

# Wine Spectator Insider

Marvin R. Shanken *Editor and Publisher*

A Members-Only, Weekly Publication

Peter Michael Winery has specialized in Bordeaux and Burgundy varieties since its founding in 1983. The estate ranch above Sonoma County's Knights Valley is the winery's primary fruit source, comprising about 130 acres of Chardonnay and Bordeaux grapes. Michael also draws on 30 acres of estate Pinot Noir in the northern Sonoma Coast. In 2009, he purchased the Au Paradis vineyard in Napa Valley; the 2012 Au Paradis was *Wine Spectator's* 2015 Wine of the Year. Also in this edition: high-scoring Chianti, Washington Cabernet, and four European Hot Wines.



Peter Michael's Au Paradis vineyard (Photo by Jack McBride)

## PRODUCER SPOTLIGHT Peter Michael

### PETER MICHAEL

**Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Au Paradis 2016**  
**93 points | \$225 | 1,772 cases made | Red**

Alluring sage and anise notes lead off, giving way to gently steeped plum and blackberry fruit flavors. Baker's chocolate, loam and tobacco details emerge through the finish, adding range and depth. Best from 2020 through 2030.—*J.M.*

### PETER MICHAEL

**Les Pavots Knights Valley 2016**  
**93 points | \$225 | 3,614 cases made | Red**

This delivers good intensity, with a racy and defined beam of plum sauce, black currant preserves and black licorice, all carried by a graphite spine. On the toasty side, with fruit to match. Very solidly built. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2030.—*J.M.*

### PETER MICHAEL

**Pinot Noir Fort Ross-Seaview Clos du Ciel 2017**  
**93 points | \$140 | 515 cases made | Red**

Lithe, rich and well-structured, with chocolate and Asian spice notes behind the taut cherry, forest floor and damson plum flavors. The juicy finish is filled with sandalwood hints and intense minerality. Best from 2021 through 2025.—*K.M.*

### PETER MICHAEL

**Chardonnay Knights Valley Belle Côte 2017**  
**92 points | \$100 | 2,194 cases made | White**

Lithe, with a buttery richness to the white cherry, currant and lemon curd flavors. Lemongrass notes and fennel hints emerge on the focused finish. Drink now through 2024.—*K.M.*

### PETER MICHAEL

**Chardonnay Knights Valley Mon Plaisir 2017**  
**92 points | \$100 | 1,350 cases made | White**

Well-structured and powerful, with ripe white fruit and melon flavors that feature a light creaminess. Poached pear and spice details linger on the finish. Drink now through 2024.—*K.M.*

### PETER MICHAEL

**Pinot Noir Fort Ross-Seaview Ma Danseuse 2017**  
**92 points | \$125 | 1,410 cases made | Red**

Pure and redolent of crushed cherry, currant and plum flavors. Medium-grained tannins and crisp acidity give this heft, with a lingering finish of forest floor and hot stone details. Best from 2020 through 2024.—*K.M.*

### PETER MICHAEL

**Sauvignon Blanc Knights Valley L'Après-Midi 2017**  
**92 points | \$64 | 2,199 cases made | White**

Mandarin orange, peach and lemon curd flavors seem subdued at first in this white, but then gain momentum and complexity as they crescendo on the finish, showing off toasty herb, lanolin and fresh lemongrass notes, with a fresh thread of acidity weaving in and out. Drink now.—*M.W.*

## PETER MICHAEL

Chardonnay Knights Valley La Carrière 2017

**91 points | \$100 | 2,587 cases made | White**

Minerally and crisp, with white currant and fresh-cut green apple flavors that are well-focused. Dried savory hints emerge on the finish. Drink now through 2023.—*K.M.*

## PETER MICHAEL

Pinot Noir Fort Ross-Seaview Le Caprice 2017

**91 points | \$125 | 1,422 cases made | Red**

Floral-accented crushed red currant, plum and raspberry flavors are crunchy and well-structured in this red. Flint and hot stone details emerge on the finish, with savory notes. Drink now through 2024.—*K.M.*

## PETER MICHAEL

Chardonnay Knights Valley Ma Belle-Fille 2017

**90 points | \$115 | 1,802 cases made | White**

Juicy, filled with red peach and Fuji apple flavors that are backed by bright acidity. Tangerine and spice notes show on the finish. Drink now through 2021.—*K.M.*

## PETER MICHAEL

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Le Moulin Rouge 2017

**88 points | \$110 | 551 cases made | Red**

A snappy style, featuring spiced cherry and rhubarb flavors. Offers crunchy minerality, with a crisp finish. Drink now.—*K.M.*

# ITALY

## Chianti Classico

### TENUTA BIBBIANO

Chianti Classico Riserva 2015

**96 points | \$30 | 750 cases imported | Red**

A deep well of cherry, plum, floral, wild thyme and iron aromas and flavors highlight this complex, vibrant red, which is beautifully balanced and taut, with firm, well-integrated tannins and lively acidity that will allow this to age gracefully. Best from 2021 through 2045.—*B.S.*

### SAN GIUSTO A RENTENNANO

Chianti Classico 2016

**95 points | \$36 | 750 cases imported | Red**

This red offers a pure core of black currant, blackberry and violet flavors shaded by earth and mint notes. The tannins are uplifting and refined. This has terrific energy and balance, with a long, expansive aftertaste of fruit, earth and mineral. Should have a long life ahead. Sangiovese and Canaiolo. Best from 2021 through 2043.—*B.S.*

### VITICCIO

Chianti Classico Riserva 2015

**95 points | \$30 | 850 cases imported | Red**

Intense aromas of black currant, blackberry, flint, iron, tar and black pepper mark this powerful red, which is vibrant and solidly tannic, yet all the components are in the right place. Terrific energy on the lingering aftertaste of dark fruit and mineral. Sangiovese, Merlot and Syrah. Best from 2022 through 2043.—*B.S.*

## CASTELLO DEI RAMPOLLA

Chianti Classico 2016

**94 points | \$40 | 850 cases imported | Red**

Purity and intensity mark this supple, complex red, bursting with black cherry, black currant, plum, graphite, sanguine and tobacco notes that show an underlying woody accent. The well-integrated structure lends support as this plays out on the long finish. Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Best from 2021 through 2035.—*B.S.*

## CASTELLO DI MONSANTO

Chianti Classico Riserva 2016

**94 points | \$28 | 17,000 cases imported | Red**

This is packed with black currant, black cherry, floral and juniper aromas and flavors. The tannins are assertive, matched to bracing acidity and a touch of heat. A bit boisterous today, but this should settle down nicely over time. Sangiovese, Canaiolo and Colorino. Best from 2022 through 2039.—*B.S.*

## FONTODI

Chianti Classico 2016

**94 points | \$42 | 3,500 cases imported | Red**

A sleek, black cherry- and blackberry-infused red, coupled with a steely, vibrant structure. Linear and tense, featuring an energetic finish. Tobacco, graphite and *macchia* notes add depth as this unwinds on the long finish. Best from 2022 through 2045.—*B.S.*

## FONTODI

Chianti Classico Vigna del Sorbo Gran Selezione 2016

**94 points | \$99 | 800 cases imported | Red**

Light oak notes wrap around a core of black cherry, black currant, iron and earth flavors in this intense red. Firm and balanced, with a fresh, mineral- and tobacco-tinged finish. Best from 2021 through 2038.—*B.S.*

## QUERCIABELLA

Chianti Classico Riserva 2015

**94 points | \$50 | 60 cases imported | Red**

This red is solid, with a dense structure supporting flavors of cherry, plum, iron and tobacco. Powerful, yet stays within a slim frame, expanding a little on the earth- and mineral-tinged aftertaste. Best from 2021 through 2036.—*B.S.*

## ROCCA DELLE MACIÈ

Chianti Classico Riserva di Fizzano Gran Selezione 2016

**94 points | \$40 | 1,200 cases imported | Red**

Shows terrific balance between the ripe cherry and currant fruit, accented by cinnamon, almond, leather and earthy components. Firmly structured, this reveals its potential on the long finish. Best from 2022 through 2038.—*B.S.*

## TOLAINI

Chianti Classico Vigna Montebello Sette Gran Selezione 2015

**94 points | \$49 | 250 cases imported | Red**

This is tightly wound, fresh and austere now, its cherry, almond, mineral and tobacco flavors compressed. Hard to see where this is going, yet no one element sticks out, so the potential is fine. Best from 2023 through 2040.—*B.S.*

## BADIA A COLTIBUONO

Chianti Classico 2016

**93 points | \$22 | 3,500 cases imported | Red**

A ripe style, this sports cherry, raspberry, violet and mineral aromas and flavors, matched to a tensile structure, revealing fine balance and length. Best from 2021 through 2033.—*B.S.*

## BADIA A COLTIBUONO

Chianti Classico Riserva 2015

**93 points | \$36 | 750 cases imported | Red**

Pure and energizing, with berry, cherry, iron and tobacco aromas and flavors allied to a racy profile. Tense and resonant on the lingering finish, showing fine balance and persistence. Best from 2021 through 2038.—*B.S.*

## SAN GIUSTO A RENTENNANO

Chianti Classico Le Baròncole Riserva 2015

**93 points | \$75 | 275 cases imported | Red**

This is dense and compact, the beefy matrix of tannins locking down blackberry, black currant, iron, earth and tar flavors. There is energy here, and the long finish indicates future potential. Best from 2022 through 2043.—*B.S.*

# WASHINGTON Cabernet Sauvignon & Blends

## ABEJA

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley 2016

**94 points | \$60 | 2,497 cases made | Red**

Offers finesse and structure, with elegantly expressive blackberry, basil and black olive flavors that build richness toward polished tannins. Drink now through 2028.—*T.F.*

## SEVEN HILLS

Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley Seven Hills Vineyard 2016

**94 points | \$50 | 400 cases made | Red**

Dynamic and multilayered, with polished blackberry, crushed stone and licorice flavors that build momentum toward fine-grained tannins. Drink now through 2026.—*T.F.*

## ABEJA

Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley Heather Hill 2015

**93 points | \$68 | 560 cases made | Red**

A handsome and refined red, with expressive blackberry, licorice and river stone notes that build richness and tension toward fine-grained tannins. Best from 2020 through 2027.—*T.F.*

## BETZ

Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain Heart of the Hill 2016

**93 points | \$110 | 400 cases made | Red**

Elegant and multilayered, with refined blackberry, stony mineral and bay leaf accents that takes on structure and expand on the finish. The tannins are broad but polished. Drink now through 2026.—*T.F.*

## CADENCE

Tapteil Vineyard Red Mountain 2015

**93 points | \$45 | 400 cases made | Red**

Polished and refined, with vibrant cherry and blueberry flavors accented by licorice notes, building complexity toward fine-grained tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Drink now through 2026.—*T.F.*

## DELILLE

Chaleur Estate Red Mountain 2016

**93 points | \$80 | 400 cases made | Red**

Impressively structured, with multilayered currant, crushed stone and smoky bay leaf notes that build richness toward big but well-groomed tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Best from 2021 through 2027.—*T.F.*

## BETZ

Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley Père de Famille 2016

**92 points | \$78 | 1,300 cases made | Red**

Multilayered and expressive, with complex blackberry, stony mineral and bay leaf accents that build tension toward fine-grained tannins. Drink now through 2027.—*T.F.*

## CADENCE

Camerata Cara Mia Vineyard Red Mountain 2015

**92 points | \$60 | 250 cases made | Red**

Has polish and presence, with expressive blackberry, bay leaf and crushed stone accents that take on richness toward well-buffed tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Drink now through 2027.—*T.F.*

## CAYUSE

Cabernet Sauvignon Walla Walla Valley The Widowmaker En Chamberlin Vineyard 2016

**92 points | \$100 | 232 cases made | Red**

Supple and elegantly structured, with rich black cherry, violet and smoky olive flavors that take on dimension toward polished tannins. Drink now through 2024.—*T.F.*

## DELILLE

Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain Four Flags 2015

**92 points | \$69 | 2,000 cases made | Red**

Refined and well-structured, with multilayered currant, stony mineral and tobacco notes that take on definition toward well-groomed tannins. Best from 2020 through 2029.—*T.F.*

## DELILLE

Harrison Hill Snipes Mountain 2016

**92 points | \$90 | 400 cases made | Red**

A handsome red, showing refinement and structure, offering poised blackberry, lead pencil and black tea notes that finish with polished tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2026.—*T.F.*

## SEVEN HILLS

Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Red Mountain 2016

**92 points | \$55 | 1,000 cases made | Red**

Densely structured, with multilayered black cherry and blueberry flavors, accented by espresso and peppered herb notes, building toward broad tannins. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2020 through 2027.—*T.F.*

# 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.

## E. GUIGAL

Condrieu La Doriane 2017

**96 points | \$140 | 500 cases imported | White**

Intense, with a honeyed edge, this maintains drive throughout, featuring intense apricot, nectarine and peach fruit flavors, lined with mouthwatering bitter orange and anise notes. The long, unctuous finish has serious cut to match. Drink now through 2025. From France.—*J.M.*

*Senior editor James Molesworth says: "While the famed E. Guigal house is synonymous with Syrah, its commitment to white wines is equally notable. Guigal represents half the production in the Condrieu appellation and its La Doriane bottling is a glorious throwback to the opulent and lush style that many other producers have moved away from in recent years. But that doesn't mean it doesn't pair well with food: Try it with langoustine or lobster, as well as asparagus with a citrus sabayon."*

## TENUTA BIBBIANO

Chianti Classico Vigna del Capannino Gran Selezione 2015

**96 points | \$42 | 500 cases imported | Red**

Alluring aromas of wild rosemary, thyme and sage complement the black cherry, blackberry, iron and tobacco flavors in this powerful red, which is supple and fluid, yet muscular too, with a long, resonant finish. Best from 2021 through 2040. From Italy.—*B.S.*

## PIERRE-JEAN VILLA

Condrieu Jardin Suspendu 2017

**95 points | \$81 | 50 cases imported | White**

Very fresh, with verbena and honeysuckle notes out front followed quickly by a mélange of yellow apple, green melon, pear and apricot fruit flavors. A light fennel hint lines the finish. Drink now through 2024. From France.—*J.M.*

## TORRES

Conca de Barberá Grans Muralles 2015

**95 points | \$120 | 36 cases imported | Red**

This red is plush, rich and vibrant. Loamy earth and mineral notes frame plum and blackberry flavors, accented by licorice, espresso and graphite undertones. Well-integrated tannins and balsamic acidity add structure but remain in the background. Harmonious. Garnacha, Monastrell, Querol, Samsó and Garro. Drink now through 2030. From Spain.—*T.M.*

*Executive editor Thomas Matthews says: "This red blend is a flagship wine from Familia Torres, one of Spain's leading producers. It epitomizes Torres' philosophy of making estate-bottled wines from indigenous grapes grown in traditional regions. Conca de Barberá, located in the east of Spain near the Priorat region, was primarily known for whites and rosés when it became an official D.O. in 1985. Torres began planting red grapes on its estate there in 1990, debuting Grans Muralles with the 1996 vintage. It has earned 90 points or higher in every vintage I've reviewed, with this 2015 its first classic rating."*

## 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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Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat: California

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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 |