

Top Ten Red Wines from the 2016 Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival



Late September always means the Newport Mansions Wine & Food Festival takes center stage and we indulge in several days of great wine and food in fantastic settings. Every year we put out our top wine lists, and every year it is difficult to decide between the great variety of wine from around the world. Here we will list our favorites in the red category. The whites will follow soon. **If you'd like to read a bit about the festival in general you can click here.**

As always this list represents our opinion, and the wines may be here due to quality, price, something unique or any combination of these. They are all, in our opinion, outstanding. We'll also give out some honorable mentions, as well as list some truly spectacular wines which we don't consider for the Top Ten, as we limit that list to wines which retail under \$100. Clearly some of the more expensive wines would easily make the list based on sheer quality otherwise.

You could toss these in a hat and randomly pull out an equally valid list, as for the most part we are splitting hairs when we rank them. This is the tough work we relish, so on to the list!

1. 2013 Morgan Syrah – wow, was this wine good, and considering it is only \$20 it vaults into the stratosphere from a value perspective. It has a dark, rich color, pure fruit including some black plum. The fruit is forward but the wine has depth and concentration, finishing very long. This is an incredibly great value wine, which puts it at the top of this list. I actually went back to the Morgan table to taste this again and convince myself it was this good. I am convinced.



2. 2013 Hall Cabernet Sauvignon – Hall can do nothing wrong it seems. All of their wines were great, and the Kathryn Hall Cab from 2013 is staggering, will probably get 100 points eventually and, alas, is well above our \$100 cutoff. The wine listed here is their regular cab, and it too brings berry fruit, some perfume notes, leather and other complexities. Long and rich, this is killer cab, blended with a bit of Petite Verdot, Merlot and Syrah. About \$45. I had this at the California Cabs seminar and it was, to me, easily the best of the bunch.



3. 2013 Domaine du Castel Gran Vin – an amazingly good wine from an unexpected place. This Israeli producer is really doing great things. Their top wine boasts structure, is full bodied and has prodigious depth and length. Rich dark fruits are framed with complex notes. This could be a great bottle of Bordeaux, but it's not. Fairly spectacular at \$80.



4. 2013 Raats Cabernet Franc – always a favorite of ours, this vintage does not disappoint. Dark red and chock full of fruit, this wine is complex, long and rich, with raspberry and violets. The tannins are brisk but approachable and promise long life. Very well done at \$40.



5. 2011 Kanankop Estate Cabernet Sauvignon – this is rich, with lush berry flavors. It stays fresh though, and is beautifully balanced at an alcohol level of 14.5%. This continues a great showing by South Africa at this event. \$40.

6. 2014 Robert Mondavi Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon – we had so many great Mondavi wines over the course of the weekend, including five different Reserve Cabs going back to 1976. We also had a string of great Napa Cabernet from 2013 from other vintners. This is an early 2014, and it is also great. Classic Napa profile, body, and length. About \$30, and a great value there.



7. 2011 Marchesi di Barolo Barolo Cannubi –

classic Barolo here, with some brawn as well behind the elegant fruit. There is some tar, and leathery notes too. Very long. If you love higher end Barolo then this wine is for you. \$90

8. 2010 Marchesi Gondi Mazzaferrata – this is a small production Super Tuscan, made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. The vineyards are in the Chianti Ruffina district northeast of Florence.



This is rich yet still elegantly lean at the same time. Tannins are integrated, yet still firm. This will age gracefully, but is so delicious right now. This was offered by Quigley Fine Wines, a wine consulting and buying service that offers direct to consumer wines from small production, sustainable producers. We were impressed with all four they were pouring, and you'll see one of their whites on that list when it comes out. We did, by the way, buy both this and the aforementioned white. You can check them out at <http://www.quigleyfinewines.com/>. \$40



9. 2010 Ken Forrester "The Gypsy" – this traditional GSM blend (Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre – think Chateaufort du Pape) is a fruit driven wine with intensity and balance. Some of the fruit here comes from a mountain vineyard where everything just grows naturally. All they essentially do is come and pick the grapes. There are no fences to even mark the property boundaries. Unusual, but it works splendidly. \$65

10. 2013 Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyard Pinot Noir – always good, and very much so in 2013, this is a fleshy, fruity style with dark color, cherry and berry fruit and wonderful freshness. Delicious is simply the correct word here, and sums it up nicely. From Sonoma Coast vineyards. We love this wine. \$39.99. (Chris from Phelps was very exact with his pricing)

So right there are ten wines you should buy and drink, or better yet find a friend who has some and drink theirs! Either way they are all outstanding, and should be tried and enjoyed. We loved the surprises, including the Israeli wine and the small lot Super Tuscan from Quigley Fine Wines. The Morgan Syrah was totally unexpected, especially at its price point.

