

Robb Report

The 14 Best Wines We Uncorked This Year

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Wine can be seductively elusive and changeable, evolving across both decades and hours. You want to chase it, to know it. Of the many new releases we chased this past year, the selections here are the ones that, when sipped, tasted like nothing else – and made us long for more. We varied our approach to winners this time, awarding 15 wines instead of just six, as we did in 2018. Even with the expansion, we agonized, and accomplished wines slipped the net. The wines we chose here span the globe as well as the breadth of varietals and styles, but they all share two things: the potential for long years in the cellar and the ability to be enjoyed deliciously right now.

US CHARDONNAY:

Ramey 2016 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay, Russian River Valley



Ramey 2016 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay, Russian River Valley Photo: Courtesy of Ramey Wine Cellars

In 1996, when David Ramey was winemaker at Dominus winery in Napa, as he remembers it, owner Christian Moueix (also proprietor of Château Pétrus) agreed to let him “make a little Chardonnay on the side.” The rest is history as they say; Ramey was off on a storied path of making ever-more single-vineyard Chardonnays. And working with techniques like the *sur lie* aging of white wines in barrel, the character of Chardonnay in California. With his 2016 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay (\$65), Ramey might have found his most beautiful balance yet – walking a tightrope, as the wine does, between richness and delicacy, textured mouthfeel and finesse. On the nose, a sophisticated note of fresh salinity is tucked under hints of honeysuckle and vanilla, with spice, creamy citrus and delicate herbal flavors following through a long finish.