

THE *Hollywood* PORTER

CONAN O'BRIEN

isn't done yet — he's just got an earlier bedtime

The renegade director reclaiming the soul of
AMY WINEHOUSE

ARI EMANUEL's

perpetual payday

COPPOLA's
Megalopolis:
Will it be
a mega dud?

The world according
to **ED RUSCHA**,
L.A.'s most elusive
art star

EASY RIDER

Reacher's **ALAN RITCHSON** is a skull-cracking, God-loving, supersensitive action star who isn't afraid to cry





Part of the Lawrence Wine Estates portfolio, Heitz Cellar recently released its 2019 Lot C-91 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$120).

Sip Into Something Comfortable

The new wave of 'cult' California wines trades in hedonistic excess for nuanced restraint. We asked some of the world's top sommeliers to share their favorites *By Elycia Rubin*

Cult wines are a very American and, more specifically, Californian phenomenon. The term rose in popularity in Napa Valley in the 1990s to describe flashy, meticulously crafted cabernet sauvignon blends with perfect scores by top wine critics, outrageous prices and insatiable demand.

"Most of these wines were simply well-made, small-production wines and the owners had no intention of multiyear wait lists," says master sommelier **Vincent Morrow**, wine director of Michelin-starred Press Restaurant in Napa's St. Helena. "Given that a vineyard will take at least six to seven years before it's producing optimum fruit, and it only bears fruit once a year, the economic nature of these small vineyards was that production

could not scale at the pace of any rapid increase in demand. Thus, when the great reviews came out, wines immediately sold out." Titans in this category include O.G. cult wine Screaming Eagle (averaging \$4,000 a bottle), Harlan Estate, Opus One,



Morrow

Scarecrow, Sine Qua Non, Dalla Valle, Promontory and Realm Cellars, most of which start from \$150 to \$450 a bottle.

But while consumers once focused on powerful "99- or 100-point wine and didn't see anything past that," says Morrow, experts now herald wider interest in wines with "more energy and balance," says **Myles Trapp**, sommelier at Napa hideaway Auberge du Soleil. **Carlton McCoy**, master sommelier and CEO of Lawrence

Wine Estates in St. Helena (whose labels include Burgess, Heitz Cellar and Ink Grade), also sees a dialing back from what he refers to as "hedonistic wines" to wines with more restraint. "The grapes are picked earlier, they're more vibrant, site-specific, terroir-driven and nuanced," he says.

Consumers are also shifting their attention to wines rooted in origin and intentionality. "This is how Europeans have viewed wines," says Morrow. "The focus is on managing the vineyard in a

From left: Clos Saron 2000 Once Upon a Time, La Cuvée Mystérieuse (\$85); Rhys Vineyards 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay (\$55); Tessier 2022 Day Dreaming (\$35).



healthy, sustainable way so that the next generation can succeed."

Trapp says **Gideon Beinstock** and **Saron Rice**'s Clos Saron in the Sierra Foothills are an example of cult wine's next frontier.

"Their vineyard is succumbing to environmental stressors such as frost, so the yields are low, but the wines are really phenomenal with hidden power and intensity," says Trapp. **Adam Hopkins**, wine director for Toscana Restaurant Group's Nella and S.Y. Kitchen in the Santa Ynez Valley, looks for wines he finds "revelatory" and is a fan of both Railsback Frères and Brughelli, located in the Santa Maria Valley. And **Melissa L. Smith**, sommelier and founder of Enotrias Elite Sommelier, wine cellar management and appraisal consulting, is impressed with wines from Mendocino County's Anderson Valley by Jolie-Laide, Rhys Vineyards and Tessier, whose founder, **Kristie Tacey**, is "a scientist working on the Human Genome Project turned wine-maker [who's] making classic pinots and head-tilting blends."

Smith is also excited about two newcomers with ties to Bordeaux: Cathiard Vineyard, owned by the same family as the prestigious Château Smith Haut Lafitte, and Pym-Rae, the former estate of **Robin Williams**, which was purchased by **Alfred Tesseron** of Château Pontet-Canet. Says Smith: "Cathiard and Pym-Rae are both bringing over a hundred years of history and experience to Napa Valley and will elevate the category and demand." **THR**



Prefer Hedonistic Excess? How's a \$100,000 'Blending Experience'?

Pulling a prized bottle out of the cellar to relish with friends can be thrilling. But think about the bragging rights of pouring your own blend, which you personally crafted at a famed winery.

In The Vines — a private travel club dedicated to the art of winemaking — members have the opportunity to learn and craft wines alongside world-renowned virtuosos. There are two tiers of membership: Explorer requires a \$100,000 initiation fee with annual dues of \$6,000 (includes a \$2,500 credit for the experience of choice), and Adventurer involves a \$20,000 initiation fee with annual dues of \$2,500. During three- or four-day "Blending Escapes," members stroll vineyards, gain inside knowledge of the craft and sip treasured wines. They also have the option

of creating a personal barrel (25 cases, priced from \$6,000 to \$40,000), which will be bottled, adorned with a bespoke label and shipped after maturation.

"Drinking wines from a region with the people who make them is an unparalleled experience," says The Vines founder **Michael Evans**. Destinations span from Priorat in Spain and France's Champagne region to Argentina and Napa. An itinerary in Montalcino, Italy, includes a stay at the charming La Bandita Townhouse in the village of Pienza, owned by **John Voigtman**, a former Sony music exec; vineyard visits (Roberto Cipresso winery is pictured at left); a Tuscan feast on an organic farm; and a chat with *Under the Tuscan Sun* author **Frances Mayes**. — E.R.