

TOP 5 WINE PICKS FROM THE SALON DES VINS D'IMPORTATION PRIVÉE

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These are all private import wines, so you'll need to find them in restaurants or scribble down the names and hope someday they come to you or you go to them. But, they're worth it.



Scribe Winery – Sonoma, California, USA

These winemakers are young, passionate about wine and *terroir*, and keeping it natural. Their pinot noir 2011 (\$42) and syrah 2009 (\$48) were just delicious. They weren't too dry or bitter or too fruity or big. And, yes, I know pinots and syrah are pretty different, but here it's all about how they're growing and what they're doing with the grapes. And it's all very, very good. They call themselves "scribes of the land."

Castelluccio – Romagna, Italy

The Ronco dei Ciliegi 2006 on the left means "vineyard of the cherry trees" and is appropriately all about cherries. So it's perfect with duck and can handle some hot spice and pepper. The lower priced flower-decorated bottles, however, impressed the most. Normally I'd see branding like that and roll my eyes. This bottle can't possibly be good if it's so pretty and feminine, but it is. Not all good wines have to look "serious." I'm not about to go buy any Barefoot anytime soon, though. The green bottle – the Sangiovese di Romagna – is a versatile wine. It's good, but you'd drink it with any meal except a very special occasion. It's a wine you're proud of and would make a great gift or a wedding wine. And Sangiovese is another varietal of grapes that, while popular, we often overlook in favour of the big names like Bordeaux or Chianti.



Flat Rock Cellars – Ontario, Canada

These guys are not certified organic (but neither is Le Clos Jordanne – they spray only when they absolutely have to), but again, it's about eco-friendly practices, small yields, sustainability and quality. With the least amount of interference from the winemaker, these wines came out tasting fresh without seeming young. They keep winning awards for their pinot noirs and chardonnays, and while I was into the reds only, I can say those are worth the price tags. The 2010 pinot noir is only \$20.



Giuseppe Cortese – Langhe Nebbiolo 2010, Barbaresco, Italy

This is an often overlooked varietal. It's made from grapes grown in the same region used to make the winery's Barbaresco wines, and there's a richness to it that stays far away from overly bombastic loudmouth reds. It's a little tannic, so just a tiny bit of pepper, and it's aged for a year in oak so there's a maturity there, like it knows to keep its mouth shut. And for goodness sake, it's only \$23 a bottle – *way* less than you'll pay for big name Italians.



Marie Courtin Résonance Extra Brut, Champagne, France

Both of these Champagnes are high quality. They're both zero dosage, which means 0 grams of added sugars, which means they can be awfully funky since the wine has nowhere to hide. The Georges Laval on the right was easy drinking. It's vibrant and fun, while the Marie-Courtin is more refined and elegant. The bubbles are finer, the fruitiness is subdued, and the acidity doesn't bite in quite the same way, which makes it the mature older (more expensive – \$60-ish) cousin.