

the restaurant top 50

If you're out at a top restaurant, you're likely to see a lot of these wines at the tables around you. And even if, like many wine geeks, you look for the most esoteric buy on the list, many others return to these comfortable favorites again and again—perhaps more so in today's economy, where brand names are a safe haven.

Twenty years ago, Sonoma-Cutrer, Robert Mondavi and Jordan led the list of the most popular wine brands in restaurants. Sonoma-Cutrer still leads the list—for the seventh time in the last 11 years—with Jordan and Mondavi not far behind.

But that's about where the similarities end. The Top 50 list has never been more diverse, with Italy, Spain and New Zealand breaking up the California hegemony. A Washington winery—Chateau Ste. Michelle—has joined the Top 10, up from 21 last year. The popularity of pinot noir is clear, with Merry Edwards jumping from 46 to 15, right next to Flowers at 16. WillaKenzie, Adelshiem and Bethel Heights, all representing Oregon pinot noir, joined the list this year.

While many of our respondents acknowledged that the economy was cutting into their wine sales, the numbers show that there are some things diners won't give up. Silver Oak, for instance, moved up



the list to number 4, even as its average price increased \$12 over last year's. Veuve Clicquot moved from 10 to 7 this year, strengthening its position at a time when Prosecco sales are challenging Champagne.

To compile the Restaurant Top 50, we asked restaurateurs to list the ten wines that sold best during the last three months of 2008. The brands that make up the Top 50 are those that received the most mentions. To compare results across the past ten years of the poll, we calculate the number of mentions per 100 respondents. To break ties in the rankings, we consider each brand's total points (see p. 62). The average price for each brand is calculated from the wine list prices given by the restaurateurs. It includes all the bottlings that sommeliers listed within that brand.

Rank	Winery	Mentions per 100 responses										Average Price		
		'08	'07	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	'01	'00	'99	'98	'08	'07
1	Sonoma-Cutrer Vineyards Windsor, Sonoma Cty., CA	14.3	14.3	14.4	15.0	19.3	17.3	16.5	19.7	24.5	22.0	25.4	\$49.90	\$47.20
2	Cakebread Cellars Rutherford, Napa Vly., CA	12.5	13.3	15.4	17.3	13.9	17.6	17.2	16.3	13.2	12.9	12.7	\$88.85	\$85.38
3	Jordan Vineyard & Winery Healdsburg, Sonoma Cty., CA	9.6	11.5	16.1	10.8	10.5	12.1	14.4	19.2	16.0	13.2	15.2	\$95.81	\$93.16
4	Silver Oak Wine Cellars Oakville, Napa Vly., CA	8.1	10.0	11.4	11.1	10.8	7.0	9.1	10.4	11.3	9.6	12.7	\$143.68	\$131.75
5	Ferrari-Carano Winery Healdsburg, Sonoma Cty., CA	7.7	10.0	6.4	5.9	6.4	6.7	11.1	14.6	14.0	16.0	16.7	\$58.90	\$57.25
6	Robert Mondavi Winery Oakville, Napa Vly., CA	7.0	3.2	7.4	4.6	9.2	9.1	13.2	10.4	11.0	15.5	15.2	\$40.21	\$56.22
7	Veuve Clicquot Reims, France	7.0	6.5	5.0	6.9	7.5	6.1	5.6	7.0	7.2	5.7	7.9	\$105.47	\$97.72
8	Chateau Ste. Michelle Woodinville, WA	6.6	4.3	5.4	5.2	7.8	7.9	9.1	8.2	10.5	7.5	6.4	\$39.06	\$34.50
9	Rombauer Vineyards St. Helena, Napa Vly., CA	6.3	7.5	7.0	6.9	5.4	3.3	3.8	5.6	3.0	3.9	-	\$60.06	\$67.38
10	Kendall-Jackson Vineyards Santa Rosa, Sonoma Cty., CA	6.3	5.7	7.7	12.1	11.2	12.7	17.5	16.9	20.9	18.1	21.6	\$38.71	\$33.56
11	Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Napa, Napa Vly., CA	5.9	5.4	5.0	7.8	6.4	5.8	8.1	11.3	12.4	6.2	6.4	\$100.81	\$100.40
12	Santa Margherita Alto Adige, Italy	5.5	6.8	7.7	7.8	10.2	10.0	9.9	11.0	9.9	8.0	11.0	\$52.47	\$48.68
13	Caymus Vineyards Rutherford, Napa Vly., CA	5.5	8.2	8.1	7.8	7.1	4.5	5.8	5.9	6.3	6.5	3.3	\$103.80	\$100.30
14	Beringer Vineyards St. Helena, Napa Vly., CA	4.8	5.0	6.0	4.9	6.4	5.5	10.9	13.5	11.3	15.5	18.6	\$59.62	\$36.50
15	Merry Edwards Windsor, Sonoma Cty., CA	4.8	2.9	3.7	5.6	3.1	-	2	2.5	-	-	-	\$85.08	\$95.00
16	Flowers Winery Cazadero, Sonoma Cty., CA	4.4	5.7	4.0	-	-	3.0	-	2.0	-	-	-	\$95.58	\$98.81
17	Ridge Vineyards Cupertino, CA	4.4	-	5.0	3.6	3.1	2.1	-	2.8	5.2	3.9	3.6	\$68.08	\$58.86
18	Tuscan Estates of Ruffino Pontassieve, Italy	4.4	6.5	6.4	4.9	5.4	5.8	6.3	4.8	6.3	4.4	4.3	\$49.58	\$46.39