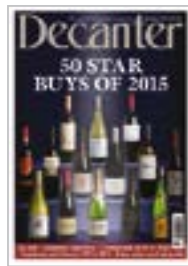


50 star buys of 2015



From the thousands of wines tasted and rated by *Decanter's* expert judges and writers over the past 12 months, we have picked out 50 of the highest-scoring bottles available in the UK. And with 14 of them under £20, there's a host of affordable treats on the following pages to kickstart your seasonal festivities

TO CELEBRATE THE end of another year of great wines, three of our regular experts – Peter Richards MW, Sarah Jane Evans MW and Xavier Rousset MS – have chosen *Decanter's* 50 star buys from the hundreds of wines rated Outstanding in 2015.

Every one scored 18.5/20 (95/100) points and above during the past 12 months and are all still commercially available, with the selection taken from our monthly panel tastings and Weekday Wines, as well as recommendations from our writers that have been published in feature articles and supplements. Our three experts retasted the wines blind (only the principal grape variety and vintage were known) and judged them totally on their own merits.

The tasting included lots of stylistic differences but our panel unanimously agreed on the final 50. The top 10 are highlighted on these first two pages, with the others grouped by region.

The results provoked a few surprises, with white wines and Australia the stars. Rousset found the Australian whites very pure and precise with great minerality

and balance. 'The country's wines have had a tough time, especially Chardonnay, often criticised as too extracted and over-oaked with high alcohol. Producers have reacted to that and it's paying off.' Richards also praised Australia's other popular varieties such as Riesling, Pinot Noir and Syrah for being 'better and more elegant and diverse than ever before'.

No sparkling wines made it into the judges' top 10, but Richards found the two English wines (see p28) 'wonderfully expressive and vivid'.

Evans praised the variety of drinking pleasure on offer in these 50 star buys: 'There are wines with glorious individual character – such as Charme and Chryseia from the Douro (see p32), the new-wave Argentinian Malbec blends like Ji Ji Ji and Demente (p27), and an unexpectedly lovely expression of Marsanne from Oratoire St-Martin (p31).'

Many of the wines recommended offer great value for money (prices and stockists have been checked and updated) and can all be bought with confidence as they come with the *Decanter* seal of approval.

1 Vasse Felix, Heytesbury Chardonnay, Margaret River, Western Australia 2013

£29.95-£35 Christopher Piper, Laithwaite's, Fine & Rare, Hawkshead, Hedonism, Slurp, St Andrews Wine Co, Vin Cognito
Wonderfully complex aromas of fresh dough, roasted nuts and butter. Ripe fruit palate with a rich lemon curd note, along with well-integrated oak and balanced sweetness and acidity. Racy and elegant, a stunning and refined modern Chardonnay. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alcohol** 13.5%



2 Clonakilla, Shiraz-Viognier, Murrumbateman, Canberra District, Australia 2013

£59.30-£78 widely available via UK agent Liberty Wines
Textbook Syrah on the nose, showing vivid cracked black pepper and dark fruit aromas. The palate has clear, bright crisp fruit with a toasty overlay and a pretty violet lift. Tight palate structure: savoury and wonderful. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 14%



3 Costers del Priorat, Clos Cypres, Priorat, Spain 2013

£15-£25 Hawkshead, Slurp, Vi-Vino
Deep, dense, iron-rich black fruit and wild herbs. The palate has a singing, individual acidity and the Carignan, although expressive, has been tamed and focused here to good effect. The fine, brisk finish is silky and tart showing bright, ripe blueberry fruit. **Drink** 2016-2030 **Alc** 14.5%

4 Pewsey Vale, The Contours Museum Reserve Riesling, Eden Valley, South Australia 2009

£16.99-£20 Corks Out, Hawkshead, Hennings, Free Run Juice, Philglas & Swiggot, SH Jones, Slurp, Solent Cellar
Glorious maturing Riesling with notes of baked apple and smoky roasted lime. Pure and precise with an oily texture and succulence. Really long, stylish and mineral, with a dynamic style. Has a sense of nobility to it. **Drink** 2016-2023 **Alc** 12.5%



5 Pikes, The Merle Riesling, Polish Hill River, Clare Valley, South Australia 2014

£24.95 Frontier Fine Wines, Quintessentially Wine, Seckford Agencies, Winedirect
Very pure lime and green apple aromas with a floral hint. Vibrant, taut, thrilling palate bursting with succulent green apples – it explodes in your mouth! A stony finish which will be very classy with some bottle age. **Drink** 2016-2021 **Alc** 12%



6 Viu Manent, Gran Reserva Chardonnay, Casablanca, Chile 2013

£12.45-£13.99 Flagship Wines, North & South Wines, Partridges
Beautiful nutty, preserved lemon rind and struck flint aromas. Great concentration of savoury tones on the palate with vivid lime pith lift and a broad, long finish. Elegantly crafted with amazing balance and lovely acidity. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Alc** 13%

7 San Polo, Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany, Italy 2010

£39-£49.99 widely available via UK agent Liberty Wines
Dried and fresh cherry fruit plus some earthy notes – some age is evident here. A firm, savoury style that is old-school in style but very well done. Roasted, nutty tones and delicately chewy, fine-grained tannins flood the palate, yet it is still elegant. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 14.5%

8 Xanadu, Reserve Chardonnay, Margaret River, Western Australia 2012

£53-£60 Bibendum PLB, Exel Wines
Fresh green fruit, herbs and hint of wood smoke on the nose. This follows on to honey, beeswax and very pleasant nutty flavours with greengage and lime to compliment. Focused, long and refreshing with a creamy texture. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 13%

9 Pike & Joyce, Pinot Noir, Lenswood, Adelaide Hills, South Australia 2012

£18 Fine & Rare, Frontier Fine Wines, Hawkshead, Seckford Agencies, Slurp
A very perfumed style with fine varietal aromas and floral, earthy tones. Very bright acidity with savoury flavours and noticeable bitter cherry and plum fruit. Quite wild with a lovely long finish. **Drink** 2016-2023 **Alc** 13.5%

10 Wine & Soul, Guru, Douro, Portugal 2013

£26.99-£30.30 AG Wines, Corney & Barrow, Fortnum & Mason, Handford, Hedonism, Vin Cognito
Engaging field blend of native white grapes. Dried herbs, toasted nuts and fine smoky cedar aromas with a mineral nuance. Lemon rind flavours mix with toast in a seamless interweaving of variety and oak. Shows great potential. **Drink** 2016-2024 **Alc** 12.5% ➤

For full details of UK stockists, see p116

 Argentina

Gen del Alma, Ji Ji Ji, Gualtallary-Tupungato, Mendoza 2014

£12-£16 **Drinkmonger, Hanging Ditch, Las Bodegas, Selfridges, Slurp, St Andrews Wine Co**
Wonderfully scented and engaging aromas of graphite, violets, dried fruit and warm earth. It has a natural edginess with brisk acidity and delicacy. Good drinkability with a refreshing, savoury essence. **Drink 2016-2019 Alc 12.5%**

 Argentina

Passionate Wine, Demente, Gualtallary-Tupungato, Mendoza 2013

£35-£36 **Bottle Apostle, SH Jones, Slurp, The Vineyard (Lancashire), St Andrews Wine Co**
Fine blackberry, blueberry and grassy aromas. Very juicy blackberry fruit on the palate with mineral notes leading to a savoury finish. Nicely structured and balanced; a modern expression of Malbec. **Drink 2016-2020 Alc 14.5%**

 Argentina

Viñalba, Cuvée Couture, Malbec-Touriga Nacional Reservado, Mendoza 2013

£12.99 **Majestic**
Bramble and garrigue aromas with black pepper and dried flowers. A hint of chocolate and dark cherries on the palate with a savoury, intense finish. Shows real complexity and class. **Drink 2016-2020 Alc 14.5%**

 Australia

Fraser Gallop, Parterre Chardonnay, Margaret River, Western Australia 2013

£21.43-£24 **Bibendum PLB, Exel Wines, Hawkshead Wines, Slurp**
Richly fruited nose with hints of honey and cedar. Lively palate of white stone fruits, nutmeg and sweet spices with a creamy texture and a long, concentrated finish. Complex and inviting. **Drink 2016-2020 Alc 13.5%**


 Australia

Kilikanoon, The Duke Grenache, Clare Valley, South Australia 2009

£38.10-£39.99 **Ministry of Drinks, Thomas Peatling**
Raisined aromas with mint and malt. Very pronounced and deliciously big palate showing sweet and bold peppery spices. Dense and warming with a herbal edge; long, supple and intense. Very engaging and effusive. **Drink 2016-2021 Alc 14.5%**

 Australia

Leeuwin Estate, Art Series Chardonnay, Margaret River, Western Australia 2012

£60-£65 **Bottle Apostle, D Byrne, Domaine Direct, Fortnum & Mason, Hailsham, Harvey Nichols, Hedonism, L'Assemblage, Jeroboams, Richard Kihl, The Secret Cellar, Slurp, The Wine Tasting Shop, Woodwinters, Yorkshire Vintner**
Honeyed melon and butter aromas. Big and bold with refined acidity and a creamy texture. Voluptuous, complex, pure. **Drink 2016-2019 Alc 14%**

 Australia

Yalumba, The Virgilius Viognier, Eden Valley, South Australia 2012


£25-£32 **AC Gallie, Hennings, Hedonism, Laithwaite's, Love Wine**
Lovely, expressive apricot and honeysuckle aromas with some clever, nutty oaking. Polished and velvety with elegance and great roundness. A classic and very successful Viognier; heartwarming. **Drink 2016-2030 Alc 14%**

 Chile

Pandolfi Price, Los Patricios Chardonnay, Itata 2012

£18.50-£19.75 **Berry Bros & Rudd, Stone Vine & Sun**
Pronounced nose of nuts, herbs and ripe fruits. Complex and savoury palate with brisk acidity and a slight oiliness. Very engaging style, with complexity from the oak and real body from the fruit. Needs a bit more time to really shine. **Drink 2016-2023 Alc 13.5%**

For full details of UK stockists, see p116

 **Chile**
Seña, Aconcagua 2012
 £94.25 Albany Vintners, Bordeaux Index, Cadmans, Chelsea Vintners Co, Farr Vintners, Fine & Rare, Halifax Wine Co, Hedonism, Lay & Wheeler, IG Wines, L'Assemblage, Loki, Morgan Classic Wines
 Full-on with dark fruits, cassis leaf, dark chocolate and toast. Pure, typical Cabernet with impressive characteristics. A rich, dense palate with fine-grained tannins and a long finish. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 14%

 **Chile**
Tabalí, Talinay Sauvignon Blanc, Limarí 2014
 £12.99 Blanco & Gomez, Slurp, York Beer & Wine, The Vineking
 Gentle aromas with hints of nettle, peas and gooseberry; very earthy. Taut and tense but underscored by brisk, well-integrated acidity and good balance. Understated with chalk and grassy notes. **Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 13.5%

 **Chile**
Viña Aquitania, Lazuli Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo 2006
 £24.95 Winety
 Lovely and wild with ripe fruits, cigar box spice and roasted green pepper aromas. Full bodied and round with lovely tannins and elegant use of oak. A refreshing style with a ripe finish - very popular indeed! **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 14.3%

 **England**
Hattingley Valley, Kings Cuvée Brut, Hampshire 2011
 £64-£65 Dalling & Co, Liberty Wines, Slurp, The Vineyard (Dorking)
 Rich, toasty, complex and autolytic aroma. Joyous and refined with thrilling acidity and a tense, linear structure. A stunning wine with wonderful texture and focus; one that will develop further. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 12%



 **England**
Nyetimber, Blanc de Blancs 2007
 £30-£48.99 widely available via UK agent Liberty Wines
 Complex green apple, herb and bready tones with some oxidative notes. Seems tense, coiled like a spring. Lovely texture and elegance with a nutty, floral finish. Needs food to fully express itself. **Drink** 2016-2035 **Alc** 12%

 **France**
Château Boyd-Cantenac, Margaux, Bordeaux 2005
 £41-£58 Dennofer Wines, Farr Vintners, Four Walls
 Toasty, smoky aromas with a savoury edge and a serious, structured palate. Classically proportioned with energy and grace. Very pretty and classic with some maturity but still has lots more to give. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 13.5%

 **France**
Château de Chambert, Grand Vin, Cahors 2009
 £24.99-£28.99 Cornelius Beer & Wine, Exel Wines, Hailsham Cellars, Kirkness & Gorie, Liberty Wines, The Fine Wine Co, The Secret Cellar, Wine One Hundred, Winedirect
 Creamy high-toned blue fruit that is carrying its years really well. Dense and plummy, with a fine rasp of tannin and a lift of citrus acidity. Lively, long, and penetrating; complex and full of interest. **Drink** 2016-2019 **Alc** 14.5%

 **France**
Domaine de L'Echevin, Guillaume de Rouville, Côtes du Rhône Villages St-Maurice, Southern Rhône 2014
 £19 The Wine Society
 Young, juicy Viognier with peach and herbal tones. Rounded but also quite grippy, showing varietal richness with pitch-perfect balancing acidity. Polished and very well-made. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 13.5% ➤

For full details of UK stockists, see p116

 France

Domaine Joblot, Servoisine, Givry 1er Cru, Burgundy 2013
£24 Big Red Wine Co, Hallgarten
Druitt, Vin Cognito

Fine, fresh and bright with plum, cherry and herbal tones. Fruit-forward palate with grippy tannins and defined acidity. Needs time to unfurl and come into its own as it is showing great potential.
Drink 2016-2028 **Alc** 13%

 France

Hugel & Fils, Gewurztraminer, Vendanges Tardives, Alsace 2007
£33-£56 Fine & Rare, Slurp,
Vintage Marque

Exotic honeyed lychee and red apple aromas – textbook Gewurztraminer. Good extract and texture here, and the sweetness is balanced by bright acidity. Expansive on the finish, and spicy too. Pure harmony. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 13%

 France

Jean-Paul Brun, Terres Dorées, Chardonnay Classic, Beaujolais 2013
£12.95-£15 OW Loeb & Co

Clean melon aromas with a mix of fresh green fruit and some tropical hints. The palate is more discreet, in a cleansing style. Long and focused with a zesty lift. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%

 France

Oratoire St-Martin, Haut-Coustias, Côtes du Rhône Villages-Cairanne, Southern Rhône 2013
£19.95 Berry Bros & Rudd

Soft apple peel scent that is quite gentle and interesting. Weighty palate that is rounded, succulent and soft with some tannic grip. All present and correct; very deftly put together by a skilled winemaker. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 14%


 France

Pierre Péters, Les Châtillons Brut Blanc de Blancs, Champagne 2007
£75 AG Wines, Berry Bros & Rudd,
Woodwinters

Talcum powder, caramel, lemon and roasted apples on the nose. The palate is brightly acidic with buttery brioche tones and a fine mousse. Very fresh for its age with good focus and elegance. **Drink** 2016-2020 **Alc** 12%

 Italy

Cascina Adelaide, Fossati, Barolo, Piedmont 2010
£36 Swig

Elegant and warm, with notes of earth, tar and dried roses. The delicate mid-palate has very fine, but dense tannins, rich fruit and a touch of smoky development. Lovely cogency and finesse. **Drink** 2016-2035 **Alc** 14.5%

 Italy

Castello di Bolgheri, Bolgheri Superiore, Tuscany 2011
£34-£60 Carruthers & Kent,
FortyFive10, Handford, Huntsworth Wine Co

Creamy, plush plum and cassis with rich, smoky tones. Tannins are a bit fierce but it has the tangy black fruit and juicy concentration to develop. Skilful winemaking; ticks all the boxes. **Drink** 2016-2027 **Alc** 14.5%

 Italy

Cisa Asinari dei Marchesi di Gresy, Camp Gros Martinenga, Barbaresco, Piedmont 2008
£63-£70 Amps Fine Wines, Define


Food & Wine, Handford, Millésima, Woodwinters, Vin Cognito
Malty and maturing, full of dried herbs and cherry; unexpectedly dense and dark. Traditional with a brisk feel and savoury damsons and dark plum fruit. Very long and spicy with a leathery finish. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 14.5% ➤

For full details of UK stockists, see p116

 **Italy**
Poggiotondo, Vigna delle Conchiglie Riserva, Chianti, Tuscany 2011
 £48-£50 Exel Wines, Liberty Wines, Slurp, Winedirect
 Floral, cherry and earthy fruit with firm tannins – quite punchy. An endearing Chianti that should be one of the stars of the region. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 14%

 **New Zealand**
Man O' War, Dreadnought Syrah, Waiheke Island 2012
 £34 Carruthers & Kent, Must Wines, The New Zealand Cellar, Oxford Wine Co, Swig
 Black pepper, hints of violets and warm earth. Juicy and tangy palate with fine, firm tannins and some toasty oak. Still young and self-contained with lots of potential still to emerge. **Drink** 2016-2028 **Alc** 14%

 **New Zealand**
Man O' War, Dreadnought Syrah, Waiheke Island 2013
 £35-£36 Carruthers & Kent, Exel Wines, New Generation Wines, The New Zealand Cellar, Swig
 Dark fruit, charred tones, some leathery tannins and bacon notes. The palate has lots of black fruit with a touch of mint; complex and classy with a black pepper finish. **Drink** 2016-2029 **Alc** 14.5%

 **Portugal**
Niepoort, Charme, Douro 2012
 £59.95 Bottle Apostle, Corks of Cotham, Fortnum & Mason, Handford, Highbury Vintners, Raymond Reynolds, Wadebridge Wines, Woodwinters
 Coffee and caramel aromas lead on to a palate of dark cherry, plum and liquorice with a faint floral hint. Medium bodied with juicy fruits and firm tannins. Finishes a bit rustic with peppery spice. **Drink** 2016-2019 **Alc** 14%



 **Portugal**
Prats & Symington, Chryseia, Douro 2012
 £50-£60 Berry Bros & Rudd, Davy's, Fortnum & Mason, Harrods, Harvey Nichols, Hedonism
 Lovely, ripe dark berries with black pepper, bacon, violets and powerful tannins. Quite savoury and forceful in style with a rustic, complex finish. **Drink** 2016-2025 **Alc** 14%


 **Portugal**
Quinta do Vale Meão, Douro 2012
 £59.95 Corks of Cotham, D Byrne & Co, Harvey Nichols, Hanford, Hedonism, Highbury Vintners, Lockett Bros, Raymond Reynolds, Uncorked, Woodwinters
 A vibrant nose of floral, high-toned, slightly raisined fruit. Decent palate weight – but not overloaded – with a fine, peppery structure and a savoury finish. **Drink** 2016-2023 **Alc** 14%

 **Portugal**
Quinta do Vesuvio, Port, Douro 1994
 £60-£91.90 Berry Bros & Rudd, Bordeaux Index, Christopher Piper, Handford Wines, Justerini & Brooks, Private Cellar, Tanners, The Wine Society
 Beautiful peppery aromas of prunes, plums, graphite and muscovado sugar. Unctuous and full of life, lifted by cherry and tobacco. Balanced and maturing with a bittersweet finish. **Drink** 2016-2045 **Alc** 20%

 **Portugal**
Quinta Vale Dona Maria, Curriculum Vitae, Douro 2012
 £51.45 Corney & Barrow
 Upfront, floral, creamy and plush dark fruit – seems quite modern in style. The juicy palate has a spicy, tarry character and fine powdery tannins. Quite savoury with good acidity. **Drink** 2016-2022 **Alc** 14.5% ➤

For full details of UK stockists, see p116

 **Portugal**
Soalheiro, Primeiras Vinhas Alvarinho, Monção e Melgaço 2013
 £13.25-£22.80 **Butlers Wine Cellar, Lay & Wheeler, Noel Young, Prestige Wines Portugal, The Wright Wine Co**
 Clean, expressive apricot and peach aromas. Very aromatic and classic with a broad, full, herbal palate and a rounded finish. A solid Alvarinho.
Drink 2016-2018 Alc 13%

 **Portugal**
Taylor's, Port, Douro 1994
 £125-£145 **Eton Vintners, Hedonism, Justerini & Brooks, MWH Wine Merchants, Private Cellar, St Andrews Wine Co**
 Aromas of dried flowers, roasted fruit and peppery hints. Some oxidative notes linger on the palate with a tang of alcohol. It's angular but still showing well. **Drink 2016-2030 Alc 20.5%**


 **South Africa**
Boekenhoutskloof, Syrah, Coastal Region 2012
 £38-£39 **AC Gallie, Dulwich Vintners, Handford, Hedonism, Love Wine, SA Wines Online, Swig, Wimbledon Wine Cellar**
 Elegant, refined cedar and plum aromas. The succulent, generous, ripe red fruits are counterpointed by grainy, chewy tannins. Rich, harmonious and well made.
Drink 2016-2020 Alc 14.5%

 **South Africa**
Keermont, Steepside Syrah, Stellenbosch 2012
 £45 **Hedonism, Swig**
 Creamy caramel and plum aromas – a modern style with lifted dried herb nuances. Expressive and generous on the supple, fruity palate with firm, ripe tannins. Needs food and time but shows nice typicity. **Drink 2016-2020 Alc 14%**



 **Spain**
Arrayán, La Suerte Garnacha, Mérida 2012
 £14 **Berry Bros & Rudd**
 An impressive example of Garnacha at its most grown up: deep red fruits, silky tannins, and a round, supple palate. It's hefty with a long finish, and has fine tannins with a touch of spice. **Drink 2016-2019 Alc 14.5%**

 **Spain**
Barón de Ley, Reserva, Rioja 2010
 £10.86-£12.49 **Grand Vin, Waitrose**
 Evocative scents of coconut, woodsmoke, dark cherry and strawberry fruit. Displays punch of citrus acidity and a fine rasp of tannin on the long, classic finish. Very well balanced with firm structure.
Drink 2016-2025 Alc 13.5%

 **Spain**
Codorníu, Gran Codorníu Gran Reserva Xarel-lo Brut, Cava 2009
 £135-£140 (case of three) **Hangingditch, Soho Wine Supply**
 Distinct pear and cream notes of Xarel-lo followed by brisk, herbal and waxy characters on the full mid-palate. Very engaging and drinkable with a well-defined, savoury finish.
Drink 2016-2022 Alc 11.5%

 **USA**
Joseph Phelps, Insignia, Napa Valley, California 2011
 £129.95-£150 **AG Wines, Handford Wines, Hedonism, Private Cellar, Winedirect**
 Controlled and restrained yet boasting intense dark fruit, well-managed tannins and a beautiful structure. Boldly oaked with a long finish. Delicious and well made.
Drink 2016-2018 Alc 14.5%

For full details of UK stockists, see p116