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## 50 star wine buys

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(by Peter Richards MW)

A few months ago I took part in a fascinating tasting.

*Decanter* magazine assembled 70 of the highest-scoring bottles available in the UK from a year's worth of expert tastings. I tasted blind alongside Xavier Rousset MS and Sarah Jane Evans MW at *Decanter's* London HQ in October 2015. Our task? To select the top 10 of these stellar bottles – as well as a top 50 overall.

The results were published in the January 2016 edition of *Decanter*. You can read the full article via this PDF: [50 star buys of 2015, Decanter magazine, January 2016 edition](#). It's also on *Decanter's* [website](#).

From these aggregated results, the big headline was that no fewer than six of the top 10 bottles were Australian, yet more proof that there's never been a better time to drink fine Australian wine of all hues. The result speaks of a country making better, more elegant and more diverse wines than it ever has before. This is no surprise, of course, but the scale of the Ozzie impact nonetheless provoked a few sharp intakes of breath when the bottles were revealed.

There were also some notable champions from the value camp. Romping into the top 10 was a modestly priced Chardonnay from Chile at around £13 as well as three more available for under £20. Given that some bottles reached up to and over £100, that's a good showing from the cheaper end of the spectrum. In general, Argentine Malbec, Spain and Chile delivered some excellent value for money.

Chardonnay performed very well, with three wines in the top 10, nine in the top 50 (if you count fizz). This demonstrates how rapidly the wine world has switched from excess to elegance with this highly versatile variety. The ABC (Anything But

Chardonnay) moment has clearly passed, just as the sickly, overworked versions of this chameleon among grapes are slowly being consigned to the history books. Now, the very best global Chardonnays are smart and sassy, all savoury refreshment and lovely nutty complexity.

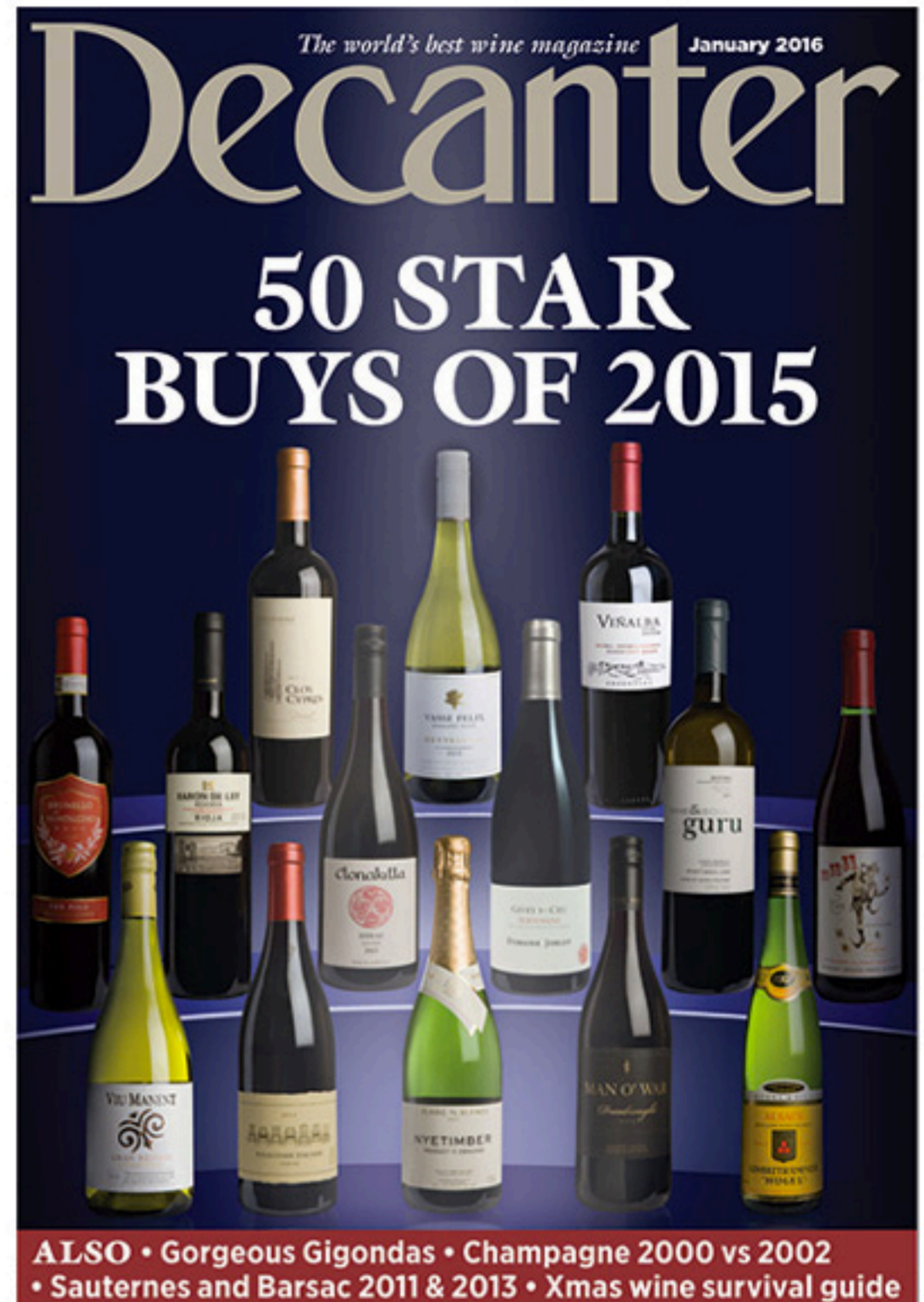
So, on the basis of these results, you could argue that we judges were clearly Chardonnay tarts with more than a sneaking penchant for all things Ozzie. But of course, tasting blind, with nothing more than the (predominant) grape variety and vintage to go on, this was a fascinating, utterly honest exercise in the way that blind tastings can be. The wines were judged totally on their own merits and the results speak for themselves.

It was a shame that no sparkling wines made it into the top ten. Personally, I loved both the Hattingley Valley King's Cuvee 2011 and Nyetimber Blanc de Blancs 2007 (see my notes below). Both are wonderfully expressive, vivid, elegant wines in their own right but neither just quite made the cut.

Below are my personal tasting notes separated into stylistic category. They are my top rated wines, only including wines I marked 17.5/20 and over.

### TASTING NOTES

- These are my individual notes, made at the tasting at *Decanter* HQ in London on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015.
- Results in the magazine differ as they were aggregate scores



### Whites

**Viu Manent Gran Reserva Chardonnay 2013, Casablanca, 13% (£13) (18/20, PR, Oct 2015)** – Beautiful nutty, pressed lemon rind aromas. Positively reductive, if you're into that kind of terminology. Good nutty savoury tones. Doesn't quite harmonize perfectly on the back palate, the acidity and savoury tension sits a bit apart. But it's elegantly crafted nutty savoury Chardonnay.