

THE TOP 10 WINES OF 2009

They came from Tuscany and Spain, from the Rhône Valley, California and Washington, and the wines they poured were as diverse as their accents. But the vintners onstage shared a rare distinction: They produced a Top 10 wine of 2009.

"Our Top 100 is a distillation of the wine world's major trends in a given year," senior editor Bruce Sanderson told the audience. *Wine Spectator* reviewed more than 17,000 new-release wines in 2009, rating more than 3,800 at 90 points and higher on the 100-point scale. "If our Top 100 wines reward excellence," Sanderson said, "the Top 10 represent the elite of that list."

To best showcase the wines, they were served from lightest to most full-bodied—starting with the sole white, from Sonoma winemaker Merry Edwards. Her 96-point wine is the highest-scoring Sauvignon Blanc in California to date. Kosta Browne's Pinot Noir, a full-bodied yet elegant California style, followed.

Italy dominated the tasting with four wines: a 2005 Barolo,



Clockwise from top left: Michael Browne, Francesco Ricasoli, Molly Chappellet, Pietro Ratti, Giovanni Manetti, Merry Edwards, Barbara Kronenberg-Widmer, Gloria Maroti Frazee, Daniel Brunier, Manuel Louzada, Ted Baseler and Bruce Sanderson.

a 2006 Chianti Classico and two Tuscan blends, the Fontodi Flaccianello 2006 and **Brancaia Tre 2007**, only \$20 on release.

Spain took the No. 2 spot, and *Wine Spectator* director of education and seminar co-moderator Gloria Maroti Frazee described how the once-rustic, tannic wines of the Toro region were transformed by wineries such as Numanthia-Termes.

Before wrapping up with a 2006 Napa Cabernet and a 2007 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the Wine of the Year was tasted. Columbia Crest CEO Ted Baseler told the crowd, "I don't recall when I heard that we

won the No. 1 wine." He added, "Nov. 13, 7:13 a.m." The 2005 Reserve Cabernet was the first Washington wine to take the

top spot, and Baseler said it was an honor for the winery and the state's entire wine industry.

—Tim Fish

TASTING 2009'S TOP 10 WINES	
1	COLUMBIA CREST Cabernet Sauvignon Columbia Valley Reserve 2005
2	NUMANTHIA-TERMES Toro Termes 2005
3	DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE Châteauneuf-du-Pape La Crau 2007
4	KOSTA BROWNE Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2007
5	BARONE RICASOLI Chianti Classico Castello di Brolio 2006
6	CHAPPELLET Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Signature 2006
7	RENATO RATTI Barolo Marcanasco 2005
8	FONTODI Colli della Toscana Centrale Flaccianello 2006
9	MERRY EDWARDS Sauvignon Blanc Russian River Valley 2007
10	BRANCAIA Toscana Tre 2007

Four Chefs Tasting

MARIO BATALI, EMERIL LAGASSE, WOLFGANG PUCK AND CHARLIE TROTTER returned to the Wine Experience stage for what many guests call the event's highlight.

In this friendly competition, each chef prepares a dish, then *Wine Spectator* executive editor Thomas Matthews and one of the other chefs vie to come up with the best wine-pairing, working only with a written description of the dish. Sometimes, very different wines pair well with one dish, as was the case with Batali's braised lamb belly topped with a cheese crisp. Puck selected Krug Brut Champagne Grande Cuvée NV, and Matthews chose a Tempranillo-based red, the O. Fournier BCruX 2006. Batali remarked, "A glass of Champagne goes with just about anything... but with the fattiness of the lamb, Tom's pick was a good one."

—Alison Napjus



From left: Emeril Lagasse, Mario Batali, Wolfgang Puck, Charlie Trotter



DANIEL BOULUD

Domaine Roulot Bourgogne White 2008

Originally from Lyon, France, Boulud turned to Burgundy. "I wanted to make sure the wine was affordable... from a winemaker who spends the same energy and passion in making a simple wine as in making his *grand cru* or *premier cru*. This Bourgogne Blanc from the commune of Meursault from Jean-Marc Roulot is certainly one of the best examples of that."

TOP AND BOTTOM LEFT: CAMILLA SIDONE; BOTTOM RIGHT: KENT HANSON

