

Where to Eat Now in NYC • Year's Best Pinot Noir • Top Tuscan Reds

# Wine & Spirits

THE *Restaurant top 50*

**SOMMELIERS** report on the wines Americans love most.



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# CABERNET SAUVIGNON

"Cab is definitely king in the steakhouse," says Adriana Camacho of *The Palm* in Las Vegas. According to our poll, it was king at other kinds of restaurants as well. After several years of playing second fiddle to pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon has reclaimed the title of the Most Popular Variety in restaurants for the past two years. Our poll results suggest that Napa Valley continued to define blue-chip cabernet for many restaurant guests, though Sonoma (Silver Oak, Jordan and Louis Martini) also placed highly, as did the J. Lohr cabernets from further south, in Paso Robles.

"Guests are asking for big, bold, dark," observed Evan Hufford of *Michael Mina* in San Francisco. "At least at this restaurant. They want that classic Napa style: big, robust, full-bodied cabernet."

Few wines fit that bill more than Caymus, so perhaps it's no surprise that, in a bull market craving opulence and willing to pay for it, Caymus

It's not unusual that three Napa Valley cabs would be among our ten top-selling wines. That's the familiar place... Shafer is familiar. Turley is familiar. Smith Madrone is not. It hits the sweet spot under \$100, and the staff has really cottoned to it because it's the anti-Napa: high-mountain, cool-climate fruit.

—Juliette Pope, *Gramercy Tavern, NYC*



topped the list of most popular cabernets this year. Chris Gaither of San Francisco's *Gary Danko* reports that whenever he bought a case of Caymus, it would disappear in a single weekend, without the staff having to lift a finger to sell it. He found that many guests were on the hunt for high-end cabernet this year, and he adjusted his list accordingly: "I beefed up on stuff like Harlan, Bond, Screaming Eagle, those things."

Other buyers were bargain hunting. Ryan Baldwin, whose list at *Girl & The Goat* in Chicago spans the globe, was surprised to discover that, at the end of the day, the wine that sold the best was a Napa cabernet: he went through 616 bottles of the 2012 BonAnno, which he priced at \$52. Meanwhile, several sommeliers in San Francisco found success with the Pied à Terre cabernet, a collaboration between New York wine buyer Richard Luftig and Sonoma winemaker Clay Mauritson—and one of the more value-driven cabernets on our list of top-sellers.

"It's a really delicious cabernet for under \$60, and I don't know of many," says Gianpaolo Paterlini of San Francisco's *1760*, noting that it's been the only wine to maintain a presence on his by-the-glass list since the restaurant opened a year ago.

As for Bordeaux, responses were more mixed. "Many New Yorkers share that feeling about Bordeaux: their cellars are full of Bordeaux, they speculated a little on that. It became out of fashion and everyone has been jumping into Burgundy," says Aldo Sohm of *Le Bernardin*. In Honolulu, where Kevin Toyama further expanded the wine list at *Le Mer* this year, he was also wary of investing in too much Bordeaux. "Five to six years ago it was important to build Bordeaux. Now it's about building Burgundy stock and Champagne stock," he says.

On the other hand, Gaither at *Gary Danko* reported that he had to

## MOST POPULAR CABERNET SAUVIGNONS

Rank	Pts.	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	108	<b>Caymus Vineyards</b>	Napa Valley Napa Valley 40th Anniversary Napa Valley Special Selection	\$145 \$158 \$238
2	88	<b>Silver Oak Wine Cellars</b>	Alexander Valley Napa Valley	\$143 \$206
3	82	<b>Jordan Vineyard &amp; Winery</b>	Alexander Valley	\$106
4	78	<b>Stag's Leap Wine Cellars</b>	Napa Valley Artemis Napa Valley	\$110 \$110
5	53	<b>Louis Martini Winery</b>	Sonoma County Napa Valley	\$39 \$80
6	51	<b>J. Lohr</b>	Paso Robles Seven Oaks Paso Robles Hilltop	\$40 \$65
7	45	<b>Justin</b>	Paso Robles	\$68
8	32	<b>Nickel &amp; Nickel</b>	Napa Valley Rock Cairn Vineyard St. Helena Hayne Vineyard	\$200 \$135
9	34	<b>Freemark Abbey</b>	Napa Valley	\$78
10	34	<b>Lewis</b>	Napa Valley Napa Valley Reserve	\$169 \$120
11	34	<b>Pied à Terre</b>	Napa Valley	\$60
12	32	<b>Alexander Valley Vvds.</b>	Alexander Valley	\$47
13	31	<b>Faust</b>	Napa Valley	\$99
14	29	<b>Heitz Wine Cellars</b>	Napa Valley	\$116
15	28	<b>Robert Mondavi Winery</b>	Napa Valley	\$58
16	28	<b>Joel Gott</b>	Napa Valley Blend No. 815 Napa Valley	\$46 \$30
17	26	<b>Ladera Vineyards</b>	Napa Valley	\$71
18	25	<b>Franciscan</b>	Napa Valley	\$63
19	25	<b>Stags' Leap Winery</b>	Napa Valley	\$104
20	24	<b>Decoy</b>	Napa Valley	\$76
21	23	<b>Chateau Ste. Michelle</b>	Columbia Valley Indian Wells Columbia Valley	\$43 \$39
22	22	<b>Franciscan Oakville Estate</b>	Napa Valley Napa Valley Oakville Estate	\$53 \$60
23	21	<b>Educated Guess</b>	Napa Valley	\$55
24	21	<b>Obsidian Ridge</b>	Lake County red hills	\$61
25	20	<b>Avalon</b>	Napa Valley California	\$43 \$32
26	19	<b>Burgess Cellars</b>	Napa Valley	\$64
27	19	<b>Cliff Lede Vineyards</b>	Stags Leap District	\$85
28	17	<b>Hess Collection</b>	Napa Valley Allomi Napa Valley Mountain Cuvée	\$86 \$79
29	16	<b>Daou Vineyards</b>	Paso Robles	\$66
30	16	<b>Simi Winery</b>	Alexander Valley Alexander Valley Landslide	\$55 \$63
31	14	<b>Frank Family</b>	Napa Valley	\$105
32	14	<b>Honig Vineyards</b>	Napa Valley	\$78
33	14	<b>Mt. Veeder Winery</b>	Napa Valley	\$73
34	11	<b>Shafer Vineyards</b>	Napa Valley One Point Five	\$169
35	11	<b>Domaine Eden</b>	Santa Cruz Mountains	\$75