

# 100 BEST WINES OF THE YEAR

Of the 10,867 wines we tasted last year, these are the 100 that excited us the most, the ones with the most elegant and delicious ability to taste of where they grow. By nature, the 100 Best Wines of the Year are diverse in style, ranging from tart and lean welterweights to ripe blockbusters, from those that strike a resonant chord with our expectations and those that help us understand a region in a completely new way. **Joshua Greene** and **Patrick J. Comiskey** review the American wines; **Greene, Peter Liem, Patricio Tapia** and **Tara Q. Thomas** review the imports.

## UNITED STATES

### BEST SPARKLING



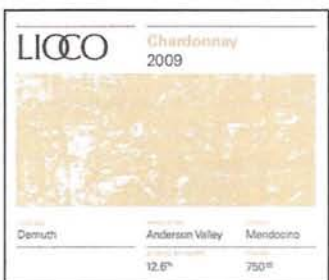
**94 | Iron Horse** \$160  
**2009 Green Valley Joy! Rosé** Though it may seem counterintuitive, this is a sparkling wine to decant. Its delicate fruit flavors show considerably more detail with air, and everything about the wine, including the bubbles, becomes more vibrant and fresh. The vinous character of the pinot noir shows in highlights of forest mushrooms and tart cherries. This has reached a graceful maturity and shows no signs of fading. Serve it with roast quail. (39 cases) *Iron Horse Vineyards, Sebastopol, CA*

### BEST CHARDONNAY

**96 | Evening Land Vvds.** \$60  
**2009 Eola-Amity Hills La Source Seven Springs Vineyard Chardonnay** This is one of those rare American chardonnays that transcends the usual paradigm of "fruit first, ask questions later." There's a pineapple scent in its complex bouquet, but it's in the service of greater elements—mineral, oyster shell, talc and the fine tang of lees. On the palate it has the acidity of a wine from the Mâcon; in its silky line and subtle richness it gives a nod to great Pouilly-Fuissé. The acidity keeps it firm and detailed, while shaping the minerality in the texture, hardly upstaging it. Drinking beautifully now, it has the stuff to age and delight for ten years or more. *The Evening Land Vineyards, Carlton, OR*



**94 | Flowers** \$40  
**2009 Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** Long-time readers of this magazine will not be surprised that I love this wine. When it comes to chardonnay, Flowers's Sonoma Coast bottling consistently delivers a fresh, fragrant, silken, mouthwatering wine. The freshness in the 2009 tastes real, the tension of the acidity captures the briskness of the far coast (70 percent of the blend in this vintage). The texture and flavor are woven together into a soft cushion of white raspberry, tart lime, white flowers, silk and down. Designed to drink rather than to impress, there's nothing challenging about it. *Flowers Vineyard & Winery, Cazadero, CA*



**94 | Lioco** \$35  
**2009 Anderson Valley Demuth Chardonnay** Kevin Kelley made this wine from 29-year-old vines planted to the old Wente clone at 1,600 feet. It's stainless steel fermented without added yeast, then aged on the lees for six months before bottling. At 12.6 percent alcohol, this balances rich, spiced apple flavors with an underlying briskness. It's focused without needing oak, lasting on a fresh scent of chamomile and

peach, long, sleek and delicious. Great with roast sea bass. (426 six-pack cases) *Lioco, Santa Rosa, CA*

### BEST PINOT GRIS



**93 | Benton-Lane** \$17  
**2010 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris** Generous and very pretty in its scent of lemon blossom and minerals, this wine's mild leesy note emerges with air. The leaner flavors of key lime and lemon create tension with broader, richer apple notes, while the wine's mineral underpinning keeps everything on point. A crisp foil to smoked salmon. (3,286 cases) *Benton-Lane Winery, Monroe, OR*

### BEST RIESLING

**94 | Hermann J. Wiemer** \$27  
**2009 Finger Lakes Reserve Dry Riesling** At once firm and lively, its peach scents lifted by a talc-like minerality, this wine shows impressive tension between tropical fruit and structure, its creamy midpalate cradled by rippling acidity. Pair with roast ham. (210 cases) *Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard, Dundee, NY*

**94 | Hermann J. Wiemer** \$23  
**2009 Finger Lakes Late Harvest Riesling** This elegant riesling displays remarkable tension between fleshy fruit and penetrating acidity. Scents of lemon and apple give way to caramel and Thai pineapple; flavors seesaw between generous and terse, the finish as taut as a pulled rope. A pleasing conundrum that will only gain definition in the cellar; then pair with tea-smoked trout. *Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard, Dundee, NY*