

# Renegade Wines

## Top 21 Wines of 2013

Every January we look back on the previous year and the wines that we have tasted. There are literally hundreds and hundreds of wines, from rich & racy Chardonnay to shinning Bordeaux. From our extensive tasting notes we compile our favorite 21 wines. The list below reflects both great quality and great value, and sometimes a nice bit of both.

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**21. 2012 Bouchard Père et Fils Bourgogne Blanc Reserve \$18.50**

Refreshing, clean, and classic chardonnay from Burgundy. Solid minerality with a nice lush, juicy core. Effortless finish.

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**20. 2011 Domaine Abbatucci Ajaccio Faustine \$36**

From Corsica: The owner/winemaker Jean-Charles Abbatucci plays classical music over loud speakers to his vines, the vineyard is intensely organic. And this wine breathtaking. There's a wealth of floral and herbal notes but also black pepper, smoky tea, ripe cherry, and dark strawberries. A exhilarating wine with a mouthwatering finish.

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**19. 2011 Sandhi Wines Pinot Noir Wenzlau \$44**

Mineral-driven & savory with a beautiful assortment of assorted red fruit, rose petal, dried herbs. This is serious wine from Santa Rita Hills. Well-structured with a everlasting finish.

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**18. 2009 William Harrison Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford \$42**

We almost didn't want to share this wine, afraid that with increasing popularity the price will go up. But we are. THE hidden gem of a cab from Napa Valley. Full-bodied, smooth tannins, layers of cassis, plum, espresso. Well-balanced, food friendly, and a house favorite!

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**17. 2012 Daou Cabernet Sauvignon Paso Robles \$24**

On the West side of highway 101, this 2012 cab is a serious contender for best Cabernet for the price of the Tri-Counties. It's a fuller bodied cab but with good acidity, balance, suave tannins. For the full experience, decant for 4-6 hours.

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**16. 2012 Liquid Farm Chardonnay White Hill \$38**

With all the press last year (wine of the week, LA Times, etc...) this was a hard one to keep in stock. Spicy pear, Meyer lemon, honeysuckle, subtle smoky lees, nice mineral notes, a long long finish all add up to a great Santa Rita Hills Chardonnay.

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**15. 2011 François Chidaine Vouvray Sec Les Argiles \$26.50**

A delightful chenin blanc. But don't get me wrong. This is serious wine from Vouvray. Lightly perfumed nose with a touch of herb and pineapple in the background. Medium length with a fine core of minerality and good balance. As this wine opens up it reveals layer after layer of zesty citrus and orchard fruit. Seriously consider trying a bottle.

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**14. 2010 Château Tronquoy-Lalande \$58**

Classic Bordeaux from St Estephe. 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and the rest Petit Verdot. Loads of blueberry, boysenberry, cassis, cocoa, with a voluptuously textured mouthfeel and terrific purity. If you have enough self control, try one now but keep the rest for the years to come.

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**13. 2012 Storm Wines Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard \$45**

With 75 cases made we were lucky to get a sample. Very lucky. Bright ruby red juice with smoky cherry, dark berry fruits. Sexy floral and Asian spice nuances, and a stunning finish. Ernst Storm has created a winner here.

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**12. 2007 Valdana Elba Montecristo \$45**

From the island of Elba off the Tuscany coast comes one of our very favorite dessert wines. Made from Aleatico grapes that are dried (like Amarone) then aged for 3 years in large, neutral oak barrels. Opulent, richly textured, with notes of mocha, spices, dried fruits. The firm acidity and tannins, and the slight saline tang provide excellent balance and structure. Perfect with Tiramisu.

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### **11. 2012 Keller Riesling Trocken \$22**

Hands down our best selling Riesling last year. And why not? It's the perfect riesling that will change your mind about rieslings. Dry, lightly effervescent, a charming personality, refreshing, quenching, and we just about opened a bottle a day when the weather was warm!

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### **10. 2001 Bodegas Ramirez Rioja Gran Reserva Ramirez de la Piscina \$42**

We've seen sales grow exponentially for Rioja wines. Quality, price, and age (this bottles is 13 years old and their current release) combine to make for top quality wines at very reasonable prices. Dark red fruits, orange peel, baking spices, tangy red currant, and a lingering finish.

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### **9. 2002 Laurent-Perrier Champagne Brut Millésimé \$49.50**

A vintage Champagne from a top-level producer under \$75 is unheard of. But somehow L.P. manages to keep their prices down while creating outstanding bubbles. Juicy and precise. Pear and peach notes with Myer lemon, spicy citrus, and a long enchanting finish. From a classic vintage, this wine drinks well now or can be cellared for years.

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### **8. 2007 Arcadian Pinot Noir Pisoni Vineyard \$58**

How do you do it Joe? A lively mineral quality surrounded by layers of addicting berrys and stone fruits. Great pinot spice here and a silky, impressive finish round out this knockout wine. This is sexy pinot!

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### **7. 2012 Punta Crena Pigato Riviera Ligure di Ponente Vigneto Cada Rena \$24**

A dear friend turned us on to this wine and we are ever-so grateful. In fact as we poured our second glass I texted her an immense THANK YOU! This 100% pigato (closely related to vermentino) from 38 year old vines hovering over the Ligurian sea is at once lush and rich, but then waves of stony fruity minerality come across the palate. It has a long dashing finish and is a wine to pair with oysters, scallops, or whitefish simply prepared.

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**6. 2011 Ogier Côtes du Rhône Villages Plan de Dieu Le temps est venu \$22**

Silky smooth, lively flavors of raspberry, spicecake, dark fruits with a long and supple finish. A very intriguing GSM blend.

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**5. 2009 Gostolai Cannonau di Sardegna Sonazzos \$22.50**

Cannonau (aka Grenache) thrives in Sardinia's warm Mediterranean climate and its ancient, rocky, limestone rich soils. A very pure and alluring wine. Nice clean red fruits, and a bit of chalkiness as the soft tannins build on the palate. Long finish invites another sip. On a side note, grenache from this region of Sardinia have the highest antioxidants (2-3 times more) than any other grape varietal so far tested. Win-Win.

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**4. 2010 Domenico Clerico Barbera d'Alba Trevigne \$24**

Known for producing top-notch Barolo, we almost overlooked their Barbera. Attractive, juicy, bursting with sweet red fruits, flowers, cloves, new leather. Gorgeous intensity and overall balance. Stellar wine.

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**3. 2009 G.D. Vajra Barolo Albe \$40**

It's not a type-O. And yes, this is a KILLER Barolo that is drinking well now for \$40. Black currant, sandalwood, coffee. Juicy, fresh, harmonious. Fine-grained tannins, and some serious mid-palate red fruits plus a long wafting finish and you will know that this is the best value in Barolo.

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**2. 2012 Masseria Li Veli Verdeca Askos Valle d'Itria IGT \$18.50**

How did an obscure grape from the heel of Italy become our second biggest selling white wine in 2013? Simply because it's fabulous (and because we love it!). A medium bodied wine that is reminiscent of a Northern Rhone white blend, but with a little more acidity. Meyer lemon, and honeysuckle on the mid-palate plus fresh cut flowers, great structure and a rewarding finish, and another glass handy makes for a perfect evening.

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**1. 2010 C. Nagy Pinot Noir Santa Barbara County \$19.50**

Clarissa Nagy makes brilliant wine. And how this wine can be so good for this price is utterly amazing. Sexy aromas of red berries, cherries, spice and fresh cut flowers. A mid-palate that is rich enough to be enjoyable to all, but not heavy or clumsy. Impressive vivacity and length and this is why we chose this as our Number One Wine of 2013. Thank You Clarissa!

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