



# Rick's Grape Skinny



January 2016

*“Never buy the cheapest wine in any category as its taste may discourage you from going on. Cheap wine will always be too expensive.”*

*(Alex Bepaloff, New Signet Book of Wine, 1986)*

## Outs and Ins...and Resolutions You Can Drink!

### Top Ten Outs and Ins

Consistent with my sworn duty to help everybody cultivate that very important (if non-essential) “social edge” as it relates to the world of wine, here is the list of the top ten *What’s OUT and What’s IN for 2016!*

And remember, I don’t make this stuff up...I just report the facts! Well – most of the time!!

1. Rhone reds are OUT      All other red blends are IN
2. Boxed wine is still OUT      Growlers are IN
3. Gotta be Cork is OUT      Screw caps are IN
4. Gotta be Chardonnay is OUT      Sauv. Blanc is IN
5. An-apple-a-day is OUT      A-gl.-of-wine a-day is IN
6. Dessert is OUT      Dessert wine is IN
7. Small talk is OUT      Eno-talk is IN
8. Dandelion wine is OUT      A line on a dandy wine is IN
9. QVC is OUT      QRW is IN
10. Plonk is ALWAYS OUT      Plonk is NEVER IN

## Be It Resolved for 2016!

Given the difficulty of honoring all those very well intended but otherwise impossible to keep New Year’s Resolutions -- I have a cure -- Drinkable Resolutions! Let’s just cut to the chase and forget all those false promises about losing weight, eating less and exercising more, etc., etc.. Borreeng! Been there done that...and I’ve blown it every time! So...let’s just resolve to do something else...something that’s fun, and interesting, and educational, and totally enjoyable...like drinking some mighty fine wine! Got your attention!? Well...here’s the skinny!

Commit now to experiencing the 12 wines below...just one a month...and I guarantee -- you’ll be very glad you did! And before you ask, the answer is no! This doesn’t mean you can’t have other types of wines during each month...just that you’ll make the effort to obtain and try the wines listed – one a month over the course of 2016! How ‘bout that eno-buds?! Drinkable Resolutions! Am I a green-friendly kind of guy or what!? Hey...anything for those grapes!

The listing below alternates whites and reds...and if it turns out that you’ve already experienced some of the wines or varietals suggested, just make a point of finding and trying something new and exciting! Drop me a line if you need some help in finding a particular wine or need assistance in determining an alternative.

### Target Wines and Varietals

1. *Jan – Crémant* - It’s French...made just like Champagne...but it’s far less expensive! Yum!
2. *Feb – Ruby Porto* – This is the perfect wine to share and enjoy with your sweetheart(s)!
3. *Mar – Bonarda/Charbono* – The second most planted grape in Argentina - behind Malbec.
4. *Apr – Albariño/Alvarinho* – One of Spain’s and Portugal’s most delicious white wines.
5. *May – Pinotage* - South Africa’s Signature grape. It’s earthy and sultry and oh so good!
6. *Jun – Piquepoul de Pinet* – The perfect seafood wine -- from the Languedoc in France.
7. *Jul – Dolcetto* – This is the commoners’ wine from the Piemonte Region in Italy. Oh Yeah!
8. *Aug – Torrontes* – The number one white wine of Argentina...and it’s a perfect Porch Wine!
9. *Sep – Carménère* – The Famous Lost Grape of Bordeaux – found only in Chile! My fave!
10. *Oct – Viognier* – Native to France, it’s a fusion of *Chardonnay*, *Gewürztraminer* and *Riesling*!
11. *Nov – Valdiguié* – Once called Napa Gamay -- “a bunch” better than Beaujolais in my book.
12. *Dec – Chenin Blanc* – Look for a “Vouvray” from France – and you will be très heureux!

*Happy New Year All!!*



# Toast of the Month



“May you always walk in sunshine and never want for more,  
And may Scottish Angels rest their wings right beside your door!”  
(Traditional Scottish Toast)

## Wines of the Month

**Pinotage** (*The Signature Grape of South Africa*)  
**Diemersfontein 2014**

**Sultry, Heady & Tantalizingly Delicious!**  
(Wellington, South Africa.)/\$18-\$22

The *Pinotage* grape is a cross between the *Pinot Noir* and the *Hermitage* (aka *Cinsault*) grapes – and it was created by a Stellenbosch University Professor of Enology, A. I. Perold, in 1925. This hallmark expression of *Pinotage* is characterized by not-so-subtle hints of roasted coffee and dark chocolate...and it has earned so much praise and achieved so much popularity that a number of cognoscenti attribute this highly distinctive version of *Pinotage* from David Sonnenberg with having “...saved and lifted *Pinotage* from longstanding commercial obscurity.” Folks, not all *Pinotage* will taste like this...or be this amazingly wonderful...so seek this one out and give it a whirl. Once you do...I’m certain of two things – 1) you too will be singing its praise -- and 2) it won’t be your last bottle. <http://www.diemersfontein.co.za/>

### Petite Sirah

**Villa San-Juliette Vineyard & Winery 2011**  
**Rich, Intense, Sensuous, & Succulent**  
(Paso Robles, CA)/\$18-\$22

Believe it or not, this amazing winery is the brainchild of Simon Lythgoe (of *American Idol* and *So You Think You Can Dance* fame) and his business partner Ken Warwick. After a few early years of trials and tribulations (all documented in the TV Reality Show *Corkscrewed: The Wrath of Grapes*), VSJ is now producing a collection of stunning wines...with this luscious *Petite Sirah* heading up my list of favorites! Nigel and Ken had the insight and wisdom to simply hire the best. And that’s exactly what they did in landing “Mr. California Winemaker” himself...the incomparable Adam LaZarre. These days, Matt Ortman is the Head Winemaker for VSJ...and he’s not only turning heads...but winning awards as well. This intensely flavored vintage – that some have affectionately called **Blueberry Motor Oil** -- is

85% *Petite Sirah* and 15% *Cabernet Sauvignon* and it was aged for 16 months in a combination of new and neutral French oak. For the money...it’s literally one of the best *Petite Sirah* wines I’ve had - period! Try it -- and it doesn’t have you singing *P.S. I Love You* by the third sip...somethin’ is most assuredly wrong with your taste buds!

<http://www.villasanjuliette.com/>

### Carménère

 (*Chile’s Signature Grape*)

**Alma de Chile Private Reserve 2011**  
**Deep, Dark and Devilishly Delectable!**  
(Aconcagua Valley, Chile)/\$12-\$14

From vineyards nestled amongst the rich and fertile foothills of the Andes Mountains, this 100% *Carménère* is a meticulously crafted exemplar of Chile’s Signature grape. With fruit grown on small family vineyards by descendants of the acclaimed Don Francisco de Rojas winemaking family, this delightfully sultry and spicy rendition was produced in partnership with the Vincente family and Viña San Esteban. With nine months of attended aging in a 50/50 combination of new French and American oak, the result is an award-winning *Carménère* that will tickle and tantalize the most refined and demanding palates!

<http://www.almadechile.com/>

### Red Blend

**Chateau Bel-Air 2010**

**Nothing Short of Spectacular!**

**(Lussac Saint-Émilion – Bordeaux, FR)/\$28-\$30**  
Known as “Jimmy Durante” for its extraordinary “nose” -- this classic “Right Bank” Bordeaux -- from one of the region’s smallest appellations and one of France’s best vintages in the past 50 years -- is very highly acclaimed! Chateau Bel-Air winemaker, Pascal Delbeck, has indeed put his magical touch on this blend of 70% *Merlot*, 15% *Cabernet Sauvignon* and 15% *Cabernet Franc*, but he humbly attributes this wine’s special character to a combination of the terroir and the attention paid to growing perfect fruit. For the money, my favorite Bordeaux red. <http://www.chateau-belair.com/>