

TOP 100 VALUE WINES OF 2023 (\$40 OR LESS!)

Tuesday, January 9, 2024

100 Tasting Notes



Our No. 1 value wine of 2023: the Muré Riesling Alsace Grand Cru Vorbourg Clos Saint Landelin 2019.

2023 was a record year for us at JamesSuckling.com, with more than 41,000 wines tasted and the best of them making it onto our Top 100 World Wines 2023 list or managing to find a spot on one of our 13 Top 100 country lists. These were chosen for their “wow” factor, availability and price, as well as their high ratings.

Our list of Top 100 Values Wines of 2023 is even more focused, narrowing in on especially affordable wines that impressed us during the year. While the prices of these bottles may vary depending on where you are in the world, they should be widely available for \$40 or less. This list proves that it's not necessary to spend lots of money to drink great wine in 2024. As a value reference, we used Wine Searcher, but the price-score metric was not the only one we used – production volume and global availability were also considered.

Take our No. 1 wine, for instance. The Muré Riesling Alsace Grand Cru Vorbourg Clos Saint Landelin 2019 is a stunning Alsatian riesling with massive structure and power that can be found for around \$33. It's made from grapes grown biodynamically on a south-facing, terraced section of the grand cru vineyard Vorbourg, has amazing fruit concentration, a chalky minerality and a long, diamond-bright finish. It's probably the best dry white that Thomas and Veronique Muré have made, according to Senior Editor Stuart Pigott, and it also finished as the No. 7 wine on our Top 100 Wines of France 2023 list and No. 26 on our Top 100 World Wines list.



James with Kelby James Russell of Red Newt Cellars, which gave us the No. 10 Red Newt Cellars Riesling Finger Lakes The Knoll Lahoma Vineyards 2020.



Beringer winemaker Ryan Rech with our No. 8 value wine, the Beringer Chardonnay Napa Valley Private Reserve 2021.

THE VALUE KING

Riesling continues to represent fantastic value in our tastings and leads the charge with 20 wines on the Top 100 Value list. Most of these are from Germany, like the No. 2 Hees Riesling Nahe Römerstich Trocken 2022 – a super-concentrated, aromatic yet weightless bottling – and the No. 4 Martin Müllen Riesling Mosel Kröver Paradies Spätlese Trocken 2022, a minerally, slaty and pure expression produced from vines planted just after World War I. Both are from an extremely hot and dry season in Germany, where the hardy riesling grape did better than many other varieties.

You might not be surprised to find a couple of rieslings from Austria (Nos. 17 and 24), plus one from Northern Italy's Trentino-Alto Adige region on this list. Three rieslings from New York State are also among the top 100, including the No. 10 Red Newt Cellars Riesling Finger Lakes The Knoll Lahoma Vineyards 2020 – the last vintage produced of this incredibly focused and racy single-parcel wine.

We love a serious chardonnay and even more so when it can be found at under \$30, like the No. 6 El Enemigo Chardonnay Mendoza 2021. It's a flinty, phenolic and structured expression and it shows all the depth and minerality of a \$100 Burgundian counterpart.

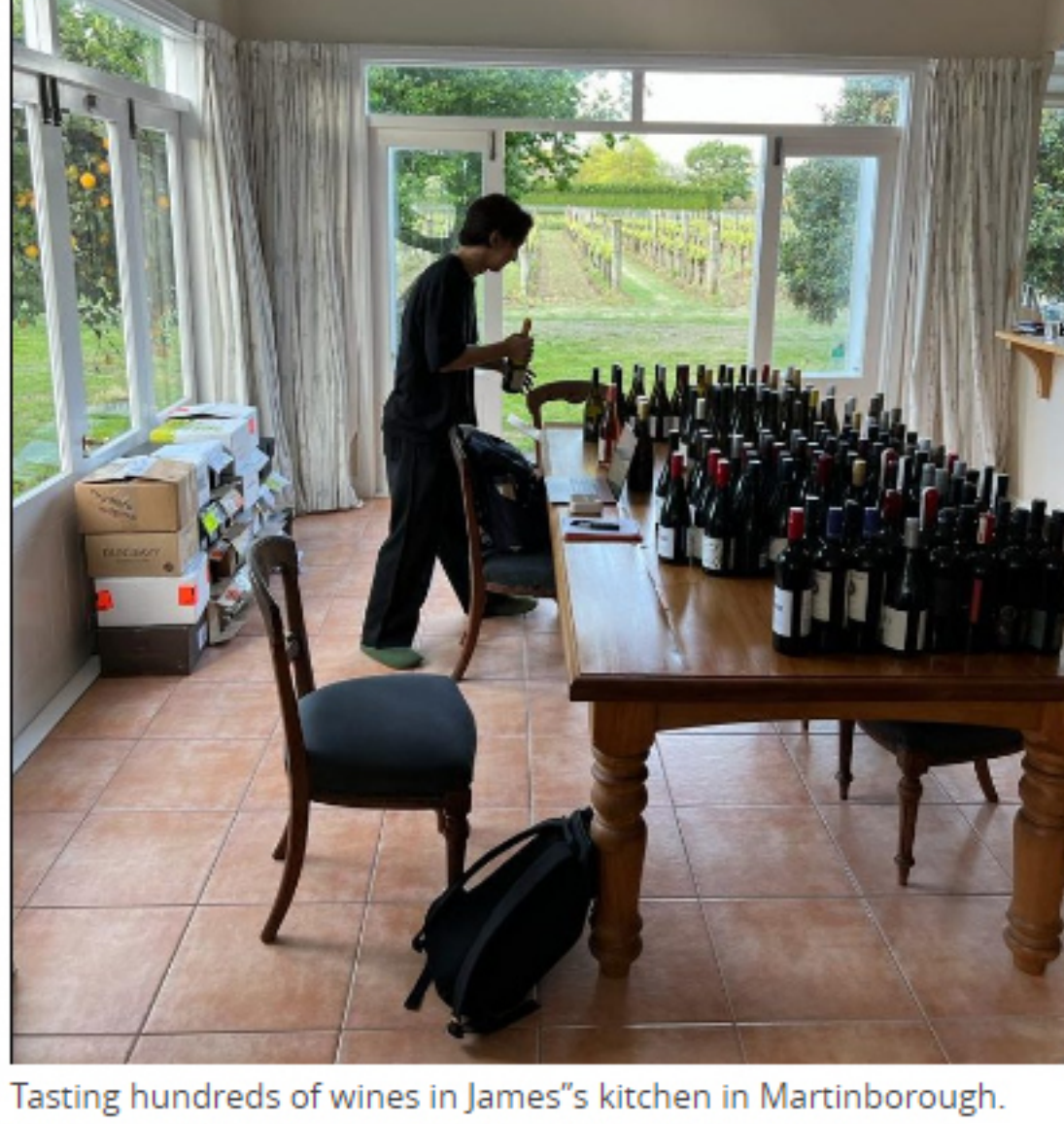


Trinity Hill's Gimblett Gravels (left, with Trinity Hill's Homage) is one of 18 New Zealand wines on our Top 100 Value list.

It's one of a dozen chardonnays that made it onto this list. Among these, we continue to be impressed by the value proposition of our No. 8 wine, the Beringer Chardonnay Napa Valley Private Reserve 2021, which hails from the otherwise high-cost Napa Valley region. It's another phenolic, full-bodied and agile chardonnay that retails at an average price of about \$40.

Of the 14 countries represented on this list, New Zealand rises above the rest in its ability to produce fantastic wines at reasonable price points. The island nation placed 18 wines on this list, with plenty of world-class chardonnay and pinot noir that won't break the bank, complex sauvignon blancs from Clos Henri (No. 26) and Dog Point (No. 32), and top-notch syrahs like the No. 14 Trinity Hill Syrah Hawkes Bay Gimblett Gravels 2021, which only costs \$20.

Chasing New Zealand with 15 wines each were Germany and Chile, followed by Argentina with a dozen. France came on strong with nine wines, with solid contributions from Beaujolais, including the No. 9 Domaine Anita Moulin-à-Vent La Rochelle 2021, which is made from gamay vines of up to 50 years old from one of the top Beaujolais crus. This is a wine that displays fantastic concentration and structure, and while it was matured for a year in Burgundian oak, the price tag is much more reasonable than Burgundy's grand cru, premier cru and even village wines.



Tasting hundreds of wines in James's kitchen in Martinborough. New Zealand placed 18 wines amid our Top 100 Value bottles.



Anita Neveu of Domaine Anita (with her perfect-scoring Moulin-à-Vent Coeur de Vigneronne 2021) also made our No. 9 value wine, the Domaine Anita Moulin-à-Vent La Rochelle 2021.

A 'MON DIEU!' MOMENT

From France's southern Rhone valley, our No. 5 wine is one that wowed us, exacting the words “Mon dieu, this is delicious!” from Senior Editor Ned Goodwin when he tasted it. The Domaine Gramenon Côtes-du-Rhône La Sagesse 2020 is a fruit-driven and fresh grenache and fresh grenache biodynamically grown, 60-year-old vines. It's not the most collectible or complex wine, but it's immensely drinkable and affordable.

Spain, the United States and Italy collectively contributed as many wines as New Zealand, including our No. 3 wine, a syrah from Tuscany. The Stefano Amerighi Syrah Cortona 2020 gives Cote-Rotie a run for its money, according to Ned. It's an extraordinarily good wine, abundant in spice, peppery and black olive aromas. It's also from biodynamically farmed vines and can be found internationally for just over \$30.

Rounding out our Value Top 100 List are wines from Australia, Portugal, South Africa and Austria, plus one from Slovenia, too. But for we must make special mention of a wine from Hungary at No. 7. The Sauska Merlot Villány Kopár 2019 is unique on our list for being the only merlot. It can be found for under \$20, even while displaying so much complexity, structure and length. It's one for the cellar.



Sauska's new spaceship-like winery in Tokaj, Hungary. Sauska produced the No. 7 Sauska Merlot Villány Kopár 2019.

Several exciting value wines may be a little different from what you usually drink but are well worth seeking out: a dry German muscat at No. 11, produced from 50-year-old vines; a tawny port at No. 54; perhaps the best ever Chilean petit verdot at No. 39; and skin-contact wines like a Slovenian bottling at No. 36 as well as the Nos. 47, 53 and 67 bottles.

While the last couple of years have been a wonderful return to pre-Covid travel, dining out and mingling, we are ever conscious of unpredictable world events and uncertain economic outlook. And although wine prices may be volatile in the New Year, the Top 100 Value Wines list is your safe haven.

We urge you to buy and uncork many of the great value wines on this list while we continue to uncover even more affordable, high-quality bottles in 2024.

– Claire Nesbitt, Associate Editor

Note: The list of wines below is comprised of bottles tasted and rated in 2023 by the tasters at JamesSuckling.com. You can sort the wines below by country, vintage, score and alphabetically by winery name. You can also search for specific wines in the search bar.