

The Hanes Wine Review, December 2018 Edition

Finally carved out the time to get this edition squared away. Nothing much going on with Hanes in the world of wine. Trying to restock the cellar with Northern Rhône and Barolo wines, both categories having been depleted of late. Need to also fill in Loire Cabernet Franc. But at the same time, and as always, need to reduce wine expenditures. Sigh. As they say, it's not really a good bargain if you have to buy it on a credit card with a rolling balance. The truth can be so painful.

This month's big winners... It's true, Xavier Gérard is the real deal in the Northern Rhône. The 2016 Saint-Joseph "Le Blanchard" is lively and fun and hits all the right notes. If it can be found it's around \$45. Sandlands continues to offer up micro-production level wines of great tastiness. They do one or two releases a year and pretty much sell out in a day or two. Probably best acquired on the secondary market. Their 2016 Contra Costa County Carignane and 2016 Santa Lucia Highlands Syrah were both big winners and only \$28 winery direct. Sorry to yank chains due to lack of availability. There's growing buzz on Falkenstein's 2017 Riesling lineup and so far for Hanes the Kretznacher Euchariusberg Spätlese is leading the pack. For a buck under \$30 it's a borderline value and delicious right now, may gain complexity over time too. Sampled a bottle of Lapierre's 2016 "N" unsulfured Morgon wine and it was fruity and floral and delish. High \$30s pricing. Was too late in pulling the trigger on a bottle for the cellar, sigh, but who knows with aging unsulfured wine anyway. The 2016 Cowan Cellars Syrah from the Moaveni Vineyard may be the best Syrah Hanes has tasted from this producer. Plenty of power to age and fairly priced at \$28. Jumping on the Arnot-Roberts bandwagon is not hard to do, it's just expensive to do it. Their 2016 white blend from the Heinstein Vineyard (which is part of Compagni Portis under different ownership) is a beautiful wine with a lot going on and one of the better values in the portfolio. Worthy of medium term cellaring too. The "sec" wines continue to outshine the "demi-sec" wines at Huet in Vouvray, which seems to be the wishes of current ownership. The 2017 Le Mont Sec shows great promise, to be expected as all Huet wines in good vintages should easily go 20 years out if not longer. The \$35 or so it costs is good relative value for what you could buy with the money.

The best \$20 and under picks... Hard to not continue to give props to Borell-Diehl as this is a wonderful "value" producer. Their 2017 Müller-Thurgau bottling remains one of their best, just happy wine for about \$13 for a bonus one liter bottle too. Pépière's 2017 basic Muscadet "La Pépie" doesn't come across as one for long term cellaring but it is open and plush right now so well worth the \$12 or so for immediate consumption. It had been some time since Hanes sampled the Sancerre "Apud Sariaicum" from Philippe Raimbault. Remembered as a very good value, picked up the 2017 version and for \$19 delivered the goods, albeit may be too forward for traditionalists, more so gateway drug to Sancerre per se. Been a couple of vintages since last Hanes has tried the "Nero Sardo" Cannonau from Il Nuraghe but based on the 2015 it's still the same competent, enjoyable wine as always and can't beat the \$11 price. Same general vibe on the 2016 Musso Barbera d'Alba, solid wine for \$12, ever more the achievement these days.

And the disappointments... 2017 Cru Beaujolais is turning out so far to be a mixed bag. Tried two different Morgon wines from Desvignes, the Côte du Py and the new Montpelain bottling and neither were particularly stirring. Likewise for Clos de la Roilette's Fleurie Cuvée Tardive bottling. Hanes gets the sense that this is going to be a "try before you buy" vintage in that you can't just buy on spec and throw bottles into the cellar without first sampling. "The "Buck Cobb" Vineyard Zinfandel from Turley is usually one of Hanes's faves but the 2016 was just so-so, not giving much at all. Of course, this vintage Hanes bought an extra bottle, yeesh. Still, \$28 is typically a good price for the general quality of the bottling. Alas, Hanes was not favorably impressed by the 2017 Pépière Muscadet "Briords" which is basically their flagship wine. Good but not great and unlikely to blossom in the cellar. Trying to branch out and try different versions of Californian Trousseau so picked up the 2017 version from Stolpman Vineyards. It was "okay" and true to type and such. Just nothing to get excited about. Still, good to see more folks giving the grape a whirl. About \$23. Hanes forgot which bottling he liked best from Vinho Verde producer Anselmo Mendes and got the wrong one, the 2017 Muros Antigos. Whoops. Decent wine, a bit plodding. Need to go back and get the correct bottle!

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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/oldervintages2018.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)

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

Sandlands

Contra Costa County

Carignane

2016, \$28.00, 12.9%

While dark, the purple yields to broad ruby to red magenta rims, spotless and vibrant. Keenly edged and penetrating nose of brown dirt, pebbles and white grapefruit pith, dried tea leaf and a touch of tobacco as well, slowly developing meadow breeze lift, moves quickly enough that it can be easy to miss the cranberry, red cherry to blueberry fruit scents, bristles with energy. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, you feel how densely packed it is even as the acidity wastes no time slashing away. Here the white grapefruit and schist clearly dominant, dry and puckering yet retaining smoothness. The sour mixed red fruit more evident throughout. Dusty earth, pine needles and twigs/tree bark add dimension. Savory and confident, not sure it would be worth waiting for greater integration and smoothness, questionable tradeoff. 92

Sandlands

Monterey County, Santa Lucia Highlands

Syrah

2016, \$28.00, 12.6%

Heavily saturated and glowing black-purple core with cranberry red rims, a sunny haze deepens it further. A dewy florality battles with raw beef slab scents for

ascendance in the nose, not quite leathery, noticeably primary with plum, blueberry scents, not much red fruit presence, persistence is average, maybe less so given its youth. Medium-bodied, very suave in how it coats the mouth fully while at the same time spotlighting its admirable acidity and tannin. Violets with a burst of white grapefruit zest, peppery as well. Turns tarry with black tea leaf notes on the back half, dulling things some but hinting at promising development potential. No lack of sour tang in the blackberry, blueberry fruit. Drinking quite well now but it's best lies ahead. 92

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Pesenti

Vineyard

Zinfandel

2015, \$38.00, 15.7%

The core more black than purple, scarlet red rims, clear and better shine than you'd expect given the general lack of meaningful hue. The nose has a roasty edge which takes the plum, cassis fruit into prune, fig territory, lazy breeze through the pines, orange reduction, milk chocolate, black cardamom, all the scents have a yawning thickness to them, the clear distraction is how prevalent the alcoholic fumes are. Full-bodied, given the history of fruit from this vineyard there's a shocking amount of perceptible acidity, brings a tang and redder fruit complexion. So, there's cranberry and red cherry alongside the plum/prune, blackberry jam base. Loaded with menthol, eucalyptus, orange peel and pine sap. That acidity

prevents the sugar from accreting too much. Pesenti is always good for throwback Zinfandel. 91

Once & Future

Contra Costa County, Oakley Road Vineyard
Zinfandel

2016, \$42.00, 15.0%

The purple core looks filmy and easily achieves opacity, likewise the red magenta, scarlet rims have a gentle haziness, good color depth with a saturated glow. Muscularly dense nose of raspberry, blueberry, strawberry fruit verging on jammy, cleansing notes of eucalyptus and witch hazel, rose petals, a chunk of milk chocolate without seeming oaky, some sandalwood and rosemary, sage herbs but unsurprisingly primary. In the mouth it's full-bodied, at first signals an acidic spine and halfway delivers. Green apple and pear notes garnish the raspberry, blueberry fruit base. Pine, mukhwas and menthol contribute to the inner mouth perfume. For all of its exuberance it stays within itself as well as does not display alcoholic heat to throw it off balance. 90

Harrington Wines

San Benito County, La Cienega Valley, Siletto
Vineyard

Grenache

2016, \$30.00, 13.0%

Gauzy glow to it but absolutely no sediment or the like, more scarlet red at the core and ruby further out with a hint of magenta, nicely hued without looking unnatural. Salt and saline give the nose an initially bracing quality, salami and mushroom, good amount going on, raspberry, red cherry fruit scents have a hard candy feel, more concentration than breadth. Medium-bodied, intently pushes down into the tongue, better grip than expected although hard to tell if it's tannin or acidity doing the work. Sugary strawberry, raspberry, red apple fruit, plenty sweet. Countered well by tart white grapefruit and that salty element along with a pleasing tarriness. No one element wows you but all the parts work really well together. (Composite Cork) 90

Harrington Wines

El Dorado County, Sumu Kaw Vineyard
Mourvèdre

2016, \$30.00, 13.2%

Basic purple core surrounded by plum pulp red and then more washed out brick at the outer edges, clear and stops short of any haziness. Slowly builds fullness in the nostrils, taking on a wet cotton ball texture, there's grill smoke meat fat notes, minerally earth, good thrust in the rhubarb, strawberry to raspberry fruit scents, you feel it could lift were it not a pregnant rain cloud. In the mouth is is medium-bodied with the acidity immediately stepping forward, activating the

tangerine, grapefruit citrus and supporting grassiness. Woolly and vaguely leathery, mostly marked by its cleanliness right now as the raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit most likely to hold your attention. Savory herbs and lavender swirl through the finish. No lack of pleasure today, should improve down the road, wish there were more discernible tannin today which could improve optimism for the time to develop tertiary elements. 90

Cowan Cellars

Bennett Valley, Moaveni Vineyard
Syrah

2016, \$28.00, 14.1%

Perfectly clean, the core is a shiny, softly glowing opaque purple, the rims a dense crimson to blood red hue. Violets and a whiff of menthol introduce the nose, rawhide and salt lick, requires patience to let it open, red currant, red cherry to Italian plum fruit, has a high-toned character, spiced orange peel, cedar to sage lend dimension, however, there's little doubting that it's a young wine built for the longer haul. Full-bodied with good vertical volume, expands well. Acidity is plus level and the tannin sturdy. Broader array of savory garden herbs to go with lavender, grill fat accents. Streamlined and focused, narrow contours to the currant, blackberry, rhubarb fruit. Cedar, sandalwood add minor lift at the end. Unvarnished, needs a 24 hour decant now or to be put down in the cellar and forgotten for a few years. 90

Bedrock Wine Co.

Santa Clara County, Vineyard Under The Mountain,
Heritage

Blend

2016, \$39.00, 14.0%

The purple bruise core dark yet manages to remain pretty much transparent, the rims a fresh brick red with a magenta edge. Just pressed blueberry, blackberry fruit gushes throughout the nose, suggestion of prune, has a nicely mentholated lift, pine, churned butter and crème fraîche, all but completely dominated by the fruit. Full-bodied but it glides so effortlessly across the palate that you hardly feel the weight. Sugary blueberry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, close to pancake syrup. Spiced orange peel, menthol, licorice, cinnamon and milk chocolate ensure it doesn't venture far from the fruity core. Not much acidity nor tannin but doesn't outstay its welcome at the end, clean enough. A well-done fruit bomb for more or less immediate consumption. Mainly Zinfandel, remainder Carignane, other. 89

Sandlands
Contra Costa County
Mourvèdre
2016, \$28.00, 13.3%

Ruby-violet core, dark but the liquid's clarity is evident, more pure ruby to watermelon red at the rims. Tutti-frutti nose of strawberry, watermelon, red cherry to melon fruit, quite pretty but the utterly distracting buttered popcorn, old school peanut marshmallow candy notes are, uhh, utterly distracting, underneath may be some wooly, leathery stuff, maybe some pressed flowers. Medium-bodied, flits gently across the tongue with the acidity nudging it forward. There's still that butter, lactose aspect but much, much lower so the strawberry, green apple, raspberry fruit gets to shine. Leather, tangerine zest, lavender and dusty stone provide anchored character. The tannin grips strongly through the finish. Just gotta hope the good parts can and will outlast that buttery crap. 89

Once & Future
Sonoma Valley, Bedrock Vineyard
Zinfandel
2016, \$42.00, 14.7%

Noticeably clear and about as transparent as Zinfandel gets, plum purple core with more reddish rims, can easily anticipate bricking as it ages. Floral nose but musky, not a lot of lift, honey ham, eucalyptus, poor field dirt, crisply tart red cherry, cranberry to strawberry fruit scents, there's an underlying ruggedness to it which favors terse expression. Medium-bodied, compact and tannic with eye opening strong grip. More stony, earthy here with spent tea leaf, boot leather and pulped white grapefruit nuances. Savory dried garden herbs vie with mocha, milk chocolate for your attention. Here too the fruit shows a sour red complexion of cranberry, raspberry, rhubarb, to strawberry. Youthful and needs time, few hints at what you'd get, though. 89

Once & Future
Napa Valley, Calistoga, Palisades Vineyard
Petite Sirah
2016, \$55.00, 14.9%

Black light glow to the impenetrable purple core, razor thin and bright red magenta rims, looks otherworldly. Stocky nose of plum, black currant to black cherry fruit, immobile were it not for a more flighty floral lift and white grapefruit zest, some damp black earth and clove it would grind to a halt even sooner. Full-bodied, despite the muteness of much of the nose the palate displays more fluidity and grace. Which is odd given how tannic Petite Sirah can be with this one not much different. No understatement in the layers of plum, cherry, blackberry fruit. Indian spices, white grapefruit, and dried rose petals add dimension. The sourness of

the finish is welcome and helps to awaken the slumbering beast. Well crafted and as polished as can be, but this is more a fetus than an infant. 89

Once & Future
Dry Creek Valley, Teldeschi Vineyard, Frank's Block
Zinfandel
2016, \$42.00, 15.0%

Glowing black throughout, admitting thin blood drenched, crimson rims, looking all medieval like. Heavy yet powerful lift in the nostrils, filled with eucalyptus, spiced orange peel, anise to witch hazel notes and then savory herbs, salt lick followed on by warm butter, butterscotch notes, the ripely sinewy blueberry, blackberry fruit scents formidable and yet sort of lost in the mix. Full-bodied and densely layered, the acidity is credible enough but immediately crushed by a wave of caramel, vanilla fudge and butterscotch topping. The mix of savoriness and sweetness in the plum, blueberry, boysenberry fruit gives it snap and length. Eucalyptus and menthol fill out the finish with a snap of herbaceousness. Kind of "push up bra" feel to it now but leaves you suspecting that there's sufficient structure to hold it together once the excess fruit and oak are gone. 89

Fogline Vineyards
Dry Creek Valley, Grist Vineyard
Zinfandel
2015, \$45.00, 15.5%

There's a fuzziness to it visually which isn't filminess per se, the purple core fairly standard and nudges into opacity, scarlet to sunset red hued rims, well colored without saturation. The nose is unexpectedly lean, pine, menthol, stones and poor brown dirt, then a lift from witch hazel and lavender, the fruit scents equally blackberry, blueberry to golden raisin, fig, no discernible burn given the higher alcohol level. Medium-bodied, tight weave here too, aided by a solid acidic jolt. Menthol, sage, fennel and lavender, presents a wild country hillside appeal. The blueberry, raspberry base comes with a sour cherry to almost pomegranate side. Moderate vanilla fudge, grill smoke to cedar oaky nuances. Tightens up considerably at the end. Eager to flex its muscles. 89

Turley
Amador County, "Buck" Cobb Vineyard
Zinfandel
2016, \$28.00, 15.1%

Dull appearance, washed out purple core segues to equally dilute brick red rims, not much to look at. The nose takes awhile to unwind before offering strawberry, blueberry, green apple fruit scents, leather, beef jerky and a whiff of ginger, there's no real complaint it's just woven very tightly, more angles than

round contours. Medium-bodied, equally compact here if not downright terse. Butterscotch, buttered toast and caramel first up, unfortunate. The shows good structure and bite, sour cherry, raspberry to strawberry fruit as well as mandarin orange citrus. Loamy earth, leather, black tea leaf, no real minerally dustiness. For all of its reticence now it stretches out well through the finish. Have to expect that its best is 5-8 years ahead.

88

Once & Future

Russian River Valley, Forcini Vineyard

Zinfandel

2016, \$42.00, 14.7%

Clean red magenta to violet core, not fully opaque, more dull brick red at the rims. The toffee, butterscotch palpable in the nose with grill smoke coming next, while juicy the blueberry, boysenberry to black cherry fruit scents not especially long lived, that said, a pleasing brush of mint and eucalyptus breathes life into things before it's all done. Medium-bodied, even with the caramel, butterscotch oak getting in the way the acidity displays punch and helps create a space for orange zest and floral water. As in the nose, there's nothing wrong per se with the blackberry, raspberry to blueberry fruit. It's just that there's nothing loudly recommending it. Smooth, polished, easy to drink and forget. 88

Harrington Wines

Central Valley, Mokelumne River, Somers Vineyard,

Old Vine Carbonic

Mission

2017, \$25.00, 13.3%

Cloudy orange to ruby red color, starts to pale at the rims, looks like it refermented albeit did not. The nose is sour and possesses good piercing power, grapefruit citrus, pickle brine, twigs and bark, the strawberry, watermelon to red cherry scents fresh if a bit heavy, detracts from length. Full-bodied, gluey to sappy texture, almost like you could chew it. Great sour bite in the blood orange, pink grapefruit citrus but overall turns juicy as honey notes sweeten things further. Acidity is probably as prominent as possible for the grape. Resonant strawberry, kiwi, rhubarb, cherry fruit. Tingly through the finish and aftertaste. Completely what it is, maximizing the potential of a grape which historically has earned its reputation for sacramental wine and that's it. (Composite Cork) 88

Harrington Wines

San Benito County, Skow Vineyard

Freisa

2017, \$30.00, 13.2%

Dark and semi-gauzy crimson to purple core, the rims a fresh crimson with good brightness. Taut nose,

brown to spare, leather, tarry earth, slate and lemon peel, the fruit a bruisingly tart cranberry, red cherry to raspberry. Light-bodied, sufficiently tannic that it's a slug to the jaw. Clove infused ham, ginger, grapefruit, more minerally and tarry here than earthy or stony. While remaining tart, it works hard to produce a prettier strawberry, cherry to blueberry fruit profile. Eventually starts to yield a floral musk through the finish. In many ways it's admirably true to the Piedmontese character of the grape, a tough little sucker. Needs time but it's questionable that the tannin will ever relent and release. (Composite Cork) 88

Stolpman Vineyards

Santa Barbara County, Ballard Canyon, Combe

Trousseau

2017, \$22.99, 13.0%

Light watermelon red to pink color, brighter cranberry red at the rims, shine inhibited by filminess throughout. Little bit of fart to the nose, resolves soon enough in favor of rhubarb, strawberry to red cherry fruit scents, mandarin orange spritz, trickle of brine, pickle juice, okay enough but not all that much going on. Light to medium-bodied, holds it together well in the mid-palate which helps in turn to fill out the finish. Nice citrus kick and while it's soft on the whole, the acidity consistently present. Pressed flowers and a pinch of cocoa powder provide dimension to the guileless strawberry, raspberry fruit. The basic elements are present, however, it never seems to hit that extra gear and zoom forward as the best representations of the grape do. But clean and honest and decently priced. 88

Mauritson

Dry Creek Valley

Zinfandel

2015, \$21.99, 14.8%

Dark purple bruise core, passes just into opacity, the rims more dried blood red to crimson in hue. Whipped cream, vanilla fudge and mint adorn the nose, offers a mentholated cleansing action as well, plum, black cherry fruit scents, distracting rubbery touch, extracted to maximize the "wow" factor. Full-bodied with a plump and velvety texture, wastes little time in coating the mouth. Eucalyptus, pine and a whisper of mixed white citrus leap forward in the attack which turns out necessary because all that oaky vanilla, chocolate and caramel oakiness quickly takes hold. The plum, cassis, cherry fruit not there yet but could easily turn to prune. No lack of visceral pleasure and appears to be crafted for consumption within a couple years of release. Big boy for sure. 88

Enkidu

Russian River Valley

Pinot Noir

2016, \$27.99, 14.2%

High shine and utmost clarity to it, from the purple core through the scarlet red outer reaches, sleek surface.

Good thrust and even angularity to the nose, mild grassiness and trail dirt relieve any excess sugariness in the cherry, raspberry fruit scents as well as blood orange to grapefruit citrus component, the caramel and butterscotch flit about the perimeter, shows a fair measure of integration. Medium-bodied, flows well even as there's no lack of assertiveness in the acidity as well as tannin. Lemony with the proper level of grassy snap to keep it skipping along. Random bursts of black licorice and cola adorn the raspberry, red cherry to blueberry fruit. These days you could say that for the price it's punching above its weight. 88

Sojourn

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Sangiacomo Vineyard

Pinot Noir

2016, \$59.00, 14.5%

Violet to cranberry red hued core, almost achieves a pinkish tint around the rims, neither squeaky clean nor hazy per se. Molasses, eucalyptus and cola bean pretty up the nose from the start, sweet oak fends off an inclination towards tart red fruits and gives the nose more of a maraschino cherry, blueberry syrup feel, seems hesitant to allow any earthiness to spread. In the mouth it's close to full-bodied, tannic bite comes out of nowhere and gives it some astringency. Still has that mentholated, medicinal character but not as sweet as the nose would have suggested. A tart orange citrus spritz sparks the strawberry, rhubarb, blueberry fruit. More sweet vanilla, whipped cream and butter smoothing out any rough spots. Sort of disjointed now, probably going to be at its best 4-5 years down the road. 88

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Griffin's Lair Vineyard

Syrah

2016, \$42.00, 14.2%

The black core looks a little fuzzy, fully opaque, thin brick red rims, saturated without the eerie glow. The nose presents itself in an angular manner, you kind of have to jam the pieces together to make them fit, offers penetrating white grapefruit citrus, peanut shells, dirt and pebbles, lean blueberry, blackberry to Italian plum fruit scents, not much lift. Medium-bodied, has solid framing tannin and to a lesser extent acidity, the palate feels deadened right out of the gate. Blunt plum, dark berry to black cherry fruit, flavor without juiciness.

Some oak toast but even this isn't active, moderate coffee grinds and buttered toast. In the background lurks some pretty floral water and honeyed ham notes. Could this be shutting down already? Mainly Syrah, remainder Viognier. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Arnot-Roberts

Sonoma Valley, Heinstein Vineyard, Old Vine Blend

2016, \$35.00, 13.0%

Bright yellow that suggests green, mostly due to its day-glo look, average shine at best, turns fully clear at the rims. Nose of lemon reduction, candle wax, stream pebbles and mukhwas, the persimmon, peach, raspberry fruit adorned by whipped cream and freshly sliced ginger, really needs to warm up to start strutting its stuff. Medium-bodied, well layered without turning heavy. Something in there evokes jalapeño then there's cinnamon and nutmeg spice, licorice, sour orange citrus and Brazil nuts, a kind of lighter fruitcake. The acidity tends to run jagged and adds an interesting turbulence. Nectarine, pineapple, peach to papaya fruit brings more tang than sweetness. A classic example of a wine best taken at once as a whole rather than analyzed into constitutive parts. Continuously intriguing. Unspecified percentages of Sylvaner, Riesling, other. 92

Sandlands

Amador County

Chenin Blanc

2016, \$24.00, 12.2%

Pure golden color with a soft translucency to it, fills out the rims well enough, pleasing sparkle throughout. Poached pear and peach scents, vanilla fudge run through the nose, some mineral dust, black licorice and air freshener styled florality, a bit too musky to really achieve liftoff. Medium-bodied with an inclination towards greater girth but the acidity is quite nice and puts an end to that quickly enough. Can't shake this echo of buttered popcorn and lactose. That said, bouncy tangerine to lemon citrus and a much breezier florality keep it innocuously enjoyable. Round core of pear, yellow apple, apricot fruit spreads without getting too sweet. Gets that wet wool thing which is nice. Can't help but wish that it was more austere. 89

Pax Mahle Wines

Sonoma County, Fanucchi-Wood Road Vineyard Trousseau Gris

2017, \$26.00, 11.8%

Orange base with accents of both pink and yellow, kind of a dull metallic sheen, translucent. There's something like a sulfur stink to the nose, cow patties,

salami, slowly releases a moderate amount of strawberry, green apple to maraschino cherry fruit scents and barest hint of lemon peel. Medium-bodied, entirely different personality from the nose. The acidity has sharp teeth and not afraid to bite. The green apple, pear, strawberry to apricot fruit lively and fresh. In turn the lemon to mandarin orange citrus brightens things further. Smoky in a metallic, earthy way rather than say kindling wood. As it warms develops a floral side which fills in some white spaces, albeit too delicate to steal the show. Vibrancy on the tongue its major asset. (Synthetic Cork) 89

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Limerick Lane
Russian River Valley, Rosé
Blend

2017, \$28.00, 12.7%

Brilliant metallic shine, closer to orange but with some pinkishness, fully transparent, moderate intensity in The rims. Citrusy nose of orange to tangerine, lilacs with equal parts whipped cream and stream stones, the raspberry to cherry fruit scents are pleasing, more steady than resonant, nice scrubbing sensation as it dissolves. Medium to full-bodied, good traction from the acidity yet offers more volume than cut. More orange based citrus with a lemony touch. Again, more stone than mineral, turns more tart through the mid-palate, falling short of grassiness or brine. Solid length and flavor persistence. No substantial change from chilled to closing in on room temperature. Very good stuff. 62% Syrah, 38% Grenache. 89

OREGON WHITE

Vincent Wine Company
Willamette Valley, Ribbon Ridge
Chardonnay

2016, \$29.00, 12.3%

Slightly filmy with consistent worn gold color, like an old wedding ring, no real surface shine. Fresh and sparkly nose of orange zest, chalk dust, pear, apricot to melon fruit and a light florality, does not show much if any oak presence, too openly knit to linger for long. Medium-bodied, stays on an even keel, spicy with a satisfyingly strong acidic spine. Pickle to jalapeño juice lends sourness. That said, enough vanilla, whipped cream and orange sherbet to balance out the ledger. Seems more minerally than chalky here. The kumquat, peach, apricot, red apple fruit lively while nowhere near the star of the show. What's a bit odd is that no one element appears to want to be the star of the show. 88

FRANCE RED

Gérard, Xavier
Rhône, Saint-Joseph, Le Blanchard
Syrah

2016, \$44.99, 13.5%

Dark purple core reaches opacity, the rims more plum flesh red and reddish magenta, not overly saturated. The nose explodes with violets then unleashes white grapefruit, graphite and tar, nice smokiness to it, fresh without any herbaceous notes, drips with pressed raspberry, blackberry, blueberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, fluid and satiny smooth with that same pungent florality leading the way. More obvious white grapefruit zest. Molasses covered ham and damp leather play their part, gentle vanillin underpinning. Juicy mixed berry fruit with a hint of apricot. The relative lack of tannin and acidity is somewhat worrisome for aging potential. But there's serious pop and pour fun right here, right now. 92

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon, N [No Sulfur Added]
Gamay Noir

2016, \$37.99, 13.0%

Dusky plum red to purple in color, a sort of gauziness prevents full clarity, scarlet red rims of above average resonance. Notes of baby bottle nipple rubber and band-aid are present in the nose, stone dust and mineral shavings, Chowards violet candy, this dryness present in the face of borderline overripe blackberry, blueberry to cherry fruit scents, leaves an impression of needing much time to let the bones show. In the mouth it's full-bodied and comes across as more tannic than acidic, good firmness, particularly at the cheeks. A touch of mixed white citrus present here to add sparkle to the ginger, cumin spice. The fruit here too on the main blueberry, blackberry, dark raspberry. On the whole savory without any greenness or even grassiness. Totally gulpable. 91

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon
Gamay Noir
2017, \$29.99, 13.5%

Purple to dark scarlet red at the core, shifts to a basic red cast further out, full clarity. The nose offers equal parts stone and parched earth as well as ripe black cherry, blackberry fruit scents, smattering of baking spices and cocoa but no citrus presence and overall comes off as entirely unevolved. Medium to full-bodied with a powerfully sappy grip, hugs the tongue. Spicy and delivers a hint of white citrus. Not as stony and way too plump to feel any major effect from acidity or tannin. Not to say it lacks structure but it's presently hidden behind a wall of cherry, raspberry, blueberry

fruit. Potential monolith in the making, every reason to suspect the aromatics will improve. Still, questionable for the super long haul. 90

Dumien Serrette, Domaine
Rhône, Cornas, Les Saveaux
Syrah

2015, \$35.99, 13.0%

Inky purple core, glowingly opaque, scarlet to fresh blood red hued rims, plenty of youthful verve. Leather, stone, dried garden herbs and salt lick make for a savory nose, a touch straight up herbaceous as well, the red currant to red cherry fruit scents direct and on the lean side, turned further sour by white grapefruit pith accents. In the mouth it's light to medium-bodied, an expansive floral perfume dresses up the attack. After that has more than enough acidity to highlight the white grapefruit to blood orange citrus and play up a stony, mineral side. Indian spices and dried up potpourri fill in some blanks. The cherry, currant, blackberry fruit fares better here and pairs well with the more rugged elements. Doesn't quite have the stuffing for the super-long haul but plenty of promise over the medium term. 89

Terres Dorées (Jean-Paul Brun), Domaine des
Beaujolais, Moulin-à-Vent
Gamay Noir

2016, \$19.99, 12.5%

While transparent and squeaky clean, the core is a brooding maroon to purple hue, consistent to the rims, has the bricking look of an older wine. Savory garden herbs, chaparral, anise seed and ginger powder lead you into the nose, dry yet gluey texture to the red cherry, raspberry scents, overall not a lot of lift, more meaty than floral or citrusy. Full-bodied and muscular, through the attack shows more tannin than acidity, not interested in fluid movement. Darker fruit complexion of blackberry, blueberry verging on plum albeit with a hint of green apple. Metallic earth and more leather than beef jerky here. Much more sturdy than pretty, has the structure to go the distance but will it ever get prettier with age? 88

Desvignes, Louis et Claude
Beaujolais, Morgon, Côte du Py
Gamay Noir

2017, \$34.99, 14.0%

Clean if warmly glowing ruby-purple core with a pronounced red magenta rims, quite colorful. Dense nose, borderline plummy with ripe black cherry, blackberry fruit scents, potpourri, spiced orange peel and lavender, kind of gelatinous in how the parts stick together. Full-bodied, chubby here as well, the acidity comes across as slight, the tannin most apparent at the finish, luckily without any green astringency.

Broader fruit array here, strawberry, green apple through to cherry, mixed berry, fresher than the nose would have suggested. Poor brown dirt, stone and a light underbrush tones. Sweet orange to lemon citrus, not much bite. Pleasing if foursquare at the moment, wish it showed more youthful structure. 88

Desvignes, Louis et Claude
Beaujolais, Morgon, Montpelain
Gamay Noir

2017, \$29.99, 13.0%

Clear violet to cranberry red hued core, close to a more red magenta at the rims, vividly colored. The nose is firm and does not feel fully opened yet, cherry to raspberry, blackberry scents, quietly floral, sand and dusty stone, moderate length for its lack of resonance. Medium-bodied, wiry and muscular here too, the initial impression is of whiplash acidity rather than tannic skeleton, although the latter increases through the finish. Sour strawberry, red cherry to cranberry fruit with a lemony tang as well. Any sense of terroir is likewise inert and deadening. You can see it getting more floral over time but it's a good question how well the fruit will last long term. In any event, this bottle is too young for anything but a provisional conclusion. 88

Clos de la Roilette (Coudert Père et Fils)
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Cuvée Tardive
Gamay Noir

2017, \$28.99, 13.0%

Dark ruby red to violet in color, consistent to the outermost edges, lushly hued. Sour and close to high-toned nose of cranberry, raspberry, blueberry fruit and pulped lemons along with more grounding leather, muddy earth, overall despite its youth not giving much at all. Medium-bodied with a formidable tannic and acidic structure, thick and bony. Phenolics strike you as a bit underripe, especially through the finish. Good level of raspberry, cherry to blackberry fruit but no juiciness. Twiggy and leafy with a mixed white citrus tang as an afterthought. It just feels like a clogged pipe, nothing getting through. But does have that structure for aging so maybe it will find itself one day. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Huet, Domaine
Loire, Vouvray, Le Mont, Sec
Chenin Blanc

2017, \$34.99, 13.0%

Offers a day-glo warmth in spite of the rather tenuous white to gold straw color, perhaps suggesting a bronzed future, right now flat with a noticeable drop off at the rims. Honeyed, waxy nose, languorously dense, bright pink grapefruit zest, sparkling kumquat,

pineapple, green apple, papaya fruit scents, in spite of its left can come off as angular, does dissolve with a few “out of left field” notes of bubblegum and butterscotch. Medium-bodied, muscular with acidity that starts pinching and gnawing right out of the gate. That said, only a first sip is needed to see that this is a very ripe wine and 100% needs that acidity to even approach being “sec.” All kinds of tangerine, lime to pink grapefruit citrus. Basil, lemongrass, but right now the smoky stoniness buried in the pineapple, star fruit. kiwi, papaya, nectarine flavors. Stumbles a little at the finish but it’s all there, might be a giant in the making.
91

Huet, Domaine
Loire, Vouvray, Le Mont, Demi-Sec
Chenin Blanc
2017, \$35.99, 13.5%

Fresh, bright golden color and deep enough to pool some into the glass, holds well into the rims. Clean pungency to the nose, just picked pear, yellow apple, nectarine to persimmon fruit aided by cinnamon stick, tangerine zest and golden honey, right now any smoky, stony notes pushed into the background. Medium-bodied, some chubbiness around the middle but by the finish it’s clear it has sufficient acidity to slim down as it ages. Floral with a big dose of tangerine, lime to pink grapefruit citrus, more sweet than sour. Here the smokiness more pronounced with as much beeswax as honey accents. Peach, nectarine, apricot dominate with some green apple. Nice traction through the finish. Might need a decanting today to open fully.
90

Pépière, Domaine de la
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, La Pépie
Melon de Bourgogne
2017, \$11.99, 11.5%

Faint yellow to white straw with a slight green tint, not that dull, fully transparent. Rich nose of melon, yellow apple to peach fruit, more honeyed than minerally, hint of smokiness around the edges, violets and anise, more overall more plump than soft with a generous spirit. In the mouth it’s not much different, medium-bodied plus, good palate grip yet the acidity lacks that extra zip. More chalky dustiness, the lack of minerally sparkle favors the wine’s fruitiness. Luckily there’s nice grapefruit tones to firm up the cherry, apple, pear to peach fruit. Odd touch of whipped cream to it. Fills the mouth well with a pungent retronasal presence. Seems like one to heartily enjoy in the short term. Which isn’t a bad result given the problematic weather this vintage. (Composite Cork: Diam1) 89

Raimbault, Philippe
Loire, Sancerre, Apud Sariaicum
Sauvignon Blanc
2017, \$18.99, 12.5%

Possesses a pale glow of white gold with green flecks, pools deeply into the glass. Juicy and ripe nose of green melon, pear, nectarine to pineapple fruit scents, pink grapefruit and mint, not really showing much by way of terroir albeit there is a slight increase in smokiness as it warms. Full-bodied, round and generous and positively dripping with pink grapefruit, lime to tangerine citrus. At times approaches a fruit cocktail like consistency in the melon, peach, apricot to cherry fruit before finally turning tart at the end. Modicum of stone to chalk nuances. Very ripe wine and in many ways closer to the New Zealand style of Sauvignon Blanc than Sancerre, certainly not for the traditionalist. Yet, it does offer a good deal of rambunctious fun. 89

Pépière, La
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Briords,
Cuvée Vieilles Vignes
Melon de Bourgogne
2017, \$21.99, 12.0%

Clear white to yellow straw color, close to colorless nearer the rims, good surface sheen, on the whole not much to look at. The nose is fairly mute until getting closer to room temperature then wet chalk, saline and violets, never quite stiffens up, challah bread, honey and moderate apricot, apple fruit scents, again more filling than brisk. Medium-bodied, same basic experience in the mouth, while the acidity has grip there’s no “searing sensation” and while not soft, it does lack some energy. Solid sourness in the lemon, blood orange citrus. Seashells, kosher salt and chalk, comes close to herbaceous echoes. The relative lack of pear, apple to apricot fruit ends up a plus. Strong finish. Leaves you unsure about its ageability.
(Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Massiac, Château
Languedoc/Roussillon, Pays d’Oc
Sauvignon Blanc
2017, \$12.99, 13.0%

Pale yellow to white hay color, shines well, transparent but not all that crystal clear. Mint, grapefruit, jalapeño and a whiff of cat pee activate the nose, fresh streamwater and stone notes but the apple, apricot scents never quite take hold. Medium-bodied, firm and while the acidity keeps kicking it still overall feels heavy. Excellent smokiness, allows it to seem more minerally than stony, tarry as well. White grapefruit brings tang, not sourness. Green melon, yellow apple, peach fruit with a nod towards pineapple, not far off tropical. Biggest problem is that it turns dilute through

the finish so all the enjoyment ends on a down note. Still, for this price these days hard to quibble. (Composite Cork) 87

ITALY RED

Vallana, Antonio
Piedmont, Colline Novaresi Spanna
Nebbiolo
2015, \$14.99, 13.0%

Touch of purple at the innermost core, then all crimson red to orange rust hues, unblemished but looks hazy from a distance. The nose at first comes off as dusty with pulverized stone, dried grass and light minerality, this slowly yields to maraschino cherry level ripeness, lemon zest and church incense, tends to stay heavy and without lift hence there's probably more there than what's showing. Full-bodied, same script as the nose, starts out dry and puckering with what feels like underripe phenolics in the tannin. Violets, sandalwood, pine to rosemary notes make a decent stab at prettying it up. Fully ripened cherry, leaning towards strawberry, fruit. Light astringency through the finish. Good everyday quaffer for the dinner table. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Nuraghe (Cantina di Mogoro), Il
Sardegna, Cannonau di Sardegna, Nero Sardo
Cannonau
2015, \$10.99, 13.0%

Slightly more purple in the core but more so crimson throughout, more of an orange rust color at the outer rims. The nose is like stuffing a fistful of pine needles up one nostril and a spoonful of Vicks VapoRub up the other, incredible cleansing lift, eviscerates the otherwise coquettish strawberry, raspberry fruit scents, a glance of stone and packed trail dirt but the nose is a one trick pony for sure. Medium-bodied, nicely smooth and fluid, sails across the palate. Hard for all that menthol and pine stuff to not affect how the wine tastes but there is a slight elevation in the red berry, cherry fruit presence and likewise a kind of clay to volcanic ash earthiness. Decent enough acidity, no real perceptible tannin. Easy enough to sip casually but no doubt not everyone wants to chug Vicks. (Composite Cork) 88

Musso, Azienda Agricola
Piedmont, Barbera d'Alba
Barbera
2016, \$11.99, 14.0%

Black core with a warm glow, equally heavysset brick red rims, quite brooding. The nose has an earthiness to it that verges on coffee grinds and burnt cocoa, grapey with plum/prune scents and a thick floral musk. Full-bodied, feels like a wet wool blanket laid across

your tongue. Floral with orange zest mixed in, spicy and close to ginger, cumin. Bold cherry, plum, black currant fruit, thick and juicy. Displays some acidity but on the whole it's a simple fruit bomb, which is not the worst thing in the world. Prolonged finish as well. (Composite Cork: Diam10) 88

Olivella, Società Agricola Cantine
Campania, Lacryma Christi del Vesuvio, Lacrimanero
Blend
2015, \$13.99, 13.0%

Clear and transparent throughout, kind of a rusty red to purple hued core, more brick to sunset red further out, bright but looks older than its age. The nose offers the expected tar, volcanic rock, leather and muddy earth, rugged and feels like it could scrape your nostrils raw, the core of cherry, dark berry fruit solid enough but kicked to the back of the bus. Medium-bodied, fiercely tannic, however, here the candied cherry to raspberry jam flavors make an immediate impact. In turn there's a formidable of white grapefruit zest. As it normalizes in the mouth the dusty stone and tar takes root. Almost twiggy by the finish. Competent for what it is, certainly not a casual sipper. 50% Piediroso, 30% Olivella, 20% Aglianico. 87

ITALY WHITE

Burlotto (Marina Burlotto), Comm. G.B.
Piedmont, Langhe, Viridis
Sauvignon Blanc
2017, \$18.99, 13.5%

White to yellow straw in color, neither especially shiny nor dull, just kind of there. The nose dominated by sour citrus of lemon to white grapefruit, smoky stones and minerals a close second, the pineapple, apple to pear scents hard nosed but fall short of brutish, needs to open warm before it starts to show more flower and whipped cream accents. Medium-bodied, the acidity is broad and clamps down rather than cuts. Sour profile here as well, pink and white grapefruit with a touch of lemon. The green apple, pineapple to star fruit flavors tingle the tongue, however, trail off through the finish. More floral and earlier too, suggestion of chili pepper, in many ways closer to, say, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc than Sancerre. Maybe the shortness is a sign of underripeness, in any event it's acceptable if not exciting. 88

Marramiero, Azienda
Abruzzi, Colline Pescaresi, Sessanta Passi
Pecorino
2016, \$16.99, 11.0%

Pours a brilliant and bright straw gold, resplendent in the glass and just the same the glass sides are all but fully covered in bubbles quite long after the pour.

Lilacs and orange blossom create a floral lift in the nose, stream water and club soda notes, light sauna smokiness, at best a glimmer of apple or pear skin for fruit scents. Light-bodied with a bracing jolt of acidity right out of the gate. The pétillance scrubs the tongue and you understand why all those bubbles are visible. Mineral water, wet river stone, lemon peel are all major contributors. Sneaking in there now and then you get a spoonful of shipped cream. Peach, red apple, bosc pear fruit, a lot more snap than juice. A Pecorino for the “I suck on stones” crowd. (Composite Cork: CSI) 88

GERMANY WHITE

Falkenstein, Hofgut
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Krettnacher, Euchariusberg,
Spätlese AP #14
Riesling

2017, \$28.99, 7.5%

Clean white gold coloration with a touch of green to it, while not particularly deep it fills the glass well and presents a decent surface sheen. The nose comes across a bit stunted, whisper of oil slick and petrol before a simple array of apricot, pear to apple fruit scents, molasses and a patina of florality. Medium-bodied, complete about face as it presents an extremely vibrant palate of green apple, pear, peach to strawberry fruit and mandarin orange to pink grapefruit citrus. Honey and glazed ham deepen it further, more chalky than minerally with a smoky to tarry finish. The acidity is tough to judge, at first it seems weak to so-so but the further into the bottle you get the more grip you feel. Could be an ager but tastes so good now there may not be any left. 92

Borell-Diehl, Weingut
Pfalz, QbA Trocken AP #1
Müller-Thurgau

2017, \$12.99, 12.5%

Pale white straw hue with more of a hint of green than yellow, moderately dull, good amount of bubbles gather along the glass at the bottom. Despite a moment of whipped cream, on the whole it's fresh offering mineral water, lemon peel, mint and sage, the just ripened apricot, yellow apple, pear fruit scents deepened by a note of golden honey, cut flowers. Medium-bodied, good cut but also rounder through the finish so as to avoid a sense of leanness. Cherry, pear, red apple to apricot fruit, good variety. Mineral water with a fresh lemon cut up in it. Honey and flowers pretty it up. Acidity is okay. Almost fizzy mouth feel at the end. As with previous vintages, a solid choice for party chugging. 1 liter bottle. (Screwcap) 89

Weis, Nik
Mosel Saar Ruwer, QbA Old Vines AP #12
Riesling

2017, \$13.99, 10.5%

Glossy yellow gold, noticeably shiny, on the whole translucent. Sweet and sour nose of cherry, apricot to pear fruit with a coating of powdered sugar, somewhat honeyed as well, touch of chalk but no real smokiness or sense of terroir. Medium-bodied, good acidity that both cuts and grips. Here there's a good deal stony smokiness and lighter minerality. That said, oodles of lime and lemon citrus to add sparkle to the very similar array of cherry, peach, pear, melon fruit. Some mint or licorice like notes. Holds its weight until the very end and manages to end drier than expected. You could do worse for the price, that's for sure. 87

SPAIN RED

Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España (CVNE)
Rioja, Laguardia de Viña Real Crianza
Tempranillo

2014, \$12.99, 13.5%

Mostly crimson to ember red with both clarity and fullness in the glass, not much purple in the core. The nose features cedar, incense and tea leaf alongside spiced oranges and candied cherry, dark berry fruit scents. Full-bodied, enjoy the nice acidic tang early and often because it's quickly steamrolled by plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit. Again, cedar, incense and other aged oaky notes but no sweet oakiness nor overt toast. That acidity helps the orange citrus find a white grapefruit partner. Black licorice, sweet tea leaf with a mild undertone of fresh leather. Nothing complex at all but fruity, generous with enough nuance to please. 90% Tempranillo, 10% Garnacha, Mazuelo, Graciano. 88

PORTUGAL RED

Crasto, Quinta do
Douro Valley, Crasto
Blend

2016, \$12.99, 13.0%

Full, dense purple core, equally heavy set crimson to blood red rims, mild saturation. Plummy nose filled out by additional blackberry, cherry scents, cinnamon and nutmeg spice, pressed flowers and indistinct citrus, dissolves with a pine forest breeze, overall innocuous enough. Full-bodied and with sufficient tannin and acidity to keep its shape start to finish. More floral here, emphasizing violets and lilacs. Some cocoa powder, toasted white bread accents. Were it not for the decent structure the cassis, blackberry to plum fruit would seem overripe, close to cough syrup sweet. Citrus here comes across as tangerine to lemon, not

that sour. Simple and juicy, easy to quaff. 35% Touriga Nacional, 30% Tinta Roriz, 25% Touriga Franca, 10% Tinta Barroca. 88

Laureano, Paulo

Alentejo, Vidigueira, Vinhas Velhas Private Selection Blend

2015, \$18.99, 14.5%

Good concentration and darkness to the crimson and purple core, the clarity comes through in the blood red to rust red rims. The nose shows some leather, field dirt and twigs, some Indian spices and grapefruit zest, the cherry, plum, black currant fruit scents foursquare and dull. Full-bodied, right off the bat the tannins leap in and spoil the party, roughhewn and drying to puckering. That said, plenty of ripeness in the plum/prune, currant, blackberry fruit. Licorice, ginger and potpourri add dimension through the mid-palate yet it tightens up too much to appreciably extend the finish. Would have benefitted from a long decant and/or arguably too young to show its best. 40% Alicante Bouschet, 25% Aragonez, 20% Trincadeira, 15% Touriga Nacional. 87

PORTUGAL WHITE

Mendes Vinhos, Anselmo

Vinho Verde, Monção e Melgaço, Muros Antigos Alvarinho

2017, \$12.99, 13.0%

Crystal clear yellow straw hue, perfect shine throughout and not much hue loss at the rims. Lemony nose with some mint and then twigs and underbrush, starts to develop a seashell, saline thing but does not coalesce, pear, apple to peach fruit succinct with nice punch, no lack of generalized energy to the scents, just not much breadth. Full-bodied, more traction and grip than might be expected, benefits from lemon to a hint of grapefruit citrus for release. The green melon, pear and apricot fruit sinewy with credible length. More chalky dustiness here and wet stone before a pleasant florality stirs the finish. Good, not great, probably should be consumed with heavier food where its heft can strut. 87