

Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

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Founded in the 1930s, Domaine Ramonet is run by third-generation vintners Jean-Claude and Noël Ramonet. The brothers now farm and make wine from 40 acres, mainly in Chassagne-Montrachet, including a 0.64-acre plot of Montrachet. Their whites, featured here, are benchmarks for Burgundy, always complex and supported by a light touch of well-integrated oak. They are true to the individual *terroirs* of their *crus*, yet with a signature Ramonet steeliness. Also in this edition: California Rhône-style reds, collectible super Tuscans, and four Italian Hot Wines.



Burgundy's Jean-Claude Ramonet (Photo by Andrew Kovalev)

PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT

RAMONET

Montrachet 2016

98 points | \$1,750 | 28 cases imported | White

Floral, citronella, peach and honey aromas burst from the glass here. Plush and harmonious, featuring peach, apple, lime blossom and buttered pastry flavors. The finish goes on and on, echoing the fruit, floral and toasty oak elements, all tied together with vibrant acidity. Majestic. Best from 2021 through 2033.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Chevalier-Montrachet 2016

97 points | \$850 | 12 cases imported | White

Supple and elegant, this white exudes lime blossom, peach, butter and citronella aromas and flavors. The oak is discreet, lending support in a subtle way. Overall, this shows beautiful harmony and expression of place, with fine salinity on the finish. Best from 2021 through 2033.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet 2016

95 points | \$650 | 12 cases imported | White

This is saturated with peach, lemon pie, citronella, butterscotch and baking spice flavors, all wrapped in a creamy texture. Balanced and persistent, ending with terrific cut and length. Peach, spice and butterscotch accents linger. Best from 2021 through 2033.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Bâtard-Montrachet 2016

94 points | \$650 | 40 cases imported | White

This is toasty right out of the gate, with apple pie, peach, lemon, butterscotch and mineral flavors. Broad and concentrated, yet lively, showing terrific balance and a long, saturated aftertaste of fruit, spice and mineral notes. Best from 2021 through 2032.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Chassagne-Montrachet Les Caillerets 2016

94 points | \$160 | 12 cases imported | White

Lemon, citronella, butterscotch, vanilla and clove flavors mark this tightly wound white. Lean and fused to a steely structure, boasting a long, lingering aftertaste of mineral, citrus and spice notes. Best from 2021 through 2032.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Chassagne-Montrachet Clos du Cailleret 2016

93 points | \$160 | 20 cases imported | White

Apricot, peach and grapefruit aromas and flavors are the major themes in this complex white. Smoke, mineral and butterscotch accents add depth as this cruises to a long finish. Shows power and restraint, with the citrus-tinged finish leaving a fresh impression. Best from 2021 through 2030.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Chassagne-Montrachet Les Ruchottes 2016
93 points | \$240 | 80 cases imported | White

A creamy version, featuring peach, butterscotch, baking spice and lemon flavors. Still a bit reserved, with the citrus element gaining intensity as this builds to a lingering finish. Best from 2021 through 2029.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Chassagne-Montrachet Les Vergers 2016
93 points | \$140 | 12 cases imported | White

This aromatic version delivers peach, apple pie, butterscotch and lanolin flavors. Opulent and toasty, showing charm and harmony. Finishes nicely, yet offers more up front than on the finish, at least for now. Drink now through 2027.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Chassagne-Montrachet Boudriotte 2016
92 points | \$150 | 55 cases imported | White

An elegant version, with a supple texture and bright acidity shading peach, apple, lemon and baking spice flavors. Balanced, firming up with a tactile, savory finish. Drink now through 2030.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Puligny-Montrachet Champs-Canet 2016
92 points | \$185 | 40 cases imported | White

Features lemon pie flavors, with flashes of honey and baking spice. Racy, persisting with vibrant acidity and spice accents. Best from 2020 through 2029.—*B.S.*

RAMONET

Chassagne-Montrachet Morgeot 2016
91 points | \$140 | 45 cases imported | White

Peach, apricot and citronella aromas and flavors grace this racy white, wrapped in an embrace of toasty oak. Lithe and agile, navigating the intense, lingering aftertaste of orchard fruit and spice. Best from 2020 through 2029.—*B.S.*

CALIFORNIA Rhône-Style Reds

KEPLINGER

Lithic Amador County 2016
94 points | \$75 | 280 cases made | Red

Distinctive and expressive, with floral orange zest, dried cherry, cured meat and cracked pepper flavors that take on structure toward big but polished tannins. Hands off for now. Mourvèdre, Grenache and Syrah. Best from 2020 through 2027.—*T.F.*

KELLER

Rôtie Sonoma Coast 2015
93 points | \$55 | 275 cases made | Red

Vibrant and gracefully complex, with multilayered black raspberry, smoky meat and savory bay leaf accents that build energy toward polished tannins. Syrah and Viognier. Drink now through 2026.—*T.F.*

KEPLINGER

El Diablo Russian River Valley 2016
93 points | \$75 | 112 cases made | Red

Grace meets backbone here, with compelling blackberry, licorice and smoky cinnamon flavors that build power on the finish. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2027.—*T.F.*

KEPLINGER

SUMO Amador County 2016
93 points | \$75 | 295 cases made | Red

Dark and brooding, with a polished yet muscular backbone, wrapped in rich and layered blackberry and plum flavors, accented by white pepper, toasted sage and peppered beef hints. Petite Sirah, Syrah and Viognier. Best from 2021 through 2027.—*T.F.*

TOP

Syrah Central Coast Exert 2016
93 points | \$62 | 222 cases made | Red

Polished and refined, with opulent blackberry, roasted meat and licorice flavors that build richness and structure on a lasting finish. Drink now through 2025.—*T.F.*

UNTI

Cuvée Foudre Dry Creek Valley 2016
93 points | \$55 | 263 cases made | Red

California meets Old World, with a multifaceted blend that blooms along the way, offering refined but compelling dried cherry, smoked meat and peppered anise flavors that take on richness toward fine-grained tannins. Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah. Drink now through 2026.—*T.F.*

CALIZA

Azimuth Paso Robles Willow Creek District 2016
92 points | \$60 | 250 cases made | Red

Offers elegance and personality, with expressive blackberry, licorice and peppered meat flavors that build tension toward refined tannins. Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah. Drink now through 2026.—*T.F.*

CALIZA

Syrah Paso Robles Willow Creek District Reserve 2016
92 points | \$85 | 100 cases made | Red

Brooding and potent, with blackberry and blueberry flavors, accented by bitter chocolate, licorice and stony mineral details, building tension toward broad-shouldered tannins. Best from 2021 through 2027.—*T.F.*

KEPLINGER

Grenache Russian River Valley Basilisk 2016
92 points | \$75 | 180 cases made | Red

Structured and polished, with expressive raspberry, dried orange and smoky spice flavors that take on richness toward refined tannins. Drink now through 2025.—*T.F.*

KEPLINGER

Hangman's Carneros 2016
92 points | \$75 | 140 cases made | Red

Densely structured and slightly tight right now, this offers expressive rose petal, black cherry and bacon fat accents that build richness toward broad-shouldered tannins. Syrah and Viognier. Drink now through 2027.—*T.F.*

TURLEY

Petite Syrah Howell Mountain Rattlesnake Ridge 2017
92 points | \$44 | 414 cases made | Red

Deeply structured and loaded with personality, offering blueberry and blackberry flavors, laced with dried orange, sandalwood and pepper notes that persist toward burly tannins. Best from 2021 through 2026.—*T.F.*

KEPLINGER

Syrah Sonoma Coast Fuego Y Mar 2016
91 points | \$75 | 130 cases made | Red

Trim and compact, with currant, smoky meat and white pepper flavors that persist toward broad tannins. Best from 2021 through 2026.—*T.F.*

ITALY

Tuscany

CASTELLARE DI CASTELLINA

Toscana Coniale 2015

95 points | \$55 | 100 cases imported | Red

This powerful red offers fine balance and richness, showcasing black cherry, black currant, leather, tobacco and graphite flavors. Vibrant and set for a long life ahead, revealing terrific energy on the lingering aftertaste. Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2022 through 2045.—*B.S.*

SAN GIUSTO A RENTENNANO

Sangiovese Toscana Percarlo 2015

95 points | \$140 | 375 cases imported | Red

Rich, with black currant, plum, iron, earth, tobacco and tar aromas and flavors, backed by vibrant acidity and fine tannins. This leaves plenty of room for the flavors to stretch out. Harmonious, with the potential to age. Best from 2021 through 2035.—*B.S.*

VECCHIE TERRE DI MONTEFILI

Toscana Anfiteatro 2015

95 points | \$120 | 200 cases imported | Red

This intense red is showing a lot of oak now, yet underneath lies ripe cherry, currant, graphite, underbrush and tobacco flavors. Racy acidity lends definition, building to a long, resonant finish. Patience is required. Sangiovese. Best from 2021 through 2036.—*B.S.*

LUCE DELLA VITE

Toscana Luce 2016

94 points | \$135 | 840 cases imported | Red

Well-marked by spicy, toasty oak, this plum- and black cherry-flavored red is broad and muscular. Smooth, with fine structural support and hints of chocolate and coffee on the lingering aftertaste. Sangiovese and Merlot. Best from 2021 through 2040.—*B.S.*

POLIZIANO

Maremma Toscana Mandrone di Lohsa 2016

94 points | \$52 | 60 cases imported | Red

A broad, deeply colored and complex red, boasting black currant, plum, cedar, mineral and tobacco flavors. Tightly wound yet well-balanced, but needs time to settle in. Toasted spice notes grace the lingering aftertaste. Cabernet Sauvignon, Alicante, Petit Verdot and Carignano. Best from 2022 through 2038.—*B.S.*

TOLAINI

Cabernet Sauvignon Toscana Legit 2013

94 points | \$45 | 3,000 cases imported | Red

This is broad and incisive, delivering black currant, plum, leather, earth and wild herb flavors. Dense and beefy, yet with ample fruit for balance, driven by vibrant acidity. This is starting to mellow but still has years of life ahead. Drink now through 2036.—*B.S.*

CASTELLO DI BOLGHERI

Bolgheri Superiore 2016

93 points | \$80 | 400 cases imported | Red

This is ripe and full of plum, blackberry, leather and spice aromas and flavors. Picks up a saline element while building to a long, fresh finish. Shows fine energy and length. Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. Drink now through 2032.—*B.S.*

DEI

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano 2015

93 points | \$32 | 1,500 cases imported | Red

This is all about complex, ripe plum and blackberry flavors, woody funk and supple tannins, with flashes of leather, mineral and camphor. More linear on the finish, where earth, mineral and tobacco notes reign. Drink now through 2033.—*B.S.*

ORNELLAIA

Bolgheri Le Serre Nuove 2016

93 points | \$82 | 1,250 cases imported | Red

Supple and polished, exhibiting plum, black cherry, wild thyme and spice aromas and flavors. Solidly built, yet harmonious and approachable now, with hints of iron and cedar on the lingering finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2033.—*B.S.*

POLIZIANO

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano Le Caggiole 2015

93 points | \$100 | 500 cases made | Red

Bright black cherry, blackberry, graphite, earth and sweet spice aromas and flavors highlight this firm yet expressive red. Everything is in the right place and lingers with a complex aftertaste. Drink now through 2033.—*B.S.*

CASTELLARE DI CASTELLINA

Toscana Poggio ai Merli 2017

92 points | \$92 | 100 cases imported | Red

Black pepper, graphite and a well of deep blackberry fruit flavors announce this concentrated, powerful red. Stays lean and sinewy as the dense, dusty tannins take hold of the finish. Needs time, unless you are grilling a steak or lamb chops tonight. Merlot. Best from 2020 through 2030.—*B.S.*

GRATTAMACCO

Bolgheri Superiore L'Alberello 2016

92 points | \$100 | 75 cases imported | Red

Expressive and typical aromas of black currant, cedar, olive, iron and tobacco mark this medium-bodied and balanced red, well-rippled with tannins. Offers a fine, lingering aftertaste of fruit, cedar and mineral. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2025.—*B.S.*

HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator Insider*. They are high-scoring wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

FONTODI

Colli della Toscana Centrale Flaccianello 2016
97 points | \$159 | 1,800 cases imported | Red

Ripe, with mulberry, plum, black cherry, mineral and spice flavors, this red is both lush and firmly structured. Complex, well-defined and persistent, courtesy of the racy acidity. Though balanced, this needs a few years to really knit together. Sangiovese. Best from 2021 through 2040. From Italy.—*B.S.*

Senior editor Bruce Sanderson says: "Conceived in 1981 as a super Tuscan, Flaccianello quickly became one of Tuscany's iconic wines. The flagship of the Fontodi estate, it is sourced from the oldest vines among their 200 acres of vineyards."

LE MACCHIOLE

Toscana Messorio 2015
97 points | \$235 | 85 cases imported | Red

Seductive, yet packs a serious punch. Blackberry, black currant, cedar, iron, coffee and vanilla flavors unravel as this builds on the palate to a long finish. All the elements are in the right place. Merlot. Best from 2022 through 2043. From Italy.—*B.S.*

ROMANO DAL FORNO

Amarone della Valpolicella 2012
95 points | \$400 | 250 cases imported | Red

A velvety, full-bodied version, loaded with blackberry coulis, baked black cherry and tar-tinged smoke flavors that ripple across the palate. Offers lovely accents of dried mint, tobacco, iron and anise that echo on the firm finish. A powerhouse, with plenty in reserve. Best from 2022 through 2032. From Italy.—*A.N.*

Senior editor Alison Napjus says: "Romano Dal Forno has played the role of a revolutionary with his modern interpretation of Veneto's classic Amarone red. With no degree or background in winemaking he established his namesake winery in 1983, far to the east of the designated Classico section of the appellation. His sleek winery incorporates modern technology at every turn, eschewing Amarone traditions such as drying the grapes in an open-air fruttaiolo up in the windy hills. The result is a hedonistic and contemporary interpretation of a classic Italian wine style."

SAN GIUSTO A RENTENNANO

Merlot Toscana La Ricolma 2015
95 points | \$186 | 110 cases imported | Red

Powerful and saturated, with black cherry, plum, cedar, iron and wild herb aromas and flavors, this is also tightly wound. The dense matrix of tannins flexes on the muscular finish, as the fruit, mineral and underbrush elements persist. Best from 2021 through 2040. From Italy.—*B.S.*

WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTERS

The Most Experienced Team of Wine Journalists in the World

Wine Spectator's tasting staff includes 16 tasters and tasting coordinators in two offices. They work together to review more than 16,000 wines each year; more than 385,000 reviews are available in our online database. Together, our 11 tasting editors count more than 250 years of tasting experience.

We always taste wine blind, in our offices in Napa and New York. This is your guarantee that our reviews are fair and objective, and that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; initials appended to the review identify the taster of each wine. We score wines using the 100-point scale (see green box).

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James Laube Senior editor, Napa
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat: California

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: At large

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: Spain

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat: California Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir, Argentina, Chile

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 2000. Tasting beat: Italy, Champagne, Alsace

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 2001. Tasting beat: California Zinfandel and other reds, Oregon, Washington, U.S. sparkling wines

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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 2012. Tasting beat: France, Portugal

Aleks Zecevic, Associate tasting coordinator, New York
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 2013. Tasting beat: Austria, Loire, Germany, South Africa

Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale

95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very good
80-84	Good
75-79	Mediocre
50-74	Not recommended