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[HOME](#) > [WINE](#)

12 Wines That Serious Collectors Don't Want You to Know About

Incredible bottles that are enjoyable now and will age gracefully for many years to come.

By [Jonathan Cristaldi](#) | March 22, 2021



Living the wine life is fun and mostly carefree, but there's also a dark side, where passionate enthusiasts run up against serious collectors. In these moments, wine can turn ugly.

Say you're at a backyard barbecue, enjoying a glass of Accendo Cellars' ultra-rare Laurea red that a collector with a big-ass wine cellar poured for you. Everything is rosy. But when you express a desire to obtain a bottle for yourself, the collector stiffens and deadpans, "You won't be able to get this," and offers you the smallest burger on the grill.



You start asking other people at the party where to buy the wine, but suddenly everyone has to get back to somebody on Slack. Well, just wait until you invite them to your own barbecue and pull out a case of that Laurea—or Newton, Goldeneye, Faust, and Cornell, and so many others that you didn't know about until you found this list.

It's time to be in the know. Most of these bottles are pricey, some are not-as-pricy, and all are incredible wines that are enjoyable now and will age gracefully in, yes, a big-ass cellar for years to come. Here are 12 wines that serious collectors wish you wouldn't buy.

2017 Kings Carey Wines Grenache Sta. Rita Hills Santa Barbara County (\$34)

If you've had cult-favorite Liquid Farm, James Sparks' day job, you know he's got a gift for crafting utterly fresh, pure-fruited [Pinot Noir](#) and Chardonnay. In 2014, he

debuted his own Kings Carey label and lent his Midas touch to Grenache grapes from Spear Vineyards, an organically-farmed site in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. Sparks' Grenache bottling will become an instant-favorite after the first sip. Collectors hoard it because it is a sheer joy to drink—it should cost twice the price. The 2017 is profoundly layered, showing a beautiful lucid, vibrant, and shimmering ruby red color, and revealing bright cherry and scorched wild crushed herb notes, complemented by roasted coffee bean, orange zest, and juicy, just-picked wild strawberry fruit leading to a long mineral finish.

2017 Boich Family Cellar NVS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley (\$125)

Founder John Boich has amassed an envious portfolio of wines, available through an allocation-only model, from some of Napa's leading vineyards, like To Kalon, Beckstoffer Missouri Hopper, and Beckstoffer Georges III. His winemaker, Jeff Ames, is no stranger to fans already collecting bottles from Tor and Rudius, his other gigs. This 2017 NVS has pitted collector against collector in a race to obtain an allocation. If any bottles do remain after their official release, they're made available to people not on the list—first come, first served, until sold out. Aromas of cookies and cream and blackberry and black cherry liqueur, with crème de cassis nuances, graphite, and purple florals; it's broad and mouth-filling with satiny French oak tannins so precisely integrated you'd be wise to mistake this for a French First Growth.



CREDIT: COURTESY OF NEWTON VINEYARD

2016 Newton Cabernet Sauvignon Spring Mountain District Napa Valley (\$210)

Founded in 1977 by Peter Newton and Su Hua, Newton is unquestionably the crown jewel of Napa's Spring Mountain District. Some of California's greatest winemakers—Ric Forman, John Kongsgaard, Andy Erickson, Aaron Pott, and Jean Hoefliger—have crafted these wines; today, Alberto Bianchi is at the helm. Although the winery and grounds experienced heavy losses in the [Glass fire](#), estate director Jean-Baptiste Rivail has said that Newton owners LVMH support the restoration of the estate. Best of all, much of the winery's previous vintages are safe in temperature-controlled storage on the valley floor. And this 2016 Cabernet, if you can get your hands on any, offers a stunning snapshot of why Newton Cabernet is a monument of a wine that stands shoulder to shoulder with the absolute best. A flourish of blackberry and mountain-grown wild herbs lifts out of the class, evolving on the palate, layering in burley and dusty mountain tannins, dried mint, and crushed graphite, cedar spices, and a finish that lasts well into the next sip.

2018 Goldeneye Ten Degrees Pinot Noir (\$130)

If this 25-year-old Anderson Valley winery isn't on your radar yet, there's a good reason. Those who make the trek to Goldeneye through winding Northern California roads, often without cell service, to traipse around the estate gardens prefer to keep it a secret. Winemaker Katey Larwood has conquered the rustic, deeply-structured, heady-spice-driven qualities of Anderson Valley Pinot Noir with this bottling of Ten Degrees. Black and blue fruits notes find rustic earthy notes underscored by vivid, crunchy acidity, leading to a flourish of wildflowers and dried tea leaf notes on a long, supple, finish, culminating in pops of brandied cherry and cedar spices.

2018 Faust The Pact Cabernet Sauvignon Coombsville Napa Valley (\$125)

Sure, \$125 may not seem like a bargain, but considering that winemaker David Jelinek has produced Harlan (\$1,400+) and Joseph Phelps (\$220+), it's a steal. The best place to enjoy it, of course, is at the newly renovated Faust Haus in St. Helena (home of the old St. Clement winery). In the glass, the 2018 Pact reveals an inky red, glass staining color, with aromas of boysenberry, candied raspberry, and red cherry. Lofty purple floral notes emerge on the tight knit, textured palate, unfolding in black-fruited waves atop elongated tannins all gliding toward a salted dark chocolate finish. It's plain to see why Faust fans want to keep it all for themselves. Pro tip: Call the winery and ask to buy library bottles of the 2011 vintage because it is mind-blowing.

2018 Medlock Ames Fifty Tons Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley Sonoma (\$90)

You need to become a member of Medlock Ames to gain access to their exclusive wines, which you'll want to enjoy when you book an Olive Grove Experience at the winery in Healdsburg (\$50 per person). It goes like this: You cozy up beneath a grove of olive trees with a picnic basket of local Sonoma cheeses, cured meats, fresh bread, chocolates, estate-grown olives, and jams from the winery's organically-certified

gardens—and the member-exclusive Fifty Tons Cabernet Sauvignon. Founders Chris James and Ames Morison moved 50 tons of rock to restore terraces for the Cabernet that goes into this blue-and-black-fruited, silky-texture red. Take note: Jean Hoefliger of Alpha Omega fame began consulting with the 2019 vintage, which means these small production wines are going to fly out the door even faster than before.

2018 Las Jaras Wines Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma Mountain (\$70)

Comedy genius Eric Wareheim is a 50/50 partner in Las Jaras with winemaker Joel Burt, and longtime Tim and Eric fans snap up these wines every year they're released. That's why Burt has a challenge for all you "serious" wine lovers: Please, try to get an allocation, so you can see how awesome the wines are. And considering that Burt and Wareheim don't own a winery and source all their grapes (primarily from Mendocino County), it gives them a lot of flexibility to do some really cool things, like get into contract for 100% of a vineyard and demand it be farmed to their strict standards. Burt is all about minimal intervention these days, using little to no sulfur additions. And he has mad skills, as seen in a "punchy, weird, and crazy" wine like Superbloom (a Carbonic-pink wine made from seven different grapes) or this fresh and structured 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from Sonoma Mountain—a throwback to the lower-alcohol, more restrained wines of California's past. With ample red and black fruit notes, rich turned earth, dark chocolate, and heady purple florals.

2018 CIRQ Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$150)

Meet anyone who has managed to obtain an allocation of Michael Browne's CIRQ wines, and they'll be happy to share a bottle. But ask how to get on the list, and they'll distract you: "Oh, look, a family of quail!" Browne is, of course, *the* Michael Browne of Kosta Browne fame, and CIRQ is his second act, along with newly released CHEV (a broad-ranging regional wine that is also highly worth seeking out). Both labels, made in tiny quantities, will be housed under Browne's new estate in the heart of the Russian River Valley, slated to open this year. Get on the list! In the meantime, his newly published *Pinot Rocks* book is [available on Audible](#) (with William Shatner

doing the narration). Just 950 cases were made of this 2018 Russian River Pinot, which offers lifted aromas of candied cherry, and a walk through dense redwood forests after a light rain, violets, black truffles, and juicy, mouth-filling black raspberry, blood orange, cedar, and pine spices.

2016 Lang & Reed Two-Fourteen Cabernet Franc Napa Valley (\$85)

Winemaker John Skupny likes to tell people he can't grow a tomato to save his life. I'm calling BS on that. The Midwestern transplant sure can work a vineyard, though. Skupny was born in Detroit and his dad worked for Ford, which meant that the family moved around a lot in his youth. He found his footing in the Kansas City white-tablecloth restaurant scene in the 1970s, where every night the tables were stained with top French and California wines. Bitten by the wine bug, he eventually landed in Napa with his wife Tracey. After working with a spate of icons, from Bob Trinchero and Chuck Wagner to Francis Ford Coppola, in 1996 he debuted Lang & Reed with a sole focus on Cabernet Franc. "I'd helped many people to make and sell high-end Napa Cabernet Sauvignon," says Skupny. "I was wary of taking ourselves too seriously, and Cabernet Franc is more level-headed." Still, his Cabernet Francs are pretty serious, and, incredibly, age like fine red Burgundy. This is the tenth vintage of Two-Fourteen, and what a beauty. Lifted and juicy red berry fruit, with deep earthy notes, atop a core of elegant acidity and feathery tannins making this a wonderful addition to just about any meal.

2017 Crescere Pinot Noir Platt Vineyard Sonoma Coast (\$120)

Planted in 2003, Platt Vineyard sits five miles from the Pacific Ocean in Sonoma and has long been a source of world-class grapes for iconic producers like Ramey, Littorai, and Red Car. When Crescere founder Joe Reynoso got his hands on a few tons, he knew just what to do. This savvy son of a Mexican migrant worker from the Central Coast hired [Philippe Melka](#) when he launched his label in 2016. This is only the second release, and talk about an absolute stunner. Out of a markedly heavy bottle

comes a surprising, almost translucent ruby-color, and heady aromas of clove and blood orange, cinnamon spices, and juicy bing cherry, grapefruit zest, and feathery wispy tannins on a long, long finish. "Varietal typicity, site specificity, purity of fruit and great texture with energy," is what Reynoso says you should expect of his wines. This Pinot proves it. Also, only 45 cases were produced.



CREDIT: MATT MORRIS

**2016 Cornell Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon Fountaingrove
District Sonoma County (\$500 / 3 pack)**

When Henry Cornell first set foot on the property atop the Mayacamas Mountains, just west of the Spring Mountain District, on the site that is now Cornell Vineyards, he may not have known that he would propose marriage to his wife, Vanessa, beneath a gorgeous oak tree. But he did know that in order to make the best wine from his chunk of the mountain, he would need one of the world's finest winemakers. That's why the Cornells tapped a legend: Francoise Peschon, of Araujo Estate fame.

Peschon's small team of viticultural workers live on the property full-time, which is a rarity, but also shows that the Cornells understand that long-term commitments to the land and community are essential to success. And the results of their hard work are evident in any of their wines, but this 2016 is a real standout. Vivid and layered with cracked black pepper, black cherry, blackberry, and blueberry, silken textures, fine-grained French cedar tannins, and impossibly fresh. Sign up for the mailing list, reach out to the winery, and get to know the Cornells—two of the most intriguing people to ever set up shop in wine country. If you have a hard time obtaining the '16, look for the '17 Cabernet in select high-end retail.

2018 La Pelle Cabernet Sauvignon Ceniza Vineyard Coombsville Napa Valley (\$75)

Pay attention to any new wine label Maayan Koschitzky starts, because the 41-year-old rising star is not going anywhere. Born in Israel, Koschitzky came to America in 2011 with his wife Dana (a former television producer turned pastry chef) and a newborn. At 7:00 a.m., the day after their plane landed, he was due for work at Screaming Eagle in Oakville. By 2015, he felt it was time for a change, and luckily for us, the winds funneling up from San Pablo Bay blew him slightly north, to St. Helena, where he joined Philippe Melka's team. Today, Maayan is the Director of Winemaking for Atelier Melka, overseeing nearly 30 brands all with SRPs above \$100. In 2016, he launched La Pelle in partnership with Silverado Farming Company. The wines have been an instant hit with a strong mailing list—even the Melkas buy Maayan's wines. This Ceniza Vineyard Cabernet is imbued with the hallmark freshness and acid lift that is classic to Coombsville-sourced grapes, coupled with deep, dense flavors of cherry liqueur, cassis, and perfumed red florals atop very long,

fine-grained tannins, and goes down just a little too easy. Pro tip: look for two other Koschitzky projects, [Aileron](#) and [Brilliant Mistake](#).

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