gritty in texture, yet there’s adequate acidity to keep this fresh. Best from 2016 through 2024.”

2009 Querceto Chianti Classico Riserva (\$16.99) 93 points JS: “Such clarity of fruit to this Chianti Classico with black cherries and blueberries and sliced mushrooms. Full body, chewy and rich. Very structured. Like a Brunello.” Also 91 points *WS*.

French Regional

2012 Domaine de Bila Haut “Occultum Lapidem” Côtes du Roussillon-Villages (\$26.99) 94 points RP: “Comprised of mostly Syrah, from schist and gneiss soils, and aged in tank and demi-muid, this superb 2012 has solid mid-palate depth, ample tannin and a beautifully focused finish.”

2012 Domaine Cabirau Côtes de Roussillon (\$12.99) 92 points RP: “Here is a stupendous value that projects distinctive Roussillon virtues including downright dynamic interactivity. I suspect that it will show well for the better part of the decade if not beyond.”

—Clyde Beffa Jr.

K&L REDWOOD CITY

3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061
P (650) 364-8544 **F** (650) 364-4687
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-7, Sun 10-6
LOCKERS Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5

KLWINES.COM

Toll Free (877) KLWINES (877) 559-4637
Email: Wines@KLWines.com

K&L HOLLYWOOD

1400 Vine Street, Hollywood, CA 90028
P (323) 464-WINE (9463) **F** (323) 836-0853
HOURS Mon-Thurs 11-8, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11-6

K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host regular evening and Saturday tastings at each K&L store as well as many special events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to KLWines.com/Local-Events.

K&L SAN FRANCISCO

638 Fourth Street, San Francisco, CA 94107
P (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739
HOURS Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-6

We accept American Express, Discover, Visa and Mastercard.

For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit KLWines.com

🍷 FOLLOW OUR BLOG UNCORKED FOR THE LATEST NEWS, REVIEWS, AND UPDATES FROM K&L STAFF 🍷