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Favourite wine of 2015 so far: Decanter awards judges

 Decanter Staff (<http://www.decanter.com/author/DecanterStaff/>)  October 19, 2015

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To celebrate 40 years of Decanter, 40 of our staff and contributors have chosen their favourite wine of 2015. Here our Decanter World Wine Awards and Decanter Asia Wine Awards judges and chairs give their pick.



Clockwise from left: Thierry Meyer, Richard Juhlin, Nico Manassis, Sarah Ahmed Credit: Chris Burke

The wines below have been chosen as part of **Decanter's 40th anniversary** (<http://www.decanter.com/40years/>) celebrations.

Thierry Meyer

DWWA Regional Chair for Alsace and has written about wine since 1999

Famille Hugel, Schoelhammer Riesling, Alsace, France 2007

Cult wines combine exceptional quality with historical milestones. While the Sélection de Grains Nobles Riesling 1976 from Famille Hugel paved the way to the law regulating that sweet wine style in Alsace, in 2015 Hugel released a new Riesling – Schoelhammer – from the best 30 rows at the heart of the marly terroir of the family's Schoenenbourg grand cru holding. From the great 2007 vintage, this dry wine combines a complex, ripe nose with a dense, mineral palate. This first step towards joining the Alsace Grand Cru Schoenenbourg appellation is another family milestone.

Drink 2017-2037

DRINK 2015-2020

Alc 13%

Price £90 Italian Continental, Loki, Mr & Mrs Fine Wine, Wine Circle

Richard Juhlin

DWWA Regional Chair for Champagne, wine writer, author and critic

Ornellaia, Bolgheri, Tuscany, Italy 2008

As I am such a Francophile, it's surprising my most memorable wine this year hailed from Italy. Yes, I have tasted more grand, exclusive and expensive wines in 2015, but at the moment of tasting this, everything melted together into perfection and the wine gave me goosebumps. After several days of tasting hundreds of Champagnes I had a rare chance to sit down with my wife, at Sartori Restaurant on Saville Row in London. Refined pasta requires an equally refined Italian wine and with my French taste I often give my highest marks to Masseto and Ornellaia. This time it was the Cabernet beauty of the 2008 Ornellaia that blew me away. The balance of power and finesse was perfection. It tasted as good as you dream a young Château Latour or Margaux might be.

Drink 2015-2020

Alc 15%

Price £160-£216.67 Armit Wines, Harvey Nichols, Justerini & Brooks

Nico Manassis

DWWA Regional Chair for Greece, a university wine lecturer and author

Thymiopoulos Vineyards, Earth & Sky, Naoussa, Greece 2012

Xinomavro from the sub-regions of Fitia and Trilofos, this reflects the complexity of Naoussa and is a game-changing wine for the appellation. Organic and unfiltered using indigenous yeast, it has Intense persistent strawberry and blackberry fruit on a spicy, earthy palate with seamless oak. There's authoritative precision on the suave tannins and great freshness and purity of fruit. Complete and compelling.

Drink 2016-2036

Alc 14%

Price £24.95 Berry Bros & Rudd, Theatre of Wine, The Wine Society

Sarah Ahmed

DWWA Regional Chair for Portugal and an awarded writer, educator and judge

Quinta dos Carvalhais, Branco Especial, Dão, Portugal NV

Barrel-aged for eight years at ambient temperature, this deliberately oxidative blend of vintages (2004, 2005, 2006) and grapes (Encruzado, Verdelho, Semillon and a field blend) is a brilliant, bold synthesis of tradition and modernity. The Dão's signature kiss of resin and visceral, racy acidity animate its complex, concentrated layers of citrus peel, salted honeycomb, dried stone fruit and flowers. Outstanding line and length; charisma in a glass.

Drink 2015-2035

Alc 14.5%

Price £47.40 Hedonism

Gerard Basset OBE MW MS

Best Sommelier in the World 2010 and Decanter Man of the Year in 2013



François Cotat, Les Culs de Beaujeu, Sancerre, Loire Valley, France 2011

This is not your usual Sancerre but truly delicious all the same. The nose presents a slightly reduced character with superb notes of beeswax, dried flowers and truffles with nuances of greengage, nettle and sage on aeration. The palate is suave to start but also very energetic, with a refreshing acidity and a beautifully long and mineral aftertaste. It is a stunning wine and a white that will benefit from being decanted – ideal with a roasted wing of skate served on a bed of orzo.

Drink 2015-2020

Alc 14%

Price £35 Armit Wines, Berry Bros & Rudd, Harrogate Fine Wine Co. Justerini & Brooks

(<https://keyassets.timeincuk.net/inspirewp/live/wp->

content/uploads/sites/34/2015/10/Basset.jpg)

Gerard Basset OBE MW MS

Sarah Jane Evans MW

Chair of the Institute of Masters of Wine and DWWA Regional co-Chair for Spain

Rafael Palacios, Sorte O Soro, Valdeorras, Spain 2011

In the wine world, we risk drowning in information. Everything is known and rated. So in May it was terrific to taste what is surely Spain's best white. It came at the end of a vertical of Rafa Palacios' As Sortes Godellos, during a Master of Wine visit. Then the first two vintages of the single-vineyard Sortes O Soro – 2009 and 2011 – appeared: vividly fresh, tense and structured, the very essence of mineral. Thrilling and unforgettable.

Drink 2016-2021

Alc 13%

Price £77-£97 Hedonism, Noel Young, The Sampler



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Sarah Jane Evans MW



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Jim Budd and Peter Richards MW

Jim Budd

DWWA Regional Chair for Loire who has written for Decanter since 1989

Domaine de la Pépinère, Vieilles Vignes Clos des Briords, Muscadet Sèvre-et- Maine, Loire, France 2014

My first Decanter assignment was to Muscadet in January 1989. A few weeks ago I was particularly impressed by Marc Olivier's beautifully balanced Clos des Briords. Tasted beside the River Tagus in Lisbon's soft evening light, this fine, organic Muscadet is delicious to drink now with plainly grilled fish but will also last 20 to 30 years. Just €9 a bottle on the night, and not much more in sterling. What a bargain!

Drink 2015-2040

Alc 12%

Price £9.58-£14.95 Christopher Keiller, Exel Wines, Vagabond, Vin Cognito

Peter Richards MW

DWWA Regional Chair for Chile, and an award-winning writer and broadcaster

Bodegas Re, Velado Single Vineyard Pinot Noir, Casablanca, Chile 2009

This is a wine that laughs in the face of terroir and other geekery. It was destined to be Casablanca Pinot Noir rosé before fate intervened – the colossal earthquake in 2010 scattered barrels. When rediscovered, some had grown a film of flor-like yeast, transforming the wine into an exquisite and unique liquid, absurdly complex, rich and savoury. Tasted blind alongside Montrachet, Morey-St-Denis and Haut-Brion, it stole the show. Mind-blowing.

Drink 2015-2035

Alc 14%

Price £52.95 AG Wines, Christopher Keiller

John Livingstone-Learmonth

DWWA Regional Chair for Rhône and has written on the region since 1973

M Chapoutier, Chante Alouette, Hermitage, Northern Rhône, France 2013



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John Livingstone-Learmonth

Dateline January 2015, Tain l'Hermitage. My first blind tasting after a year of illness. White Hermitage 2013. Wine number 3: what is this? Wham! Exotic aromas leap out of the glass, pound the senses, and the wine runs around the room trailing clouds of glory. A sumptuous morale booster. Enter M Chapoutier Hermitage Chante Alouette Blanc 2013. The wine of dreams.

Drink 2015-2040

Alc 14%

Price £42-£49 Berry Bros & Rudd, Frazier's, Hawkshead Wines, Noble Green, Slurp

Rosemary George MW

DWWA Regional Chair for Languedoc-Roussillon, and president of the Circle of Wine Writers

Plan de l'Homme, Khi Carignan, Terrasses du Larzac, Vin de France 2012

A stunning example of a previously much-despised grape variety in the region. This wine fully justifies the renaissance in the reputation of Carignan, showing finely crafted, elegant red fruit, balancing tannins and acidity, taking Carignan to a new level of quality. The name is a play on words – the Greek letter khi sounding like qui, ('who' in French), as in some quarters Carignan is not as well known as it should be.

Drink 2015-2020

Alc 14.5%

Price N/A UK www.plandelhomme.fr

Richard Mayson

DWWA Regional Chair for Port & Madeira, an author and winemaker

Barbeito, Ribeiro Real Boal, Lote 1, Madeira, Portugal, 20 Years Old

One of a pair of recently launched wines (the other is a Verdelho) named after the Ribeiro Real estate 200m above Câmara de Lobos on the south side of the island. Wines from this vineyard form an important component in the blend of 85% Boal and 15% Tinta Negra. Wonderfully lifted orange blossom and jasmine aromas with an underlying savoury bonfire smoke note. There's caramelised oranges and quince marmalade on the palate, perfect texture and balance with a long, pure finish.

Drink 2015-2050

Alc 20%

Price £185 Berry Bros & Rudd, Hedonism, Wine Raks

Bob Campbell MW

DWWA Regional Chair for New Zealand and a leading wine educator

Te Mata, Coleraine, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand 2013

When Coleraine was first made in 1982, it was light years ahead of any New Zealand red wine produced before that date. It has since become the country's most iconic wine label. With 31 vintages under its belt, Coleraine was able to take full advantage of the 2013 vintage, Hawke's Bay's best ever. It's a wonderfully intense, powerful yet teasingly brooding blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc that's a delight to drink now but promises to become a revelation in



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Rosemary George MW and Richard Mayson

years to come.

Drink 2015-2033

Alc 13.5%

Price £41-£49 Farr Vintners, Fells, Hawkshead Wines, Slurp, The New Zealand Cellar, The Wine Society

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Bob Campbell MW





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Jon Bonne and Patricio Tapia

Jon Bonne

DWWA Regional Chair for USA and senior wine editor for Punch

Domaine Armand Rousseau, Chambertin, Burgundy, France 2004

Great Burgundy has largely been taken out of the hands of mere mortals. So when my fiancée and I found this wine at a restaurant in Naples, Florida, for a price that seemed at least a decade out of date, we did not hesitate. But a 2004, with all that vintage's hail and greenness? In a sleepy town? A choice not without risk. But Rousseau did impressive triage in that year, and at 11 years old, the Chambertin was dense, heady and majestic. I often worry about the overweening of grands crus, but not that night. For one evening, by the Gulf, greatness made its case on our table.

Drink 2015-2023

Alc 13%

Price £420-£500 Christopher Keiler, Farr Vintners, Goedhuis, LHK, Renaissance Vintners

Patricio Tapia

DWWA Regional Chair for Argentina and writes the Desorchados wine guide

Suertes del Marqués, El Ciruelo, Valle de la Orotava, Tenerife, Spain 2013

There is a revolution in Tenerife (see p90) – small producers offering an amazing interpretation of the ancient grapes on this remote Spanish island. In the lead is Suertes del Marqués, and my favourite wine is El Ciruelo, a 0.8ha vineyard of Listán Negro planted 90 years ago, on the volcanic soils of Valle de la Orotava. This is a red as mineral as it is fruity; tones of coal are joined with aromas of black cherries, offering great complexity. Refreshing and vibrant, the texture feels soft but with grip and strength. A unique wine in a new Spain.

Drink 2015-2025

Alc 13.5%

Price £29-£30 Connolly's, Vin Cognito, Winedirect

Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW

DWWA Regional co-Chair for Spain and a regular Decanter contributor

Raúl Pérez, La Penitencia, Ribeira Sacra, Galicia, Spain 2012

Incredibly delicate, pure and distinctive; a most refined expression of the Mencía grape – very different to hearty Bierzo reds. The wine is so finely grained in its tannins, so charming in its long aftertaste and so balanced. It conveys the beauty of its origin, one of the most breathtaking vineyard landscapes, with its impossible slopes, accessible only from the river. It is also one of Raúl Pérez's works of art, a milestone in his unending quest for the ultimate and purest terroir expression.

Drink 2015-2025

Alc 13.5%

Price £54 (2011) The Sampler

See also: Favourite wines of 2015 picked by Decanter staff

(<http://www.decanter.com/40years/favourite-wine-of-2015-decanter-staff-and-columnists-276240/>) and Decanter contributing editors (<http://www.decanter.com/40years/favourite-wine-of-2015-so-far-decanter-contributing-editors-277047/>).



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Pedro Ballesteros Torres MW

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