

The world's best wine magazine

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Decanter

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THE MOST EXCITING WINES OF 2019

WINES OF THE YEAR 2019

We asked our experts from around the world, and the *Decanter* team, to nominate the classic, offbeat and value wines that impressed them most in 2019, and called the wines in to taste. Here we present the top scorers from the 117-wine line-up. **Tina Gellie** reports

Exceptional diversity and interest were once again the buzzwords following our third Wines of the Year tasting, in which a remarkable 87% of entries scored an average of 90 points or above.

'This has become my favourite event in the calendar,' said Sarah Jane Evans MW. 'There's nothing more exciting than being presented with a roomful of extraordinary bottles recommended by fellow *Decanter* experts.'

Dirceu Vianna Junior MW agreed: 'I've been judging for *Decanter* for 10 years and I've never enjoyed such an exceptionally high quality but varied array of wines from around the world that all had a real sense of place.'

As one of the first comprehensive two-day tastings to be held at *Decanter's* new Canary Wharf HQ, it was fitting that 117 fascinating wines were put forward – what better way to help christen the new facility?

Unlike other publications that rank the year's highest-scorers from tastings, our annual showcase highlights the wines that really made an impression on our experts, for their classicism, value or quirkiness.

We asked *Decanter* World Wine Awards Regional Chairs, key contributors and *Decanter* staff to name the wines they most enjoyed over the past 12 months under the categories of Classic (a premium, textbook wine style), Offbeat (unusual grape, winemaking method, region or unearthened gem) and Value (a wine that punches above its weight at £25 or under). Each wine's category and their champion are included in the tasting notes to follow.

Encouraging variety

Of the 23 countries that featured in our Wines of the Year, France was the most-represented

with 29 wines, followed by Italy (17) and Spain (14). Australia led the New World charge with nine wines, with South Africa (seven) and New Zealand (six) close behind.

The wines were tasted blind, in late October, and scored out of 100, though their respective Classic, Offbeat and Value categories were not disclosed. 'The great value in this is that we are not prejudiced by either big-name expensive wines or the humble brands,' explained Evans. 'The cream rises to the top.'

'So I was encouraged to see that in the Outstanding category, for example, we rewarded a £175 bottle of Champagne, but also a £20 Australian Chardonnay.'

But the judges were most enthralled by unusual wine styles and grapes – 60 different varieties were represented among our 117 entries. Evans highlighted a 'beautifully complex' Ribolla and the 'wonderful' Malbec from Washington, while Vianna was impressed by the Plyto from Greece, Bequignol from Argentina and Areni Noir from Armenia. 'Some of these things are out of my comfort zone,' he admitted, 'but that's a good thing! To be a wine lover you need to expand your palate and many of the wines we've recommended here will help you do that.'

Evans agreed: 'It shows us how extremely diverse the wonderful world of wine is and just how much variety of style and price there is to choose from.'

'It also reinforces that we need to branch out from our safe zones,' she urged. 'There are some lovely discoveries here – let's celebrate and enjoy them. And what better time than the festive season to be more adventurous!'

• For full tasting notes of these wines, plus the 58 others that scored 88 to 91 points, see Decanter.com



Sarah Jane Evans MW is a DWWA Co-Chair, past chair of the Institute of Masters of Wine and an award-winning writer



Dirceu Vianna Junior MW is a wine consultant, educator and judge who has worked in the wine industry for more than 30 years



Tina Gellie is *Decanter's* Content Manager and Regional Editor for the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa

Thank you to the following people who contributed their recommendations: Vahan Agulian, Sarah Ahmed, Jane Anson, Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW, Amanda Barnes, Paolo Basso, Richard Baudains, Jim Budd, Bernard Burtschy, James Button, Bob Campbell MW, Ferran Centelles, Jeannie Cho Lee MW, Alistair Cooper MW, Markus del Monego MW, Natalie Earl, Sarah Jane Evans MW, Simon Field MW, Michael Garner, Tina Gellie, Rebecca Gibb MW, Caroline Gilby MW, Michael Hill Smith MW, Justin Howard-Sneyd MW, Jane Hunt MW, Andrew Jefford, Anne Krebiehl MW, James Lawther MW, Nico Manassis, Caro Maurer MW, Elin McCoy, Fiona McDonald, Thierry Meyer, Michaela Morris, Barbara Philip MW, Anthony Rose, Ronan Sayburn MS, Julie Sheppard, Stephen Skelton MW, Rod Smith MW, Steven Spurrier, Matt Walls, Amy Wislocki

37 Mullineux, Schist Syrah, Swartland, South Africa 2016

93 **C** SJE 94 TG 91 DVJ 94
 £63.68-£77 AG Wines, Berry Bros & Rudd, Harrods, Justerini & Brooks, Lay & Wheeler
 Enticingly complex and seductive, with notes of blackberries, blueberries, dried herbs and sweet spices. Fresh, with punchy acidity. **Drink** 2020-2030 **Alc** 13.5% **James Button**

38 Osborne, Capuchino VORS Palo Cortado, Jerez, Spain 93 **C** SJE 93 TG 92 DVJ 94

£79 Vindependents
 Sensational bouquet displaying amazing complexity through notes of walnuts, chocolate, caramel and molasses. Powerful and long. **Drink** 2020-2026 **Alc** 20% **Decanter staff**

39 Poderi Luigi Einaudi, Barolo Bussia, Piedmont, Italy 2015

93 **O** SJE 93 TG 92 DVJ 93
 POA The Wine Society
 Bursting with flavour, dark cherry, vanilla and floral aromas. Very structured, with firm, dense tannins working nicely with crisp acidity. **Drink** 2020-2030 **Alc** 14.5% **Paolo Basso**



37



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42

40 Vinos de la Luz, Iuminado Malbec, Paraje Altamira Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina 2015

93 **C** SJE 94 TG 92 DVJ 92
 N/A UK www.vinosdelaluz.com
 Bold aromatics with distinct mulberry fruit and sweet spice. Powerful, dense and juicy with excellent concentration and a long finish. **Drink** 2020-2026 **Alc** 14% **Decanter staff**

41 Yann Chave, Hermitage, Rhône, France 2012

93 **C** SJE 92 TG 94 DVJ 93
 POA Montrachet
 Intense aromas, quite meaty and showing some minerality. Dense blackcurrant conserve on the palate with a long finish. **Drink** 2020-2036 **Alc** 13.5% **Matt Walls**

42 Zorah, Karasi Areni Noir, Yeghegnadzor, Vayots Dzor, Armenia 2017

93 **O** SJE 93 TG 93 DVJ 93
 £25.55-£29.99 Exel, Hedonism, Noel Young, The Drink Shop, Vinvm, Wine Direct, Wino's
 Vibrantly aromatic, with fresh and intense plum, cherry, wet earth and violets, sweet spices and herbs. On the palate it is generous and juicy, yet firm with refined structure. **Drink** 2020-2024 **Alc** 14% **Caroline Gilby MW & Anthony Rose**