

A tasty lineup of The Press Democrat's wine-of-the-week winners for New Year's

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As we come to the end of 2018, let's raise a glass to some of our Wine-of-the-Week winners from the past year. These bottlings were standouts in Press Democrat blind tastings. Think of them as risk-free purchases; they've been vetted.

This tasty lineup of wines saw us through the cultural tumult of 2018, a tectonic shift of sorts. We lost the "Queen of Soul" — Aretha Franklin — best known for her hits "Respect," "Think" and "I Say a Little Prayer." Meanwhile across the pond, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle said, "I do," in front of a global audience of 1.9 billion. Finally, the stakes were high for theatergoers; "Hamilton" set a record for a top premium ticket at \$849.

While life continues to be in flux, these wines remain a constant, ones you can count on to stand up over time. With New Year's Eve in the offing, why not stock up your cellar? Here's a list of 10 bottlings, with five stars being the finest, that won't disappoint.

—Amici, 2016 Sonoma Coast Chardonnay, 13.9 percent, \$25, ★★★★★. The supple chardonnay is gorgeous and a steal for the price. It has aromas and flavors of apple, melon, lemon and mineral. It has an intriguing yin yang; it's bright and balanced, yet lush with a lingering finish. It's striking.

—The Acumen, 2015 Mountainside Cabernet Sauvignon, \$60, ★★★★★½. This cab is striking with generous fruit — black cherry, blackberry, cassis and a streak of black raspberry. It has firm tannins and great bone structure. The Acumen is also briary and layered with savory notes, with a hint of forest floor. This mountain-grown cab is a beauty. It's 76 percent cabernet sauvignon, 8 percent cab franc, 7 percent merlot, 5 percent malbec and 4 percent petit verdot.

—Foursight, 2016 Charles Vineyard, Clone 05 Anderson Valley Pinot Noir, 13.9 percent, \$54, ★★★★★★½. This pinot is complex with a depth of flavors. It's savory and weighted to black fruit with notes of black cherry and plum. The Foursight is crisp with great balance, yet supple with a lingering finish. It's gorgeous.

—Argyle, 2016 Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir, 14 percent, \$27, ★★★★★. This pinot has dark fruit — blackberry and black cherry — with a hint of red currant. It's elegant with a purity of fruit. Buoyed by bright acidity, it's layered with a meatiness and spice. This is a striking pinot to pair with a holiday or other celebratory feast. Spot on.

—Dry Creek Vineyard, 2016 Old Vine Zinfandel, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County, 14.5 percent, \$35, ★★★★★. What makes this zin a standout is its complexity. It's layered with raspberry, cranberry, mocha and cracked black pepper. It has ripe tannins and a supple texture. Impressive.

—Carlisle, 2016 Steiner Vineyard, Sonoma Mountain, Sonoma County Gruner Veltliner \$30, ★★★★★½. The Carlisle has high-toned stone fruit, crisp acidity and great minerality. It has notes of grapefruit, lime and a hint of apricot. The wine has great balance and finishes crisp. Striking.

—Williams Selyem, 2016 Lewis MacGregor Estate Vineyard, Sonoma County Chardonnay, 14.7 percent, \$65, ★★★★★. The chardonnay's pitch-perfect balance is what makes it a standout. It's lush, yet crisp, a conundrum of sorts. It teases your palate, enticing you to take another sip to figure out its true nature. The Williams Selyem is complex, with notes of apple, pear, crème brûlée, a hint of toffee and refreshing mineral. It has a supple texture, with the entire wine buoyed by bright acidity. It's a knockout.

—Cashmere, 2016 California Red Wine, 14.5 percent, \$23, ★★★★★. Bright cherry and raspberry upfront fruit, with a hint of plum and chocolate. The Rhone Red is a blend of mourvedre, syrah and grenache, and it's buoyed by crisp acid. It has a sassy finish of cracked black pepper, a tap dance of spice.

—Katherine Goldschmidt, 2016 Crazy Creek Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, 14.5 percent, \$24, ★★★★★½. An impressive cabernet that's a steal for this caliber of cab. It has firm tannins and yet it's juicy with generous fruit. It has aromas and flavors of blackberry, cassis and black cherry, with a hint of smoke and forest floor. Full-bodied, with a seamless texture. Well-crafted.

—Longboard Vineyards, 2015 Dakine Vineyards, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County Merlot, 14.5 percent, \$35, ★★★★★. A striking merlot with aromas and flavors of blackberry and black cherry, with briary undertones. It's clean and balanced. But what sets it apart is its supple texture and its lingering black fruit finish. Impressive.

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