

## *The Hanes Wine Review, February 2007 Edition*

Foolish mistakes fit Hanes like a glove. Especially when they involve money. This fact has been driven home once more in recent months as he has made an effort to restrict his wine purchases by drinking wine already happily housed in his personal collection. Let the below serve as a cautionary tale to any and all wine collectors. Unless you're mega-rich, then you can stop reading.

Over the past 7-8 years Hanes has amassed a wine collection of over 1,500 bottles of wine. These represent all kinds of wines, from all sorts of grapes, and from wine regions spanning the globe. As would be expected, though, the percentages of any given holdings have changed as Hanes's taste in wine has changed. For example, when Hanes was just an innocent pup he became quite enamored with buying highly sought after, small production Californian wines. Fast forward years into the future and, although he now rarely buys these wines today, the ones he did buy are now "due" and ready to consume. These and many others from France, Spain, Australia, etc. Time to drink up!

OK, sounds easy on the surface. Just drink, Hanes. And Hanes does. About a bottle a day. Can't fault him for trying! The thing is, he also drinks all kinds of new release wines too. Both out of insatiable inquisitiveness about the new as well as necessity. How do you know which wines you want to put in the cellar if you don't try them first? Then, of course, there is *The Hanes Wine Review* and the desire to review as many current release wines as possible for inclusion therein. Before it appears that Hanes is whining about having too much wine – a problem many wish they had – let's make it clear that there is recognition that it's an enviable problem. It's not like Hanes is whining about living in a cardboard box. That's next.

So, there's these 1,500 bottles of wine. On the wall. Which is about 125 cases of wine. Hanes's locker at the storage facility where he keeps his wine has three levels to it. A few months ago he went through two of the three levels, methodically pulling out bottles deemed ready to drink and consolidating the remaining bottles to ensure maximal space utilization. The result of this process was about six cases of wine set aside for immediate drinking. Just grab one of the cases and bring it home and start chugging.

However, since performing this task Hanes has only brought three of those cases home. And there's about a case of these bottles still sitting in Hanes's fridge, trigger cocked back and ready to fire. Hell, Hanes had to throw out all his ketchup, mustard, milk and eggs because there was no room in the fridge with all the wine in there. Just kidding. Only threw out the mustard. The upshot here being the wine is not getting drunken fast enough. And this with yet one level of the storage locker needing the cull "drink now" bottles treatment. Compounding the problem is that which each passing month or year, *more* bottles become due. The process is ongoing, no rest for the weary. Which underscores the real point Hanes wants to make here.

For a wine geek slash wine aficionado, what is the "correct" amount of bottles to have in one's collection? Hanes didn't *mean* to acquire 1,500 bottles, it just kinda happened. It was them other guys, they did it. The assumption is that it's one person or maybe a couple who consume the collected wine. Other assumptions may include the following. That current releases are purchased regularly, because they are less expensive "everyday drinkers" or are wines one wants to try to gauge ageability. Or just because. That the person or couple doesn't drink *every* day (flawed assumption, Hanes knows). There may be parties or special occasions during which more bottles than usual may be consumed. Some diversity among the wines collected needs to be maintained for the sake of anticipating changing tastes or differing tastes in future houseguests, etc.

Different wines mature at different rates. So one cannot easily predict when the varied bottles one owns will hit their sweet spot for drinking. Californian Cabernet, German Riesling, red Bordeaux, white Burgundy, or Australian Shiraz will all mature at very different rates, both within their categories and when compared as categories. A veritable bazillion factors play roles here. As a result, the smart collector has to leave a lot of wiggle room in the drinking schedule for random spikes in the number of perfectly aged wines one should be drinking. Valleys can always be filled in with additional purchases!

While naturally up for debate and interpretation, wines one age to improve gustatory quality should require a minimum of 2-3 years of aging and anywhere from 15-20 years maximum. Sure, there will be wines like certain Zinfandels which taste better after only 8-12 months more of bottle age or certain Loire Chenin Blanc wines or sturdy Bordeaux which can last and/or improve for decades. But these are general exceptions to wine collecting and as outliers should be treated as such. Most people don't lay down a bottle to drink in 10 months nor do they lay one down to drink in 40 years. But god bless those who do.

So, this is a wine collection full of wines that will come due anywhere from three to 15 years after acquisition. Let's just say that. Going back to our assumptions, we are not going to be pulling a bottle every night to drink nor drink per se every evening. But let's be aggressive and say a bottle is opened 300 nights out of the year. Of these 300 bottles, we're assuming that most consumed will be relatively inexpensive everyday drinkers. If we open four bottles from the cellar a month that would be 48/year. If we start with a baseline of an 1,000 bottle collection, that would take almost 21 years to consume, assuming the collecting process stops and no new bottles are added over time.

21 years is more than 15 years. Even Hanes knows that. Hence, if the wines needing the most age need to be consumed at the latest 15 years after acquisition the lesson is one needs a smaller collection, 1,000 bottles are too many. And this is with building a lot of leeway into the model by assuming an equal amount of 3 year agers, 5 year agers, 8 year agers,

10 year agers, etc. We also recognize that in some select years of consuming one's collection five bottles might get pulled a month rather than four, all stops pulled out to avoid necrophilia and catch the wines in their fullest glory. We are nothing if not flexible.

Hanes owns some wines among his 1,500 bottles which could last 15 years beyond their acquisition date. However, most will have to be consumed sooner. Our strawmodel collector has too many bottles at 1,000. Hanes is in better shape than this model because he drinks more, but worse shape because he owns more. To drink all his wine within 15 years *of today* Hanes would have to pull, plug and play 100 bottles a year. Which is realistically still under the true amount needed be consumed and thus avoid necrophilia while paying for the honor of storing over the hill bottles.

Another way of putting this is that he currently needs to be drinking around a case of wine per month from his collection. Which, as was underscored at the outset, he is not doing. For those thinking it, no, he isn't going to sell much of it. Hanes has considered doing some "thinning" of his collection but (a) he bought the wine to drink it and (b) it's murky whether or not he could even recoup the purchase price, never mind the accumulated years of storage fees associated with any given bottle. Some bottles might get sold but not more than a case or two's worth of wine, a minor fraction of the total. Drink or be damned!

The alternative, then, is to consume more older wine and buy less new wine. Both of which are happening. Albeit with the expected lapses. Don't tell anyone, but Hanes isn't perfect. It's a quandary without a clear direction forward. At least not when you consider the alcoholic daze sure to ensue from trying to drink down the wine collection while all the bottles are in their prime! So, don't be like Hanes. Don't let the thrill of the chase or natural acquisitiveness or mere stupidity cause you to buy more wine than you need. Even now, having intellectually grasped the direness of the situation, Hanes wants to buy more wine, can't imagine missing out on this or that bottle and the glories sure to be in its future years down the road. *They say* that there's always another vintage coming and that skipping this or that particular wine today only leaves room in a year or two for some shiny new alternative choice. But, damn it, who asked *them*?

The final stage is to maintain a zen-like tranquility and no longer be saddened by the reduction of collection activities. After all, Hanes wouldn't have the time to actually drink these additional wines anyway, so what's the point? Mere collector's mania? Leave that for the rubes. Hanes isn't getting any younger so there's no sense in buying wines that will peak in 20 years anyway. Time to stay within a realistic collecting framework and slim down. Now, if Hanes could only so easily slim down the growing rubber tire around his waist...

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**This month's big winners...** Many, many Californian wines consumed this month due to getting through winery-direct purchases, plus attending a tasting of Californian wines. As one might guess, this boosts the average price of wines reviewed herein so maybe more cheapies next month. Anyway, Lagier-Meredith continues to crank out great Syrah wines (since 1998 and the only wine they produce). The 2004 is one of their best and the same price as their first vintage, a fact worth noting. Reichsrat von Buhl produces a Kabinett level Riesling from the Pfalz called "Armand" which one can call one of the best under \$20 winners almost every vintage. And so it goes with the 2005 bottling. Thivin's 2005 Beaujolais from the Côte de Brouilly was very satisfactory for \$19 but you have to like them on the rustic side. Two Californian wines kind of surprised Hanes with their quality as he wasn't expecting much. The first was the 2003 Silverado Cabernet Sauvignon as I take the producer to be a ho-hum "Brand" but it was nice and not overblown. Maybe questionable for \$35 but that's another story. The second was the 2005 Lane Tanner "Santa Barbara County" Pinot Noir which had great focus and a reasonable price for what it is, \$26 or so. Lane Tanner is a producer unjustifiably ignored previously. Hanes has not been drinking many 2005 Chablis wines due to lack of fundage but he enjoys Chantemerle's l'Homme Mort bottling so much he dropped the \$32 for it. Worth it, a bonus as he could've had a V-8 instead. FYI, l'Homme Mort is a sub-parcel within the larger Fourchaume vineyard.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** White Côtes-du-Rhône wines can be risky bets but Trignon's 2005 made a very positive impression on Hanes, particularly for the \$13 price tag. Nieto Senetiner is an Argentinean producer who seems quietly produce nice little wines at a decent production size, not the easiest thing to do. Their 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva is a solid value at around \$11.

**And the disappointments...** Hanes is slowly saving his pennies to taste the 2005 Huet lineup and one of his most favorite bottlings, the Vouvray "Clos du Bourg" Demi-Sec, did not wow as hoped. Very frustrating, greatness expected here. Another \$35 shot to hell, albeit it is not a bad wine by any stretch. The 2004 Outpost Grenache underperformed as Hanes holds this winery to a high standard, expected more personality and \$35 isn't cheap either. Turley's 2004 Zinfandel from the Tofaneli Vineyard just about clinches it for Hanes, this vineyard (from Turley or other producers) has disappointed too many times for the prices it gets. Copain is a top notch outfit which made it all the more disappointing when their 2005 Syrah from the McDowell Valley didn't float people's boats. First experience with this bottling, any further will be on someone else's dime. Selbach-Oster remains a German wine producer of formidable reputation that leaves Hanes's heart strings unmoved. Same goes for the 2005 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Kabinett Riesling. Price is fair though.

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

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

The challenge. Each month Hanes will try out a new "tagline" for *The Hanes Wine Review* empire. The goal is to sum up and represent The Hanes Brand. This month's entry is...

**Tagline #28:** "Voted 'Most Pedantic Wine Review' seven years running!"

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 Varietal

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 February!

## CALIFORNIA RED

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder

Syrah

2004, \$50.00, 14.8%

Youthful sparkle permeates the purple core, completely unblemished, distinct violet influence in the ruby rims, dark yet so clear you can still see through it with ease. High-toned nose, disguises its weight through penetrating minerals, dried beef, orange zest, garden herb elements, surfeit of mountain air freshness, easy to forget to register the understatedly ripe red currant, cherry scents. Full-bodied with excellent purity during the attack, helps each element achieve separation. Right now, the white grapefruit to orange citrus and mountain rocks trump the venison, blood iron components. The sharp acidity sort of restrains the florality. The sweetness in the cherry, blackberry, black currant fruit recedes by the mid-palate to allow for a more tartness driven fluidity. Nothing overtly oaky going on. The tannins help it clamp down by the finish, bring the narrative to a succinct, well-mapped end. 92

Pride Mountain

Blend, Reserve

Cabernet Sauvignon

2003, \$120.00, 14.7%

Immaculate scarlet red to dark orange hued core with only hints of purple, excellent reflectivity, sits quite pretty in the glass. In the nose, there's a bunch of toffee but it's really velvety and meshes perfectly with the toasted coconut, bell pepper, eucalyptus and pitch-perfect currant, black cherry fruit, almost daunting in how it's fit together. Medium-bodied, soft and downy in the mouth, dissolves like warm butter. On the butter tip, here the oak is extremely prominent, overflowing with cinnamon, clove, caramel crème brûlée and chocolate. The super-suave currant, blackberry, black cherry fruit allows the tannins to speak periodically at most. Progresses to bring out additional mint, eucalyptus, menthol shades and traces of tobacco, leather but no real development, both in general and as it finishes. Impressive stuff, in a good way for a certain

palate, in a bad way for another. 98% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Petit Verdot. 50% Napa Valley/50% Sonoma Valley. 91

Outpost

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain

Zinfandel

2004, \$42.00, 16.2%

Dark but trim violet core, nowhere near opacity, shows a ruby infusion, leaves a full ruby-magenta hue around the rims, sits attractively in the glass. Ripe, succulent blackberry, raspberry, boysenberry fruit, not dried fruit in character but way dense, also has grapefruit peel, white pepper, mountain underbrush, pine and streak of milk chocolate and gingerbread scents, just draws you into it as much as you draw it into you. Medium-bodied, the flavors are bigger than the overall weight, this in part due to the brawny tannins. peppery with elements of menthol, orange zest, stony earth, this all before the raspberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit settles in. That pepper and grapefruit keep it dancing through the finish. Changes a lot over just a few hours, interesting to follow. 91

Ojai Vineyard, The

Santa Barbara County, Verna's Vineyard

Syrah

2003, \$29.99, 14.5%

Fully saturated and glowing purple core, its cleanliness begins to show closer to the rims as it turns to ruby and then a pinkish magenta, no sediment but already gathering crud on the shoulder of the bottle. Great texture in the nose as it has a steady weight and presence but more airiness than expected too, lots of lavender and wildflowers, the caramel/vanilla oak there more out of obligation than desire to dominate, orange peel, has a mountain breeze feel like it's whizzing by too fast to fully register, some gamey notes but nothing major, the cherry, red currant, blackberry scents possess admirable steadiness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, stays within itself very nicely with above average framing acidity. This component helps to also minimize any caramel or vanilla aspects. Given its long, sturdy strides through your mouth it maintains a refreshing elegance and freshness while hinting at what kind of game and leather it might provide

with aging. Vibrant blackberry, black cherry fruit, still tingling at the end. Orange zest, clove and earth gain hold as it moves forward. Real nice. 91

Redline

Mendocino County, Eaglepoint Ranch

Syrah

2004, \$32.00, 15.2%

Dense purple core yet not close to blackness, rather widens the ruby rims which have a soft luminescent quality. The nose is really stuffed, moves but not without concentration, coffee beans and cocoa, rocky earth and flowers obscured by the growl of the oak toast as well as the plum, currant, blackberry fruit scents, needs time to get in synch. Full-bodied, flattens itself like a wet wool blanket across your palate. Here the brute force of the plum, blackberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit "staves off" the oak toast, still those cocoa, coffee and mint flavors persist. The floral dimension musky enough to spread a light dew around. Tastes unevolved if not outright backward. Even the tannins lack the room to stretch. The material is there for a butterfly to emerge in 3-5 years. 90

Redline

Arroyo Seco, Cedar Lane Vineyard

Syrah

2004, \$30.00, 15.4%

Very trim and immaculately arrayed in the glass, near opaque purple core but the effulgent glow brightens it too much, thick ruby rims retain a lot of violet coloration as well. Nose hits you like a sucker punch, wet violets and lilacs do little to effect the steel bar feel of the plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit scents, even the oak toast and vanilla extract can't spread out, over time you can tease out beef jerky, granite and orange peel nuances. In the mouth it's full-bodied and equally resistant to investigation, takes a considerable amount of air time to open. Dusty tannins coat the tongue yet remain pliant enough to move with the blackberry, cherry, blueberry fruit, not extinguishing the latter. Very tangy, mixed white citrus, mineral and metal flecks, tea leaf, the oak toast stays right-sized to the whole, less evident after being open for awhile. Throws its shoulder into you through a prolonged finish. Seems like it will unclench some in a 2-3 year horizon. 90

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Santa Barbara County, L'Ange Rouge

Grenache

2005, \$32.00, 15.4%

The scarlet influence in the purple core brings it back from pure opacity, sleek reflections along the surface, the rims are such a dark red-ruby they hardly seem separate from the core. The nose is a bulldozer of blackberry, black raspberry fruit accompanied by a sweet vanilla/chocolate swirl, menthol and springtime grass, inclines towards a soft soaking of your nostril pores but the alcoholic fumes throw this intent a bit off. Full-bodied, hyper-juicy and invades each corner of your mouth like a cat burglar searching for the hidden family jewels. Cinnamon, orange zest components pair with the oak-derived vanilla, buttered toast and cocoa to make certain the black cherry, raspberry, blackberry, almost cassis fruit stays onstage for many a curtain call. Little acidity but has some tannins to help add to its punching power. Not overly herbaceous. Recognizable as Grenache, coiled in its sweetness. Will probably best perform in 3-5 years. 90

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Santa Barbara County, Colson Canyon Vineyard

Syrah

2005, \$28.00, 15.2%

Fat ruby-purple core inches over the line into opacity, seamless transition to more red-magenta rims, warm hum throughout brings out more reflections across the surface. Stones and lilacs provide the first impressions in the nose, then a swipe of crunchy toast and mocha before black currant, cherry fruit comes on, taken as a whole fairly demure. Full-bodied, tannins and acidity assertive from the start in terms of getting the beams and plumbing in place. Here the oak toast more evident, the cocoa powder joining with roasted coffee and vanilla tones. Thankfully, the florality more elevated as well, blending in orange blossom and honeyed ham elements. The cherry, blackberry fruit never too thick nor sweet while still remaining consistent throughout. Shows some refreshing bite on the finish but mum on what it might show you down the road. 90

Silverado

Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2003, \$34.99, 14.5%

Fully opaque black purple core with razor thin brick red rims, if that, despite the utter darkness has a noticeable glow to it. Cedar, licorice, menthol and orange blossom adorn the nose, ripe and nicely shaped cassis, Italian plum and black cherry scents provide a continuous foundation and lengthen the dissolve, nothing oaky leaps out at you. Medium-bodied, the admirable tannic structure is firm enough to help it appear bigger, you have to move your jaws to get it moving. Mineral shards, cedar blocks, stones continue the solid feel, nothing airy nor creamy about it. Some crushed flowers and anise seed yet not many natural allies for the thick currant, black cherry fruit. Some vanilla residue shows on the finish. Nice for its balance given its size and structure. 96% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc. 89

Lane Tanner

Santa Barbara County

Pinot Noir

2005, \$25.99, 13.5%

Very light ruby-magenta color, has a strong cloudiness throughout, bright pink rims, warm in appearance. Fluffy nose of sun-drenched grass, earth, merde, super-sour cherry, raspberry, strawberry, watermelon fruit, palpable lemon peel, a certain smokiness develops as it sits in the nostrils, heavy and steady lift. Medium-bodied plus, like it is whipped into an agitated state in the mouth, fills up more space than its real weight would appear to warrant. The highly active clove, ginger spice pairs nicely with orange blossom notes. Aggressive verve in the lemon citrus. The tannins are finely grained but more than ready and willing to take care of business. The strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit is all about tang and bite. Good length, makes an impression without drawing undue attention to itself. 89

Redline

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Blue Oaks Vineyard

Syrah

2004, \$24.00, 13.8%

Ruby lightens the purple core yet it still achieves opacity, given this not surprised that the red-ruby rims are noticeably wide and take a light pinkish cast at the

outermost edge. Oak drives the nose, drips with vanilla, caramel, mint and cocoa before you can register a strong underlying florality, there's a tautness in the cherry, plum, blackberry scents which suggests its current lack of evolution may mask something more knit together down the road. Medium-bodied, while also oaky in the mouth with crisper buttered toast and mocha chip flavors, the tannins disperse most of this by the mid-palate. Semi-sour cranberry, red cherry, raspberry fruit gets added zing from white grapefruit accents and a kind of tobacco, meadow grass aspect. Stoniness comes around as it further progresses, however, not displaying many gamey notes at the moment. May be best in 2-3 years. 88

#### Outpost

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain

Grenache

2004, \$35.00, 15.5%

There's a vague pond-like film to the red-violet color, more ruby around the rims but the hue is surprisingly light and dilute there. Immensely floral nose, very engaging, ginger and cinnamon spice, low degree of grassiness, more stony notes with also a pit fruit nature in the blackberry, cherry, apricot scents, not much oak presence at all, good lift with a "just so" attitude. Medium-bodied, comes on strong but dissipates fairly swiftly, making for the need to repeat sips often. The grass, stone, orange zest's hardness is proportionately equal to the softness of the milk chocolate, raspberry, cranberry, strawberry fruit, strikes a nice balance. Not very oaky, baking spices and cocoa. On the tannic side for the grape, does most of the contouring as the acidity is weak. The finish is perfunctory, nothing out of the ordinary. Doesn't blow you away but no problem refilling the glass either. 88

#### Carr

Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2003, \$19.99, 13.9%

Light ruby-violet in color, super-clear with deeply bright crimson rims. Plenty of sweetness in the nose but not out of proportion to the whole, the currant, cherry, blackberry fruit fits seamlessly with the dark chocolate, herbs, earth, keeps it easygoing and accessible. Medium-bodied, not that concentrated, more crafted for smoothness and fluidity. May be semi-innocuous as a result, the raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit consistent and even-handed. The tannins are low yet not non-existent, has average acidity, capable of helping in a fight. Shows little, if any, evolution towards cedar, tobacco, leather elements but this remains in the realm of possibility. Some citrus tang at the end adds a nice uptick. Affably polished. 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 5% Syrah. 88

#### Twenty Bench

Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2004, \$21.99, 14.1%

Bright ruby-violet in color, fully consistent to the rims, its cleanliness and lighter hue helps build shininess. The nose bursts with juicy raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit, minimal dark fruit notes, minerally and chalky, a touch of tobacco smoke, little oak, maybe a tad chocolate, texturally fills your nostrils but the scents are not diverse. Medium-bodied, above average spiciness and a touch of toastiness keep it from becoming too heavy but, as in the nose, not dastardly oaky. Presents much more by way of tobacco, bell pepper, orange zest and a quieter minerality. There's a

velvety feel in the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, especially upfront. At the finish line the sour spice and clove add tackiness as well as the aforementioned lift. Solid if unspectacular. 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc. 87

#### Turley

Napa Valley, Tofanelli Vineyard

Zinfandel

2004, \$34.00, 15.3%

While clear the red brick influence in the purple core reminds one of dusk, there's moderate lightening of hue to red ruby around the rims, about average surface reflectivity. The delicate floral perfume and orange zest overcome by alcoholic fumes, makes things more medicinal in nature, grassy too, and also truncates the spread of the cherry, blackberry scents. Medium-bodied, not very sweet but there's an aspect of powdered, confectionary sugar to the attack. Then the lemon/orange citrus adds some spring to its step. The tannins come across as heavy-set if not overly drying, makes your belly feel like you ate too much. Oak toast mixes with leather and earth, a tad minty and also past the mid-palate, herbal. The red currant, cranberry, raspberry fruit not high-toned per se yet gets screechy at times. Keeps its shoulders squared through the finish, even if semi-astringent. 87

#### Copain

McDowell Valley, McDowell Valley Vineyards

Syrah

2005, \$42.99, 14.1%

Cleverly not quite opaque, it's more like the third level down on the optometrist's chart, the violet core gives way without a fight to the ruby-magenta rims, sits distinctively in the glass. The nose is intriguing as at first you get overwhelmed by blueberry, blackberry and green apple jam, yet it takes awhile to realize it's mostly texture and not sugar, especially as it lacks in discernible supporting scents. Full-bodied, kind of soupy in that it pools in your palate and then sinks vertically with no horizontal movement at all. The weight ensures that the blackberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit will cascade throughout, no mention of focus and direction. Ginger, cinnamon and cola flavors fit with the whole but do not address any desire for complexity. Acidity and tannins both accepted the payoff and look the other way. Whole lot of flavor but it's fireworks without direction. 87

#### Tres Sabores

Napa Valley, Rutherford

Zinfandel

2002, \$24.99, 14.0%

Light, clear red-ruby core with a touch of purple, purer red rims turn paler as well, but not washed out. Aggressive nose, full of coconut oil, dill, cream custard, witch hazel and sugary raspberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit scents, not complex but rushes at you with everything its got. Medium-bodied, medicinal bitterness frames the entry, very puckering and throws you back on your heels. There's a tarry and earthy side to it which evokes that Rutherford dust thing but it's not overly dry, possesses good degree of tannins but nothing special. Oily texture causes the raspberry, blackberry fruit to stick to your mouth pores, doesn't flow easily. Less overt oak here in the mouth, more by way of dark chocolate and toasted bread than creaminess. Bright orange to grapefruit citrus pretties up the finish some. 86

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

McPrice Myers Wine Company  
Santa Ynez Valley, Larner Vineyard  
Viognier  
2005, \$24.00, 15.6%

The darkness of the amber-gold color makes it visually impressive, especially as it holds onto its surface sparkle, this in spite of the deep translucency below. There's a definitely burly blast of oak toast when you first draw it into your nose, makes room alongside it for orange sherbet, mint, lilacs and fetchingly alert and focused apricot, pear fruit scents, noticeably smooth presence. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and wearing its alcohol very well, no trace of heat. Smooth but just avoids turning creamy, stays semi-sleek and well-paced. Spicy with ginger, clove notes and orange to tangerine zest, here the oak, while there, is more woven into the whole. The tang infiltrates the peach, nectarine, apricot fruit providing contrast to its natural ripeness. Lacks floral lift, more wet dew in nature. As a result the finish is more of a pregnant sigh than airy dissolve. Hard not to keep chugging. 91

Ojai Vineyard, The  
Santa Rita Hills, Clos Pepe Vineyard  
Chardonnay  
2004, \$31.99, 14.0%

There's a gauzy quality in the green-gold color, presents a deep pooling in the glass despite losing most of its hue at the rims. Fresh apple cider filled nose, cinnamon stick, nutmeg, orange spice, unbaked pie dough, all this blends together so well that the peach, apricot scents seem out of place. Full-bodied, starts off very big, then firms up and increases focus during the back half. The tangerine to lemon citrus aids this process, sucking out extraneous sweetness in the baking spices, pie crust and honey glaze elements. The green apple fruit here more admitting of the pear, apricot, green melon flavors. Nice chalkiness accrues throughout while it also displays a subtly ever-present acidity. Even though it does firm up by the end, stays chewy and pliant. 90

## OREGON RED

Green Cellars, Patricia  
Willamette Valley, Ribbon Ridge, Estate Vineyard, Old Vine  
Pinot Noir  
2005, \$36.99, 13.6%

Clean and fairly lightly hued red-purple core, while consistent throughout, is a touch more ruby towards the rims with a pinkish outer edge. Funky nose of merde, sun warmed bag of cut grass, menthol, sour oranges, cinnamon stick, finds a solid anchor in the cherry, blackberry scents while maintaining solid outlines, minimal oak influence and good natural and unforced length. Full-bodied, broad and sumptuous attack with sufficiently coarse tannins to keep the blackberry, raspberry fruit on its toes. Stimulating acidity heightens both the herbaceousness as well as the lemon citrus. Concurrently, minerals, stones and hard earth add a rugged, grounding dimension. Very good pacing and stays on point to the end, snugly fit together without interfering with its natural flow. 89

## OREGON WHITE

Holloran  
Willamette Valley, Chehalem Mountain Vineyard  
Riesling  
2005, \$21.99, 13.0%

Resplendent green-gold color, dances in the glass, mild loss of hue at the rims but nothing diminished in terms of shine. Lemon-honey and orange blossom fill the nose, faint whisper of rubber, becomes denser as it sits in the nose imbuing the peach, pear, Fuji apple scents with some sluggishness. Medium-bodied, sweet and sour attack displays most prominently the white grapefruit/lemon bite as well as some white mineral dust. More rubber and earth with a full core of peach, apple, pear fruit. The acidity is a welcome visitor, however making it dry enough that the finish becomes somewhat short, more weight than flavor persistence. Very pleasing, focused and understated yet not to the detriment of personality. 89

## CANADA RED

Osoyoos Larose  
Okanagan Valley, Le Grand Vin  
Blend  
2003, \$39.99, 13.4%

Pure black core, pairs a shiny surface with complete opacity below, the crimson rims are deep and tinged with rust hues. Fairly traditional nose of cedar, tobacco leaf, saddle leather and stone, the oak toast a proportionate embellishment, the alcohol a slightly volatile presence, the florality masks the lack of expressivity in the currant, black cherry scents. Full-bodied, sits squarely on the tongue, a flat board of tannins pressing downward and compressing the release of flavors. On the peppery side too, as spicy as toasty, little soft about it, all the way through to the herbal and floral qualities. Cigar ash, stone, minerals more than anything as soft as leather. The cherry, plum, currant fruit dry but the whole thing juts forward enough it drags the fruit well into the finish. Makes you interested in how it would be with some age on it. 75% Merlot, 11% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Malbec, 5% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc. 87

## FRANCE RED

Thivin, Château  
Beaujolais, Côte de Brouilly  
Gamay Noir  
2005, \$18.99, 12.5%

Crystal clear and consistent from core to rims, much more ruby to red-magenta in color than violet, looks like a colored sheet of glass. Juicy strawberry and raspberry fruit filled nose with a touch of hard candy sweetness, lemon drop as well, given all that also furnishes some curious cured meat, salt nuances, to the point any stoniness or grassiness reduced to a murmur. Medium-bodied, the dusty tannins and acidity get off the starting blocks quickly, take the sugariness right out of the strawberry, raspberry, watermelon fruit. Still well-fruited while accommodating the lemon zest, mineral dust, and cut grass elements. Lacks the meatiness but still expresses itself in a rough hewn manner. The brightness of the fruit a definite contrast to the other flavors and overall texture. 89

Marcoux, Domaine de  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône  
Blend

2005, \$25.99, 14.5%

Crystal clear without a spot to be found, dark yet transparent purple core, barely turns to dark scarlet ruby at the super-thin rims. Good erectness in the nose, lots of pebbles and rocks alongside the orange peel, pressed flowers and forest scrub, has a vague saline quality too, semi-immobile red cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit, overall carves out a strong presence without being austere. Medium-bodied, has admirable structure with a steel beam frame from which to hang the dried flowers, grass, lemon peel, stone as well as high-pitched, tart cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit. Attractive leathery streak appears in the mid-palate, binds well with the earthiness. Keeps leaning into you through the finish, good persistence, it might try opening up a little and smiling. Unspecified percentages of Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Cinsault, etc. 88

Lafouge, Jean et Gilles  
Burgundy, Auxey-Duresses, Les Duresses  
Pinot Noir

2004, \$24.99, 13.0%

Very clear red-violet color, spreads evenly with no change from the core to the rims, just sits real pretty in the glass. Excellent herbal, earthy funk to the nose, smoky too, with white citrus peel, powdered stone and cigarette ash to almost get you sneezing, measured doses of raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit scents. Light to medium-bodied, nice rawness in the tannins keep it pulsing from start to finish. Lemon peel and a high degree of crushed stone, minerals and poor earth swell to fill the attack. Adds in dried tobacco, saddle leather and forest scrub way before remembering the red cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit, a perfect duplicate of the nose. While firm due to the tannins not without its charms, wouldn't call it demure but it doesn't shout either. Leaves a powdery chalk residue behind. 88

Gœuil, Domaine Catherine Le  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages Cairanne, Cuvée Léa  
Felsch  
Blend

2004, \$15.99, 14.0%

Trim and unblemished red-ruby to violet in color, stays full through the rims with only a minor drop to magenta at the rims, quite appealing shine along the surface. Collected nose, no showiness in the raspberry, blackberry and cherry fruit department, nor in the fresh flowers and citrus, however, hard to imagine it more densely stuffed, comes with sufficient earthiness for character. Medium-bodied, has good tannic oomph right from the start, gets it erect and adds follow-through to the orange citrus and wet stone elements. Becomes more herbaceous as it progresses through the mouth, bringing with it more of that earthiness. Really clamps down on the finish, noticeably truncating the experience although the weight persists, no lack of heaviness on the tongue. Unspecified percentages of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre. 86

Croix Bellevue, Château La  
Bordeaux, Lalande de Pomerol  
Blend

2003, \$20.99, 13.0%

Deep purple core with a hint of crimson, not fully opaque, ruby rims are dark and also very reddish in appearance.

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High level of leather, tilled black earth and merde in the nose, then real burnt cocoa, coffee, toast notes and a sprig of mint, the currant and cherry fruit scents are long but only semi-expressive. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and much more perfumed than the nose with added floral and citrus touches, the oak toast also smoother and less invasive. The tannins are filmy but not green, tend to bend in the wind. As a result, there's little to focus and thus lengthen the moderate cherry, plum, currant fruit flavors. Cigarette ash, stone and bell pepper fill this vacated spot near the finish. Brief ending. 50% Merlot, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Cabernet Franc. 86

Lynch, Cuvée Sélectionnée par Kermit  
Rhône, Vin de Table du Vaucluse  
Blend

2004, \$8.99, 13.5%

Has a cloudy glow to the ruby-pink magenta color, light in hue, though, with some fade at the rims, only the murk gives it depth. Sour raspberry, blackberry, red cherry fruit scents, herbaceousness heightens this, offers a modicum of milk chocolate and orange peel in addition to a momentary flourish of meatiness before a semi-swift dissolve. Medium-bodied, neither airy nor sappy, just kind of in the middle, plays up more earthiness and clumped damp grass than it does raspberry, black cherry, blackberry fruit, average in the latter department. Elevated white grapefruit outscores the chocolate notes. The tannins have a grainy bite, welcome for their ability to activate. Not much acidity. Turns somewhat jagged during the finish. Stays in the middle of the qualitative pack for the price. 80% Grenache, 20% unspecified percentages of Syrah, Carignan, Mourvèdre. 85

## FRANCE WHITE

Reverdy et Ses Fils, Domaine Hippolyte  
Loire, Sancerre  
Sauvignon Blanc

2005, \$21.99, 11-14.0%

Reflections cascade across the surface, sparkles like a gem, white to light yellow hay in color, the rims turn fully transparent. Light nose, subtly penetrating as if it's sneaking past the security guard, all smoky shale, seashells and chalk dust, you just about sneeze it's so dry, blends in white grapefruit pith, tar and dried flowers, overall feels like it never fully releases and broadens. Light to medium-bodied, razor-sharp acidity cuts cleanly and deeply into the palate, tingles, if not throbs, from it. Straw, dried meadow grass, bitter lemon/white grapefruit and mint get "dusted" by the gravelly stone and streamwater components. Stays so bright that the peach, apple, pear fruit turns evanescent. That said, it also ensures long reverb through the finish. Cries out for oysters. 90

Chantemerle (A&F Boudin), Domaine de  
Burgundy, Chablis, l'Homme Mort  
Chardonnay

2005, \$31.99, 12.5%

The yellow straw color on the dense side in that it absorbs some of the surface shine and defuses rather diffuse light, some drop around the rims. Outsized and semi-tropical nose, the mineral dust and chalky smoke aspects trumped by dewy flower petals and pineapple, nectarine, peach, pear scents, at times go so far as to suggest cayenne pepper, compelling if atypical. Full-bodied, the acidity grinds along and has broad shoulders but it's questionable if it's a match for the richness of the pineapple, papaya, nectarine,

apricot, pear, green apple fruit. With the violets and mint notes as well as tangerine/white grapefruit citrus, it's some time before the chalk, stone and blanched earth can show. By the mid-palate does clamp down with muscular jaws. Would be interesting to taste once it loses some flesh. 90

Trignon, Château du Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône Blend

2005, \$12.99, 14.0%

High level of reflectivity, brilliant sparkle to the well-set yellow straw color. Charming nose, airy floral perfume of violets, honeysuckle, mint as well as orange juice and ripely concentrated apricot, peach, pear fruit, releases adroitly. Medium to full-bodied with good grip, squeezes the tongue without giving up all fluidity, slow low rider. Here the peach, apricot, pear, red apple and melon fruit more centerstage with buttressing elements of lilacs, licorice, mint and witch hazel. The stone, solid chalk components clearer as well, especially past the mid-palate. The freshly squeezed juiciness in the orange to pink grapefruit citrus persists throughout. Dense enough that the acidity doesn't leap out at you yet it stays a sturdy, steadying presence. Very appealing. Unspecified percentages of Marsanne, Roussanne, Viognier. 89

Huet, S.A.

Loire, Vouvray, Clos du Bourg, Demi-Sec Chenin Blanc

2005, \$34.99, 12.0%

Changes in visual character depending on distance to the glass, from a distance there's a rich golden translucency that loses some hue as it gains in transparency up closer, either way light dances well on the surface. Super-ripe nose without being offputtingly sweet, juicy lemon and lime citrus buttress the omnipresent peach, pear, red apple scents, not a great deal of honey but the smoky chalk and dried salt water notes build as it sits. Medium-bodied, smooth enough to glide and thus disguise some of its body. Fresh and lively but without much kick, smiles and smiles rather than converse. Honey, orange blossom, violets, mint adorn the foundation of peach, apricot, nectarine, melon fruit. Difficult to find an acidic spine albeit not flabby. Equally resistant to placing any stoniness center stage. Immensely tasty today but doesn't provide much reason to age it. 89

Verget, Maison

Burgundy, Mâcon-Charnay, Le Clos Saint-Pierre Chardonnay

2005, \$20.99, 13.0%

Golden straw in color, at a slight angle the rims are much more deeply hued than the core, for all its translucency not very rich. Floral dew, lemon/lime sorbet, vanilla custard and pie dough comprise most of the nose, mostly clean with well-spaced scents for lift, the pear, yellow apple, melon scents on the mute side. Medium to full-bodied, much spicier and oakier here with crisp toast, cinnamon, clove to cancel out the more appealing orange/lemon citrus, flowers and chalk dust. Maybe too lowkey apple, pear, melon, peach fruit, no moment of lift and cruising altitude not very high either. Offers a little taste of many things, like a tasting menu more than a full meal. That said, no glaring flaws (if you don't mind oak). (Screwcap) 86

## GERMANY WHITE

Buhl, Weingut Reichsrat von Pfalz, Armand Kabinett AP #54

Riesling

2005, \$17.99, 9.5%

Shiny white gold in color, cut from a single cloth, not much difference from core to rims, there's some sparse but lasting bubbles upon and after the pour, the surface distorts the light. The nose has a round contour without excess weight, pushes outwards but not "hollow" in a pejorative way, lots of rubber, slate and stone dust, faint dried flowers and the pear, yellow apple, peach scents forgot to call shotgun. Medium-bodied, built sturdily, brick by brick to withstand strong winds. The acidity has minimal cut but can bulldoze a tongue with the best of them. There's an initial hint of sweetness that quickly disappears in favor of stone, slate, limestone, any kind of damp stone you can think of, like a cave just without the bats. You get more bright lemon accents here and the peach, melon, apple, pear fruit more focused, helps its length. The rubber aspect is here but more as a part of the whole. Dry, succinct finish. Worth it. (Screwcap) 90

Selbach-Oster, Weingut

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Wehlener, Sonnenuhr, Kabinett AP #42

Riesling

2005, \$15.99, 10.0%

Golden in hue with whitish rims, the surface shines much more than the semi-flat liquid below. Bountifully floral nose, spongy and soft with orange and lemon sherbet, mint and a touch fresh whipped cream scents, all this comes across as much sweeter than the apricot, peach, green melon fruit, displays just a bare murmur of chalk or stone scents. Medium-bodied, firm, if not too much so, has some give in it. The acidity seems decent but submerged in its youthful flesh, you get more life from the cinnamon, ginger spice and lemon/lime zest. Slightly higher degree of stoniness here, brings with it a light burst of rubber and salt accents. The pear, peach, apricot, red apple fruit surprisingly loses grip by the finish. At the finish it produces much more weight pressure on the mouth roof than tongue. 86

## AUSTRIA WHITE

Nigl, Weingut

Kremstal, Senftenberger, Piri

Grüner Veltliner

2005, \$19.99, 12.5%

The white-green straw hue catches enough light to add depth to what's essentially transparent, pools nicely when viewed from a distance. In the nose the semi-dry lemon, lime, white grapefruit citrus evokes a custard creaminess, adroitly mixes in violets, licorice and peach, pear, apricot fruit, the lower level herbaceousness not a big part, fills your nostrils more texturally than via array of scents. Full-bodied, sappy if not out-and-out viscous, coats every mouth pore. The acidity is like a rubber mallet to the tongue, bruises more than cuts. Super-tang in the white grapefruit, lemon citrus, adds a needed boost in the treble. The wildflowers and snap peas are edgy enough to draw out more stoniness. Nothing soft in the apricot, nectarine, pineapple, red apple fruit, stops short of becoming fully angular. Some peppery reverb contributes to the length of the finish. Steady rhythm. (Screwcap) 90



## SPAIN RED

Polo, Hijos de Antonio  
Ribera del Duero, Aldealbar  
Tempranillo  
2004, \$13.99, 13.5%

Close to opaque purple core, its flatness adds darkness, while clean the red brick rims have a morning fog haze to them. Earthy nose with firewood ember smokiness, leather and semi-roasted cherry, blackberry scents, mild brush of damp herbaceousness develops before the dissolve. Medium-bodied, earth, stone and grass play a much larger role here in the mouth, tangy with more obvious acidity than tannins. White grapefruit contributes to this as does the sour cherry, red raspberry flavors. The minerality grows throughout, reaching a wincing level at the end. Lacks the richness for a truly full finish, however, its trebly reverb lasts well. No wimp. 86

## SPAIN WHITE

Casanovas i Roig, Maria  
Penedès  
Xarel·lo  
2004, \$16.99, 12.0%

Layered from the surface down, translucent but the yellow straw color is mottled, comes in patches and where it ain't, it's much closer to transparent. Effusive floral perfume, rushes right into your nose, following on with mint, orange blossom and dapperly fresh peach, apricot, pear scents, hovers more like a humming bee than lifts. Medium-bodied but super-relaxed so that you don't really notice the weight as you might otherwise. Minerally dust would powder the tongue if the swift moving acidity didn't wash it away. Here there's a reverse with the white grapefruit to lemon citrus more expressive than the drier florality. Green apple, pear, peach fruit dry but with above average focus. Good enunciation on the finish. 89

## SOUTH AFRICA RED

Meerendal  
Durbanville  
Pinotage  
2004, \$17.99, 13.5%

Clear but warmly dark violet, glows all the way through the red-magenta, ruby rims doesn't need opacity to impress visually. Fat smoky nose of leather, game fat, molten tar and black earth, with air time there's an abundance of black cherry, currant, blackberry fruit, sort of a musky floral perfume too. Light-bodied at first, puts on weight over time too, achieves a medium body with good forward momentum. Here the cherry, blackberry, red currant fruit more front and center, that is until the tannins crop dust the tongue. This too releases tar, earth, orange peel, tree bark, animal hide flavors but keeps them from fully spreading. The citrus turns to white grapefruit near the finish. The oak subdued and while toasty at turns nowhere near a major player. Even drier at the end. 88

## ARGENTINA RED

Nieto Senetiner, Bodegas  
Mendoza, Reserva  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2004, \$10.99, 14.0%

Spotless purple core, sparkly and pools outward seamlessly into scarlet red rims. Good lift in the nose,

chalky with accents of tobacco, tilled earth, tar and a brush of bell pepper, compact yet juicy red cherry, red currant fruit scents, maintains its nostril presence well. Medium-bodied, leads with clove, tobacco, orange rind, cut grass flavors, becomes increasingly smokier and denser as it progresses through the mouth. The spiciness persists from start to finish, enlivening the currant, cherry, blackberry fruit. You get more leather and earth on the back end, gets a little twiggy too. The tannins are agreeably sturdy, no slouching allowed here, yet remains accessible and not too chewy. Savoriness is its strongest suit and adds to its relative value. 87