



We give you the tips and tricks to ensure you're the ultimate host this season.

FOOD & DRINK WINE

## 20 Standout Bottles That Elite Masters of Wine Are Uncorking for the Holidays

Their picks may surprise you.

BY SARA L. SCHNEIDER ON NOVEMBER 16, 2019



Special occasions have a way of turning wine cellars into playgrounds. Choosing which bottles to pour involves weighing age, the tastes of family and friends and the best matches for the menu. We indulged in this pregame pleasure with an elite group of wine professionals: the band of men and women who have earned the title of Master of Wine.

Only 390 people worldwide (53 in the US) hold the credential, which requires years-long study with a mentor, passing notoriously difficult tests—both in written theory and a blind tasting (the annual pass rate is heartbreakingly low)—and a written dissertation.

A Master of Wine (MW) is not to be confused with a master sommelier. The latter (also legendarily difficult to achieve) is a service credential, with candidates mostly emerging from restaurant experience, while the Master of Wine is more academic. MWs parlay their achievement into a range of prestigious roles, from winemaking, buying and writing to consulting and teaching. You'll find MWs judging wine competitions all over the world and helping private clients build dream cellars.

We couldn't help, then, but ask a few Masters of Wine—including the two newly minted ones in the United States—what they love to drink come holiday time. These wine pros might have access to the best bottles worldwide, but their choices this time of year are personal, ranging in price from \$25 to \$700. Their picks—and four of ours, just for fun—may surprise you.

Gus Zhu



With practical experience in both winemaking and hospitality in Napa Valley, Zhu (one of this year's two new MWs in the US) is now an international consultant on wine education and a Wine & Spirits Education Trust (WSET) diploma tutor for WSET's online classroom and a guest lecturer in Beijing and Napa Valley.

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