

The Hanes Wine Review, December 2007 Edition

A perennially fun game for wine geeks to play goes like this. Pick one white wine grape and one red wine grape that you would have to drink for the rest of your life. Just wines made from these two grapes. It's fun for the whole family!

Obviously, one has to *like* the wines made from the chosen grapes. A lifetime can be a long time. That's why we drink wine, to make it all go away. Over the long haul, another key attribute to consider is the versatility of the grapes, can they express themselves in a variety of ways? Fuller or lighter? Sweeter or drier? Can they reflect a variety of places of origin well, expanding the range of scents and flavors enjoyed from but two grapes? And, most importantly, do hot chicks dig them?

Ahh, Hanes digresses. So, without further ado, here are Hanes's choices and why. Note that he first played this "thought experiment" game with wine friends a decade ago and his answers then in no way resemble those found here. Life is nothing if it is not about change. And, who knows, maybe the answers will change once more ten years hence? *If* his liver holds out that long.

Both choices are equally difficult, white and red. The runners up in both categories could prove equally as pleasing and versatile. But no one remembers who lost the World Series in 1932, just who won, so screw 'em. For white wine grapes, the answer has to be *Riesling*. So distinct and yet so transparent at the same time! How do they do it? Riesling not only survives but thrives the world over, capable of adapting to a variety of terroirs while yet hewing to its innate character. The tell-tale notes of petrol or oil can be found in German Rieslings, Australian Rieslings and New York State Rieslings. Albeit with greater or lesser intensity, let's not get too crazy. Even in warmer climates it often manages to provide above average acidity to lend it freshness and verve

Beyond its basic adaptability, Riesling also lends itself incredibly well to a plethora of viticultural approaches and vinification styles and techniques. Regardless of the level of ripeness, the final wines can be vinified to be bone dry or ultra sweet dessert quality wines, without losing its essential nature as Riesling. Heck, regardless of red, white or amber color, Riesling may be the most versatile grape known. Like ever! Its range from dry to sweet makes it a wonderful wine with a full menu of dishes, as does its ability to express itself clearly at either lighter or heavier weights.

Riesling can also capture the more subtle differences among vineyards neighboring one another or just around the bend by the old oak tree. You can stand in one vineyard and drink a glass of wine from it and literally see another vineyard, walk there, have a glass of wine from that vineyard and it will taste dramatically different. That's no lie, folks. Try it yourself. Just watch out for men in lederhosen with shotguns and dogs.

A key differentiator for Riesling is that it also ages fantastically, developing tertiary aromas and flavors for decades. You can have a Riesling of 40 years age and it will be alive and kicking and furnish flavors unlike any other aged white wine. Thus, Riesling is not only versatile in "horizontal" terms of similarly aged young wines from an assortment of places, the versatility continues with each passing "vertical" year.

If that isn't enough, Riesling is often one of the more low alcohol wines on the market — so you can drink even more of it!

Sharing many of the attributes of Riesling, and a close second place finisher, comes Chenin Blanc. It can be very dry or sweet, ages beautifully, expresses a sense of place of origin and comes with crisp, invigorating acidity. Hanes could deal with a lifetime of quaffing Chenin Blanc wines. But, in the end, there can only be one.

Hanes's choice among red wine grapes is likely to prove more debatable to wine geeks. Here, it's gotta be *Syrah* (aka Shiraz in some places). This noble grape crosses the finish line first for a variety of reasons. It too possesses different sorts of versatility. Syrah can adapt to, gosh, just about anywhere. There's very few places left which do *not* grow Syrah to some extent (a good and a bad thing). While in hotter climes Syrah loses a good deal of structure, when grown in cooler areas it maintains the acidity and tannin required to achieve both finesse and power. Syrah also tastes "like Syrah" at a variety of body weights, light, medium and full. This allows the consumer to decide which style is appropriate for the moment or meal and choose accordingly.

Syrah produces some of the most intriguing secondary and tertiary aromas and flavors around. Grilled meat, bacon, animal fur, tar, earth, flowers, garden herbs, citrus, you name it. The level of fruit ranges from brightly tart red fruits to thick, jammy black fruits, in some cases one voice in the chorus, in others the diva soloist. Syrah evolves steadily over the years, and while not as long-lived as some other noble grapes, beyond a doubt changes from the wine it was in its infancy. For a red wine grape, Syrah evinces a high degree of transparency to its place, its environment leaves an indelible mark on the final wine (or it *should*). With select Syrah based wines you just *know* from whence it came. Would that life always provided such security!

While hard to prove per se, Hanes also suspects that Syrah is able to better integrate excessive exposure to oak as it gains age. Even if it tastes like a vanilla ice cream and caramel swirl while young, the grape's more rugged personality fights its way to the surface over the years. So, there's hope for those oak and fruit bombs yet, just cross your fingers and wait. And wait.

While Syrah can be fruit-driven, the best examples tend towards the drier end of the spectrum. But, if sweet you want, Syrah can deliver. Although, note that Hanes only in the rarest of circumstances has seen a dessert quality wine made from Syrah (there is, however, plenty of "sparkling Shiraz"). Another bonus for Syrah, although not strictly part of this here game, is that Syrah can be blended with many other grapes to produce stellar results. If done well, it keeps the right proportion of its character while at the same time allowing freedom of expression to the other grapes in the blend. Riesling, well, Riesling is best left alone.

More learned imbibers of the vine's fruit might aver that while Syrah absolutely has its merits, the true "alone on a deserted island" red wine grape is Pinot Noir. This grape is the noblest of the noble, the most nuanced and elegant, the most intellectually compelling and soul stirring. It's hard to argue long and hard against Pinot Noir. But as Hanes has yet to have the long-expected "Burgundy conversion" which afflicts both the well-heeled middle-aged as well as fat, unshaven guys in movies, let's leave it at this. The worst Syrah is always going to be better than the worst Pinot Noir. And there's something to that.

In a very close third place, Hanes has to honor the Nebbiolo grape, which possesses so many of the positive attributes of Syrah and Pinot Noir, save perhaps its ability to travel across the globe and produce wines which stun in their beauty as those born in Piedmont, Italy. A lifetime of Nebbiolo from Piedmont would not be too shabby.

Looking back, the choice of Riesling and Syrah proves painfully obvious to any follower of *The Hanes Wine Review* since these two grapes make up like 75% of the tasting notes he scribbles. Why, it's like this game is actually happening in real life! Zoinks!

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This month's big winners... Curiously, Hanes has never had a wine from Les Vins Contés of the Loire before just now. Go figure. Their blend based mostly on Côt (i.e., Malbec) called "Vin de Table R6" is a nice quaff for \$16 or so, pleasing breadth without trying to do too much. With a tighter distribution pipeline than other Germans, it's easy to miss or not learn about Ratzenberger from the Mittelrhein. Yet, this is a top-drawer producer who should be sought out. Their 2006 Riesling Kabinett Trocken from parcels around the village of Bacharach is a steal for \$20. Two simple, semi-sweet sparklers for under \$20 impressed this month. Morandina's 2006 Moscato d'Asti has all the light, gossamer sweetness of this category of wine plus a very refreshing minerality on the back half. Renardat-Fâche's "Vin de Bugey Cerdon" made from the Poulsard grape is a perennial winner, converts all who taste it. Hey, it's the thinking person's sparkling Shiraz! Hmmm. Never a huge fan of Schlossgut Diel from Germany's Nahe region, there appears to be a shift in winemaking style away from overblown exaggeration if their 2006 Riesling Pittermännchen Kabinett is any evidence. Only problem here is the over \$30 tariff.

The best \$15 and under picks... It has taken this long but the achievement has been made. Hanes has had a wine from Cabardès in the Languedoc. It doesn't matter that before swilling Château de Pennautier's 2005 red "kitchen sink" blend he had never heard of Cabardès. Let's not let that take away from the achievement. About \$10 and worth it. Sobon Estate is a very solid producer of less expensive wines. Their Zinfandel wines are usually their best and their 2006 "Hillside" bottling is one of the better of this bottling in recent years. \$10 and in screwcap so no corked bottles. Unless they have TCA in the winery or something. From Chile, Viu Manent's 2006 "Reserva" Carmenère bottling is a straightforward expression of the grape, not trying to be Merlot nor Cabernet. For \$11, it competes within its low-priced peer group.

And the disappointments... In the minority opinion, Hanes was relatively unmoved by the new 2005 Muscadet bottling by Marc Ollivier and friends called "Granite de Clisson." It's alright, don't get Hanes wrong. But for close to \$20, there's lots more Muscadet wines closer to \$10 which satisfies Hanes to a greater extent. May we all live long enough to taste this wine years down the road from the 3.0 liter bottles which is the rage with the in-crowd. It's tiring to slam Pride Mountain wines. But maybe not as tiring as drinking them. Hanes was gifted the 2005 Syrah by a well-meaning party. Hanes said thank you. Drank it at work where there would be more mouths to help it go away quicker. Needless to say, those who go for the 2x4 to the head will love this wine. Don't know how long we can blame the weak dollar for poor value but a decent wine like Joguet's 2005 Chinon "Cuvée de la Cure" should not be \$26. Fans of the "relative scale of value" may still see value but an absolutist like Hanes says if this is what \$26 gets you *from anywhere* in the world of wine, he'd rather buy a bottles of Jamesons. Thankfully the question is moot since Hanes doesn't have \$26.

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Unlike *those other* professional reviews, Hanes only will share what he likes if it is *currently available* in stores for immediate purchase. If these wines are not to be found in some of your local stores, they suck and that's not Hanes's fault.

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on the older (or non-imported) wines he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/oldervintages2007.html>

Here's the order in which Hanes humbly provides the wine review information:

Winery/Producer Name

Region of Origin, Appellation, Brand Name/Wine Style, Single Vineyard (if any applicable)

Grape Type

Vintage Year, Price Hanes Paid (if available), Alcohol Percentage (if available)

Tasting Notes, Hanes's Numeric Score (on the traditional, yet inane, 100 point scale (which for Hanes truly begins at around 80 points and more or less ends around 94 points))

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And here's Hanes's wine reviews for December!

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Pesenti Vineyard
Zinfandel

2005, \$35.00, 16.1%

Clean, deep purple core, seamlessly integrates into dark ruby rims, The nose is all heavy floral musk, orange citrus and, of course, super-ripe blackberry, blueberry, raspberry fruit, still fresh and without dried fruit concentration, minimal oak toast, just flowers and froot. Full-bodied without in any way coming across as fat, just big and muscular. Here the orange, tangerine, lemon citrus lends tang to the attack and pairs more with a meadowy herbal streak, cleanses the cherry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit, which on the palate finds enough concentration to suggest prunes. Some mountain, piney notes displayed, less emphasis on the floral elements. Nice length on the finish without forcing itself on you. While not especially complex, moves nimbly and does not show evidence of its higher alcohol. 89

Bohème

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Que Syrah Vineyard
Syrah

2004, \$50.00, 14.5%

More black than purple in the core, while opaque so squeaky clean and spotless that it's hard to not visually be deflected by the surface, robustly gleaming red-magenta rims. There's some salted beef notes that get steamrolled by syrupy black cherry, blackberry scents in addition to moderate black coffee, orange slices and flower petals, faster pacing as first but slows to a hover in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, smooth and polished to the point where the acidity and tannins become all but unrecognizable, glides along without a hitch. Caramel, coffee ice cream and butter subtly present, minty too. Good mix of red and black fruit, raspberry, strawberry, blackberry, cherry flavors. Presents a very lightly perceptible minerality through the back half. 89

Sobon Estate

Amador County, Hillside
Zinfandel

2006, \$9.99, 13.9%

More crimson to red-ruby in color than violet at the core, fairly consistent through to the rims, not a blemish in sight. Juicy, sugary, yet not heavy, scents of strawberry, raspberry, cherry fruit and lemon juice, some cocoa but really pure and devoid of secondary scents, just plays it nice and easy. Medium-bodied, smooth and suave and much more fluid than many Zinfandel wines, snappy raspberry, blackberry, strawberry fruit alongside candied lemon drops. Sweet herbs, ginger, cinnamon, shows a minor zap of herbaceousness. Only near the back end

does any cocoa or vanilla cream oak surface. Because it never strives for too much, achieves more for it. Noticeably food friendly and non-intrusive. 91% Zinfandel, 5% Petite Sirah, 4% Grenache. (Screwcap) 88

Bohème

Monterey County, Santa Lucia Highlands

Syrah

2005, \$40.00, 15.1%

Fair degree of clarity and transparency to the ruby-violet color, glassy surface, the rims offer a red-magenta tint. The nose is scrubbed clean, erect posture and well-mannered, even if somewhat easy to achieve given the restricted palette of garden herbs, wildflowers, orange peel and raspberry, red cherry fruit scents, touch of green olives, restrained oak, does stick around after its point is made. Medium-bodied, has the mouth feel of whipped cream, expansively fluffy. Not to say it's devoid of acidity, just devoid of perceptible tannin. More vanilla ice cream, toffee and fresh butter oak flavors here, refined. Clear contours to the red cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit, perhaps aided by their hard candy sort of sweetness. No noticeable alcoholic heat, never dries out as the back half offers plenty of flowers, orange citrus and menthol. Easy to discern the care and competence it's made with, lacks real bravura, though. 88

Pride Mountain

Sonoma County

Syrah

2005, \$55.00, 14.9%

Jet black onyx core, black on black and all that, razor thin rims of crimson and red-magenta, no evidence of anything but clean liquid amidst the blackness. Popcorn, coconut oil and vanilla fudge billow recklessly through the nose, then follows up with a gusher of plum, blackberry, black cherry fruit, does produce bursts of ham and salted meats and fresh mint leaves before dissolving. Full-bodied, even if with a certain hollowness to the mid-palate, duplicates the nose in producing an initial flurry of coffee ice cream, caramel, coconut and butterscotch before piling on sugary more than ripe blackberry, blueberry, plum fruit. Less of any meatiness here but more orange to grapefruit citrus and flowers. Not especially smooth, there's a lowgrade graininess throughout, as if tannic residue. Impressive for its thrust and cacophony of flavors but lacks graceful integration. 86

FRANCE RED

Vins Contés (Olivier Lemasson), Les
Loire, Vin du Pays du Loir-et-Cher, Vin de Table R6
Blend

NV, \$15.99, 13.0%

Possesses a dense cloudiness which darkens the purple core and pushes the bright ruby magenta hues out towards the rims, where the deep glow continues. The

nose is full of ripe and naturally sour raspberry, boysenberry, cranberry fruit, softened some by a billowy floral perfume, accents of tree bark and fallen leaves approach herbaceousness but not quite there, while leans strongly on the fruit retains a "country wine" feel. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a somewhat fizzy character that gives it a woolen texture, feels layered on the tongue. The sourness of the raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit persists even as its fullness keeps it completely there through the finish. Its acidity more apparent than tannin, dry however its weight prevents any structure-created leanness. Tar, bark, wet fur and damp earth give it character. Pays more attention on getting the parts working together as a seamless whole than individual clarity. 70% Côt, 20% Grolleau, 10% Gamay. [Synthetic cork: Nomacorc] 88

Joguet, Domaine Charles
Loire, Chinon, Cuvée de la Cure
Cabernet Franc
2005, \$25.99, 13.5%

The vivid purple core is fully opaque and possessed of good shine, the dark garnet rims could hardly have more inky saturation. There's some leafy qualities, tobacco ash and bell pepper in the nose while the emphasis yet remains squarely on the plum, black cherry fruit scents, the barnyard horse and manure accents help add depth before its final dissolve. Full-bodied, the juicy and velvety attack made more so by the truncated finish, definitely pulls up way before you expect. Presents a natural enough array of finely powdered minerals and stone as well as tobacco ash, hits you with orange zest and dried flowers too. The herbaceousness kept to a minimum. The currant, plum, cherry fruit has deep flavor for however long it lasts. All the parts play well together but it's somewhat highly priced for what it is. 88

Vignerons de la Méditerranée, Les
Languedoc/Roussillon, Corbières, Les Deux Rives
Blend

2006, \$8.99, 13.0%
Bright, crystalline violet color, sleek surface, dark scarlet rims share in the reflectivity. High-toned cranberry, raspberry and some red cherry scents in the nose, floral musk plays in the air, even with light olive pit accents about as airy and friendly as you would want from any wine from this region. Light to medium-bodied, touch more acidity than tannins, for the best as it adds to its freshness. The floral perfume gently settles on the tart cranberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit. Not herbal but yet has this drying grassy feel. Add in an orange blossom breeze to the already dominant florality and it's clear someone smacked the winemaker and ordered him to make a wine you can sell abroad. 40% Grenache, 30% Syrah, 20% Mourvèdre, 10% Carignan. [Synthetic cork] 87

Taluau, Joël
Loire, Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil, L'expression
Cabernet Franc
2005, \$17.99, 12.5%

Clear pure purple core calmly yields to fairly wide dark garnet to crimson rims, densely hued throughout. All the scents in the nose feel pressed together as if in a vise, cocoa bean, flowers, mineral dust and black currant to black cherry fruit lose shape and contour as a result, more smoke and ashes than herbaceousness. Medium-bodied, on the stern side, reluctant to budge more than a centimeter into the mouth and stop. The tannins have a

pliant feel about them but, at the same time, are anchored in place and not gonna budge. More blood iron, leather, orange peel and tar than herbaceousness or bell pepper here too, driven by soil flavors. Tightly wound cherry, currant, plum fruit has length as well as breadth but little enjoyable ripeness, not to claim underripeness. Evidently requires a lot of time to find the desire to please. 87

Pennautier, Château de
Languedoc/Roussillon, Cabardès
Blend
2005, \$9.99, 13.5%

Bright scarlet influence lightens the purple core, perfect transparency through to the brick red rims, easy on the eyes. Intensely sweet nose without being jammy, fresh and juicy raspberry, blackberry, strawberry fruit, only a little room left for wildflowers, dried grill fat and a faint whisper of lemon peel. Medium-bodied, spicy and mineral through the attack, the tannins provide a moderately drying influence which pushes off the juicy raspberry, red cherry, blackberry fruit until the mid-palate. Even with the fruit's advent, a powdery stoniness accrues on the tongue. The florality about the biggest other component, not striving for complexity but rather the right pitch to what it does put on the table. Hard to find fault with it at the price. 20% Cabernet Franc, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 20% Grenache, 10% Malbec, 10% Syrah. [Synthetic cork] 87

Mourat Père & Fils, Jean
Loire, Fiefs Vendéens-Mareuil, Collection
Blend
2006, \$12.99, 12.5%

Very light violet to red-ruby in color, perfectly consistent throughout, completely transparent as well. Sour and borderline raw nose of raspberry, red cherry fruit, grapefruit pith, mineral chunks, its ashen texture dries and cleanses things nicely. Light-bodied, for its weight handles its big tannins well, dry if not tacky in texture throughout. Candied maraschino cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit has bravura through the attack and falters by the mid-palate in the face of the herbaceousness. Mineral and stone dust continue to dry out the tongue, however, that hard candy character remains at the end. Easy enough on the palate, the first few sips tell you there's no need to overthink this one. Unspecified percentages of Pinot Noir, Cabernet Franc, Négrette. 86

FRANCE WHITE

Clusel-Roch, Domaine
Rhône, Condrieu, Verchery
Viognier
2005, \$59.99, 14.0%

Vale pale, if not watery, white straw color, fully transparent rims, consistent glassy surface. Very rugged nose, the flowers and honey last a few ticks only, the tar and stony earth surprisingly strong, the peach, apricot, pear fruit scents full of pit and seed notes, wild meadow herbs and dried out lemon peels too, spreads and spreads until it turns on you and closes up prematurely. Medium-bodied, similarly unique in its tarry, black earth, mineral chunk emphasis, densely yeasty, its bottom-heavy nature slightly dampens the fullness of the peach, apricot, mango fruit. Sort of grassy at moments, the acidity broad and blunt, nothing bright nor zippy going on here. The florality is there but can barely get off the ground. Very good but in no way for those expecting the usual Condrieu profile. 89

Pépière, La

Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine, Granite de Clisson
Muscadet

2005, \$18.99, 12.5%

Mild brown hues darken the yellow straw color, helps it better fill out the rims, pleasing surface shine, below there's signs of almost imperceptibly small bubbly fizz. The nose is heavy without getting droopy, creamy in texture as the cherry, peach, apricot fruit unfolds, joined by rose water and lemon custard, more mint than minerality, dense enough to suggest a very concentrated palate. Full-bodied, delivers on the nose's promise, extracted to near immobility, clings to your cheeks and tongue like they are a life preserver. Full ripeness in the apple, pear, peach, cherry fruit without expressivity. Lower levels of white citrus and florality yet more by way of stoniness and salinity. The acidity a blunt instrument. Enjoyable enough but given it's "super-band" status of vigneron contributing to the bottling plus it's late release and potential for shutting down best to reserve final judgment. Decanted for two-three hours. 87

Mosse, Domaine Agnès et René

Loire, Anjou
Chenin Blanc

2004, \$18.99, 13.5%

Deep orange amber cast to the base of gold, layered as if glazed, holds pretty nicely through the rims, translucent throughout. Nose of apple cider and pear juice, generous portions of cinnamon and clove spice, dewy floral musk, the stone component demure, on the whole soft and pliant, stays full for some time. Full-bodied, while it fills up your mouth unto gushing out, there's also this semi-dusty texture to it that contrasts with the ripeness of the yellow apple, pear, apricot, persimmon fruit. Maintains that sweet spicy zing of clove and cinnamon, just enough to evoke baked goods. Decided elevation in the orange and lemon citrus department here. The acidity gives when pushed, not weak but sluggish. On the whole comes across as somewhat sleepy, like it just wants to relax in the shade rather than get up and move. A touch short on the finish too. 86

Vaufuget, Domaine de

Loire, Vouvray
Chenin Blanc

2006, \$8.99, 11.5%

Faint yellow straw glow to it, very nice shine throughout which makes up for the lack of depth. Soft, fruity nose of peach, pear, apple fruit, more grassy than floral, moderate smokiness and chalk without a minerally edge. Medium-bodied, the acidity makes it lurch some, doesn't have the flesh to stay on an even keel. The apricot, peach, pear, melon fruit somewhat short-lived, if sweet. More floral here, helps fill out the mid-palate. Past then starts to accrue a bitter touch, distracts from any stone, mineral elements. Curiously, given the general dropoff in flavor intensity, has a borderline cloyingly sweet finish. In no way horrible, just very average. 84

FRANCE SPARKLING

Renardat-Fâche, Alain

Ain, Vin du Bugey Cerdon, Méthode Ancestrale Sparkling
Rosé

Poulsard

NV, \$16.99, 7.5%

The watermelon pink color masked by real serious foam, when that dissipates you can see that it's moderately clear. The nose is all bubbly strawberry, red cherry, watermelon fruit, lemon candy, wildflowers, nothing else and leaves you believing nothing else needed. medium-bodied, as visually and olfactorily foamy as it is, even more so in the mouth. Hardly an inch of your palate not covered in bubbles, sweet and yet alternately sour raspberry, strawberry, watermelon fruit, aided and abetted by glazed brown sugar and lemon drops. The acidity somehow manages to show through all the fruit and foam. Has the energy to stay broad and deep through the finish. Fun in the sun. 88

ITALY SPARKLING

Morandina, Azienda Agricola La

Piedmont, Moscato d'Asti
Moscato

2006, \$15.99, 5.5%

The paleness of the yellow gold color betrayed by a day-glo aspect, easy to ignore the color given the super-fat bubbles lazing throughout. Hard to imagine a cleaner nose, the pear, peach scents as if held up for your inspection, orange blossom, lemon peel, not deep but so much clarity who notices? Medium-bodied, crisp acidity and light fizz add the cleanliness here, relieves a lot of the sweetness in the pear, peach, apple fruit while leaving all the fun. Surprisingly high degree of mineral water and stone, smoothes out the back half appreciably. Keeps all its weight and fullness until the end. Easy to envision it as an aperitif wine or with dessert. 88

GERMANY WHITE

Ratzenberger, Weingut Jochen

Mittelrhein, Bacharach, Kabinett Trocken AP #9
Riesling

2006, \$19.99, 12.0%

Pale and semi-flat golden hay color comes with a soft green cast, completely transparent rims. Salty, minerally nose, extremely linear and piercing, its dusty texture kills a lot of the lemon/lime peel notes, oddly the dearth of apricot, peach, apple fruit allows for the smokiness to lift and fill your nostrils, preventing an otherwise quick evaporation. Medium-bodied, the pinpoint acidity gives it stunning clarity, no wasted movements nor words. Curious initial creaminess for a nano-second during the mouth entry then nothing but white mineral dust, chalk and stone powder. The lime, lemon brightness clicks in the mid-palate and just prior to the denouement the peach, nectarine, pineapple, apricot, pear fruit offers a momentary burst of juiciness. Presents a few drops of oil as it echoes towards the finish. A "sucker of stones" special, doesn't give you any time to relax. 91

Keller, Weingut

Rheinhessen, Westhofener, Kirchspiel, Grosses Gewächs
QbA Trocken AP #39

Riesling

2006, \$54.99, 13.0%

Light, gleaming yellow straw color, unblemished and on the whole transparent, attractive in an unassuming manner. Floral nose, yet, in no way soft, makes itself known in succinct fashion, offers lime juice, some spicy heat, the pear, melon, red apple scents fresh, if quiet, settles in like a spider web of steel, airy but not moving. Medium-bodied, stern to the point of turning its cheek on you, however, not

ungracious, winds up and springs into action like it knows it has many miles yet to run. Round if not supple, pushes outward with relentless pacing. Turn of honey at first before succulent lemon, lime citrus sweeps it away, the latter just zingy enough. The acidity isn't weak but stays on the blunt side, more bruising than cutting. The peach, apricot, pear fruit gets pulled down by the sheer weight of the extract. Not a wine of joie de vivre, meant to be serious. 89

Karthäuserhof, Weingut
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Eitelsbacher, Karthäuserhofberg,
Kabinett Feinherb AP #8

Riesling
2006, \$25.99, 10.0%

Light yellow straw color, even with its relative weak hue has a glow that helps extend it through the rims, attractive surface shine a touch above average. Enough mineral dust at first in the nose to get you on the verge of sneezing, light grassiness, the stoniness comes back again and again, angular lemon peel notes undercut the honey aspect, even with a light floral perfume the crispness remains in the green apple, pear, melon scents. Medium-bodied, very fleshy and, err, semi-sweet on the attack, squeezes itself into your mouth like it's wearing a tight girdle forcing the flesh out. Lemony with dashes of lime and orange citrus, the stone, mineral water aspects on a slow boil through the mid-palate. Pleasingly floral but this is gone by the finish. Tightens up as it warms, cuts some into the length of the peach, nectarine, apricot fruit. More complete because it doesn't overreach. 89

Dönnhoff, Weingut Hermann
Nahe, Schlossböckelheimer, Felsenberg Türmchen,
Spätlese AP #12

Riesling
2006, \$51.99, 8.0%

Pure white straw in hue, almost bleached, blindingly reflective, this more than adequate compensation for the lack of color. Crinkly lemon peel dust and chalk powder in the nose, then does a volte face into vanilla pudding, orange sherbet, brown sugar and candied peach, apricot, yellow apple scents, a brief breeze of grassiness helps snap it back awake. Full-bodied in an airy manner, stays on the ground even as it moves upward. The lemon, pink grapefruit, tangerine citrus is juicy and ripe but the acidity is flat-footed enough that this component doesn't go anywhere. Highly respectable fullness in the apricot, nectarine, pineapple, papaya fruit yet you hardly notice it vacating the premises until it's long gone. Not especially minerally nor stony, just echoes of brown sugar. For the house fans, of course. 89

Diel, Schlossgut
Nahe, Dorsheimer, Pittermännchen, Kabinett AP #7

Riesling
2006, \$30.99, 9.0%

Light yellow hues yield to white almost throughout, easy fade to transparency towards the rims, plenty of reflection across the surface. Round, creamy texture to the nose, hints at grassiness but doesn't deliver, crinkly lemon/lime zest, streamwater, shows good and all but unexpected restraint in the peach, apricot, pear fruit, widely dispersed floral perfume. Medium-bodied, good firmness in the acidity without undue bite, more a big clampdown. The lemon, orange citrus stays smooth and fluid, retains juiciness but not necessarily sweetness. Low but persistent current of streamwater, chalk, white stone

notes, keeps it fresh. The pear, apple, peach, apricot fruit almost subtle. Minimal honey or sugar, just a nicely continuous interplay between dry and sweet. 89

Wirsching, Weingut Hans
Franken, Iphöfer, Kronsberg, Spätlese Trocken AP #25
Riesling

2006, \$34.99, 14.5%

Sparkling white golden color, brilliant surface luster, the rims devoid of color but too pretty to notice. Gently expanding nose of equal parts flower petals to stream stones, lemon-honey patina on the pear, yellow apple, peach scents, hint of custard, very tactful and serene. Medium to full-bodied, spicy like it wants to cut your tongue into evenly spaced slices, no thoughtless savaging. There's a relaxed manner to the lime, lemon citrus, tightened up a bit by the mineral and stone dust. The acidity is of moderate thrust, pushes it past the mid-palate, but just. Steady cruise in the peach, apricot, pear fruit, no real reason to complain. Just seems like it needs time to pull together but may not turn into anything appreciably better. 88

Weegmüller, Weingut Ed.
Pfalz, Haardter, Herrenletten, Spätlese Trocken Alte
Reben AP #13

Riesling
2006, \$30.99, 13.0%

Unusually dark golden hue, while clear it's not crystal clear, some shimmer, its depth makes the lack of color along the rims more noticeable. The nose isn't sweet yet honey, lemon juice and peach, apricot fruit dominate, comes up with an unusual touch of chili pepper, ends with a decided floral cloud and only vague stoniness. In the mouth the acidity firms it up appreciably, full-bodied but has the flesh in the wrong places, like it has fat ankles or something. White grapefruit and lemon citrus adds zest to the point of adding heat too. The floral dimension does soften it a little, also bringing out a light powdered sugar aspect. There's an evanescent quality to the nectarine, pineapple, apricot, pear fruit but it's not weak per se. Has a nice, steady decline through the finish. (Glass Stopper) 88

Selbach-Oster, Weingut
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Zeltinger, Sonnenuhr, Spätlese* AP
#5

Riesling
2006, \$32.99, 7.5%

The surface sparkles delightfully yet beneath there's a soft gauziness which saps out some transparency, rims hold fairly well. Sweet, fruity nose of cherry, apricot, pear, peach scents, once this settles in there's wafts of honey glaze, lemon drop, softer motor oil, just before it dissolves turns floral, overall primary emphasis on the fruit. Full-bodied, borderline gusher in the mouth, the honey and brown sugar ratcheted up more than a few notches, same for the dried fruit nature in the cantaloupe, apple, pear, apricot, peach fruit. Very little acidity, rolls along like a tidal wave and breaks deep onto the beach. Given the zero loss of weight at the end, isn't clumsy and if you want full throttle fruit, it's here for you. 88

Pfeffingen, Weingut
Pfalz, Ungsteiner, Nussriegel, Spätlese AP #15
Gewürztraminer

2006, \$21.99, 11.5%

Heavy gold to amber color, like it was glazed into the glass, the shiny surface gets lost in the translucent twists below.

The nose has a round and supple texture yet closes up a touch prematurely and dissolves before the flowers, lemon zest and honey notes gain hold, the apricot, pear, green melon fruit scents fare marginally better. Medium-bodied, much sweeter than anticipated here and thus soaks in more effectively, the apricot, peach, nectarine, pear and apple fruit stride through the attack. Possesses a fizziness to it which helps break up some of the blockish thickness, not getting much help from any acidity. Honey, caramelized brown sugar and sweet tangerine juice keep it vibrant if at the same time suppressing any stream water or stone parts. Not that it's trying to per se, but would be better off not seeking to do too much. [Screwcap] 87

AUSTRALIA RED

Red Heads Studio
South Australia, South Eastern Australia, Yard Dog
Blend
2005, \$9.99, 15.0%

Despite the blackness in the violet core it remains clear and semi-transparent, a curious combination, possesses bright crimson hued rims. Mint, licorice, orange zest pretty up the nose, the alcoholic fumes upset the plum, cherry, blackberry scents, not much complexity, could be richer were it not for the heat. Medium-bodied, stretched and pulled to cover as much territory in your mouth as possible. While the blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit is massaged into maximal fleshiness it starts to fall up seconds after your palate registers it. As in the nose there's licorice, mint, orange and floral nuances, uneven just the same too. The cocoa, fried caramel, vanilla powder actually welcome as a salve for the heat and general ups and downs. Basically just stuff thrown together. 46% Petit Verdot, 30% Merlot, 24% Cabernet. [Screwcap] 85

Gumdale
South Australia, South Eastern Australia
Shiraz
2005, \$6.99, 13.5%

Bright violet core with a dark transparency, surrounded by broad, vivid red-ruby rims. Cocoa, mocha notes blend with eucalyptus, mint and sweet baking spices in the nose, tenuous leathery streak easily run down by the plum, cherry, blackberry scents, even as the latter fade prematurely. Light to medium-bodied, luckily smooth enough to mask its lack of body and richness. Sour edge in the blackberry, cranberry, raspberry fruit, strong menthol and eucalyptus with toffee, coconut, cocoa embellishments. Hesitant leathery, dried meat accents but without the acidity to direct it, only momentary at best. Minty residue the strongest thing left at the end. A drop from a vast ocean. [Synthetic cork] 83

CHILE RED

Viu Manent
Colchagua Valley, Reserva
Carmenère
2006, \$10.99, 14.5%

Rich and lustrous purple core, fully opaque, very dark scarlet to ruby rims, barely a notch down in intensity. The plum, currant, cherry scents deep enough to reach a fair degree of immobility, some floral notes but they get outstripped by bell pepper, mocha and hard stony mountain path earth, tends to sit there. Full-bodied, the tannins smooth enough that the velvety fullness of the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit fills your mouth swiftly. Holds

this note for many beats, then releases room for the mineral bits, spice, bell pepper, dusty earth and flowers. The back half brings with it an elevation in the caramel and chocolate oak component without this getting annoying. Has some bite at the end which brings it to a pleasingly crisp ending. 88

Viu Manent
Colchagua Valley, Reserva
Cabernet Sauvignon
2005, \$13.99, 14.0%

While very clear, the purple core deeply blackened, little true color there, the transparency comes out through the garnet-orange rims. Menthol notes start the nose off in an airy manner, then coffee bean, dark chocolate, flowers and fairly dense black currant, cherry scents enter. Full-bodied, smooth and plush with only a vague, dimpled grip. More coffee, chocolate, burnt oak toast, especially due to the relatively swift to fade cherry, blackberry fruit. Not herbaceous, seems like it was massaged out, minor notes of bell pepper. The flowers, mint, menthol more a whisper here than anything else. Pretty much hits the basics and plays it safe, probably a good love on its part. 86

Undurraga
Maipo Valley, Reserva
Cabernet Sauvignon
2005, \$10.99, 13.5%

Clear ruby-violet core, bright scarlet to garnet rims of above average width. Piercing nose, rife with freshly cut grass, bell pepper and jagged mineral shards, not swift to endear, not especially oaky, the cherry, blackberry scents have decent length for its wiry frame. Medium-bodied, polished down to as smooth and soft a texture as possible. Thus, the tannins handcuffed and thrown in the trunk. Given this, nothing is going to shackle the herbaceousness. Here, the chocolate to mocha oak-inspired notes more obvious. Adequate currant, cherry fruit, appears more doused with sugar than naturally sweet. Someone's making some real money here. 85

ARGENTINA WHITE

Astica
Mendoza, Cuyo
Sauvignon Blanc
2006, \$6.99, 13.0%

Perfectly transparent white to yellow straw, no color really left by the rims. Sweet pink grapefruit to lime citrus infused nose, there's something resembling grassiness or chalkiness, the floral perfume is like actual perfume, wet and overpowering, hint of cotton candy, takes pains to stay smiley and innocuous. Medium-bodied, soft to the point of flopping around a bit, stand up for yourself man! Low acidity, even without this, stays grassy, hard to imagine what its bite would be like with supporting acidity. Soft drink sweetness to that lime to pink grapefruit citrus. No lack of apricot, peach, pineapple, pear fruit but lacks real power to the point of lolling about. Just wants to be friends with everyone and, at the price, why not? [Synthetic Cork: Nomacor] 86