

Canada

90 Maleta First Frost Last Grape Oak Aged Vidal Icewine 2002, Niagara-on-the-Lake (\$26.95/200ml)

At this year's icewine gala, this was my top pick, no doubt due to the extra ripeness achieved with the hot 2002 vintage. Deep golden colour, with honey, dried apricot, prunes and a touch of caramel on the nose. Excellent length with just the right amount of acidity to give lift. (ES)

88 Maleta First Frost Last Grape Oak Aged Vidal Icewine 2003, Niagara-on-the-Lake (26.95/200ml)

A different creature than the 02 version. From a cooler vintage, the wine shows less intensity and more elegance. Aged in Canadian oak, it delivers citrus, clover, spice, honey and orange marmalade flavours. In the mouth there is lots of zingy acid to counterbalance the sweetness. Now to 2009. (ES)

88 Chateau Des Charmes Paul Bosc Estate Chardonnay, St Davids Bench (\$19.95)

I have always been a big fan of this wine. Mid weight with a bouquet of pear, apple, honey and vanilla. In the mouth, the fruit resurfaces as well as spice, caramel and mineral notes. Elegant with very good length. Having sampled every vintage since 1990, I can unequivocally say that this wine ages extremely well, so drink until 2011. (ES)

88 Eastdell Cabernet Franc Icewine 2004, Niagara (\$54.95)

A red Icewine that delivers a crate full of red fruits; cherries, raspberries and cranberries. The palate is sweet with 20% sugar as well as herbs, tobacco flavours. Lengthy finish with a touch of

bitterness. (ES)

United States

92 Beringer Knights Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2003, Sonoma (\$44.75)

In a recent blind tasting of some high profile 03 Bordeaux, this “ringer”, unanimously, came out on top. It displays a dark colour and flaunts lots of black fruits, spice and cocoa as well as a light undercurrent of herbs. Approachable now, but there is more than enough structure behind the fruit to give it cellaring potential. Drink until 2022. (ES)

France

92 Chateau du Viella Cuvee Prestige 2003, Madiran (\$27.25)

It's unfortunate that most wine loving Canadians have not had the opportunity to taste Alain Bertolussi's fabulous offerings from Madiran. He and Alain Brumont of Montus fame, are the best producers from this appellation. This wine, a 16% alcohol monster was left open for three days. Over that period, it kept on evolving like a high speed locomotive zipping down the track. Everything from red to dark fruits, from spice to chocolate kept appearing and evolving, with no sign of weakening. Beautifully concentrated, excellent length and at least 15 years ahead of it.

Why buy Bordeaux at double to triple the price when this is available? (ES)

92 Chateau Lamartine Cuvee Expression 2001, Cahors (\$41.25)

This wine expresses itself via a black colour, as well as with power, elegance, length and a wonderful bouquet of blackberries, spice, cocoa and earth. By far, my favorite wine from

Cahors, four year in a row. Now to 2020. (ES)

Spain

94 Alvear Pedro Ximenez □ DeAnada 2003, Montilla Moriles (\$18.95/375ml)

Feeling tired? A little blah? Blood/sugar level low? Well, say hello to a superb dessert wine from southern Spain, close to Jerez. The PX grapes were dried in the sun before being pressed, which has yielded a wine as thick as olive oil, as sweet as Willy Wonka's factory, and as intense as the inside of a nuclear reactor. Superb length! If you love the famous Liqueur Muscats from Australia, this is definitely your cup of tea. (ES)

89 Torres Mas la Plana Cabernet Sauvignon 2001, Penedes (\$39.95)

Dark garnet colour with just a hint of garnet at the rim. Fairly aromatic, with violets, tobacco/cedar, cocoas, cassis, spice and vanilla. The palate is soft with supple tannins, mild acid and cassis on the finish. Drink over the next 3 to 4 years. (ES)

87 Alvaro Palacios Les Terrasses 2004, Priorat (\$38.95)

A warm climate red, rather forward, with jammy cherries (think nibs licorice), raspberries, blackberries and pepper. Very good length with a hot finish thanks to 14% alcohol. Needs hearty fair, like stew or osso bucco. (ES)

87 Bodegas Breton Lorinon Gran Reserva 1998, Rioja (\$33.95)

This is definitely for fans of the traditional style of Rioja; meaning long aging in barrel which in turns allows the wine to loose its fruit and take on an oxidative/cedar/tomato ketchup quality.

Very good length, pronounced acid and black olive flavours. Try with Gazpacho.

86 [Herencia](#) [Remondo La Montesa](#) [Crianza 2003](#), Rioja (\$21.95)

A modern style of Rioja. It is a blend of 40% Grenache, 45% Tempranillo, and the rest Graciano and Mazuelo, which was aged in French oak. Offers up a medley of sweet fruit; namely cherries, strawberries and plums, as well as vanilla from the barrels. Medium bodied and a wine to have with the first BBQ of the season. (ES)

86 Vinas del Vero Syrah Las Corona , Somontano (\$18.95)

Somontano translates as “in the foot of the mountains”, a reference to its location at the base of the Pyrenees. One of the new “hot ticket” regions in Spain, it concentrates on the international varietals, as in the case of this wine. An opaque colour leads the way to blackberries, dark cherries, earth, licorice and herbs. Lingering finish. (ES)

New Zealand

89 Kim Crawford Sauvignon Blanc 2006, Marlborough (\$19.95)

A very intense nose of tomato vine, nectarines, red delicious apple, passion fruit, gooseberry and pink grapefruit. In the mouth, it is mid weight with very good length, but lacks the zippy acid which is typical of this wine. (ES)