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Wine & Spirits

24TH ANNUAL RESTAURANT POLL



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"The fear of doom is over," Jeff Hagley says. At Atlanta's *Restaurant Eugene*, he's watched his guests shed "the shock and withdrawal we saw over the past few years. If it's a special occasion, they're planning to spend. They're expecting it."

Sommeliers are upbeat by nature, and with incremental improvements in the economy, their optimism has surged this year. Some have gone on auction buying sprees, restocking old vintages of Bordeaux and Burgundy. Others are looking to Eastern Europe and the far shores of the Mediterranean for new names to add to their lists.

Closer to home, wine directors are voicing more excitement about California wines. While they may view oak-driven chardonnay and cabernet as a fact of life, they're rethinking

their stance on American wines overall, pressured, in part, by their own proclivities for serving local food. In Pursuit of Balance, a group spearheaded by Jasmine Hirsch and Rajat Parr, has added to the buzz around young winemakers working with moderated ripeness and varieties unknown.

Add the disruptive technology of the iPad wine list, which some sommeliers hail and others disdain, and you'll find yourself at the center of a restaurant wine market exploding with the new. May we show you to your table?

BY THE GLASS

Chardonnay is still the first thing on diners' minds when they ask for "a glass of wine," but after that, all bets are off. Last year, 21 out of the 23 most popular by-the-glass pours were from US wineries, and the top three spaces were firmly held by the usual triumvirate of chardonnay, cabernet and pinot noir—in that order.

No longer. Parallel to this year's by-the-bottle numbers, pinot noir by the glass has pushed cabernet aside, dropping its first mention to fourth place, and taking up some of its previous real estate. Last year, only six pinots appeared on this page; this year, six appear within the top ten, with Copain in third place (up from ninth), and ABC, Belle Glos and Coppola not far behind.

Sommeliers consider it a sign of the increased attention diners are paying to pairing wines with food. While there are still people who order a glass of chardonnay without opening the wine list, many are asking for pairing advice, and pinot is the top sommelier go-to. "If [diners] want to get geeky, we'll do a frappato," says Josiah Baldivino at *Michael Mina* in San Francisco, "but otherwise we'll do pinot. I don't think it's ever going to go out of style."

Tasting menus are helping to drive diversity on by-the-glass lists, too, as sommeliers use them to draw diners' attention to something new. "I've been able to get pretty crazy," says Amy Goldberger at *Fifth Floor* in San Francisco. "Right now I've got Bollinger Special Cuvée by the glass, but then I've got some müller-Thurgau. I've got Nicolas Joly Savennières, and a Greek wine that does quite well because it's amazing for pairing purposes—the Alpha Estates Malagousia. And on the red side of things a premier cru red Burgundy, some frappato, a higher-end Paradigm cabernet...some of those more opulent but still balanced wines are great for pairing."

Although the average price for a glass of wine in our poll results is holding even, at \$12.36, diners seem to be willing to pay more for a special pour. At *Eleven Madison Park* in New York, Dustin Wilson has added about a dozen higher-end options, running from \$50 to \$195, for a 1995 Mouton-Rothschild. "We had a lot of guests who would order a bottle of really nice Burgundy and they would finish it and still have a few courses coming," he explains. "We wanted to be able to supplement that first-growth Bordeaux or grand cru Burgundy the guests had been drinking."

By-the-glass sales also show a rise in sparkling wine: This is the first year since 2005 that Champagne has appeared on this page, with Bruno Paillard, Ruinart and Moët et Chandon in the running. At *Spiaggia* in Chicago, Champagne is the only non-Italian wine on the list, and people are going for it, prompted in part by a truffle menu with Champagne pairings from sommelier Jason Carlen. "People don't have a problem spending money on quality product any more," Carlen says. "It gives me a lot of flexibility. I think people come here expecting a certain thing, so I have to keep Barolo on by the glass, grower Champagne and certain upper echelon producers. That costs money, and they get it."

The 12 best wines on a list should be the 12 wines you pour by the glass, because people want to be exposed to interesting things, but maybe don't want a whole bottle.
—Viny Eng, *Bar Tartine*,
San Francisco

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Wines per \$50 (approx)		Average Price	
			'12	'11	'12	'11
1	Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards WINDSOR, SONOMA CO., CA	Russian River Ranches Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Chardonnay	8.0	5.0	\$14	\$13
2	Chateau Ste. Michelle WOODINVILLE, WA	Washington Riesling Columbia Vly. Indian Wells Chard.	8.0	4.0	\$11	\$13
3	Copain HEALDSBURG, SONOMA CO., CA	Anderson Valley Tous Ensemble Pinot Noir	6.0	5.0	\$16	\$17
4	William Hill Winery NAPA, NAPA VLY., CA	Napa Cabernet Sauvignon Central Coast Chardonnay	6.0	6.0	\$9	\$9
5	Duckhorn Vineyards ST. HELENA, NAPA VLY., CA	Napa Merlot Napa Sauvignon Blanc	6.0	4.0	\$16	\$17
6	Au Bon Climat SANTA YNEZ, SANTA BARBARA CO., CA	Santa Barbara Chardonnay Santa Barbara Pinot Noir	5.0	5.0	\$13	\$11
7	Belle Glos RUTHERFORD, NAPA VLY., CA	Sonoma Coast Meloni Pinot Noir Clark & Telephone Pinot Noir	5.0	5.0	\$14	\$17
8	Coppola RUTHERFORD, NAPA VLY., CA	Calif. Diamond Series Merlot Calif. Diamond Series Pinot Noir	4.0	—	\$10	—
8	Ferrari-Carano Winery HEALDSBURG, SONOMA CO., CA	Sonoma County Famé Blanc Alexander Vly. Cabernet Sauvignon	4.0	9.0	\$10	\$14
9	Hall ST. HELENA, NAPA VLY., CA	Napa Cabernet Sauvignon	4.0	—	\$20	—
9	Justin PASO ROBLES, CA	Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon	4.0	—	\$15	—
9	Beringer Vineyards ST. HELENA, NAPA VLY., CA	Knights Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Chardonnay	4.0	—	\$12	—
10	Maison Joseph Drouhin DAYTON, OH	Chablis Chardonnay Macon-Villages Chardonnay	4.0	—	\$13	—
10	Laetitia RUTHERFORD, NAPA VLY., CA	Arroyo Grande Pinot Noir Arroyo Grande Chardonnay	4.0	—	\$11	—
10	Truchard Vineyards NAPA, NAPA VLY., CA	Carmers Napa Pinot Noir Carmers Napa Syrah	4.0	—	\$15	—
11	Bruno Paillard REIMS, FRANCE	Champagne Premiere Cuvée Champagne Rosé	3.0	—	n/a	—
12	Honig Cellars RUTHERFORD, NAPA VLY., CA	Napa Sauvignon Blanc	3.0	—	\$10	—
12	Ruinart REIMS, FRANCE	Champagne Brut Rosé Champagne Blanc de Blancs	3.0	—	n/a	—
12	Simi Winery HEALDSBURG, SONOMA CO., CA	Alexander Vly. Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma Chardonnay	3.0	—	\$11	—
13	Louis Martini Winery ST. HELENA, NAPA VLY., CA	Sonoma Cty. Cabernet Sauvignon	3.0	—	\$11	—
13	Stella SICILY, ITALY	Umbria Pinot Grigio	3.0	—	\$8	—
14	Pascual Toso MIRAFLORES, MENDOZA	Mendoza Reserve Barrancas Malbec	3.0	—	\$11	—
14	Stoller DAYTON, OH	Dundee Hills IV Estate Pinot Noir	3.0	—	\$11	—
15	Kenwood Vineyards KENWOOD, SONOMA CO., CA	Sonoma Cabernet Sauvignon California Pinot Noir	3.0	5.0	\$12	\$12
15	Santa Margherita ALTO ADIGE, ITALY	Alto Adige Pinot Grigio	3.0	—	\$14	—
15	Raymond Vineyard ST. HELENA, NAPA VLY., CA	Napa Reserve Sauvignon Blanc Napa Reserve Chardonnay	3.0	—	\$12	—
16	Castello Banfi MONTALCINO, ITALY	Rosso di Montalcino Centine Chianti Superiore	3.0	—	\$8	—
16	Orin Swift RUTHERFORD, NAPA VLY., CA	Napa The Prisoner Zinfandel Spain E Grenache	3.0	4.0	\$15	\$15
17	Dutton Goldfield SEBASTOPOL, SONOMA CO., CA	Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch Chardonnay	3.0	—	\$20	—
17	Newton Vineyard ST. HELENA, NAPA VLY., CA	Napa Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Unfiltered Chardonnay	3.0	—	\$19	—
17	Vietti BAROLO, ITALY	Barbera d'Alba Tre Vigne Piedmont Perbacco Nebbiolo	3.0	—	\$12	—
18	Moët & Chandon EPERNAY, FRANCE	Champagne Brut Impérial	3.0	—	\$22	—
18	Mark West GRATON, CA	Central Coast Pinot Noir California Pinot Noir	3.0	—	\$9	—