

LOCAL/ARIZONA

PINE WINE

Wines for Valentine's Day and beyond

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Wine Columnist

Romantic wines are beautifully expressive of color, aromas and flavors. Highly pleasing throughout the year, they are ideal for celebrating Valentine's Day. The following recommendations include a broad range of grapes, styles and prices.

\$10s & 20s

Trapiche 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon "Tesoro, Uco Valley, Argentina" (\$15): Excels beyond its price range with deep-purple hue and appealing strength, body, fruit, balance and length. Also consider Trapiche's Tesoro Malbec and Tesoro Chardonnay.

Vecchio Florio 2020 sweet wine "Marsala Superiore, Italy" (\$18): Quality surpasses price with noteworthy vitality, viscosity, fruit, balance and complexity.

St. Clair 2024 Sauvignon Blanc "Dillons Point, Marlborough, New Zealand" (\$24): Strong on the palate with attractive fruit, excellent balance, forward personality and extended finish.

St. Francis 2023 Zinfandel "Old Vines, Sonoma County" (\$25): Enjoy deep-purple hue, layered nose and notable body, fruit, character and length.

Sean Minor 2023 red blend "Signature Series, Nicole Marie, North Coast" (\$28): This Californian excels with impressive color and strength, along with beautiful fruit, fine balance and extended finish.

Other fine buys:

Souleil 2024 Piquepoul "Vin de Bonte. Le Blanc, France" (\$19), **Drusian non-vintage sparkling wine "Brut, Prosecco Superiore, Valdobbiadene, Italy" (\$20),** **Montecillo 2019 Tempranillo "Reser-**

va, Rioja, Spain" (\$20), **Eroica 2024 Riesling "Columbia Valley" (\$22),** **Textbook 2023 Chardonnay "Sonoma County" (\$23),** **Warre's non-vintage Port "Warrior, Finest Reserve, Portugal" (\$24),** **Cambria 2024 Rose of Pinot Noir "Julia's Vineyards, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County" (\$25)** and **L'Ecole No. 41 2022 Merlot "Columbia Valley" (\$29).**

\$30s & 40s

Ex Post Facto 2024 Pinot Noir "Sta. Rita Hills" (\$30): Intensity and complexity on the nose foretell appealing strength, body, fruit, personality and length.

Imagery 2024 Riesling "Upper Ridge Vineyard, Pine Mountain — Cloverdale Peak, Sonoma County" (\$38): Light hue is surpassed by strength and dimensionality on the nose and by intensity, fruit, balance, refinement and character on the palate.

Emeritus 2024 White Pinot Noir "Hallberg Blanc, Russian River Valley" (\$45): The white color may surprise, but it is followed by vigor and complexity, coupled with notable body, fruit, polish, personality and length.

Domaine Carneros non-vintage Brut Rose "Cuvee de la Pompadour, California" (\$45): This gold-tinted Rose is robust with vigor and dimensionality on nose and palate, along with superior balance, character and length.

Patz & Hall 2023 Chardonnay "Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley" (\$45): The broad excellence of this Chardonnay tops others in its price range. I especially enjoyed the notable strength, body, complexity and personality, all carrying throughout a lingering



COURTESY

Pride Mountain 2023 Merlot "Napa County"

finish.

Additional highly-attractive selections:

Benziger 2024 Sauvignon Blanc "Paradiso de Maria, Sonoma Mountain" (\$43), **Imagery 2022 White Burgundy "North Coast, California" (\$43),** **Matanzas Creek 2024 Rose of Malbec "Sonoma County" (\$45),** **Northstar 2022 Merlot "Columbia Valley" (\$45),** **La Selvanelle 2020 Sangiovese "Riserva, Chianti Classico, Italy" (\$47)** and **Dutcher Crossing 2023 Chardonnay "Ferrington Vineyard, Anderson Valley" (\$49).**

\$50s & 60s

Imagery 2023 Primitivo "Sonoma Valley" (\$53): Enjoy deep-purple color paired with fruit and complexity on the nose and excellence on the palate featuring strong, wonderfully balanced fruit, notable body, captivating dimensionality and extended length.

Dutcher Crossing 2021 Zinfandel "Maple Vineyard, Dry Creek Valley" (\$54): Beautiful purple-tinged hue sets the stage for an outstanding nose with strong fruit and noteworthy layer-

ing. Pleasure peaks on the palate with attractive strength, body and much more.

Dry Creek Vineyard 2021 red blend "Sea-Quelle, Dry Creek Valley" (\$55): Enjoyment begins with wonderfully deep color and peaks with superb intensity, balance, complexity, integration, refinement and length.

Benziger 2022 Merlot "Sunny Slope Vineyard, Sonoma Valley" (\$63): Very good to exceptional in all aspects, from its purple color to strength, body, fruit and more, all beautifully extended throughout a long-lingering finish.

Lewis Cellars 2024 Chardonnay "Russian River Valley" (\$65): Strongly appealing with deep, yellow-gold color and powerful complexity, along with polished excellence in personality and length.

Papapietro Perry 2022 Pinot Noir "Peters Vineyard, Russian River Valley" (\$69): This beautiful, purple-hued wine projects impressive aromas, but is even more attractive on the palate with forward strength, body and fruit, along with notable balance, character, complexity,

integration, refinement and finish.

Other excellent choices:

Ram's Gate 2022 Pinot Noir "Sonoma Coast" (\$52) and **Hartford Court 2022 Chardonnay "Four Hearts Vineyards, Russian River Valley" (\$55).**

\$70s+

San Simeon 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon "Estate Reserve, Paso Robles" (\$70): This beauty topped the numerous Cabernets in my tastings with its deep-purple hue and strength on the palate featuring broad excellence carried over exceptional length.

Pride Mountain 2023 Merlot "Napa County" (\$72): Among the best Merlots I've tasted, it has gorgeous color and an impressive nose, but is even better on the palate with ample vigor, heavy body, powerful fruit, superior balance, engaging personality and prolonged finish.

Eleven Eleven 2023 Pinot Noir "Calesa Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County" (\$75): Beautifully hued, but even more attractive on nose and palate. I especially enjoyed its memorable strength, attractive fruit, forward complexity and notable length.

Charles Krug 2019 red blend "Generations, Family Reserve, Napa Valley" (\$85): I've recommended numerous vintages of this wine over the years, and its impressive quality continues with excellence in color, body, fruit, dimensionality, integration, character

and finish.

Knights Bridge 2022 Chardonnay "West Block, Knights Valley" (\$85): Among the best Chardonnays I've ever tasted in terms of its goldish color, strong nose and exceptional beauty on the palate that carries for lingering length.

Donum 2021 Pinot Noir "Year of the Ox, Single Vineyard, Carneros" (\$105): This wonderful wine excels in numerous dimensions. I loved its purple hue, powerful nose and outstanding strength, balance, integration, refinement, personality and finish.

Additional superb wines:

Mount Veeder 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon "Napa Valley" (\$70), **History 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon "Cold Creek Vineyard, Columbia Valley" (\$75),** **Domaine Willamette 2021 sparkling "Brut Rose, Willamette Valley" (\$80),** **W. & J. Graham's non-vintage "Reserve Porto, Six Grapes, Douro Valley, Portugal" (\$80),** **Donum 2021 Chardonnay "Year of the Ox, Single Vineyard, Carneros" (\$80),** **Gary Farrell 2021 Pinot Noir "Gap's Crown Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County" (\$95)** and **Lallier non-vintage Champagne "Blanc de Blancs, Brut, France" (\$100).**

Contact local liquor stores or search online to determine availability. John can be reached at azpinewine@yahoo.com.

Love should NEVER hurt you.

Love...

is	is not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Freedom • Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Acceptance • Collaboration • Control • Harm • Isolation • Blame • Coercion • Gaslighting

Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1 (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or go to TheHotline.org if you or someone you know is impacted by relationship abuse.

This program is supported by a grant from the Administration for Children and Families through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) and the Arizona Department of Health Services.