



Merlot World

Exploring the World, One Merlot at a Time

Tuesday October 15, 2024

Registration: 6:00 PM, Tasting: 6:30 PM

Faculty Club, Univ. of Toronto, 41 Willcocks Street, Toronto

Price (including HST) Member: \$125; Guest/Non-Member: \$160

TVC's February tasting is an event dedicated to Merlot. One of the "noble" varietals, Merlot is the second most planted red wine grape in the world and one of the world's most beloved red wines. Each glass offers a story of place, tradition, and artistry, showcasing why Merlot continues to captivate wine lovers across the globe.

Merlot, with its origins in Bordeaux, France, is renowned for its velvety texture, ripe fruit flavors, and incredible versatility. Its name, derived from the French word *merle* (blackbird), reflects the grape's dark, inky hue. As one of the most widely planted varietals globally, Merlot is celebrated for its ability to thrive in diverse climates and soils, adapting to the unique characteristics of each region while retaining its approachable, fruit-driven charm. Known for notes of plum, black cherry, and chocolate, Merlot ranges from soft and supple to structured and age-worthy, making it a favorite for blending and single-varietal wines alike. Our journey begins in France, where the grape thrives on the Right Bank of Bordeaux in Saint-Émilion and Pomerol, producing wines of exceptional elegance, with plush textures, ripe plum flavors, and layers of complexity. These wines reflect the harmony of tradition and terroir, embodying the heart of French winemaking.

In Italy, Merlot has been reimagined with a vibrant and expressive twist. Tuscany and Friuli are renowned for producing Merlots with a bold structure, bright acidity, and earthy undertones. These wines, deeply rooted in Italy's diverse landscapes, offer a fresh interpretation of this classic varietal, blending rich tradition with innovation.

Crossing the Atlantic, we explore Merlot in the United States, where its versatility shines in the sunny vineyards of California and the cooler climates of Washington State. California's Napa and Sonoma regions deliver rich, fruit-forward wines bursting with notes of cherry, plum, and chocolate. Meanwhile, Washington's Merlots are known for their finesse, with a delicate balance of vibrant fruit flavors and refined structure. Even in our backyard in Canada, we can find Merlot flourishing in regions like British Columbia's Okanagan Valley and Ontario's Niagara Peninsula. Canadian Merlots feature bright fruit, fresh acidity, and smooth tannins, reflecting the dedication of local winemakers who craft wines as distinctive as the country itself. These New World interpretations highlight the creativity and adaptability of Merlot.

As you savor tonight's selection, you'll experience how climate, soil, and craftsmanship shape the grape in each region. Whether a longtime fan or new to the varietal, this evening promises to deepen your appreciation for the diversity of this extraordinary grape. Raise your glass, share your thoughts, and join us in celebrating Merlot—a wine that transcends borders yet remains universally loved. Don't leave, everyone is ordering merlot tonight!

The event price includes reception wine, bread, appetizers and, of course, our main wines! Newcomers and those who would like more tutoring are encouraged to sign up for our Newcomers' Table on our registration page. We look forward to seeing you!

REGISTER/ BUY TICKETS online at [World Merlot](#) and pay by e-transfer, credit card (via PayPal) or by cheque. E-transfer & credit card payments must be received within 48 hours of signing up to secure your reservation. Cheques must be received by Tuesday, February 14. You will be sent an automated email confirmation from our online reservation system, Jotform, after submitting your registration. All ticket sales/reservations are final. If you tried to register but did not receive your confirmation, please contact winetastings@torontovintners.org before trying to register again. In order to maximize everyone's tasting experience, we ask that you please refrain from wearing scented products.



Tasting Notes and Information

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(Prices are as of date of purchase)

2016 Mayacamas Mt. Vedeer, Napa \$95
"From the mighty site, this wine is made by Braiden Albrecht and consulting winemaker Andy Erickson. It is a stellar version of the variety: chalky, structured and sophisticated in graphite, currant and cranberry, with a tease of black tea and sage. The tannins are elegant and will support aging..."

94 Pts – Wine Enthusiast

2015 Chateau Faugeres, St. Emilion \$60
"Very deep-set aromas of blackberries and red and dark plum fruits, set amid integrated oak spices, cedar and hints of earth. The palate has a super plush feel with intense flavors of blueberries and dark plums. Succulent tannins that are smooth, entrancing and very long."

95 Pts – James Suckling

2016 Clos de Betz, Washington \$73
"The 2016 Clos de Betz is 70% Merlot and 15% each of Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon. It shows how strong this vintage was for Washington and is the finest example of this cuvée to date, offering up medium to full-bodied notes of blue fruits, violets, blood orange, and spring flowers. It's seamless and layered on the palate, with terrific purity, and while it's already drinking great, it's going to keep for 15 years or more."

95 Pts - Jeb Dunnuck

2015 Chateau La Cabanne, Pomerol \$78
"The 2015 La Cabanne is a blend of 95% Merlot and 5% Cabernet Franc... Tasted on three occasions, the nose is offers brambly black fruit mixed with wild hedgerow and cold stone, certainly more sophisticated than recent vintages, with impressive purity. The palate is built upon fine grain tannin, well-judged acidity, and is nicely proportioned with the fruit, given lift by the new oak on the finish. I suspect that the aromatics were just having an off day; given the performance of the palate and knowing how fine this Pomerol can be, it should turn into a delicious, perhaps relatively approachable Pomerol that will give a couple decades of pleasure."

92/94 Pts – Neal Martin

2018 Checkmate Silent Bishop, Okanagan \$96
"The fruit for this wine is from vineyards on western benches in the South Okanagan. The wine was fermented with indigenous yeast and aged 21 months in new French oak. The bright aromas and flavours reflect that the fruit is from the cooler side of the valley. There are aromas of red currant, raspberry and cherry with green herbal notes, all of which carries through to the flavour. The tannins, while ripe, still have grip."

94 Pts -John Schreiner

2016 Arcanum Valadorna, Toscana \$99
"The celebrated 2016 vintage in Tuscany continues to impress. This Bordeaux blend is based on Merlot but has a slightly Left Bank style, and will soon become the estate's current vintage of Valadorna, due to be released this year. Aged in 60% new French oak, it is polished and intense, with bramble fruit, earthy balsamic tones, a milk chocolate aroma and a slightly herbal touch. Its tight-knit structure, combining crisp acidity and firm yet velvety tannins, makes this a powerful yet graceful wine. Even if you're not a fan of Tuscan Merlot, the tense character it gives to wines in the Chianti region is to be admired."

96 Pts - Decanter

2020 Duckhorn Three Palms Vineyard, Napa \$160
"Epic, elegant and profoundly complex, this stunning wine draws you in with aromas of fresh cranberry, huckleberry, crushed rose petals, raspberry and graham crackers. On the palate, mesmerizing layers of black fig and cocoa powder mingle with the lush berry flavors, with a sophisticated note of minerality emerging on the long, resonant finish."

Winemaker's notes

2017 50 Anni Le Vigne di Zamo, Friuli \$94
"Aromas of rust, iron and dark fruit with spices. Turns to violets and dried flowers. Full-bodied and rather tight in the palate, with tension and focus. Lean and beautiful. Drink after 2026, but already enticing."

95 Pts – James Suckling