

YEAR'S BEST FRIULIAN WINES



Our blind panels tasted **123** wines from Friuli over the past 12 months. **Stephanie Johnson**, our critic for Italy, rated **23** as exceptional (90+) and **14** as Best Buys. Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at wineandspiritsmagazine.com.

WHITES

BLENDS

92 | Livio Felluga \$55
2016 Rosazzo Abazzia di Rosazzo This blend of Friulian varieties (friulano, pinot bianco, sauvignon, malvasia and ribolla gialla) balances its butterscotch richness with fresh flavors of citrus and stone fruit. Notes of lime pith and orange blossom give the wine extra lift, as does the brisk salinity. *Maisons Marques & Domaines USA, Oakland, CA*

92 | Lis Neris \$60
2016 Venezia Giulia Lis Flavors of golden apple, pear and white peach combine with notes of toasted nuts and cream in this rich oak-aged blend of pinot grigio, chardonnay and sauvignon blanc. It has the potential to gain further complexity with a year or two of cellaring. *V.O.S. Selections, NY*



92 | La Tunella \$30
2017 Friuli Colli Orientali Biancosesto (Best Buy) This wine brings together the floral and almond notes of friulano with the racy acidity and tangy citrus flavors of ribolla gialla. It's a lively, well-balanced blend with a cool and zesty feel, right up through the savory nut-skin finish. *BEVA, Randolph, NJ*

91 | Borgo del Tiglio \$40
2016 Collio This blend of friulano, sauvignon and riesling fills its rich, round texture with flavors of citrus, green apple and white peach. Taut acidity draws out those flavors as

the wine takes on air, leaving a tingling sensation on the finish. *Grand Cru Selections, NY*

91 | De Stefani \$60
2017 Veneto Olmèra Sixty percent of this blend is made from friulano that's been left to dry for a month; the concentrated juice is then fermented and aged in barriques with frequent lees stirring. The balance is sauvignon blanc aged in stainless-steel tanks. It's a successful marriage, sauvignon's notes of mandarin orange and its mouthwatering acidity enlivening the wine's creamy texture, the wine lasting on exotic flavors of mango and pineapple. *Ethica Wines, San Diego, CA*

91 | Scarbolo \$48
2013 Venezia Giulia My Time A blend of chardonnay, sauvignon and friulano aged in French oak *tonneaux*, this gold-tinted wine offers flavors of fresh apple and peach cushioned by a rich, creamy texture. Hints of smoke and toasted nuts give it a pleasant savory edge. *Soilair Selection, NY*

90 | Gradis'ciutta \$43
2015 Collio Bianco Riserva Tropical fruit scents lead into flavors of peach, apricot and dried mango couched in a round, almost unctuous, texture. Ample alcohol adds warmth and weight, balanced by saline notes that brighten the finish. A blend of ribolla gialla, friulano and malvasia, it should be served well chilled with rich foods, like slow-roasted pheasant. *Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL*

CHARDONNAY

92 | Meroi \$57
2017 Friuli Colli Orientali Chardonnay We tasted an impressive set of releases this year from Paolo Meroi's Buttrio estate, including this chardonnay. Notes of vanilla, hazelnuts and spice picked up from 11 months in new French oak barrels integrate well with its green-apple flavors and vibrant acidity. The wine blazes a path between Burgundy and California chardonnay that should lead directly to a pairing with creamy polenta. *Artisanal Cellars, White River Junction, VT*

FRIULANO

93 | Meroi \$82
2016 Friuli Colli Orientali Zitelle Pesarin After renting plots in the Zitelle vineyard for nearly a decade, Paolo Meroi had the opportunity to acquire it in 2004. Since the plot was large, he split the purchase with his neighbor Enzo Pontoni of Miani, a producer of cult status among Friulian wine lovers. Meroi surveyed Zitelle's rock-studded clay soils and divided his holdings into parcels, replanting each solely to white varieties to take advantage of the site's northeast exposures. This 2016 is Meroi's first release of friulano from the Pesarin parcel. Scented with spearmint, lime and toasted almonds, it offers layered flavors of spiced pear and quince that seem to become riper as the wine rolls across the palate. It's a bold, distinctive wine that's built to age and will only get more interesting after a few years in the bottle. *Artisanal Cellars, White River Junction, VT*

90 | Vignai da Duline \$45
2017 Friuli Venezia Giulia La Duline Friulano Fruit culled from vines planted in 1920 and 1936 produced this sage-inflected friulano. Cool acidity balances its creamy texture, keeping the wine light on its feet despite its juicy peach and mango flavors. *Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, Berkeley, CA*

90 | Lis Neris \$36
2016 Friuli Isonzo La Vila Friulano This is intensely herbal, with scents of basil, rosemary and mint accenting brisk flavors of golden apple and grapefruit. It finishes with a note of white pepper. *V.O.S. Selections, NY*

88 | Gradis'ciutta \$22
2017 Collio Friulano (Best Buy) Notes of spearmint brighten this creamy, lightly spicy friulano, the flavors recalling white peach and blanched nuts. *Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL*

88 | La Tunella \$22
2018 Friuli Colli Orientali Friulano (Best Buy) Cool citrus notes and herbal scents accent this wine's flavors of crisp apple and lime pith. Fresh and zesty, it's a match for poultry or shellfish. *BEVA, Randolph, NJ*

87 | Eugenio Collavini \$19
2018 Collio T-Friulano Friulano (Best Buy) Floral scents orange and peach give way to flavors of citrus and guava tinged with bitter nut-skin. *Eugenio Collavini Viticoltori, NY*

87 | Scarbolo \$21
2018 Friuli Friulano (Best Buy) A mild, creamy texture couches this wine's flavors of tart green apple and pithy lime. Zippy acidity brings it to a clean finish. *Soilair Selection, NY*

MALVASIA

94 | Meroi \$82
2016 Friuli Colli Orientali Zitelle Duri This is Paolo Meroi's third release from Duri, a plot in his Zitelle vineyard that he planted to malvasia between 2004 and 2007. The wine aged for a year in barriques (80 percent new), gaining notes of vanilla bean and candied florals as well as an opulent texture that envelops the ripe apricot, peach and almond flavors. The fruit becomes more expressive the longer it is exposed to air, so decant this an hour before serving, to coax out all its detail. *Artisanal Cellars, White River Junction, VT*

94 | Skerlj \$48
2015 Venezia Giulia Malvasia Matej Skerlj hand-harvests malvasia for this wine from densely planted alberello-trained vines rooted in a thin layer of terra rossa over hard limestone. He kept the juice and skins together for three weeks in old oak barrels, where the wine developed a deep golden hue and such fragrant aromas of apricot, peach and mango that it smells sweet. Yet the wine is fully dry, with a citrus-skin texture and tangy acidity that carries rich tones of dried pineapple and orange marmalade. Skerlj seems to have coaxed every drop of deliciousness from the grapes while avoiding any tannic bitterness, making this an orange wine that will entice aficionados, novices and everyone in between. *North Berkeley Imports, Berkeley, CA*

PINOT GRIGIO

91 | Lis Neris \$36
2017 Friuli Isonzo Gris Pinot Grigio From a gravelly vineyard planted 30 years ago, Gris is fermented and aged for 11 months in used French oak *tonneaux* with frequent lees stirring. It's plush and broad, with flavors of lemon curd, toasted almond and peaches, zesty acidity bringing it to a mouthwatering finish. *V.O.S. Selections, NY*

91 | Scarbolo \$25
2015 Friuli Grave Mattia Beyond Pinot (Best Buy) Aged in a mix of stainless-steel tanks and large oak casks, this is clean and brisk, with scents of pressed flowers and dried pineapple and flavors of ripe peaches and fresh cream. *Soilair Selection, NY*

90 | Lis Neris \$25
2017 Friuli Isonzo Pinot Grigio (Best Buy) From the winery's younger vines and aged entirely in stainless-steel tanks, this is robust and fleshy, the emphasis on flavors of juicy peach and apricot. *V.O.S. Selections, NY*

90 | La Tunella \$30
2017 Friuli Colli Orientali Col Bajè Pinot Grigio Vibrant acidity weaves through this wine's layered flavors of white peach and grapefruit, balancing its creamy texture and smoky, spicy tones. *BEVA, Randolph, NJ*

RIBOLLA GIALLA

88 | Gradis'ciutta \$22
2017 Collio Ribolla Gialla (Best Buy) With autumnal notes of blanched nuts, warm spice and freshly crushed apples, this calls for a match with slow-roasted pork belly. *Vineyard Brands, Birmingham, AL*

88 | La Tunella \$22
2018 Friuli Colli Orientali Rjgialla (Best Buy) Made from ribolla gialla, this offers flavors of white peach and pineapple accented by toasted almond and a hint of salinity. *BEVA, Randolph, NJ*

SAUVIGNON BLANC

91 | Meroi \$36
2017 Friuli Colli Orientali Sauvignon This sauvignon's scents of grapefruit skin, pith and pulp continue on the palate, taking on juicier flavors of peach and apricot with exposure to air. It's plush and creamy, with some notes of vanilla and honey picked up over its 11 months in barriques (half new). *Artisanal Cellars, White River Junction, VT*

88 | Scarbolo \$21
2018 Friuli Sauvignon Blanc (Best Buy) This is a bright, simple sauvignon, its scents of white petals and lemongrass leading into flavors of pink grapefruit and lime, with a hint of white pepper on the finish. *Soilair Selection, NY*

87 | Ronchi di Pietro \$20
2018 Friuli Colli Orientali Sauvignon Blanc (Best Buy) This is round and juicy, with flavors of honey-drizzled grapefruit and grassy notes. *Enotec Imports, Denver, CO*

VITOVSKA

92 | Kante \$35
2015 Venezia Giulia Vitovska (Best Buy) Brisk, chalky acidity races through this wine's

flavors of green apple and lemon, picking up mineral tones and lime-leaf scents along the way. It offers the complex refreshment of a premier cru Chablis; pour it with oysters. *Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant, Berkeley, CA*

92 | Skerlj \$48
2015 Venezia Giulia Vitovska Fermented on the skins for three weeks, this gold-tinted vitovska opens with orange-blossom scents that lead into flavors of juicy peach and nectarine. The chewy citrus-skin texture and tea-like tannins lend firmness to the flavors, which develop notes of chamomile and saffron. Rich and flavorful, this has the dense texture and savory tones to match braised rabbit. *North Berkeley Imports, Berkeley, CA*

RED

91 | Meroi \$33
2016 Friuli Colli Orientali Nèstri A blend of merlot with one-quarter refosco, this wine tucks flavors of red plum, black cherry and blood orange into a taut structure. Notes of fresh mint and cracked-black peppercorn add a lively snap to the finish. *Artisanal Cellars, White River Junction, VT*

91 | Skerlj \$48
2015 Venezia Giulia Terrano This terrano's deep magenta color matches its concentrated flavors of black cherry and sour plum. Notes of tarragon, blood orange and subtle spice accent its freshness, while bracing acidity lifts the finish. It's an excellent partner for cured meats. *North Berkeley Imports, Berkeley, CA*

90 | Scarbolo \$47
2013 Friuli Grave Refosco Early-harvested, air-dried grapes were fermented with later-harvested whole clusters of fresh grapes to create this robust wine. The flavors are complex, ranging from fresh blackberry to baked plum and charred meat, with notes of baking spice picked up from three years of aging in French oak barrels. Pair it with braised meat or mushroom dishes. *Soilair Selection, NY*

88 | Ronchi di Pietro \$23
2017 Friuli Colli Orientali Schioppettino (Best Buy) Notes of black pepper and smoke weave through brambly red-berry flavors in this juicy midweight wine. *Enotec Imports, Denver, CO*

87 | Ronchi di Pietro \$19
2015 Friuli Colli Orientali Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso (Best Buy) This smoky, tannic wine offers flavors of tart plum and seedy berries. *Enotec Imports, Denver, CO* ■