

### Saintly Wines

According to Wikipedia, a saint is defined as “a person who is recognized as having an exceptional degree of holiness...”



While the English term "saint" originated in Christianity, historians of religion now use the appellation in a more general way to refer to the state of special holiness that many religions attribute to certain people with remarkable conviction and generosity of spirit, including members of the Jewish, Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist faiths. Depending on the religion, saints are recognized either by official ecclesiastical declaration and denomination or by popular acclamation.

But when it comes to wine, in order for a wine to be “saintly,” it simply needs to be in proximity to fertile soil, great climate and a winemaker who can shepherd the flock grapes into awe-inspiring wine. It also helps to have “saint” in the name.

So, as a last homage to Pope Francis’ visit, I give you a few saintly wines worthy of praise.

Of course, we have to start off with the guest of honor, for whom the current Pope has chosen to honor by taking his name, St. Francis. While St. Francis may have taken a vow of poverty, the **2013 St. Francis Winery Old Vine Zinfandel** from Sonoma Valley, California is a rich and opulent wine. A classic old vines Zinfandel, this wine offers aromas of cigar box, pepper and spice. Flavors of ripe black cherry and vanilla bean are followed by a long, luscious finish. This will make a Zinfandel believer out of you. **\$15**

Washington State is home to a remarkable wine renaissance, thanks to the arid climate and abundant water found in the Columbia Valley on the eastern side of the Cascade Mountain range. The valley is home to St. Michelle, one of the largest wineries in the region, and for good reason. They have a reputation for making divine wines, like their **2014 St. Michelle Columbia Valley Pinot Gris**. An interesting combination of the lighter-style Italian Pinot Grigio and the richer, rounder style Pinot Gris found in Alsace, France, it is characterized by a fragrant nose of grapefruit, peach and nectarine that leads to a fruit laden palate featuring melon, juicy pear and ripe peach. The abundant acidity keeps the finish fresh and crisp. **\$15**

Located in the Rutherford appellation of Napa Valley, a temple to wine in and of itself, the family run St. Supéry Estate Vineyards & Winery is a testament to sustainable farming. The **2014 St. Supéry Estate Oak Free Chardonnay** offers brilliant aromas of nectarine, white peach, lime, and kiwi combine with expressive orange marmalade. The grapes were harvested in the cool morning hours in an effort to preserve the delicate flavors of nectarine, lime, honeydew and orange zest. The bright acidity keeps the finish clean and crisp. **\$25**

St. Innocent is considered one of the greatest missionaries of the Russian Orthodox church, helping to spread faith throughout the untamed Alaska frontier. In much the same way, Mark Vlossak is considered one of the greatest missionaries of viticulture in a rugged wine region. As president and winemaker at St. Innocent Winery in Willamette Valley, Oregon, Mark was one of the first to realize the potential of the region for growing and making Pinot Noir wine. It is evident in his **2021 St. Innocent Momtazi Pinot Noir**. It features subtle aromas of red cherry fruit and violets on the nose. In the mouth, there are loads of ripe red cherries, black plums and hints of cinnamon that play out over the entire palate. The soft tannins impart a sweetness that adds depth to the medium finish without being overly ripe. This Pinot Noir is heavenly. **\$37**