

The Hanes Wine Review, December 2012 Edition

With the holiday retail season coming to an end (please god, make it end), Hanes found an actual *day off work* to bring into existence a new wine review. Which in its own way is a tonic of sorts. Here, Hanes gets to say whatever he wants, create his own version of the truth and more or less present opinions with authenticity. Whereas, bluntly put, at work he is paid to lie all day. Which can be wearying.

What? Lie, you say? What does this mean??? Let's just say there are many types of wine retailing out there. If one's past experiences are formed by "high end" retailing where one truly enjoys and holds in esteem the majority of wines sold, one can go about one's job with head held high and engage in recommending and advising without reserve. The customer may not like all your recommendations or have opinions of their own. But the dialogue is usually polite, informed and even at times earnest. When one works retail in a more "downscale" environment it may become more difficult to actually not only help the customer but feel good in the process of doing so. There's nothing wrong with someone being uninformed or inexperienced about wine. Most people, even wine retailers, will say "what's good is what you like." Hanes agrees to an extent. Yet, not enough to feel he is doing good deeds by showing customers where the Moscato is. Objectively speaking, there *must* be an answer to "What's better, the Barefoot Moscato or the Sutter Home Moscato?" But Hanes does not know the answer even if asked multiple times in a day. The answer is: none of the above. Or the ever popular query, "I need a good bottle of red for \$20. What do you got?" If you even *think* probing the customer for information such as possible food pairings for the intended wine purchase or for the stylistic preferences of the wine gift recipient will get you anywhere, does Hanes have a bridge to sell you.

The lesson here may be do not accept employment with an establishment if you do not beforehand believe in the product being sold. In a store with literally thousands of wines for sale, if you think only a few dozen should ever be consumed by humans, pass on the job. Or instead you will find yourself singing the praises of Ruffino Chianti Classico Reserva, J. Lohr Cabernet, or Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio until the very heavens open and shine their gloriously resplendent light upon these most august pinnacles of fermented grape juice. You may not be *lying* in the strongest sense of the word but you will spend 10-12 hours a day smiling, nodding and never coming close to speaking your own truth. Those who do work in more "boutique" wine retailing environments should spend a few weeks in more mainstream stores so that the quibbles they have with their own places of employ may thus appear trivial in comparison.

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This month's big winners... Still can't figure out if they want to be called Domaine du Closel or Château des Vaults but it's been awhile since any of these Savennières Chenin Blancs hit the gullet, perhaps even years for new releases. So, snapped up the 2011 "La Jalousie" bottling for \$23 and it was a pure delight, citrus, tropical fruit and honey, yummy. Tempting to put some in the cellar but no, must behave. Do they even make a Clos du Papillon bottling anymore? If so, does it see the US shores? Heard a lot about Italian producer Ar.Pe.Pe so coughed up the \$33 for their 2009 "Rosso di Valtellina" and a delicious Nebbiolo it was. My goodness, a reputation earned! The Grist Vineyard in California's Dry Creek Valley is storied and has earned a sterling reputation over the years. The 2010 Zinfandel from here by Fogline is a great example of balanced, nuanced Zinfandel that still possesses showy fruit. Affordable for its type at \$28. Leave it to Eric Texier to find yet another underappreciated Rhône appellation to resuscitate. His 2010 Syrah from Saint-Julien en Saint-Alban is just what you want in a Northern Rhône Syrah, floral and mineral with taut black fruits. \$35 or so seems fair for what you get, not having to pay Cornas or Hermitage prices. Again on the topic of 2011 Loire Chenin Blanc (which seems to have fared better in this vintage than Loire Sauvignon Blanc based on what Hanes has sampled), the Pascal Janvier bottling from Jasnières is also a delight with tangy marmalade and lively smokiness, mucho fun in the area of \$21. The prices for top Austrian wines are spiraling out of Hanes's reach but every once in awhile one splurges. So it was with the 2011 Prager Grüner Veltliner "Hinter der Berg" for close to \$40. This for a Federspiel level wine, ouch. Anyway, great wine, delicious from start to finish, looking forward to the next Austrian splurge in six months. Also, don't age this one. The "Marie Weiss" label from Champagne producer Ployez-Jacquemart is very good non-vintage Champers in the mid \$20's which is an achievement these days. Nothing regal, getting that will cost you more, just smiles all around when you need the fizz.

The best \$15 and under picks... The 2010 Gianfranco Bovio Barbera wine “Il Ciotto” is straight up throwback Barbera that is thoroughly enjoyable even with the sediment floating about. Very well priced at \$12 or so. Château Chanteloiseau from the Graves region of Bordeaux is new to Hanes, their 2010 red being a quite nice rendition of that Graves minerally roughness, the poor man’s Pauillac, for like \$10 or so. Hanes can recommend two French red wines simply on their inherent ability to not suck and stay affordable in these troubled times. These being the 2010 Domaine de l’Ameillaud, a Vin de Pays de Vaucluse rouge, and Les Jamelles 2011, a Pinot Noir from the Aude in Languedoc. Neither will blow you away but both have established track records for likability and remain under \$10. Can’t recall the last Lambrusco to be opened at la Casa Hanes, however, the NV bottle of Cantina Medici Ermete from Reggiano Lambrusco “Frizzante Secco i Quercioli” had surprising structure and muscularity for its type, honest and not trying too hard to please. For \$8, load up. Another newbie to Hanes is Château Jarr from Bordeaux and their white Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon blend is just fun to sip, rich and ripe and soft without anything seeming “manipulated” about it. For \$12, this is an easy buy. If you want gentle, creamy styled Chardonnay not from the United States at a basement price then Domaine de l’Olivier from the Languedoc may be for you. At \$7 or so it is juicy and fruity and mindlessly friendly. Another “don’t analyze me, drink me” wine. A pleasing little find is the 2010 Cannonau di Sardegna “Nero Sardo” from Il Nuraghe, bright fruit, herbal matter, excellent complexity for ten bucks, well worth the search. From Germany’s Rheinhessen comes Keth’s 2011 Scheurebe grape bottling called “Bruni,” a wine from that crazy character Willie Gluckstern. The kind of tropical, citrusy Scheurebe that you pound glass after glass like it’s a soft drink. \$11 is very fair here.

And the disappointments... In the not as great as hoped department, the 2011 Muscadet “Clos des Briords” from La Pépière was good but not great, seemed to lack bite and focus. Guess \$17 is fair still for the care and craftsmanship which go into these wines. J.J. Prum deserves to be in the discussion of the top ten wineries in all of Germany. Hanes luvs this shit. This noted, the 2011 Riesling Kabinett from the Wehlener Sonnenuhr vineyard was acceptable and unexciting. One may aver and hope that additional age will reveal its glories. Hope so as have the Spätlese and Auslese from this vintage/vineyard in the “to drink” queue. Even at the Kabinetten level one expects a touch more, especially for \$28. This only counts as a disappointment given the applause wine geeks give this New York State winery, which is a lot. That said, the 2010 Finger Lakes red blend called “Cuvée Acidalia” from Eminence Road was alright but nothing to “put New York on the map” so to speak. Suppose \$20 is a fair enough price. Have another wine from them yet to drink, maybe Hanes will catch lightning in a bottle with that one. Few wines today make wine geeks pop a boner like those from Frank Cornelissen. Tried a bunch at a trade tasting and then decided to buy my two favorites from that to consume at home under more laboratory conditions. The first is the 2011 blend from Etna, Sicily called “Contadino 9.” As at the tasting it was pretty good, nice ripeness with good underlying structure. But no real “ohmigod” moment appeared. Decently priced at \$24, fun for its “zaniness” but nothing to get worked up over. More for the True Believers then.

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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/oldervintages2012.html>

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on *beer* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/beer.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)

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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))

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Fogline Vineyards
Dry Creek Valley, Grist Vineyard
Zinfandel
2010, \$28.00, 15.3%

The dark saturation of the purple core belies its cleanliness and relative transparency, takes on a very bright cranberry to ruby red hue further out, really hums visually in the glass. The nose leans strongly on the fruit, fresh and juicy blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, blueberry, cobbler pie in feel, fresh butter, caramel and custard, oak is proportionate and in check, there's a good bit of mint, flower petals and licorice in there to keep it appealing, nothing all that earthy or rustic going on. Full-bodied, while smooth and fluid there's no avoiding its weight, it's there and you know it. Has a useful level of discernible acidity which helps create a fresh zing and favors the orange, grapefruit citrus, mint, menthol and even a touch of beef jerky. Again, well-fruited with sweet to candied cherry, blackberry, boysenberry, strawberry fruit, slightly more black than red fruit. The butterscotch, toffee crunch, vanilla bean accents never detract from the purity of the fruit. Savory finish with shades of garden herbs and sweet cigar leaf. Nicely done. 91

Edmunds St. John
El Dorado County, Bone-Jolly
Gamay Noir
2010, \$19.99, 12.4%

Candy apple red in color, splash of violet, resplendently brilliant, immaculately transparent, could say it fades at the rims but really it's more the natural extension of its overall lightness. There's a quiet power to the nose, herbaceous and stony with a mixed white citrus zest, cherry pits, just ripened strawberries and raspberries, wiry as it tunnels deeply into your nostrils, much more penetrating than rich. Medium-bodied, lithe with acidity which both creates a cleansing sensation as well as a micro-grooved surface which adds grip. A quarry of pebbles and stones, dries out the back half appreciably. Tart lemon, white grapefruit to mandarin orange citrus. Some garden herbs like basil, fennel or bay leaf. Achieves the right level of complexity to not screw up its clarity of purpose. As interesting texturally as for the flavors or such. (Screwcap) 91

Bedrock Wine Co.
Sonoma Valley, Old Vine
Zinfandel
2011, \$18.00, 14.8%

Mostly opaque magenta tinged purple core, at the same time shockingly clear and by the pinker ruby to cranberry red rims it is close to fully transparent, nothing seems forced about its saturation. The nose is dewy, wet and juicy without being soft, coconut custard, pie crust flakes, mint and lighter eucalyptus, strong orange zest to go with the concentrated, yet zippy, cherry, plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit scents, has just enough earthiness and herbal matter to keep it out of jammy territory. Full-bodied with good fluidity, no clogs in the pipes, hides the alcohol well and allows the butterscotch, caramel and rice pudding flavors to soften the mouth entry. Here the orange to grapefruit citrus has more bite, contributes to the mentholated lift. The fruit stays out of dried fruit territory, array of plum, cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit, covers the whole red and black fruit spectrum. There is a certain dryness to the finish which conjures up earthiness. Most of the flavor seems stuck to the roof of your mouth, hence not as long as might be. Very nice Zinfandel which isn't going for the steroidal approach. Sourced from Stellwagen Vineyard, Casa Santinamaria Vineyard, Los Chamizal Vineyard, Rossi Ranch, Monte Rosso Vineyard. Contains a small percentage of Carignane, Mourvèdre. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.
Contra Costa County, Evangelho Vineyard, Evangelho
Vineyard Heritage
Blend
2011, \$27.00, 15.2%

Strong ruby to magenta presence lightens the otherwise purple core, while clear has this warm glow about it creating a diffusing effect, the rims are a slightly washed out scarlet to red magenta, for all its range of hue doesn't seem forced. There's some alcoholic headiness to the nose, spotlights the raspberry, boysenberry, elderberry, cherry fruit, followed on by eucalyptus, orange peel, ginger root, lots of room ceded to burnt cocoa, vanillin oak until dill notes, taken as a whole kind of comes to an abrupt stop, minimal lingering. In the mouth it's close to full-bodied, sturdy and not shy about using its weight to impress. Here the oak gets pretty aggressive with caramel, butterscotch, mocha base and a slight minty edge. The smokiness approximates mineral dust while the sweetness buttresses the ripe but not overripe

blackberry, raspberry, cherry, sometimes strawberry fruit. Not tannic per se but there is a semi-gritty texture which may conjure up phenolic dreams. The sweet, sour, savory interplay helps extend the finish. Well done within its idiom. Approximately 40% Zinfandel, 25% Mourvèdre, 15% Carignane, 10% unspecified white grapes. 89

FRANCE RED

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon
Gamay Noir
2011, \$28.99, 12.5%

The ruby-purple core has depth while maintaining its purity and clarity, consistent through to the rims, touch more reddish magenta there, simple prettiness. In the nose the earthy, minerally qualities leap right out at you, leafy at turns before handing the baton to the white grapefruit and cranberry, Bing cherry, raspberry fruit, takes a few twists here and there, a few peppery moments as well as a lightly mentholated lift, ends with a return to the barnyard funk. Full-bodied without dullness nor heaviness, leverages the white grapefruit and animal hide to leather aspects to create a brawny presence, the acidity has kick but it's the high level of tannin which most catches your attention. In spite of its sourness, the velvety grip of the raspberry, cherry, pomegranate fruit creates a rich flavoring, aided by a swirl of cocoa and vanilla. Returns to its tang to help extend length and presence. No ignoring it, plenty to enjoy now and suggests legit ageability. (Lot M11TR S 08/05/12) 91

Texier, Eric
Rhône, Saint-Julien en Saint-Alban, Domaine de Pergaud Vieille Serine
Syrah
2010, \$34.99, 13.0%

The purple core has enough saturation and glow to appear opaque at a distance, up close becomes more transparent, changing to a crimson, red ruby for broad rims, excellent shine and cleanliness. The nose is a touch understated but not mute, just quiet, flowers, white pepper, beef jerky, caramelized brown sugar, spiced orange peel and sour plum, dark berry fruit scents, brief waft of merde, all-in-all lingers better than expected at first. Medium-bodied, has the acidity to stay fresh and lively rather than curt or attenuated, flows at a brisk pace but not rushed. More minerals and dry dirt here, fits in well with the olive pits, dried leather and white grapefruit pith. Most of the florality comes retronasally, a big pungent afterthought. Again, mostly tart blackberry, black cherry, Italian plum styled fruit, dark in complexion yet biting more than sweetly juicy. Well-balanced with a good natured recklessness

which creates a few welcome twists and turns. If it had a bit more heft it would really bowl you over. As is, impressively natural and pure. 90

Clos de la Roilette (Coudert Père et Fils)
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Cuvée Tardive
Gamay Noir
2011, \$25.99, 13.0%

Pure ruby-purple in color, achieves the neat trick of both darkness and transparency, very consistent throughout with perhaps a vague burst of red magenta at the rims, sparkles well. The nose too is a study in contrasts as it has a firmness verging on unyielding all the while you get a steady beam of blackberry, raspberry, cherry fruit, you're not sure it's really speaking to you or maybe just out loud, likewise the flower mist met head-to-head by muddy earth and fallen tree bark and leaves, some ambiguous citrus and powdered dark chocolate in there. Medium-bodied, the acidic and tannic structure sneakily powerful and prevents it from being a truly gulpable wine, this giving full credit to the length of the raspberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit and the orange citrus, mint, lilacs and ginger root. The earthiness and stoniness comes off drier here, having more textural effect than changing flavor profile. That cocoa/mocha nuance comes through at the end. Pleasant now like being seated next to a professor during a dinner party, suspect more meaningful depth may be in offing 6-10 years from now. 89

Chanteloiseau, Château
Bordeaux, Graves
Blend
2010, \$9.99, 13.0%

Purple gives way easily to crimson, blood red hues, has a dense glow yet nowhere near hazy, suggests a little future orange around the rims. The nose has plenty of fullness yet with ample bell pepper, limestone and earth to match the currant, cherry, drier plum scents, hits you with a touch of grapefruit, smoky while staying more minerally than toasty, has a nice savage character to it but doesn't overplay that hand. Medium-bodied, no fat, still manages to create complete fullness cheek to cheek. Sourness enlivens the currant, red cherry, cranberry fruit, ripeness comes through equally. Minerals, stone, earth, rawhide and bell pepper a consistent presence here too. The grapefruit stings some, fades into a meeker florality. Just lots and lots of soil, like digging a six foot deep hole and playing with the strata. For its price has ample fruit to hazard the chance and see what tertiary development could occur 5-6 years hence, expecting sufficient fruit to be left. Enjoyable if you like a more rugged profile, which, umm, you should. 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc. 88

Ameillaud, Domaine de l'
Rhône, Vin de Pays de Vaucluse
Blend

2010, \$7.99, 14.0%

Clean with a warm glow to the saturated ruby-violet core, displays wide pinkish magenta rims as well, vivacious glass presence. The nose is both sour and sweet, not sugary, the fruit being a blend of plum, cherry, raspberry and even green apple, throws into the mix chocolate, baking spices, pressed flowers and then some mud caked straw, almost more pleasing for its lack of complexity. While medium-bodied, use what weight it has to fully cover and press down into the palate, semi-soft, not close to velvety. Not much tannin, acidity makes a better showing of it, maybe why it has a strong white grapefruit streak. More floral, less chocolate and spice. Earth, tar, field underbrush stays about the same. Ripeness very evident yet fruit still sour, cherry, raspberry, blackberry, cranberry, allusion to kumquat. It's an honest wine with the sort of flaws which are debatable, like having a really big nose or hair on your back. It doesn't mean you're ugly, just maybe not for everyone. 60% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 20% Carignan. 87

Jamelles, Les
Languedoc/Roussillon, Aude
Pinot Noir

2011, \$8.99, 13.0%

Light, trim violet based core which segues to a ruby-magenta hue with flecks of pink, while transparent nothing seems dilute about it. There is an earthy sourness to the nose, some grassiness but mainly cranberry, raspberry, strawberry fruit with a white grapefruit accent, pinch of spice but hard to opine on depth and nuance which is not there. Medium-bodied plus, neither coarse nor delicate, light of touch. Instead it presents a sort of woolen glove grip, albeit neither the tannin nor acidity are kicking ass and taking names. There's tart pep in the red cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit, more balance and length, particularly as it opens. Less citrus influence here, concurrently not much uptick by way of stone or earth. Meets expectations head-on, nothing more nor less. (Synthetic Cork) 87

Bastide, Château La
Languedoc/Roussillon, Corbières
Blend

2010, \$9.99, 13.0%

Red magenta brightens the basic purple core, clean with sufficient darkness to fill the glass, while spotless there is a dried blood to crimson coloration around the rims. Loads of plum, black cherry in the nose, tends to cloak the clay, muddy earth and lighter merde, fruit tends to weigh down the flowers and white citrus too,

hints of cocoa and mocha. Full-bodied, not quite dusty more so silty like a not-so-fine grit infuses the liquid and thus the mouthfeel. Natural tannin is decent, acidity maybe sluggish. Fully ripened, yet at the same time dry cherry, blackberry, plum fruit. The white grapefruit punches to the surface, surrounded by broken pebbles, clayish earth and maybe some leather. More of a square than one of the cool kids, highly drinkable just wish it expressed more terroir, especially given how Corbières can hit you with terroir in spades when done right. 60% Syrah, 20% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Closel (Château des Vaults), Domaine du
Loire, Savennières, La Jalousie
Chenin Blanc

2011, \$22.99, 14.0%

Layered golden appearance, translucently shimmers deeply into the glass, no loss around the rims, looks young and vigorous, nothing out of place in terms of surface luster. Texturally the nose has a lot of sparkle and crinkly dustiness even as the lime to tangerine scents possess a soft drink sweetness and there's bodacious licorice, mint, honey going on shoulder-to-shoulder with nectarine, peach, papaya, pineapple scents, the minerality and stoniness remains a quiet undercurrent, at times you get a little camp fire smoke action, feels freshly laundered and as a result crisper in spite of the dulcet richness. In the mouth it's close to full-bodied, doesn't throw its weight around but you know when it taps you on the shoulder. The acidity builds steadily, no real keenly edge blade coming down on you. The honey, custard, beeswax aspect mostly present through the attack then submerged into the tangelo, lime citrus and peach, apricot, quince, pineapple, green apple fruit. Wet stone and quartz instead of a real minerally bite. Certainly a wine of pleasure, as a result likely to be considered not one for the cellar, this may be an incorrect assessment. Luckily, time will tell. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 91

Janvier, Pascal
Loire, Jasnières
Chenin Blanc

2011, \$20.99, 12.0%

Slight green tint to the otherwise shiny gold color, pools deeply into the glass, has a vague translucency going on, holds pretty well through the rims, attractive overall. High degree of smoky minerality and wet stone in the nose, flinty, mixes in dried honey, beeswax and flowers, a little bit of milkiness at moments, the citrus is mixed and subordinate to the rest, likewise the apricot, kumquat, papaya and pear scents dry, lean and more penetrating than rich. Medium-bodied, the acidity has

sufficient brawn to set the tone early, likes flexing its muscles even if the flow is thrown off. That said, they are beautiful muscles which spotlight the minerals, chalk, flint and sauna stones. Marmalade quality to the orange, lemon citrus. The honey and flowers recede some, the sourness favors the guava, papaya, pineapple, nectarine, apple fruit flavors. There is sweetness present and nothing is underripe but the liveliness of the smokiness really trumps all. Well-balanced, all the parts fit together and from first sip to last has you licking your lips in enjoyment. (Composite Cork: Diam) 91

Pépière (Marc Ollivier et Rémi Branger), La Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Clos des Briords, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes

Melon de Bourgogne

2011, \$16.99, 12.0%

Unblemished silvery to golden in hue, plenty of translucent shimmer, for a wine of such little color commands presence in the glass. Honey, lanolin, floral water adorn the nose, in turn has a saline quality as well as damp earthiness, lacks citrus but the apricot, red apple, pear fruit eventually gets it in gear, overall sort of hangs back like it's waiting to hear what you say first. Medium-bodied, gets a little fleshy at times but has sufficient acidity to cinch the belt appropriately. Again with the salty, minerally, sea water aspect, provides a solid foundation for the here riper apricot, peach, apple fruit. Still lacks citric bite, flowers and a honeyed element there in its stead. Decent length, never really slices into the palate, kind of squarish end. Can envision it becoming more interesting as it loses some baby fat but nothing screamingly complex, the stage not set for greatness even if quite enjoyable as is now. 88

Jarr, Château

Bordeaux, Bordeaux

Blend

2011, \$11.99, 12.0%

Light golden straw color, has an attractive shimmer to it, shiny surface, while no one aspect sticks out as a whole it's quite pretty. Flowers, mint, orange peel bubble up in the nose, this gets followed on by honey and notes reminiscent of botrytis, yet fresher apricot, apple, persimmon fruit, there's a fun blend of richer, juicier elements with more crisp snap, however, nothing in there like meaningful minerality or stoniness. In the mouth it's full-bodied, has the softness of ripened age, like dried apples or pears, no flab, just gives. Peach, apricot, mango, melon fruit, ends up just ripe rather than tropical. For all of this, surprisingly credible acidity which helps it stretch out and find balance, particularly when factoring in the honey, brown sugar and candied orange peel. Some

more of that mint and flowers. To its credit, it "feels" natural, like whatever the outcome this is what it was supposed to be, no one tried to force it in any given direction. 75% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% Sémillon. 88

Simonnet-Febvre, Maison

Burgundy, Chablis

Chardonnay

2011, \$11.99, 12.5%

While possessed of a pale golden hue, there's enough glow to help it fill the glass, acceptable sparkle across the surface, bleached out rims, looks just about exactly as it should. The nose has a broad smoky component which carves a lot of the fat out of the pear, peach, apple, pineapple fruit, has a nice minty streak as well, mix of dry white grapefruit to tangerine citrus, undercurrent of salinity, sets itself squarely but not immobile. Full-bodied, again, takes up the full territory available to it so it won't really seem nimble nor "racy," instead more like it's rowing across a great river, steady over flashy. There is more pineapple, papaya fruit which hints at tropicality even as a vanilla nuance softens things into apricot, yellow apple, peach. Lower flowers, mint or citrus, accelerates into deeper metallic and water scarred limestone base. Remains consistent at both cooler and warmer temperatures, more commitment than passion. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Olivier, Domaine de l'

Languedoc/Roussillon, Pays d'Oc

Chardonnay

2011, \$6.99, 13.5%

Fairly deep golden hue, layers well, more translucent than transparent, some fade around the rims, almost looks slightly maturing. The nose at first is minty and floral then segues into pear, red apple, apricot, persimmon fruit, the caramel element outpunches the mineral and stone dust, can't say it's really either soft or firm, more like it's just there in an undeniable fashion. Medium-bodied, zesty mouth entry with lots of tangerine, orange, lime citrus, minerality and flowers. Then swerves hard into serious butterscotch and vanilla pudding, this echoing fully through the finish. The acidity is okay, does what it has to and no more. While sweet, the pear, apricot, peach, melon fruit isn't all that deep and you'd be hard pressed to call this a fruity wine. Cinnamon and clove spice find their place. Good range of flavors help it rise above pedestrian. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 87

FRANCE SPARKLING

Ployez-Jacquemart
Champagne, Marie Weiss Brut
Blend

NV, \$24.99, 12.0%

Palish yellow color, not a lot of bubbles but they are certainly fat and clearly visible, not a lot of surface froth, neither especially shiny nor dull. The nose is luxuriously rich and full, stuffed with vanilla cream, sweet orange extract, dewy flowers, ripe peaches and pears, having so much fun it almost forgets to add a little mineral tingle at the end. Fairly full-bodied, the pétillance consistent without being soft nor aggressive so as to create extra dryness. As a result, you get a free flow of that vanilla, caramel, butterscotch sweetness as well as candied tangerine, orange citrus. More tang here in the form of pineapple, nectarine fruit with the peach, apricot fruit. It's not like there's no minerals, stoniness or other "terroir" aspects, more like they seem besides the point. Champagne is for happy occasions and this is a happy bottle of wine. 50% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir, 25% Pinot Meunier. (Composite Cork) 90

NEW YORK RED

Eminence Road Farm Winery
Finger Lakes, Seneca Lake, Cuvée Acidalia
Blend

2010, \$19.99, 12.3%

Very dark and almost ominously opaque black-purple core, the fatness continues through the scarlet to brick red rims, the surface has good shine, likely the lack of filtration adds to the wine's "heavy" appearance. The nose is a steady pulse of cherry, plum, currant fruit, mildly jammy, with a pretty floral breeze, some cocoa and forest floor scrub, nothing being revealed here which would give you a hint of what might happen once the fruit starts to subside. Full-bodied, repeats the script in the mouth, albeit drier due to the credible tannic punch. Presses on the currant, blackberry, black cherry fruit, juicy and quite ripe. Develops orange citrus, tea leaf, tobacco leaf and cedar, this in spite of being unoaked. The florality here has a minty touch too. Texturally there's a silty chewiness to it. The finish is full and long. Satisfying although you never quite "peg it" fully. Unspecified percentages of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon. 88

Cereghino Smith
American, Tarragona
Monastrell

2010, \$21.00, 13.0%

Sparkling, clear and transparent ruby red, like squeaky clean, turns to watermelon red as it fades to the rims.

The nose is super-sweet with coconut oil, black licorice, vanilla custard and strawberry, raspberry, rhubarb, green apple, white grape scents, oddly a bit boozy given the relatively low alcohol percentage, more lift than breadth. Light-bodied, sweet and close to candied in character, mostly raspberry, strawberry, cranberry and cherry. Then comes the coconut, caramel, vanilla custard accompanied by a low cruising florality. Has a certain leafy quality which is truly welcome. The sweetness tends to slow down its pace, which may create the impression of its being heavier. User friendly for sure. (Grapes sourced from Amador County, vinified in the Hudson Valley.) 87

ITALY RED

'Tavijn, Cascina
Piedmont, Grignolino d'Asti
Grignolino

2011, \$21.99, 13.5%

Very light ruby red with an orange tint, remarkably clear and transparent, to the point you can't really judge the surface, becomes semi-dilute around the rims. The nose initially features a semi-funky earthiness but this quickly succumbs to the charms of the strawberry, raspberry, melon fruit scents and the sweet orange citrus, cinnamon spice and incense musk, for as pretty as it is has good traction and length. Medium-bodied, the acidity gives it more spine and erectness than freshness, again takes on a slightly more serious feel than expected. Grips the palate, eschews smooth gliding. The ripe, candied quality to the raspberry, strawberry, watermelon, cherry fruit lasts fully from start to finish. Orange, lemon citrus, pine needles, clove and potpourri provide unforced complexity. Stone, poor dirt, olive pits and a patch of fallen tree leaves more or less completes it. A novice and veteran alike should find much to enjoy here. 90

Ar.Pe.Pe, Societa' Agricola
Lombardy, Rosso di Valtellina
Nebbiolo

2009, \$32.99, 13.0%

It's basically crystal clear cough syrup red with a broad orange streak towards the rims, so shiny and pure that while the coloration suggests an older wine it stays youthfully fresh in appearance, completely transparent. Licorice and sweet basil and thyme pretty up the nose, the orange zest sweet as well, hard candy feel to the cherry, raspberry scents, all this noted it yet has a layer of earthiness as an anchor, pebble dust and tree bark, as pure here as visually. Light to medium-bodied, has some balls to the walls acidity and tannin going on to make you sit upright in your chair. In keeping, features white grapefruit to sour orange citrus and

stoniness first, almost spicy but not in a specifiable manner, perhaps chilies. By the mid-palate that concentrated cherry, strawberry, rhubarb fruit has asserted itself and coos in your ear the rest of the way. At moments there's a flutter of something like chocolate or caramel. Comes across as too masculine to really let any floral nature show. Interesting for how its structure is so hard yet the flavors want to soften. 90

Occhipinti, Azienda Agricola Arianna
Sicilia, SP68
Blend

2011, \$26.99, 12.5%

Dark yet very clear, about as much cough syrup red as purple, full ruby to cranberry red rims, even with all its shine strikes as "brooding" in nature. The nose offers lots of ash, leather, earth and tree bark to ground the concentrated blackberry, cherry scents which are more dense than sugary, there is some prune in there, any citrus or flowers stay in the shadows, as it opens gets more twiggy, overall large in scale and quite persistent and long. In the mouth it's full-bodied with the big time tannin and acidity to make it somewhat of a bruiser. Here the white grapefruit sourness comes through loudly, greater amount of stone and minerals to accompany the ash too. There's a light funk, like peanut shell, fur or merde. The cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit is basic and the textural structure here all but removes the prune aspect. As in the nose, extended finish, just about have to scrape it out of your mouth. Feels like there's some slightly underripe phenolics, otherwise hits most of the desired notes. Unspecified percentages of Nero d'Avola, Frappato. (Composite Cork: Diam) 89

Bovio, Azienda Agricola Gianfranco
Piedmont, Barbera d'Alba, Il Ciotto
Barbera

2010, \$11.99, 13.0%

Bright purple core, average clarity, the rims glow with a deep ruby red hue, brightening further into magenta further out, fills the glass prettily enough. The nose has a rich floral element to it, some cocoa to play against the muddy earth, does have some leathery, animal funk going on, nicely ripe plum, cherry fruit scents make the final statement. Full-bodied, very wet and juicy mouthfeel even though there's also a great deal of sediment like grittiness present. Tea leaf, flowers, orange peel lead into a minerally stoniness, has a decided savory streak. Have to think some of that grit coming from resolving tannin, otherwise the acidity is average plus. Tangy cherry, plum, blackberry fruit, ripe but not sweet. Finish brings white grapefruit, twigs and leather. Real nice rugged styled Barbera, however, the

mouthfeel distracts, maybe needs to shimmy through some cheese cloth before consuming. 88

Cornelissen, Azienda Agricola Frank
Sicilia, Etna, Contadino 9
Blend

2011, \$23.99, 15.0%

Clear on the whole with a vague gauziness, given its level of transparency the purple core has a strange blackish quality, the rims turn to a basic brick red to deep scarlet hue, very little stands out visually. The nose has a candied nature to it, mix of sweet raspberry, cherry, plum fruit with a floral infusion and large dose of orange zest, you can also find clay, poor brown dirt and ash, comes across as normal red wine with above average concentration. Full-bodied, has the kind of gritty tannin which cuts the flab off the sugary plum, cherry, blackberry fruit. More clay, cement, mildly gym floor mat rubber notes but at the same time very sweetly spicy, mainly ginger and clove. Has more focus when colder, starts to meander as it warms, even it is tightens in terms of mouth feel. Interesting but nothing to make you bolt upright in your chair. Mostly Nerello Mascalese, remainder likely Carricante, Dorato, Grecanico, Inzolia, Cataratto, Alicante, Nerello Cappuccio, etc. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc Select 300) 88

Nuraghe (Cantina di Mogoro), Il
Sardinia/Sardegna, Cannonau di Sardegna, Nero
Sardo

Cannonau

2010, \$9.99, 13.0%

A dark scarlet to blood red infuses the purple hue base, while clear there's definitely a "brooding" quality to the coloration, looks like a slightly aged wine even given the perfect surface luster. Prune, golden raisin and fig match up with cherry, raspberry scents for a fruity nose, honey and orange blossoms, light menthol drift, cinnamon stick, has an earthy side but not strong enough to really change the course of things, nice lift prevents excess heaviness. Medium-bodied, almost unexpectedly high degree of structure with both acidity and tannin with bite, framing well the candied cherry, raspberry, strawberry, fig, raisin flavors. Here more twigs, fallen leaves and meadow grasses, a drier sort of herbaceousness. The orange citrus has tang, the cinnamon and ginger provide sweetness at opportune moments. Again, its ability to lift and create mouth perfume makes it prettier than might at first be expected. Lot more going on than you'd normally get at the price. (Composite Cork) 88

ITALY SPARKLING

Ermete, Cantina Medici
Emilia-Romagna, Reggiano Lambrusco, Frizzante
Secco i Quercioli
Lambrusco
NV, \$7.99, 11.0%

You absolutely get a froth to cover the surface during the pour, mostly gone within ten seconds. Incredibly saturate and glowing purple color, close to day-glo like you could make a wall poster from it's ink, completely opaque, the rims a dark magenta. While the nose is fruity, there's a sourness to it which tempers any sugariness, a vinous quality to the blackberry, blueberry, strawberry, watermelon scents, at times becomes floral with a dash of orange juice, soft undercurrent of earth. In the mouth it's full-bodied, close to heavy with the mild fizz naturally helping to relieve such. Ripe and juicy blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, boysenberry fruit lasts completely through the finish. Orange, lemon citrus perks up the finish. There is that minerally, stony aspect meandering in the background. If you're looking for this sort of wine, hope you find this. (Composite Cork) 89

GERMANY WHITE

Keth, Weingut
Rheinhessen, Bruni Kabinett AP #14
Scheurebe
2011, \$10.99, 10.0%

Simple white to yellow gold color, at times suggests a green tint, shiny with hue loss at the rims, appears trim and clean in the glass. The nose is extremely funny with fine powdered sugar, honey, vanilla prettying up the tangerine, lime citrus scents, there's a nicely counterbalancing tropical tang to the pineapple, guava, nectarine, apricot fruit scents, throws a sprig or two of mint in there as well, nothing profoundly complex just engagingly fun. Medium-bodied, has decent enough acidity, it's not going to get in the way of the sweetness in all that aforementioned pink grapefruit, lime, tangelo citrus, not to mention the nectarine, pineapple, apricot, peach, star fruit. Floral, minty and with a spoonful of vanilla pudding, this with a patina of stoniness. Sufficiently tart to carve out a clean if reverberating finish. A real chugger. (Screwcap) 90

Prum, Weingut Joh. Jos.
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Wehlener, Sonnenuhr, Kabinett AP #8
Riesling
2011, \$27.99, 9.0%

The greenish to white gold hue makes it look thinner than it is, gentle bending of light below the surface creates presence, quite clean and harmonious. The

nose starts off smoky with minerals and sauna stones before creating some room for flowers, vanilla bean, lime to tangerine citrus, the peach, apricot, pear scents are straightforward and demure, at times clean to the point of lacking depth. Medium-bodied, softly caresses the tongue, has a mild fizziness which supports the somewhat average acidity. Again, has that vanilla, custard to light butterscotch quality to balance that smokiness. The lime, lemon citrus is light, similar feel to the cherry, apricot, pear, yellow apple fruit. Its strongest attribute may be how it all folds together without a loose thread showing. Nice transparency as well, shows more manner and breeding than exuberance. 88

AUSTRIA WHITE

Prager, Weingut
Wachau, Weissenkirchen, Hinter der Berg, Federspiel
Grüner Veltliner
2011, \$38.99, 12.5%

Straightforward white straw in color, translucent enough to create a deep layering into the glass, enough so that you hardly notice the lack of coloration around the rims, dense and solid appearance. The nose is full and texturally expands in a steady, muscular manner with vanilla pudding, orange sherbet and apricot, apple, peach, pineapple fruit then takes a turn towards white pepper and cut grass, never quite gets past its initial genial friendliness, much more fun than complex at this juncture. Full-bodied, the acidity is there but there's so much flesh on it that it never gains the room to move. Here the white grapefruit, orange tang shows first, favors the zest in the pineapple, papaya, nectarine fruit over the foundation of apricot and peach. Also more minerally here, a nice metallic bite. The herbaceousness is minimal but a pleasing part of the whole. Conversely, that vanilla to light butterscotch element wafts in and out and fills in a few rough spots. Starts getting real floral through the mid-palate, extends the citrus too. In the end a wine of pleasure that while the intellect can explore, more reward not going too far in that direction. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 90

SPAIN WHITE

Rodriguez Méndez, Bodegas
Ribeiro, Gran Solbeira
Blend
2011, \$7.99, 12.0%

Agreeable shine to the straightforward gold color, plenty of glints of light, holds well enough into the rims as well as deep into the glass. The nose is smoky and toasty in a way which suggests oak but perhaps unlikely given the type of wine and price, buttered

toast, caramel as well as green apple, pear, peach fruit scents, you might discern a touch of minerality but not much else going on. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, offering a broader swath of flowers, honey and orange/lemon citrus in support of pear, peach, apple fruit. Retains that apparent oak toast albeit not as bold as in the nose. Not much acidity, yet it stays texturally dry and finds a course and sticks to it. The flavors are lively but on the whole it seems like it was made aiming at something specific rather than letting it take a flowing natural path. Whatever the interpretation, doesn't suck. 80% Treixadura, 20% Torrontés. (Composite Cork) 87

PORTUGAL RED

Ramos Pinto, Adriano
Douro Valley, Duas Quintas
Blend

2009, \$10.99, 14.0%

Fairly dark purple core, equally deep ruby-magenta rims, well-saturated, clear and shiny, looks impressively fresh in the glass. While the nose features plum, ripe cherry fruit it's nowhere near sugary, cinnamon, orange peel, raw nuts, wildflowers then slowly turns to tree bark, twigs, muddy earth, good lift but little length. Medium-bodied, tangy with good acidity for its size, helps spotlight the grapefruit, orange citrus, grass and to an extent stoniness. Pulling in the other direction, one finds more toast and chocolate here and something close to dill. Juicy, not overly ripe cherry, blackberry, Italian plum fruit, dries up before the finish allowing some astringency through. As if there's some phenolic underripeness skeleton hidden in the closet. Anyway, it's not bad but not a fun and easy quaff nor "serious" enough to rise above the pack. Not sure what to do with it. 40% Touriga Francesa, 40% Tinta Roriz, 20% Touriga Nacional. 87

Lima, Casa Santos
Lisboa, Quinta de Bons-Ventos
Blend

2010, \$6.99, 13.0%

Glowing ruby-violet, vibrantly hued while staying clear, definitely more pink-magenta around the rims. Thick nose with a perfume of plum, cassis, blackberry jam alongside coconut oil, cinnamon, orange reduction, camphor and potpourri, while not complex it remains soft and pregnantly full for some time. Full-bodied, super-juicy and fruity with plum/prune, cherry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit. The citrus lower here, some orange or maybe grapefruit. Close to zero tannin or acidity, concurrently very low oak-like presence, hence not even wood tannin at hand. Pinch of cocoa, vanilla or coconut but this is not an additional

sweetening factor. Ginger, clove and baking spices bound forth through the finish. if you want big, fat juiciness this is in your wheelhouse. 50% Castelão, 20% Camarate, 15% Tinta Miúda, 15% Touriga Nacional. (Screwcap) 87