

From: The BrightWines Beacon lighthouse@brightwines.com
Subject: loading up Santa's Sleigh
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To: The BrightWines Beacon newsletter

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The BrightWines Beacon for 12/20 - 12/26 of 2025

*Sleigh bells ring, are you listening?
Santa's elves have been hustling.*

*A beautiful WINE, we're happy tonight!
Toasting in a winter WINE-derland.*

Okay, I guess those aren't exactly the lyrics that Bing Crosby sings in "Winter Wonderland" but it's a version that BrightWines endorses!

It's the time of year for wines for entertaining, wines for gifting, wines for celebrating, wines for special meals. BrightWines will offer a wide range of options of course, from Bargains to Smart Buys to Affordable Luxury. For this weekend's newsletter, my goal is to update you with all the great NEW ARRIVALS and re-stocked favorites too that are being loaded up onto Santa's Sleigh for this weekend and next week too. Santa's elves have been very busy bringing in cases and case of new wines and stocking recent favorites, as well as plenty of great seasonal wine options too. I will also publish a newsletter between Christmas and New Year's that highlights a wide range (at least a dozen different wines) of options for sparkling wines too..

In short, there is *plenty of beautiful wine to make us happy tonight!* Here's what the elves have loaded onto Santa's sleigh...

CHRISTMAS CABERNETS... NEW WINE from ITALY... re-stocked TOP PICKS from SPAIN... NEW WINES from FRANCE... re-stocked and NEW wines from "Down Under" and from CALIFORNIA too... plus some affordable luxury picks for "Christmas Cookies" and for toasting the season! All this, and MORE in today's **BRIGHT LIGHTS** section (*see below*). So many wines, so little room on the sleigh!

THE LAMP IS LIT: Store Hours for 12/20 - 12/26

**** SATURDAY December 20th: OPEN from 10:30am until 5:30pm** (regular Saturday hours)

**** SUNDAY December 21st: remember, BrightWines is CLOSED on Sundays**

**** MONDAY December 22nd: OPEN from 11am until at least 5:30pm/6pm** (regular weekday)

**** TUESDAY December 23rd: OPEN at 10:30am** for a full day of regular business and order pickups

**** WEDNESDAY December 24th: OPEN from 10:30am to 2:30pm** (holiday hours)

**** December 25th & December 26th: CLOSED** for Christmas... and for the day-after too!

**** NEXT SATURDAY Dec 27th: OPEN at 10:30am next Saturday, December 27th** (regular Saturday hours)

BRIGHT LIGHTS: loading up Santa's sleigh!

**** Christmas Cabernets (and friends) ****

Rutherford Ranch - 2021 Napa Valley - Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$29.99 per bottle (\$359.88/case, mix/match)

Suggested Retail: \$40 *GREAT VALUE compared to its peers!* 5 cases available, in-stock.

A longtime producer of **true to style, textbook Cab from Napa Valley vineyards** from the "Rutherford dust". The Rutherford Ranch winery boasts an unbroken lineage of just two familys' ownership and is on the site of the original Round Hill Winery that was founded in 1978. This Napa Valley Cabernet is drinking superbly from a great Napa Valley vintage, and could just as easily be from the 80's or 90's because the style is as familiar and "classic Napa" as it gets - not a modern "food science" style like so many can be at comparable prices. In fact, this impressive red **is rated 91 points by Wine Spectator** magazine, who says this wine is "**Juicy and engaging**, with a relatively open-knit feel to its bramble-laced cherry and dark plum puree notes. Offers a light kiss of toast, letting the fruit linger unencumbered. Drink now through 2032." Also rated 91 points by James Suckling who notes the "**a full body (yet) shows the classic structure and restraint** of the variety."

(also available, very limited) **Rutherford Ranch 2019 Napa Valley Reserve Cabernet @ \$59.99 per bottle** (inquire)

"Here by Chance" 2023 Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon @ \$19.99 per bottle

case price \$239.88 mix/match is okay

This is our second vintage of this relatively new project, based on a vineyard source in Paso Robles and made by a Sonoma-based winery that makes some very popular wines. This is a textbook, fruit-smooth Paso Robles style of Cabernet, easy to drink and easy to share - but has complexity and Cabernet character so it's easy for Cab-lovers to love! This new vintages is comes **nicely recommended, at \$25 retail, by Wine Enthusiast** magazine who particularly likes the "**mahogany, incense and berry aromas**" to be found and also by James Suckling too, who notes the "upfront mixed cherries and currants are dusted with cocoa powder and a slightly char-edged, toasted vanilla and singed herb character."

KIONA 2020 "Estates Cuvée" Red @ \$16.67 per bottle

case price \$200 mix/match is okay

Red Mountain vineyard quality, all-estate grown. This red blend is a "**meritage**" or "**claret**" style of red blend from one of the best wineries and vineyard sources in Washington's Columbu Valley. Drinking in a serious - yet very approachable - style. It is perhaps best described by James Suckling in his recommendation when he said there is "a high level of varietal diversity in this **well-matured, well-mannered and full-bodied blend.**"

FIDELITY 2023 Alexander Valley Red (Merlot blend) @ \$19.99 per bottle

Suggested Retail: \$22 - \$24

Rated 90 points by Wine Enthusiast magazine (at \$22 retail). This Alexander Valley “meritage” is made by Nick Goldschmidt, who says of this wine “black plum, blackberry, dark chocolate, white pepper, and savory spice. **Full-bodied and silky**, it shows hallmark finesse and a long, lingering finish. **Merlot adds richness, Cabernet power**, Cab Franc structure, Petit Verdot suppleness, and Malbec color.”

**** Duendes Navideños** - Santa’s elves in SPAIN loaded these gem onto Santa’s sleigh **

Bodegas ONTANON 2015 RIOJA Reserva @ \$22.50 per bottle (\$270 per case, mix/match)

Suggested Retail: \$24 - \$30 (various sources)

93 points by James Suckling - also rated **90 points by Wine Spectator** magazine, and **92 points in Decanter**

DAVE says: Flashy and modern and full-bodied, yet following all the traditional oak barrel aging and in-bottle aging rules of a classic Reserva. We are catching the tail end of the 2015 vintage here, but at 10-years old it is PRIME drinking and just now hitting its peak years. WINE SPECTATOR magazing notes: “A savory red, leading with smoke and grilled herb notes before revealing flavors of plumped cherry and baked plum. Well-balanced, with supple tannins and fragrant accents of sassafras root, cocoa powder and macchia emerging on the finish. 95% Tempranillo and 5% Graciano. Drink now through 2030. 90 points.” AND Decanter magazine rates it even better at 91 points saying “Silky texture with fine dark fruits. Notes of stones and spice. On the palate it develops well, with nice grip, juiciness and a persistent finish.” *The **LAST 5 cases available from the supplier** (of this hugely popular BrightWines pick this fall) just got loaded onto Santa’s sleigh...*

Alfredo Arribas (Portal de Priora) 2019 Gotes del PRIORAT @ \$22.50 per bottle

A rare Priorat, drinking at peak. Some say it’s Spain’s answer to Chateaufeuf du Pape. I will write more about this wine soon, and it’s another NEW ARRIVAL (available Monday Nov 24th). But it’s rated 91 points by the respected Spanish publication Guia Penin “cherry, purple, spicy, ripe fruit, black fruit, flavourful, good acidity and long;” and wine notes by the blog Cadus Vinum are quite accurate when they say: “Vibrant red and dark berry. The wine is delicious in its simplicity, with deep tones of ripe red and black berries and subtle hints of oak. Gently tannic with a lovely cherry finish.” 50% Garnacha, 40% Carignan, 10% Syrah. (\$270 per case, mix/match) *The **LAST 3 cases available from the supplier** (of this savvy thanksgiving pick here) just got loaded onto Santa’s sleigh...*

**** Folletto di Natale** - Santa’s elves in ITALY just loaded these classical beauties onto Santa’s sleigh **

Castello di Radda 2022 Chianti Classico @ \$19.99 per bottle (\$239.88/case, mix/match)

Four consecutive vintages of Tre Bicchieri in Gambero Rosso (that’s a big deal) and similarly consecutive vintages of 90-91 points by Wine Spectator and Wine Enthusiast. Simply stated, this is as good as Chianti Classico gets for \$20 bucks, and it sure IS good!! This winery is the historic castle for the famous Chianti Classico town of Radda in Chianti. The 2022 is their newest release, and already has yet another 91-point rating. I have found my new “go to” Classico for the season... and fans of Tuscany, Classico, Sangiovese, etc, need to come check it out. Reference point wine for the style.

Fontaleoni 2024 Vernaccia di San Gimignano @ \$14.99 per bottle

The most famous white wine of Tuscany. This new fresh 2024 vintage is the best one this winery has made in the several years I’ve followed Fontaleoni (I like the importer alot). This white has lovely aromas of stone fruit and pear, with salty mineral notes alongside the classic hay/straw tones and hints of melon and honey.

Brigaldara 2023 Valpolicella d.o.c. @ \$17.99 per bottle

This is this lightest and brightest version of this old-school winery’s flagship Valpolicella that I can recall, and it’s my favorite one! James Suckling was similarly charmed, and rated it **90 points** saying “So lightweight and evanescent... **red cherries, mountain herbs and freshness. Delicious in the most prosaic sense.** Scored on honesty, fidelity and thirst-slaking joy alone.”

Vietti 2022 Nebbiolo delle Langhe “Perbacco” @ \$33.33 per bottle (limited stock)

Rated **93 points** by Robert Parker’s Wine Advocate: “Vietti 2022 Langhe Nebbiolo Perbacco is not too far off from tasting and smelling like a full-fledged Barbaresco, or even a Barolo for that matter, since it does technically have the DNA of both.” AND rated 90 points by Vinous “The 2022 Langhe Nebbiolo Perbacco is a very serious wine in its peer group. Crushed flowers, red-toned fruit, chalk, mint, white pepper and orange peel give this rich, textured red notable aromatic brightness and presence.”

**** Les Lutins de Noel** - Santa’s Elves in FRANCE just loaded some *alternatives* to Bourgogne Rouge and Sancerre **

Vignoble Gibault 2021 Touraine (Sauvignon Blanc) @ \$14.99 per bottle

Gorgeous vibrant nose, intensely aromatic with white flower aromas and a hint of lemon peel. Clean entry, with a nice minerality on the palate, a fine blend of supple, rounded flavours with underlying notes of blackcurrant and passion fruit. A long chalky finish. A thirst-quenching style. (importer notes) *Alternative to Sancerre.*

Jean Marc Burgaud 2022 Morgon Cote de Py @ \$33.33 per bottle (limited stock)

Rated 94 points Vinous, 94 points Wine Advocate, 96 points James Suckling. Wine Advocate notes of this Cru Beaujolais lieu dit - one of the most Burgundian of all such designations - that “**2022 was a standout year for the Côte du Py**, making wines of great depth that will stand a great test of time. On the nose, the 2022 Morgon Côte du Py unfurls with aromas of tangy blackberries, plums, blood orange, oak leaf and slate. Medium to full-bodied, this wine exudes an energetic presence, characterized by a well-defined structure upheld by tangy acids and velvety tannins made firm by concentration. Deeply nuanced, it gradually unfolds on the palate with layers of umami richness intertwined with hints of iron-like salinity melded seamlessly with persistent tangy black fruit. **This is a standout wine that demands attention.** 94 points.”

**** Christmas in summertime!** Santa’s elves from “**Down Under**” say check these out **

Escudo Rojo 2022 Casablanca, Chile PINOT NOIR @ \$15.99 per bottle

Suggested Retail: \$20 (see Wine Enthusiast)

"Cherry and other berries rise from the glass of this Pinot Noir from Casablanca. It has **a soft texture holding cranberry, raspberry and cherry flavors. A dash of ground black pepper appears on the pleasant finish.**" (Wine Enthusiast) Escudo Rojo, the red shield, is the Chilean winery owned by Baron Phillippe de Rothschild.

"The Better Half" 2025 Marlborough, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc @ \$15.99 per bottle

As fresh as can be, 2025 vintage (down under makes this possible) and as tasty as the previous vintage we loved last summer!

(#74 on W.S. Top 100 of 2025) **"The NED" 2024 Marlborough, New Zealand PINOT GRIS @ \$17.99 per bottle**

Case Price: \$200 per case = \$16.67 per bottle 5 cases available in-stock, only 1500 cases imported

Has that delicate hint of salmon-pink, as if it were a Vin Gris of Pinot Gris, as noted by the Wine Spectator in their full review. And they loved it too - ranking it #74 on Wine Spectator's Top 100 wines of the year, saying: "A faint salmon color announces this white's fresh and creamy notes of salted, ripe melon, nectarine and peach at the core. Hints of citrus zest and white flowers join a whiff of ginger and a hint of persimmon preserves. Drink now. 90 points. 1500 cases imported."

Clos de Luz 2022 "Arao" red blend (Carmenere / Cabernet) @ \$15.99 per bottle

Family winery that has some of the oldest vines, and original plantings, of Carmenere in Chile - dating back 90 years!!

"Bruce Jack" 2021 Pinotage 'reserve collection' @ \$14.99 per bottle

Aussie Shiraz fans would love this wine, and since those are not around as much anymore - check this out instead! There is no earthy or pipe tobacco in this Pinotage (well, maybe just a tiny bit) but there is tons of blueberry fruit and depth. Drinks like \$20 wine, and looks like \$20 wine. From Breedekloof, near Paarl.

**** a beautiful wine, we're happy tonight... having Christmas cookies - or propose a toast - to celebrate the season! ****

Warre's 10-year Tawny Port "Otima" @ \$29.99 per bottle (500ml - limited stock)

Rated 91-93 points by Wine Spectator and Wine Advocate. "a full-bodied, silky smooth Tawny Port"

FIDELITY 2023 "Railyard Vineyard" ZINFANDEL @ \$19.99 per bottle

Rated **92 points** Wine Spectator! **Great red Zin (dry but luscious) is a very good pairing for chocolate!!** Wine Spectator notes: "Generous and lively yet elegantly structured" and rated this 92 points just recently. A perennial favorite here, and a former Wine Spectator Top 100 wine too.

Carpineto 2006 Vin Santo @ \$69.99 per bottle (500ml - inquire with Dave)

King Estate 2019 Vintage Brut (Willamette Valley) @ \$39.99 per bottle (limited stock)

Rated **91 points** (\$40 retail) by Wine Enthusiast magazine: "leads with aromas of of lemon sorbet, straw and the scent of two quartz rocks striking to create sparks. Its traditional method bubbles form a tight, elegant column as flavors like lemon, pith and peels included, wet rocks and pine needles fill the mouth." Chardonnay and Pinot Noir cuvee sparkling Brut.

DRAPPIER Carte d'Or BRUT Champagne (Urville/Reims) @ \$49.99 per bottle (limited stock)

Possibly Dave's all-time favorite Champagne? 80% Pinot Noir is the secret ingredient from vineyards and winery in Urville, along with long cave aging and blending in their historic caves in Reims. **"As always, Drappier Carte d'Or is a classic, well-executed, and perfumed Champagne"** (91 points W.A.) "Attractive aromas of white peach, dried orange, and brioche with subtle hints of dried raspberries. 92 points." (James Suckling)

AND... stay tuned for the the upcoming New Year's newsletter, or inquire with Dave, about **a dozen or more in-stock sparkling wines ranging from \$11.99 per bottle Cava up to \$49.99 Champagne**, with many-many fun styles of bubbles in between...

That's all for now... this elf has got a big weekend ahead, and next week too. Be sure to read THE LAMP IS LIT for Store Hours! —Dave

*Up on the housetop, reindeer pause
Out jumps good old Santa Claus
Down through the chimney with lots of WINE
All for the patrons of Bright-Wines!*

(my apologies to Gene Autry)

The Right Wines are BrightWines!

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