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Waters On Wine
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Gold Standards

There are many boxes to check for judges to deem a wine worthy of a gold medal, which means it's no easy feat to win a top award at the annual InterVin International Wine Awards.

Nearly 1,400 wines were entered into this year's competition, which were systematically tasted in a variety of categories by 21 expert judges over the course of three days at White Oaks Resort & Spa in Niagara. The blind-tasting format meant judges (a selection of educators, sommeliers and winemakers) didn't know the producers or origin of the samples being evaluated. They just

knew they were there to celebrate the very best for the benefit of Canadian wine lovers.

When all of the samples

were tasted and re-tasted to identify the top wines of the competition, 55 wines stood out from the crowd and received gold medals.

WINE OF THE WEEK



★★★★

**Bonterra Vineyards
2012 Organic
Cabernet Sauvignon**

California

BC \$18.29 (342428)

Made in a crowd-pleasing style, this ripe and juicy expression of Cabernet from one of California's pioneers of organic grape growing checks all of the boxes. The core of red fruit makes this instantly attractive, while the structure and chewy tannins maintains the focus and intensity of the wine. It's a match for grilled ribeye or portabello mushroom burgers.

So, what exactly makes a wine as good as gold?

"Balance and harmony," explains Daenna Van Mulligen, a Vancouver-based sommelier and writer who has judged at wine competitions around the world. "A gold medal wine is immediately obvious when tasting."

Erin Henderson, a Toronto sommelier who specializes in wine education, wine parties and wine list management services, agrees that gold medal wines announce their presence.

"You just know it when you taste it," says Henderson. "A wine that makes you take pause is always a winner. When you can keep coming back to it and finding something new, and even more enjoyable, that's gold."

Here are three top-scoring wines from this year's InterVin competition that truly stood out from the crowd.



★★★★+

Ruffino 2011 Il Ducale

Tuscany, Italy

BC \$17.49 (872572)

This well-balanced super Tuscan blend is 55% Sangiovese with nearly equal parts of Merlot and Syrah. Look for distinctive cherry fruit aromas and flavours accented by vanilla and dried herbal notes. It's classically Tuscan in nature, with an appealingly plush texture. Try with herb roasted chicken or Panzanella.

★★★★+

**Masi Agricola 2010 Amarone
della Valpolicella Classico**

Veneto, Italy

BC \$47.99 (317057)

The richness and concentration of classically made Amarone is the star here. Masi's latest release presents a heady mix of ripe plum and raisins with coffee, leather and earthy notes. This full-bodied red would be best with grilled or braised meat dishes.

