

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Cabernet sauvignon and pinot noir have been fighting for top variety in *W&S's* Annual Restaurant Poll for the last five years. Last year, cabernet took top honors among the most popular wines in US restaurants. This year, pinot noir edges it out by less than a percentage point.

Still, of the most popular wines on respondents' lists in 2017, nearly 13 percent were cabernet sauvignon or cabernet-based. And seven of the most popular brands overall are significant cabernet producers: Cakebread, Caymus, Jordan, Duckhorn, Frank Family, Silver Oak and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars.

In terms of brand visibility among American diners, cabernet sauvignon has the upper hand. "Wine lists can be intimidating," says Joshua Steiner of *Carnevora* in Milwaukee. "Guests gravitate to names that are familiar. Our three best-selling cabs (Stag's Leap, Silver Oak and Caymus) are consistently good, regardless of vintage. We don't try to sell those wines: People have decided on those before they walk through the door."

And where beef is involved, cabernet is still king. "We are very much a traditional Texas steakhouse," says Bill Elsey of *Pappas Bros. Steakhouse* in Houston, "and with their meals, people love the big California cabs." At *Mistral* in Boston, David Borsman says diners are "taking a deeper look at Chateau Montelena, Grgich Hills, Ridge—you know, the guys that have been doing it for decades. I think as people learn more about wine in general maybe they're starting to think these aren't just brands, these are the originals for a reason and they're still at it so there must be something to that."

There is also a significant interest in Bordeaux, which, sommeliers are finding, can often come in at a better value than Napa cabernet (the average price for the best-selling cabernets in our respondents' restaurants is \$104, \$14 more than the average for pinot noir). "Bordeaux is making a comeback," says Nicole Hakli of NYC's *Momofuku Ssäm Bar*, pointing to the 2011 Haut-Medoc, Les Allées de Cantemerle. "It's a great restaurant wine—it's food friendly, ready to drink, at a friendly price point at \$68 a bottle—and it's terrific with the duck or pork shoulder ssam, or the wagyu beef."

In the \$50 to \$70 range, you'll get better value out of Bordeaux than Napa. You can find some fun artisanal Côtes de Bordeaux or Supérieur—family-made wines, with a couple years of bottle age.

—Noah Singerman,
Husk, Charleston, SC



The international business crowd that comes in wants the best of what the US has to offer, so then we're dealing with Napa Valley and cabernet sauvignon. They want to try California.

—Bill Elsey, *Pappas Bros. Steakhouse, Houston*



MOST POPULAR CABERNET SAUVIGNONS

Rank	Brand	Bottling	Avg. Price
1	Silver Oak Wine Cellars	Alexander Valley	\$163
2	Caymus Vineyards	Napa Valley	\$165
3	Justin	Paso Robles	\$67
4	Stag's Leap Wine Cellars	Napa Valley Artemis	\$118
5	Faust	Napa Valley	\$104
6	Frank Family	Napa Valley	\$108
7	Jordan Vineyards	Alexander Valley	\$120
8	Hall	Napa Valley	\$83
9	Heitz Wine Cellars	Napa Valley Napa Valley Trailside Vineyard	\$143 \$188
10	J. Lohr	Paso Robles Seven Oaks	\$50
11	Duckhorn Vineyards	Napa Valley	\$93
12	Obsidian Ridge	Red Hills Lake County	\$57
13	St. Francis Vineyards	Sonoma County	\$48
14	Mt. Veeder Winery	Napa Valley	\$86
15	Opus One	Napa Valley Overture	\$229
16	Darioush	Napa Valley	\$243
17	Woodward Canyon	Columbia Valley Artist's Series	\$93
18	Corison	Napa Valley	\$192
19	Alexander Valley Vyds.	Alexander Valley	\$49
20	Turnbull	Napa Valley	\$100
21	Sequoia Grove Vineyards	Napa Valley	\$90
22	Leonetti Cellar	Columbia Valley	\$228
23	Louis Martini Winery	Napa Valley	\$44
24	Chateau Montelena	Napa Valley	\$119
25	Keenan	Spring Mountain	\$52
26	Lewis	Napa Valley Mason's	\$125
27	Snowden	Napa Valley Brothers Vineyard	\$140
28	L'Ecole No. 41	Columbia Valley	\$68