

30th ANNUAL RESTAURANT POLL

Wine & Spirits

TOP
50
WINES

IN AMERICA'S BEST
RESTAURANTS

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THE RESTAURANT



Some wines create buzz. Some simply sell without any effort: Guests don't bother to name-check those wines on their Instagram feed, or to confer with a sommelier before calling for a bottle.

Those are the wines that top the *W&S* Restaurant Top 50, the most popular wines in America's favorite restaurants.

For 30 years, we've asked wine directors to mine their sales data for the last quarter of the year and report on their top-selling bottles; we then count the number of mentions for each wine reported on their top-ten lists, as well as the rank; these 50 wines accrued the greatest number of mentions overall. The accompanying price is the average wine-list price for all the bottlings our respondents mentioned.

Many of these names have been perennial favorites over the 30 years we've been tracking wine trends: Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, Jordan, Cakebread, Kistler, Sonoma-Cutrer, Duckhorn, Silver Oak, Antinori and Trefethen have been regulars since 1991. "Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Jordan are comfortable, consistent steakhouse-style wines that are recognizable, and people

are willing to pay for them," says Brian Mitchell at Max Restaurant Group in Connecticut, calling out two of the top wines on the Restaurant Top 50. Wines from the the US still hold diners in thrall, making up 38.4 percent of the Most Popular bottlings.

There are some wines on the Top 50, however, that we would have never imagined making the list 30 years ago. López de Heredia's ultra-traditional Rioja, for example, which shot to the #1 position last year, and remains at the top of the list. Or Lucien Crochet, rising into the top ten, thanks to diner's thirst for Sancerre.

There's no doubt that the wine world is far bigger than it was 30 years ago. Respondents' lists of Most Popular wines include ever more obscure regions, as well as more esoteric varieties—143 in all this year, compared to 76 in 2005. As Catherine Morel reports from *71Above* in LA, people used to ask her to "suggest a red. Now they'll say, 'Oh, I know I like this and this. Can you recommend something like that?'" People are definitely willing to try off-the-beaten path wines, especially the younger crowd, which is fun because some of the weirder wines are the inexpensive wines on the list.

Some of them, like Ameztotl Tzacoli and Alpha Estate Xinomavro, are making it into the Top 50.

RANT TOP 50

THE MOST POPULAR WINES IN AMERICA'S TOP RESTAURANTS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS, \$120 | 27 PIERRE-YVES COLIN-MOREY, \$82 |
| 2 JORDAN VINEYARD & WINERY, \$112 | 28 DOMAINE VACHERON, \$93 |
| 2 R. LOPEZ DE HEREDIA, \$82 | 29 MARCHESI ANTINORI, \$104 |
| 4 ROMBAUER VINEYARDS, \$86 | 30 JEAN-LOUIS CHAVE SELECTION, \$74 |
| 5 CAKEBREAD CELLARS, \$96 | 31 FERRARI-CARANO WINERY, \$64 |
| 5 KISTLER VINEYARDS, \$150 | 32 BAILLY-REVERDY, \$83 |
| 7 FAUST WINES, \$120 | 33 CHATEAU MONTELENA, \$105 |
| 8 SONOMA-CUTRER VINEYARDS, \$51 | 34 PRODUTTORI DEL BARBARESCO, \$78 |
| 9 LUCIEN CROCHET, \$84 | 35 ALPHA ESTATE, \$62 |
| 10 DUCKHORN VINEYARDS, \$106 | 35 J. LOHR, \$44 |
| 10 SILVER OAK WINE CELLARS, \$141 | 37 TURLEY, \$76 |
| 12 CAYMUS VINEYARDS, \$150 | 38 BOW & ARROW, \$58 |
| 13 FRANK FAMILY VINEYARDS, \$99 | 38 THE PRISONER WINE COMPANY, \$91 |
| 14 G.D. VAJRA, \$65 | 40 RIDGE VINEYARDS, \$83 |
| 15 FAILLA, \$84 | 41 BILLECART-SALMON, \$168 |
| 16 HIRSCH VINEYARDS, \$125 | 41 LITTORAI, \$121 |
| 16 VEUVE CLICQUOT, \$128 | 43 AMEZTOI, \$50 |
| 18 HEITZ CELLAR, \$118 | 44 CLOUDY BAY, \$68 |
| 19 MOUNT VEEDER WINERY, \$91 | 45 MASSICAN, \$69 |
| 20 DECOY, \$83 | 46 PATRICIA GREEN CELLARS, \$76 |
| 21 ROBERT SINSEY VINEYARDS, \$93 | 47 MERRY EDWARDS WINERY, \$117 |
| 21 VIETTI, \$59 | 48 CHAPPELLET, \$81 |
| 23 LA RIOJA ALTA, S.A., \$71 | 48 DIVISION WINE CO., \$63 |
| 24 JUSTIN VINEYARDS & WINERY, \$74 | 50 CASANUOVA DELLE CERBAIE, \$117 |
| 25 CRISTOM VINEYARDS, \$73 | 50 HALL, \$98 |
| 26 FLOWERS VINEYARDS & WINERY, \$103 | 50 TREFETHEN FAMILY VINEYARDS, \$74 |

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Cabernet sauvignon still serves as the engine of wine sales for the country, leading in the varietal sweepstakes, beating out pinot noir this year for the pole position: More than 15 percent of all bottles on the table were cabernets or cab-based blends. Needless to say, they also represent the most expensive offerings on any given list. Two of the top brands in this year's Top 50, Stag's Leap Wine Cellars and Jordan, are both cabernet houses; six of the top 12 brands, and ten of the top 20, are brands with strong cabernet programs.

Steakhouses, now a fixture on the dining landscape, clearly lead in this trend, and the trend is California, Napa in particular. "Napa cabernet has developed a spot in the consumer's brain to where it is the perfect pairing with steak," says Bill Elsey of *Pappas Bros.*, in Houston. "It's the number one place that people associate with California wine."

But there seems to be more stylistic latitude within the category, as Maxwell Eyrise, at *Five O'Clock Steakhouse* in Milwaukee, observes. "I've noticed a lot more people asking for cabernet sauvignon with more elegance and structure, moving away from wines that are just super fruit-forward, and moving towards cabernets with some spice and a peppery bite."



CHRIS RAFTERY
Gramercy Tavern
NYC

Frog's Leap is like Kistler or Littorai: If you appreciate the Old World or the New World style of wine you can appreciate Frog's Leap. We see people asking for that, cold calling, not even opening the list. Shafer gets a lot of cold calls without opening the book. Guests will order One Point Five or Hillside Select; it moves surprisingly quickly. The One Point Five is on our list for \$275 but the Hillside Select—we go through a fair amount of it and that's on the list for \$845.

MOST POPULAR CABERNET SAUVIGNONS

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	Stag's Leap Wine Cellars	Napa Valley Artemis	\$122
2	Faust	Napa Valley	\$122
3	Jordan	Alexander Valley	\$123
4	Silver Oak Wine Cellars	Alexander Valley	\$143
5	Caymus Vineyards	Napa Valley	\$164
6	Justin	Paso Robles	\$63
7	Mt. Veeder Winery	Napa Valley	\$91
8	Heitz Wine Cellars	Napa Valley	\$126
9	Frank Family	Napa Valley	\$115
10	Chateau Montelena	Napa Valley	\$104
11	Hall	Napa Valley	\$98
12	Duckhorn Vineyards	Napa Valley	\$89
13	Shafer Vineyards	Stags Leap District One Point Five	\$184
14	Katherine Goldschmidt	Alexander Valley	\$62
15	Cain Cellars	Napa Valley Cain Cuvée	\$74
	Chappellet	Napa Valley Mountain Cuvée	\$83
17	Obsidian Ridge	Red Hills Lake County	\$61
18	Beringer Vineyards	Knights Valley	\$58
	Decoy	Sonoma County	\$55

20	Woodward Canyon	Columbia Valley	\$100
		Columbia Valley Artist's Series	\$125
		Columbia Valley Nelms Road	\$49
21	Snowden	Napa Valley The Ranch	\$109
22	Buena Vista Winery	Napa Valley	\$88
		Napa Valley Chateau Buena Vista	\$68
23	Turnbull	Napa Valley	\$80
		Oakville Estate	\$110
	Amavi	Walla Walla Valley	\$60
24	Ferrari-Carano Winery	Alexander Valley	\$81
		Napa Valley Adaptation	\$114
	Odette	Stags Leap District	\$190
	Gramercy Cellars	Columbia Valley	\$112
		Columbia Valley Lower East	\$72
27	Joel Gott	Napa Valley	\$32
		Napa Valley Blend No. 815	\$30
	Opus One	Napa Valley Overture	\$243
	Santa Carolina	Maipo Valley Reserva	\$32
31	J. Lohr	Paso Robles Seven Oaks	\$37
		Paso Robles Hilltop	\$62
	Pine Ridge Winery	Napa Valley	\$73
	Groth Vineyards	Oakville	\$139
		Napa Valley	\$112
33	Robert Mondavi Winery	Napa Valley	\$69
	Stags' Leap Winery	Napa Valley	\$102
	Cakebread Cellars	Napa Valley	\$155
36	Honig	Napa Valley	\$83
	Trefethen Vineyards	Oak Knoll District	\$88
		Napa Valley	\$104