

IMPORTED NEW RELEASES

Our blind panels tasted **265** new-release imported wines for this issue. Our critics rated **27** as exceptional (90+) and **29** as Best Buys. **Joshua Greene** reviews Italy and Portugal; **Tara Q. Thomas** reviews Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Israel, Lebanon and Turkey.

Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at wineandspiritsmagazine.com.

CROATIA WHITE



92 | Bastianich \$18

2010 Istria Adriatico Malvasia Istriana Joe Bastianich and his Friuli team cross the border into Croatia for this wine, sourcing fruit from three highly respected growers: Moreno Degrassi, Gianfranco Koslovic and Ivica Matosevic. It's finely balanced, the grape's floral, honeyed fragrance restrained and elegant; its texture is full and satiny yet lifted by a steadfast acidity. It lasts long, the flavors clean and precise, with the combination of heft and delicacy to match seafood risotto. *Dark Star Imports, NY*

CYPRUS WHITE

88 | Vasilikon \$11

2012 Pafos Xynisteri (Best Buy) This has the acidity Cypriot winemakers try hard to retain in spite of the island's warmth, alongside a sunny red-apple fruit. It's a good alternative to a glass of unoaked chardonnay. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

87 | Kyperounda Winery \$13

2011 Paphos Petritis Xinisteri (Best Buy) Kyperounda's vineyards are some of the highest in the world, rising up to 4,500 feet in the Troodos Mountains. In 2011, they soaked up the sun, producing a wine with ripe orange tones. The acidity keeps the fruit lively, although that briskness is countered by an overlay of oak. Give it another six months, or pair with something rich and slightly sweet, like pork chops stuffed with dried fruit. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

85 | Vouni Panayia \$10

2011 Paphos Alina Xinisteri (Best Buy) This is full bodied and nutty, for roast chicken on a cool summer evening. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

CYPRUS RED

84 | Vouni Panayia \$10

2008 Plakota (Best Buy) A traditional blend of mavro and maratheftiko bolstered with a little cabernet (franc and sauvignon), this is sweetly ripe, with a bit of volatile acidity running through the figgy fruit. For barbecues this summer. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

CYPRUS DESSERT

90 | Loel \$12

Paphos Commandaria Alasia (Best Buy) One of the best bottles of Loel in memory, this has both lift and lusciousness, the salted caramel and nut flavors as airy as a mousse; the candied orange notes and cinnamon stick spice are delicate and refined. Draw out the smoky notes with some grilled peaches this summer, or save a bottle for winter, to enjoy with cheese. *Fantis Imports, Carlstadt, NJ*

CZECH WHITE

90 | Vinarstvi Galant \$25

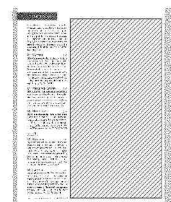
2011 Moravia VINO z Czech Welschriesling Mikulov, where this 68-acre estate was established in 2004, is an hour's drive north of Vienna, just across the border. The rolling hills, loamy soils and nearby lake make for rich welschriesling; the 2011 is honeyed and orange-toned, with apple blossom scents and celery seed herbals that lend delicacy while smoky earth tones add gravitas. It's succulent and intriguing, a wine that would be fun to pair with intricately spiced dishes, like Persian rice with saffron and dried barberries. *Czech Wine Imports, Colebrook, CT*

87 | Vinselekt Michlovsky \$15

2011 Moravia VINO z Czech Sauvignon Blanc (Best Buy) Grown not far from the vineyards of Vinarstvi Galant (recommended above), in Rakvice, this sauvignon skews to the vividly green edge of the varietal spectrum, with lime and asparagus notes balanced by a bit of sweetness. For the cocktail hour. *Czech Wine Imports, Colebrook, CT*

87 | Vinselekt Michlovsky \$16

2011 Moravia VINO z Czech Grüner Veltliner (Best Buy) This is very grüner in its



snap-pea crispness and limey fruit. It's not complex but it is refreshing, especially with a plate of snow pea shoots and some shrimp fried rice. *Czech Wine Imports, Colebrook, CT*

ISRAEL RED

90 | Galil Mountain \$21

2010 Upper Galilee Alon In the Upper Galilee the mildness of the winter of 2010 and the warmth of the summer that chased it pushed harvest up two weeks. While the fruit in this blend of cabernet sauvignon, syrah, petit verdot and cabernet franc is irrefutably sweet, it's balanced by chocolaty earth and herbs. It leaves a coolness akin to an After Eight mint, at once lush and refreshing. *Yarden, Inc., NY*

ITALY WHITE

VENETO: SOAVE

90 | Suavia \$33

2010 Soave Classico Monte Carbonare This vineyard, named for its black, volcanic soil, produced a rich garganega in 2010. It emphasizes leesy flavors of toasted almonds and minerally grape skin notes layering herbs and the greenness of baby artichokes. Chill it for braised *polpo*. *Vias Imports, NY*

88 | Santi \$16

2011 Soave Classico Vigneti di Monteforte (Best Buy) Musky with melon and orange citrus flavors, this is dry, ending on a soft note of crushed white cherries and clean acidity. It's big enough to serve with roast salmon. *Frederick Wildman and Sons, NY*

87 | Inama \$15

2011 Soave Classico (Best Buy) Golden in color, this wine tastes like a roasted almond, the texture smooth, the finish clean and peppery. A patio white that's simple and refreshing. *Dalla Terra, Napa, CA*

86 | Villa Girardi \$15

2011 Soave Classico (Best Buy) Tight in its juiciness and clean lines, this is fragrant with white rose scents. Leesiness makes the finish a little vague, but a chill will bring it back in line for clams roasted with garlic. *Montcalm Wine Importers, NY*

PINOT GRIGIO

84 | Fontana d'Italia \$11

2011 Pinot Grigio delle Venezie (Best Buy) A sweetly fruited white with toasted lees flavors, this is ripe yet still refreshing, especially with a chill. *Winery Exchange, Novato, CA*

WHITE BLEND

86 | Bertani \$17

2011 Venezie Due Uve Pinot Grigio Sauvignon Blanc (Best Buy) A simple, grapey white with scents of butternuts and pine-like acidity, this is a smooth blend to serve as an aperitif. *Palm Bay Int'l., Boca Raton, FL*

ITALY RED

VENETO: AMARONE

**92 | Bertani** \$140

2004 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Noted for its long-lived Amarone, Bertani offers a 2004 that feels less powerful than persistent. It's relatively light in body for an Amarone, holding what might be described as a silent power, recessed in mineral-scented tannins and savory earthbound fruitiness. It's elegant enough to decant for dinner with seared grass-fed beef, and balanced for further aging. *Palm Bay Int'l., Boca Raton, FL*

92 | Vaona \$62

2008 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Pegrandi (Best Buy) From a single vineyard in Marona, this is equal parts corvine gentile, corvinone and rondinella, with five percent each of molinara and raboso Veronese, the grapes air-dried for four months. It comes off as more complex and more energized than Vaona's Paverno (recommended here as well). The flavors build out from tight tannins, starting at bitter almond skins, moving toward chocolate richness into fruit that completely fills out the middle of the wine before it's scolded by the tannins back into peach and plum pit flavors. This has the structure to evolve for ten years or more. *A.I. Selections, Long Island City, NY*

91 | Begali \$70

2008 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico (Best Buy) A full-bodied Amarone, this has classical elegance, a harmonious balance of sweet fruit and firm, bitter tannins. Impressive for its gentle length of flavor, melding

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bitter chocolate, fresh herbs and peppery scents, this is a wine to contemplate over cured meats and Parmigiano-Reggiano. *Vignaioli Selection, NY*

**91 | Nicolis** \$90

2005 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Ambrosan Ornate in its high notes of sweetness, volatile acidity and tart cherry and coffee, this has an underlying gaminess, like *pastissada de caval*—a horsemeat stew served in Verona's *trattorie*—that this powerful wine would match well. *Vignaioli Selection, NY*

90 | Le Salette \$62

2008 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico (Best Buy) Layered with scents of game, smoked peppers and earth, this feels potent and rich in the middle, bristling with tannins that resolve through the end as they soften into flavors of sweet fruit. An engaging Amarone to serve with *osso buco*. *Vias Imports, NY*

90 | Tenuta Sant'Antonio \$45

2008 Amarone della Valpolicella Selezione Antonio Castagnedi (Best Buy) The Castagnedi brothers, based in Monti Garbi, vinify this wine in stainless steel and age it in 500-liter barrels, producing a tightly structured Amarone that keeps its richness in check with the dry severity of its structure. A stroke of black tannins cuts off the sweet root vegetable flavors and leaves a layered floral scent in the finish. Hard to access for now, this needs several years of cellar time to mellow. *Dalla Terra, Napa, CA*

90 | Vaona \$49

2009 Amarone della Valpolicella Classico Paverno (Best Buy) Grown at the Vaona family's vineyards in the Valpolicella hills, the grapes for this wine are air-dried for three months, producing a robust Amarone with black, dimpled-fruit flavors that last. The aroma is equally dark and mineral, the mid-palate closed off behind tannins that create a simple, bittersweet balance. Cellar this for five or six years, then serve with oxtail stew. *A.I. Selections, Long Island City, NY*

VALPOLICELLA

92 | Antica Corte \$25
2010 Valpolicella Classico Superiore Ripasso This tight black wine is structured by its flavors of blueberry skins and blackberry seeds, the fruit and tannins reading as one. It's tense with freshness that lengthens and deepens its flavors, a gracious, appetite-inducing red to decant for braised lamb. *Saranty Imports, Harrison, NY*

91 | Zenato \$30
2009 Valpolicella Superiore Ripassa The concentrated power of air-dried grapes creates an equilibrium between this wine's dense black fruit and floral scents, from rose to violet. Chunky tannins provide a slow melt to the finish, like bittersweet chocolate, while the fruit maintains its briskness and direction. Built to age. *Winebow, NY*

90 | Giuseppe Lonardi \$30
2009 Valpolicella Classico Superiore Ripasso A savory ripasso packed with dark fruit, this tastes as meaty as a juicy steak. Black peppercorn scents add spice. For grilled sirloin. *August Wine Group, Seattle, WA*

89 | Tenuta Sant'Antonio \$19
2009 Valpolicella Superiore Monti Garbi Ripasso (Best Buy) Saturated with dimpled fruit flavors, from raisins to prunes and fresher, sweet black plums, this is a straightforward ripasso that feels zesty even if completely black. For pasta with boar ragu. *Dalla Terra, Napa, CA*

88 | Villa Spinosa \$18
2010 Valpolicella Classico (Best Buy) Scents of thyme and game add depth to this light-bodied red, a brisk summer wine for pasta with sausage and broccoli rabe. *Tradizione Imports, NY*

VENETO BLEND

87 | Inama \$20
2010 Veneto Rosso Più Carmenère (Best Buy) Intriguing herbal scents meld with violets and spice in a tight red that narrows to spice in the end. The flavors in the middle hint at green bean under oak. Serve this cellar temperature with cured sausages. *Dalla Terra, Napa, CA*

ITALY DESSERT

91 | Suavia \$60
2006 Recioto di Soave Acinatium Made from garganega grown on a hilltop vineyard

and dried for five months, this wine presents a golden amber color and a honeyed flavor. It tastes of pine nuts and spice, its sweetness balanced so it comes off as gentle richness. A drop of sunshine to share after dinner. *Vias Imports, NY*

LEBANON WHITE

93 | Chateau Musar \$41
2005 Bekaa Valley Gaston Hochar The abundant rain and snow that fell in the winter of 2005 set Musar's vines up for a long, sunny summer, the months between May and September memorable for their mildness. This is a wine that takes days to unfold, starting out deeply toasty and even tannic, getting brighter and more refined as it opens. Never does the flavor come across as fruity; instead, the flavor is so deeply savory it brings to mind brioche spread with foie gras. A blend of obaideh and merwah fermented in oak for seven months and aged in bottle for seven years before release, it feels as though it can go another seven without any problem. *Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA*

LEBANON RED

90 | Chateau Musar \$51
2004 Bekaa Valley Gaston Hochar This is lighter and friskier than the typical Musar red, a reflection of the cool vintage, yet it has all the hallmark components: earthy fruit, forest floor aromas, leather and spice (and some volatile acidity). It's delicious now, a wine to drink while waiting for more robust vintages to come around, especially if game birds or sweetbreads are on the menu. *Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA*

86 | Chateau Musar \$14
2010 Bekaa Valley Musar Jeune (Best Buy) This is a punchy red, full of sour-cherry fruit and sappy herbs; the base of cinsault (60 percent) keeps it light while firmly Mediterranean in character. *Broadbent Selections, San Francisco, CA*

SLOVENIA WHITE

PINOT GRIGIO

88 | Pullus \$15
2011 Stajerska Pinot Grigio (Best Buy) This has the transparent pink color of a currant, along with a clean, pear cider-like fruitiness that gives it some grape skin cut. It has the pink to match langoustines, or mantis shrimp from the Adriatic. *Vinum USA, Madison, NJ*

RIBOLLA



92 | Kabaj \$25
2010 Goriska Brda Rebula (Best Buy) A woman walked into a bar and said, "I'll have an orange." The bartender looked confused. "Orange wine?" he asked. "Yes, an orange," she said. True story, and a strong case for a glass of this ribolla, which is neither red nor white. The color is spot-on orange, the aromas and pleasantly bitter flavors hover between white flowers, dried pear, orange pith, the pink of peach pit, and red notes of bosky cherries. The wine's direction and freshness seems to come from its pithy tannins rather than acidity, confounding any categorization other than orange. *Blue Danube Wine Co., Los Altos Hills, CA*



91 | Valter Sirk \$30
2010 Goriska Brda Rebula The youth of this wine is apparent in the platinum gold color and the tightly constricted structure. It manages to feel supple against tart green apple flavors and saline acidity, like the liquor of an oyster. Age it to bring the richness forward. *Vias Imports, NY*

RAVAN

92 | Kocijancic-Zanut \$20
2011 Goriska Brda Sauvignonasse (Best Buy) "Explosively juicy," was one take on the fruitiness of this wine, bursting with green tropical fruit, honeydew melon and kumquat flavor. Chalkiness in the texture interprets the wine's grape skin tannins with delicacy. The flavors last, gracious and satisfying. For roast fish. *Tri-Wines, Shrub Oak, NY*

91 | Kabaj \$25
2010 Goriska Brda Ravan If you have no patience for oxidative whites, steer clear. But if you're open to the charms of this wine, it delivers remarkable freshness. Look past the resinous, tree-sap aroma and you'll find a rich, earthy wine with yellow spices and flavors that are more wheat berry than nutty. Its mineral character would meld with a mushroom pilaf with fresh thyme and sage. *Blue Danube Wine Co., Los Altos Hills, CA*

SAUVIGNON BLANC



91 | Movia \$30
2010 Goriska Brda Sauvignon More a food than a wine, this has the numbing heat of Thai chiles balanced by a raft of fruit, from ginger juice to pineapple and fresh lime. It's spicy rather than acidic. Decant it for pork loin with a Thai marinade of fish sauce and lime. *Domaine Select Wine Estates, NY*

SLOVENIA RED

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

90 | Kocijancic-Zanut \$80
2008 Goriska Brda Augustus Cabernet Sauvignon Foresty blue fruit and high-toned spice meets a lot of oak tannins in this cabernet. It feels cool and focused underneath the vanillin of the oak. Give this time to evolve. *Tri-Wines, Shrub Oak, NY*

MERLOT

92 | Kabaj \$35
2008 Goriska Brda Merlot Gamey and closed off when first poured, this is all about structure, a dark, savory red with scents of tree bark and fresh pomegranate, amaro spices and meaty black juice. Some acidity brightens the wine, shot through its black tannins, lending a clean, fresh appeal. Serve with a well-aged hard cheese, like Vella Jack. *Blue Danube Wine Co., Los Altos Hills, CA*

88 | Kocijancic-Zanut \$20
2010 Goriska Brda Merlot (Best Buy) Plummy merlot at its core, this is lifted out of its softness by scents of an herb garden. Its high-toned notes of roses and bright red peach add dimension to an otherwise cushy, earthy red. *Tri-Wines, Shrub Oak, NY*

RED BLEND

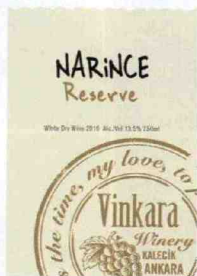


92 | Kabaj \$40
2007 Goriska Brda Cuvée Morel From the compelling herbal aroma to the generously textured fruit, this melds the best elements of merlot (60 percent of the blend) with cabernets sauvignon and franc and a small addition of petit verdot (4 percent). It's as dark and savory as a digestif of herbal bitters, balanced by dark fruit that lasts with freshness. Decant it for venison or other robust game. *Blue Danube Wine Co., Los Altos Hills, CA*

REFOSCO

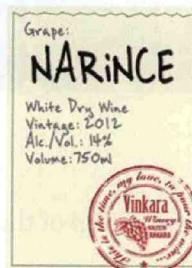
87 | Santomas \$13/liter
2011 Slovenska Istra Ludvik Nazarij Glavina Refosk (Best Buy) High-toned mulberry and violet candy scents brighten all the dark corners of this wine, which will brighten barbecued brisket. *Tri-Wines, Shrub Oak, NY*

TURKEY WHITE



90 | Vinkara \$25
2010 Turkey Reserve Narince Vinkara's first commercial release was in 2009; made from

the local narince and aged on the lees in barrel for 14 months, this second vintage could be a ringer for a Rhône white, given its structure and elegance. It feels broad and firm, with an orange-like acidity woven through scents of white fruit; oak bolsters the feeling of richness rather than informing the flavors. It could use bottle age to integrate; then it will make a fine complement to veal with roasted mushrooms. *Fine Terroir Selections, Greenwich, CT*



85 | Vinkara \$15
2012 Turkey Narince (Best Buy) Sweetly green and floral, this is a light white that recalls a simple sauvignon blanc. *Fine Terroir Selections, Greenwich, CT*

TURKEY RED

88 | Suvla \$13
2011 Gallipoli Peninsula Kabatepe Kirmizi (Best Buy) Selim Zafer Ellialti planted vineyards in 2003 and spent a few years selling the fruit to Kavaklidere before launching his own wines in 2010. This 2011—a blend of shiraz, cabernets franc and sauvignon, merlot and petite verdot—has a bright acidity coursing through its mulberry-dark fruit that makes it positively palate whetting. It feels Adriatic, a red to drink out of doors with grilled lamb kabobs. *House of Burgundy, NY*

87 | Suvla \$13
2012 Gallipoli Peninsula Grenache Noir (Best Buy) This drinks like a hearty rosé, fresh and brightly cherried with refreshing acidity. Give it a chill for grilled sausages. *House of Burgundy, NY* ■