

WINE ENTHUSIAST BUYINGGUIDE

NOVEMBER 2020

THIS MONTH

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Grapes going into a crusher

FOR ADDITIONAL RATINGS AND REVIEWS, VISIT WINEMAG.COM/RATINGS

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92 J.C. Somers 2019 Croft Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (Willamette Valley). For full review see page 12. *Editors' Choice.*
abv: 13% Price: \$29

92 Ovum 2019 Big Salt (Oregon). For full review see page 13. *Editors' Choice.*
abv: 12.5% Price: \$18

92 Ovum 2018 To Love Somebody Gerber Vineyard Gewürztraminer (Rogue Valley). Sourced from the same vineyard as in previous vintages, but with a stylistic change to a dry, much leaner wine. It's terrifically complex, textured and lightly salty, a mix of different fermentation vessels showcasing old vines and native yeasts. It finishes dry and long, with spice and mineral highlights. —P.G.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$30

90 Battle Creek 2019 Winemaker's White Blend White Blend (Willamette Valley). The aromas pull you into the glass, with notes of wet stone, Satsuma orange and dried rose petal. It drinks off-dry, with a pleasing sense of tension between the stone fruit and citrus flavors and a compelling mouthfeel. A flavorful finish caps it off. —S.S.
abv: 12% Price: \$28

90 Valcan 2019 Bare White Malbec (Rogue Valley). This wine is a very pale copper hue, with aromas of peppery herbs, thistle and pine. The fruit touches on rhubarb and wild strawberries. It's a delicate but interesting light white produced from this red grape. —P.G.
abv: 12% Price: \$22

88 Foris 2019 Estate Grown Dry Gewürztraminer (Rogue Valley). Foris makes a distinctive version of this grape, more akin to those from Italy than Alsace. The varietal perfume is there lightly, a touch of rose petals and talcum powder on the nose. Lychee, lemon, citrus rind and grapefruit play across the palate. This would be optimal with Indian fare. —P.G.
abv: 14% Price: \$15

87 Battle Creek 2019 Unconditional Blanc Pinot Noir (Oregon). Fruit-forward aromas of tangerine, tropical fruit and pear lead to lightly smoky pear flavors. It's interesting but doesn't seem entirely settled. —S.S.
abv: 13.2% Price: \$28

87 Ransom 2019 Albariño (Willamette Valley). Despite its startlingly low alcohol, this is quite dry and extremely tart. The flavors indicate that the grapes were picked at very low brix, and the citrus fruit mix of lemon, lime and grapefruit is searingly sour. Try this with raw oysters and you may find a good match. —P.G.
abv: 11% Price: \$22

ROSÉS

91 Clos Griotte 2018 Highland Vineyard Pinot Noir Rosé (McMinnville). It's almost unheard of to find a rosé fashioned from old vine, Coury clone grapes, and biodynamically farmed at that. This superb effort mixes floral and fruit scents and flavors, with ripe watermelon and wild strawberries dominant. It resolves in a burst of cherry as it trails away through a lingering finish. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$25

91 Talent 2019 Pinot Noir Rosé (Oregon). A deftly managed wine, this seems to have been picked purposefully, fermented carefully and barrel aged just enough to put a hint of toast into the mix. Indefinable but delicately delicious fruit flavors conjure up thoughts of citrus, apple, peach, melon and strawberry, though in appearance and palate weight it's a delicate wine. *Editors' Choice.* —P.G.
abv: 13.4% Price: \$24

90 Foris 2019 Rosé of Pinot Noir (Rogue Valley). This all-Pinot rosé is a pale copper, so light in color that its true power is a bit hidden. There's nothing thin about the flavor, a mix of cherry pit, peach and apple, with an underlying sensation of wet stone. Sourced from old vine Pommard, it's fermented in a mix of stainless steel and neutral oak. *Best Buy.* —P.G.
abv: 13.4% Price: \$15

89 Coeur de Terre 2019 Rustique Rosé (McMinnville). This is a blended rosé from separate lots—45% Syrah and 55% Pinot Noir—that's all estate grown. It's an unusual wine, with rhubarb, oranges, apples and a splash of rose water. In sum it's rather bold and peppery, with a foundation of wet stone, a nod to the AVA's defining characteristic. —P.G.
abv: 13.2% Price: \$26

88 Battle Creek 2018 Reserve Pinot Noir Rosé (Willamette Valley). This is a very pretty pale peach color. The aromas bring notes of wilted flower, smoke, dried rose petal and cherry. Smoky notes linger on the finish. —S.S.
abv: 13% Price: \$26

88 Fences 2019 Rosé (Rogue Valley). Made entirely with Cabernet Sauvignon grapes using the saignée process (whereby some of the juice is quickly bled off the press and fermented separately), this is strikingly pretty to look at. It's richer and heavier than Pinot Noir rosés, with core flavors of maraschino cherry and orange liqueur. Give it a good chill and it will work well with barbecued burgers and franks. —P.G.
abv: 13.3% Price: \$22

88 Valcan 2019 Rosé of Malbec (Rogue Valley). Darker than Valcan's White Malbec, this is sourced from the same (Kelly) vineyard and seems to have had extra skin contact prior to pressing. It's rose pink, tank fermented and tastes principally of

mixed herbs and citrus. The only knock is a bit of the freshness has been lost, and the finish falls a little flat. Drink up. —P.G.
abv: 12% Price: \$22

87 Sweet Cheeks 2019 Pinot Noir Rosé (Willamette Valley). A simple and light style, this touches gently on flavors of watermelon and strawberry. The acidity is restrained, keeping it balanced. Compared with the overall quality of many other Willamette Valley Pinot Noir rosés, this is quaffable but rather dull. —P.G.
abv: 12.9% Price: \$30

87 The Great Oregon Wine Company 2019 Coles Valley Vineyard Rosé of Pinot Noir (Umpqua Valley). This is a clean, serviceable rosé, with light but thin strawberry fruit. There's a burst of citrus elevating the finish. Some 30% was barrel fermented; the rest in stainless steel. —P.G.
abv: 13.1% Price: \$26

WASHINGTON CHARDONNAY

92 Novelty Hill 2018 Stillwater Creek Vineyard Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). Nuanced aromas of spice, poached pear and cardamom lead to well-balanced fruit flavors, accented by bright acidity. The finish carries. *Editors' Choice.* —S.S.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$23

91 Januik 2018 Cold Creek Vineyard Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). The aromas are bright in notes of pear, spice and apricot. Rounded flavors follow on the palate, showing precision and detail. A tart finish caps it off. *Editors' Choice.* —S.S.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$30

91 Passing Time 2018 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). A new effort from this winery that has previously been Cabernet focused, the fruit for this wine comes from Conner Lee, Boushey and Kenny Hill Vineyards. The aromas command attention, with notes of corn silk, pumpkin spice, toast, candy corn and ripe peach. The palate is full bodied and rounded, redolent with stone and tropical fruit flavors. It's a ripe offering of this variety. *Editors' Choice.* —S.S.
abv: 14.4% Price: \$50

90 Abeja 2018 Chardonnay (Washington). The aromas offer notes of toast, barrel char and stone fruit. The palate brings a ripe peach flavor that maintains a sleek profile out of the gate, filling out over time. —S.S.
abv: 14.1% Price: \$45

90 L'Ecole No. 41 2019 Chardonnay (Columbia Valley). The aromas draw you into the glass, with notes of toast, corn silk, spice and peach. Full feeling stone fruit flavors follow. A pleasing sense of acidity ties it all together. —S.S.
abv: 13.5% Price: \$20

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freshly cut yellow apple and pear followed by sleek, pleasing, fruit forward flavors that bring a bright sense of acidity. Acid and freshness are the drivers. Pair it with scallop ceviche with generous amounts of lime. **Best Buy.** —S.S.
abv: 12.45% **Price:** \$13

90 Novelty Hill 2019 Stillwater Creek Vineyard Roussanne (Columbia Valley). Lemon balm, spice, herb and nori aromas lead to a palate that brings a pleasing amount of acidity. It's equal parts intrigue and delivery. Best after 2021. —S.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$23

90 Novelty Hill 2019 Stillwater Creek Vineyard Viognier (Columbia Valley). The aromas are bright, with notes of flower, pear, peach and honey-suckle. Ripe stone fruit flavors follow, with the acidity of the vintage keeping it all in check. —S.S.
abv: 13.5% **Price:** \$23

90 Syncline 2019 Boushey Vineyard Grenache Blanc (Yakima Valley). The aromas intrigue, with notes of orange twist, fig and citrus. The palate is broad down the middle, lighter along the edges, fleshing out over time. Lively acidity keeps it all in focus. —S.S.
abv: 13.4% **Price:** \$30

SPARKLING WINE

91 Syncline 2016 Scintillation Blanc de Blanc (Columbia Gorge). Coming from Rainmaker, this is a vineyard change for this wine. The aromas bring notes of baked bread and citrus. The palate is light and crisp, with the acid driving it. It's a very cleanly styled sparkler. **Editors' Choice.** —S.S.
abv: 12% **Price:** \$50

ROSÉS

90 Rôtie Cellars 2019 85% Mourvèdre 15% Grenache Rosé (Washington). Strawberry aromas out front on this pretty pale peach colored wine, followed by notes of wet stone. The palate brings a lot of weight and flavor intensity but with more than enough acidity to pull it off. —S.S.
abv: 12.3% **Price:** \$22

90 Syncline 2019 Rosé (Horse Heaven Hills). Mourvèdre makes up 40% of this wine, with the rest Cinsault (33%) and Grenache. Pale peach in color, this wine brings aromas of strawberry, whole tangerine and watermelon range. The palate is somewhat weighty in feel but with enough acid to pull it off. —S.S.
abv: 12.7% **Price:** \$25

89 Canvasback 2019 Rosé (Walla Walla Valley). There's plenty to chew on on the aromas, with notes of pear, citrus, strawberry and cream. Broad, heavy feeling strawberry flavors. It gets a bit bogged down through the middle, but the acid picks it back up. —S.S.
abv: 12.2% **Price:** \$30

88 Dunham 2019 Rosé (Columbia Valley). A pretty pale peach color, this wine shows some reduction out of the gate that distracts. Behind that are notes of melon and strawberry. An acid driven palate follows. It hasn't all come together at present. —S.S.
abv: 12.9% **Price:** \$20

88 Itá 2019 Les Collines Vineyard Rosé of Primitivo (Walla Walla Valley). A pretty pale salmon color, the aromas offer notes of lees and baked bread, reminiscent of the autolytic notes of a Champagne. There's a lot of texture to the fruit and lees flavors. It's equal parts intrigue and delivery, with the aromas holding it back a bit. —S.S.
abv: 12.6% **Price:** \$25

87 Sleight of Hand 2019 The Magician's Assistant Blackrock Vineyard Rosé (Yakima Valley). Darker in color than recent vintages, this is a weighty interpretation of rosé, where the palate gets quite bogged down with heavy fruit flavors. The aromas offer interest but can't make up the difference. —S.S.
abv: 13.4% **Price:** \$18

86 Canoe Ridge 2019 Limited Edition Cinsault Canyon Vineyard Ranch Rosé (Yakima Valley). The aromas offer notes of toast, vanilla, baking spice and strawberry, showing a lot of barrel influence. The palate shows more of the same. The wood gets in the way. —S.S.
abv: 13.35% **Price:** \$22

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

94 Waters 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon (Washington). This 100% varietal wine offers aromas of chocolate, mushroom, cedar, dried herb, cherry, dried lavender and umami—a unique profile for a Washington Cabernet. The palate is action packed in a rich, textured cherry flavor that coats the palate from end to end, lingering on the coffee-filled finish. Best from 2027–2033. **Cellar Selection.** —S.S.
abv: 14.7% **Price:** \$50

93 Upchurch 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain). The aromas are locked up out of the gate, with notes of pink peppercorn, spice, fresh herb, raspberry and dark cherry. The flavors are dense and rich, with the tannins polished to a fine sheen and more than enough acidity to keep it all in focus. It's a prototypic Red Mountain wine, full of class and tannic brawn, with the acidity of the vintage upping the interest. It will have an exceedingly long life in front of it. Best after 2029. **Cellar Selection.** —S.S.
abv: 14.6% **Price:** \$75

92 Abeja 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley). Aromas of barrel spice, coffee, cherry, bittersweet chocolate, graphite and sautéed herb are followed by textured cherry and chocolate flavors. There's a pleasing sense of brightness to the acidity and deftness to the rich, creamy coffee and bright cherry flavors that keep the interest

high. Plenty of tannic structure holds it all together. Coffee notes linger on the finish. It's far from a big bruiser and needs some time to all integrate but brings and abundance of rewards. Best after 2026 with a very long life beyond that. **Cellar Selection.** —S.S.
abv: 14.5% **Price:** \$60

92 Abeja 2016 Heather Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Walla Walla Valley). The aromas offer notes of coffee, pink peppercorn, cedar, bitter-sweet chocolate, sautéed herb, barrel spice, coffee and dark cherry. There's a pleasingly open texture to the coffee and cherry flavors. Lightly grainy tannins provide support. Give it a few years in the cellar for them to smooth out, and it will deliver. **Editors' Choice.** —S.S.
abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$68

92 Andrew Januik 2017 Lady Hawk Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills). Coffee, cherry, chocolate, scorched earth and herb aromas lead to focused, fruitful cherry and chocolate flavors. The bright acidity of the vintage keeps the interest way up. **Editors' Choice.** —S.S.
abv: 14.6% **Price:** \$50

92 Andrew Januik 2017 Stone Cairn Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain). Brooding aromas of cherry, scorched earth, herb and bittersweet chocolate are followed by plump, ripe cherry flavors backed by tannins that are combed to a fine sheen. Bright acidity accents it all. It's a delicious offering of the variety. **Editors' Choice.** —S.S.
abv: 14.6% **Price:** \$40

92 Januik 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain). The aromas are pleasing, with notes of bittersweet chocolate, spice, dried herb and cherry. It brings a mouthful of chocolate and cherry flavors, supported by the brawny tannins that this appellation is known for. The pillowy mouthfeel ups the appeal. Give it some time in the cellar or decant. **Editors' Choice.** —S.S.
abv: 14.4% **Price:** \$40

92 Januik 2017 Champoux Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Horse Heaven Hills). Aromas of cocoa, bittersweet chocolate and scorched earth are followed by soft, plush feeling cherry and chocolate flavors that are in vivid focus. It lingers on the finish. **Editors' Choice.** —S.S.
abv: 14.4% **Price:** \$55

92 Prospice 2017 Reserve Quintessence Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Red Mountain). Coming from an up-and-coming vineyard site, the aromas pop like a firecracker, with the notes of dried herb, black raspberry, earth and cedar commanding attention. The palate is lithe and fruitful, constructed around a frame of bright acids and firm tannins, with the fruit and herb flavors filling in over time. It's a beauty with a very long life in front of it. **Editors' Choice.** —S.S.
abv: 14.9% **Price:** \$NA