



Editors' picks

Each month our editorial team tastes a lot of wine, but not all of it makes it onto the page. So here's our in-house pick of other great wines we've tried

CAPE CATCH-UPS

TINA GELLIE

Over the past few months South African winemakers have descended on London for their own vertical, horizontal and even blind tastings, as well as those organised by individual importers and then the big one, from industry body Wines of South Africa, featuring more than 80 producers. While I'll endeavour to elaborate on these in more detail online, on Decanter Premium, I thought I'd pick out a few wines (from the many) that stood out – and as it happens, they're all Chardonnays. Ahead of winning DWWA Best in Show this year for his 2021 Highlands Chardonnay, Andrew Gunn of **Iona** in Elgin showcased several others, including the **Single Vineyard Fynbos Chardonnay 2020**: opulent orchard fruit, brisk lemony acidity and deft oak spice (£35.65-£40 Handford, The Fine Wine Co, Thorne Wines, Villeneuve, Winoship). Catching up with Carolyn Martin of **Creation Wines** on Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge is always a treat – as are the wines. The superb Glenn's Chardonnay 2020 has sold out, but splash out on the **Art of Creation Chardonnay 2021**: flamboyant butterscotch apple richness with wonderful drive and tension (£65 creationwines.co.uk). Finally, Christopher Jackson, youngest scion of the Jackson Family Wines dynasty, showcased the **Capensis** Chardonnays now imported into the UK via Fells. The 2019 Fijnbosch single-vineyard bottling from Stellenbosch is impressive but will be out of most people's pockets at £173, so I would recommend the **Silene 2020** (2019, £46.95 Fareham Wine Cellar): apricot richness, buttery popcorn oak and a racy acid structure for ageing.



Carolyn Martin,
Creation Wines



Napa's Cabernet Franc devotees

CLIVE PURSEHOUSE

It's not terribly difficult to open a winery in Napa Valley, crank out some Cabernet Sauvignon, sit back and print money. The prices fetched by California's iconic variety are eye-popping and seem to be more so every year. It's for this reason that the small family producer of Lang & Reed really stands out (the wines are superb, too). Proprietors Tracey and John Skupny (*pictured above*) have been flying in the face of convention in Napa since they began in 1993, producing world-class Cabernet Franc and laser-focused Chenin Blanc of real finesse. The Cabernet Franc leans towards the Loire, as do many of Lang & Reed's clonal selections. Its **California Cabernet Franc 2021** is surely one of the best Napa reds under \$30; its level of sophistication and complexity doesn't seem fair for how little it costs. Forest floor, savoury herbs and purple florals exude a real elegance that the wine's mineral-driven palate only emphasises. The **Two-Fourteen Cabernet Franc 2018** is the winery's revelatory flagship. Bramble fruits, turned earth and crushed stone burst from the glass, the mineral and herbaceous elements demonstrate the commitment to acidity, balance and freshness. A different, refreshing take on Napa Valley. langandreed.com

Roussillon snapshot

NATALIE EARL

Recently, at a zoo down in Roussillon, I discovered some of the best wines I've tasted in months. Not where you might expect to be tasting wine, admittedly, but bear with me. Under the dappled shade of a cluster of pine trees, with the soft warm breeze (one of Roussillon's eight different winds) rustling through the scrubby dried-out grass, a group of stoic winemakers poured their wines for a group of melting journalists.

We were at EcoZonia, an animal conservation park. The reason for this choice of tasting location became clear when the sweeping and spectacular views opened up over the vineyards of the Agly Valley, in the north of the



region. Here Grenache is king. Carignan, Syrah, Lledoner Pelut and Mourvèdre play their part, too. Among the numerous excellent wines being shown, **Domaine Depeyre's** stood out. The white **Symphonie 2022**, a blend of Grenache Blanc and Grenache Gris, was pretty and

floral with a salted apple zing and a chalky, cotton-like texture, while the red **Tradition 2020**, a blend of Syrah, Carignan and Grenache, was full of supple red fruit, flint and spice with delicious succulence. Both wines showed such purity of fruit, with power and freshness.



FRENCH CLASSICISM

AMY WISLOCKI

We're so spoiled for choice these days, with emerging wine styles and wine regions, and new restaurant openings showcasing cuisines from every corner of the globe, that it's easy to forget the more traditional options in a constant search for the next new adventure. Tucked away in a Mayfair side street, London's Maison François is an upmarket bistro serving classic French dishes. Deciding to stick to Bordeaux by the glass, I discovered innovation even in this region. **Château Moulin du Peyronin's L'Orange du Moulin 2019** (£28 Theatre of Wine) is a characterful orange wine from Entre-deux-Mers, an accomplished blend of Sauvignons Blanc and Gris. But the star, unexpectedly for me, was the red that accompanied the entrecôte de boeuf. Owned by Christian Moueix of Petrus fame, **Château La Grave** has vineyards planted on gravelly soils on the western side of the Pomerol plateau. The **2016 vintage** (£45-£52 AG Wines, Hic, Noble Grape) has a minerality and elegance I don't always associate with Pomerol, but enough power and structure to cope with the beautifully cooked meat. Long live the classics. **D**



THE SOGEVINUS DREAM TEAM

INES SALPICO

We're used to tales of 'visionary, gifted, iconic' winemakers. It's rare, however, to praise the joint achievements and collaborative strength of talented teams. On an early-summer visit to the Douro, I had the pleasure of meeting one such dream team. At Sogevinus, Carla Tiago (head winemaker Port), Carlos Alves (director of winemaking and viticulture, and master blender), Ricardo Macedo (head winemaker still wines) and Márcio Nóbrega (head of viticulture), met at university and have all, not by coincidence, ended up in leading roles. The mutual admiration within the team is palpable, as is the sense of fun and

challenge. This translates into a steady development that has consolidated the group's historical brands and launched exciting projects. Kopke stands as a benchmark for white Port; with Alves I tasted jewels such as the zesty and lifted **Kopke, White 10 Years Old** (£36-£38 Connolly's, Seven Cellars, The Oxford Wine Co) and the complex, seductively nutty **Kopke, White Colheita 2003** (£57.95 Cotswold Port Co, The Secret Bottle Shop). But I'm curious to see where Macedo can take the group's dry wines, with bottles such as **Quinta da Boavista, Reserva Douro red** and **São Luiz, Reserva Branco Douro white** (2021, £21 Cambridge Wine Merchants) now revealing the estates' potential.

