

## *The Hanes Wine Review, February 2009 Edition*

It's still winter here in Hanes's new home of North Carolina but living in the Great South is supposed to get one thinking about spring, summer and shorts sooner than back in New York City. This in turn makes Hanes think about all the fun summer barbecues and outings he would attend if he wanted any friends in Charlotte. The next step in this trail of thought is what fun, light, crisp summery wines will Hanes drink safely alone at home as the weather soon regularly reaches the 70's?

And the answer might very well be white wines from Portugal! Why not, there is diversity, food friendliness and affordable prices. Plus, few people know what the hell they are so you look even cooler when you bring some to a friend's place and wow them with your new find. Or, in Hanes's case, impress his cat Meow-Meow with his wine knowledge and savvy.

The most well recognized of the white wines of Portugal are those known as "Vinho Verde." This translates into English as "green wine" and refers to the fact that they are "green" in the sense of young and fresh. Albeit, there may be a greenish tint to the actual wine but this is not regulated by the Portuguese authorities. It should be noted that here in the United States we can refer to Vinho Verde as a white wine whereas in Portugal there are "Vinho Verde" wines which are categorized as rosé or red wines. What, you say, this cannot be! Alas, it's true. At the present time so few rosé or red Vinho Verdes are imported into the U.S., it is silly to mention them. Gosh, Hanes is silly in mentioning them. But thorough. Maybe more will be imported in the future but who can predict such things?

Vinho Verde is produced in the northern part of Portugal which stretches from the famous city of Oporto and the Douro River northward to the Minho River and Spanish border, an area also known as Costa Verde, or "Green Coast." The Vinho Verde DOC (Denominação de Origem Controlada) is the largest in all of Portugal. The qualities most associated with Vinho Verde are low sugar content and thus overall dryness, a slight fizzy pétillance which contributes to its liveliness, above average acidity, and a light, easy-to-drink body and mouth weight. They tend to be relatively low in alcohol, depending on which grapes the producer uses in the final blend. The most common grapes allowed to go into Vinho Verde are Loureiro, Arinto, Trajadura, Avesso and Azal. Only rarely will the "cépage" be listed on the label since no one knows these grapes anyway. Customers are more attracted to Vinho Verde by the like \$4.99 price tag than by a hankering for some Trajadura.

That said, there are more "high end" Vinho Verde wines coming into the U.S. These typically come from the Monção area near the Spanish border and are made from the Alvarinho grape. This is not crazy surprising since Alvarinho is actually the same grape called Albariño in Spain. And Albariño wines are now getting popular in the U.S. See how it all fits together? The labels may say "Vinho Alvarinho" but they are still technically from the Vinho Verde DOC. Additionally, with each vintage there's more 100% Loureiro white wines too and these will probably be labeled as such.

As with many traditional, if underdeveloped, wine regions most of the grapes in Vinho Verde are grown by small farmers who then sell to cooperatives or larger winery entities. As a result, to-date there are only a few "brand names" of Vinho Verde that are capable of saturating more than a couple of U.S. markets at once. One day we will have the Gallo of Vinho Verde but we're just not there yet. Rome was not built in a day. Until then, feel free to try random bottles you find, they will probably be cheap enough as an experiment.

Vinho Verde can be pleasingly aromatic and floral with light citrus tones and pale white fruit and apple flavors. Perhaps even a certain stream water minerality. It would be a freak scene for any to see new oak (seeing as they are intended to be drunk in the first year or so after bottling) so no oak flavors. They're not aged long enough to even develop a lees-based creaminess. Most malolactic fermentation is arrested early. What you see is what you get, no sealed court records of past steroid use needed.

No other wine region in Portugal is "known" for their white wines as is Vinho Verde. But most regions do produce some white wines and some can be pretty gosh darn good. And still on the cheap side of things.

In the Dão region of central Portugal there's fine quality wines made from the local Encruzado grape as well as experimentation with non-indigenous grapes such as Malvasia. The same for the Terras do Sado region in Southern Portugal where Muscat (aka Moscatel) reigns and makes for some attractively floral and fruity wines. There's plantings of grapes like Riesling and Gewürztraminer too, so maybe Terras do Sado will make a splash here by using grapes at least a few people know.

Oddly, the home of Port wine, the Douro, still seems to be having trouble making consistently good white table wines. The red table wines' quality is there (even if the prices are sometimes higher due to the association with Port). In the Douro they grow Gouveio, Rabigato, Viosinho, Fernão Pires, Arinto and Malvasia Fina among others. Here you are most likely to see white wines which spend time in new oak as the Port houses have the cash for the oak as well as the desire to match the international palate. So, the Douro will likely represent the most expensive white wines imported to the U.S.

Hanes likes Rabigato because it means "cat's tail." That is cool. Maybe Meow-Meow would like some Rabigato too.

Still kinda not there yet are white wines from places like Alentejo (from grapes such as Rabo de Ovelha, Roupeiro or Perrum). The quality of reds from here (often labeled Alentejano to confuse you more) are rising rapidly so maybe one day

the whites too? Hanes would probably put the Ribatejo region in the same boat as Alentejo. As always, feel welcome change his mind with bottles of free wine.

Overall, from Portugal you're likely to find lighter bodied wines with more freshness than complexity or "wow" factor. Which is a good thing to Hanes. Higher priced Portuguese wines today will translate to more weight and power and intent to impress. Probably higher alcohol percentage too. When the median for white wines from Portugal passes \$15 you'll know they have "arrived" and it's time to find some new wine to drink.

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**This month's big winners...** The big Hanes rapprochement with the red wines of the Northern Rhône continues. While typically treated as a more "feminine" appellation, Saint-Joseph has produced a muscular, challenging wine in the 2006 version from Georges Vernay. Curious more, since Vernay's fame rests in their white wines. Crazy world. It's hard for Hanes to look at the label of a wine from Yann Chave and not wish it said Jean-Louis Chave instead. But, let's be fair, Yann Chave does make very nice wines and their 2006 Crozes Hermitage is one of them for \$38 or so. For \$24 in its category it should be good, so thankfully the 2007 Malbec from Achaval-Ferrer proved itself a classy, well-conceived and executed wine. Whew. If you want to buy Malbec and have the extra coin, look for it. Hanes has sampled the Pride Mountain Viognier from Sonoma since the 1999 vintage. While the wine is no longer his cup of tea, the 2007 vintage recently sampled was not as horrendous as anticipated and thus counts as recommendable to those who dig this shit. But, for around \$43, if Hanes wants Viognier he can get top notch Condrieu from the Rhône for that price. He should not to have done it, but it has been some time since Hanes has bought top notch white Burgundy so he snagged the 2006 AOC Puligny-Montrachet from Etienne Sauzet and, yes, it was delicious and delightful. A wine geek's delight, the 2006 wine called "Torrette" from Noussan in the northern reaches of Italy's Valle d'Aosta is quite complex and compelling. It may be the best wine you have from Petit Rouge this month. It has been many moons since Hanes has tried a Cava from the Spanish producer Avinyó. But he remembers liking them. So, snagged a bottle for like \$17 and it was indeed quite good, quite dry and structured. But you have to have a tolerance for strong pétillance.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** If you like cheap white wine, Hanes has one word for you: Gascogne. There's many more hits than duds coming out right now and one can easily buy blindly and come out winning. That said, look for the 2007 Domaine des Cassagnoles "Cuvée Gros Manseng Reserve Selection," the 2007 Union des Producteurs de Plaimont "Colombelle," and the Domaine du Tariquet "Ugni Blanc - Colombard." Good stuff. For some reason Hanes is witnessing Côtes-du-Rhône wines coming back into fashion. Perhaps the prices are normalizing against offerings from across the globe, particularly around \$15 and below. In this vein, we recommend the 2007 Domaine de Châteaumar "Cuvée Bastien" which is 100% Grenache and tasty and just what you want in a CdR. While Hanes did not bust a nut over it as much as "the other guy," for CdR the 2007 Domane Les Grands Bois "Cuvée Les Trois Soeurs" is very good. Same for the 2006 CdR from Cave de Cairanne "Le Pas de la Beaume." While not as "approachable" as some others the 2008 Torrontés from the Argentinean cooperative La Riojana Cooperativa and called "Santa Florentina" is an interesting find for around \$9.

**And the disappointments...** While he generally admires the northern Italian producer Hofstätter, their 2007 Pinot Nero (Pinot Noir) "Meczan" was indeed a disappointment, especially as the prices has gone up to around \$24. No buy no more, taste for free first. Way back in the shrouded mists of time Hanes tried a Zinfandel from a new producer called Joel Gott. It was pretty good and it was cheap and the packaging was nice and all that. Fast forward to today and the lineup of Joel Gott wines can be found just about anywhere and everywhere. The prices still remain fair but the quality just ain't what it used to be. Hence, disappointment in the 2007 "California" Zinfandel. Gott is a "brand" now more than a winery. The State of Oregon is known for Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris. Hanes sees lots of Oregonian Pinot Gris around for \$20 or less and tried one. This being the 2007 Benton-Lane version for about \$16. Hopefully this is not entirely representative of what's out there cause it be kinda bestanky. Perhaps kind other folks will give more Pinot Gris to change Hanes's mind without Hanes having to spend money. More as a funny experiment than anything, Hanes tried a bottle of the ubiquitous Pinot Grigio which goes by the label "Kris." It is easy to see why it is popular. Which, yes, is a slam against the wine.

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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/oldervintages2009.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 February!

## CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

Central Valley, Lodi, Dogtown Vineyard

Zinfandel

2006, \$45.00, 15.7%

The violet base met head-on by red-magenta hues, mostly transparent with a pinkish cast around the rims, catches light nicely around those rims too. Some crunchy toast, butter and whipped cream in the nose yet the main component remains sour, almost pinched cranberry, raspberry, pomegranate, red cherry fruit scents, smattering of lemon and orange citrus, more floral than earthy but some of the latter, for its nostril weight pierces well, and without depending on alcoholic fumes to do so. Medium-bodied, the acidity more like a girdle than a machete, not cutting away, just condensing. Molasses, caramelized brown sugar, toast presented in an integrated manner, not makeup. Ripeness first, sourness next in the raspberry, strawberry, blackberry fruit. Gets twiggy with orange hips, tea leaves, dried mud notes, not close to a "country wine" but you can still envision the grapes in an actual vineyard. Here the alcohol does shorten the finish. Solid performance. 89

Hill Family Estate

Napa Valley, Beau Terre Vineyard

Merlot

2004, \$31.99, 14.5%

Deep purple core with a tinge of brick red, the dark redness persists through the rims resulting in more garnet than ruby. There's a lot of fine oak upfront in the nose, a compact punch of vanilla fudge, butterscotch and maple syrup, then smokiness introduces the blackberry, black cherry fruit scents, derives further lift from mixed white citrus and potpourri notes. Medium-bodied with a firm mouth feel, the blend evident in its erect bearing. The sourness in the cherry, currant, blackberry fruit gives it tang instead of sugariness. Tannin feels natural and not all wood-based. Here the oak shows more crisp toast with a coat of butterscotch and molasses. The grapefruit citrus and floral dew elements persist well. Hint of stone and clay earth before it ends. Does improve with air time and find its core message. 76% Merlot, 19% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec. 88

Bommarito Vineyard

Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2005, \$23.99, 14.2%

The darkness of the purple core yet allows for clear viewing through it at close range, stays ruby at the rims with a suggestion of more crimson hues yet to come. In the nose the lead shavings, pine resin and cedar elements slowly covered over by butterscotch, hot toffee and sweet

grill smoke notes, the roasted quality extends through the plum, black currant, black cherry scents. Medium-bodied, its sheer sappiness in clinging to your mouth pores increases presence greatly. Concentrated sweetness premier aspect of that same plum, cassis, blackberry fruit. This large enough that the oak toast, carob and butterscotch actually recede a bit. Not much by way of tannic spine. Orange citrus, cedar and dried flowers round up the flavor array. Moderate length on the finish but by then there's some alcohol showing. (Screwcap) 87

Gundlach Bundschu (Vineburg Wine Company)

Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Coast, Block 13

Pinot Noir

2006, \$22.99, 14.4%

Very light ruby-violet in color, easily transparent, while it lightens around the rims, holds onto the ruby base with only a soft pinkish cast. The nose is "pretty" and focuses on bright raspberry, strawberry, cranberry fruit scents and orange/tangerine citrus, touch of cola nut and root beer, nothing to interfere with its inherent airy cleanliness, hence there and then, poof, gone. Medium-bodied, sheds its weight with ease and stays nimble on the tongue. Given this positive attribute, there is a sort of evanescence to the raspberry, pomegranate, strawberry fruit as well as mixed sweet citrus. Lacks the acidity or tannin to anchor things and produce refreshing cleanliness. Only slight fresh butter, butterscotch accents. Spicier near the finish, in a yet sweet manner. Nothing to not like, nothing to grab you by the short hairs. 86

Gott, Joel

Regional Blend, California

Zinfandel

2007, \$15.99, 14.4%

Light violet to sturdier ruby, garnet in color, lightens sufficiently for full transparency at the rims. Coconut oil, butterscotch, gingerbread and freshly whipped butter would make for a soft nose were not the alcoholic fumes so forward, no paucity of raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit scents, overall tends to hover rather than lift in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, the sugary and candied nature of the raspberry, strawberry, cherry masks the majority of the underlying grassiness. The vanilla, butterscotch oak toned down a few notches here, mostly sweet spices and toast. Shows a good little burst of acidity. That said, falls off on a steep decline towards the finish. Could be better, could be worse. Grapes sourced from Napa County, Amador County, Lodi County, Sonoma County. 86

Coppola, Francis

Regional Blend, California, Diamond Series Black Label

Claret

Blend

2006, \$17.99, 13.5%

Given its clarity, the purple core inclines more towards black than ruby, garnet to brick red dominates the rims, fully hued. Heavy, molasses and brown sugar coating to the nose, almost evokes bacon fat, you got a big dollop of heavy freshly whipped cream, abundance of sweet and layered blackberry, cassis, plum fruit scents and baking spices, get ready for a slathering. Full-bodied, the extraction of the plum, black currant, cherry fruit somewhat at contrast with the textural dryness experienced by the tongue. The molasses, butterscotch, honey has the expected relentlessness. Touch of mixed citrus adds to the sweet profile, maybe an inkling of floral dew. The tannin and acidity are non-factors, its weight and subsequent forward momentum take care of any "structure." Clenches at the end, though, but if you are focusing on the fruit you'll probably never notice. 79% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Petit Verdot, 7% Merlot, 3% Malbec, 2% Cabernet Franc. Grapes sourced from Napa, Sonoma, El Dorado. 86

Candor  
Regional Blend, California, Lot 1  
Zinfandel  
NV, \$18.99, 14.5%

Deep ruby crimson to violet color with a burnt edge, no real loss of hue at the rims. The tightly wound nose still releases vanilla creaminess and toffee, good amount of smokiness, while ripe a sourness pervades the raspberry, red cherry, blackberry scents, has pleasing tangerine to lemon zest shades, moderate lift and hides its alcohol decently. Medium-bodied, double-clutches some on the attack but smooths out enough to release the raspberry, blackberry fruit and orange/lemon citrus at a measured gait. Pine, cedar and twigs imbue it with some "country wine" elements. As the fruit drops off through the mid-palate it leaves you with buttered popcorn, butterscotch flavors. Very much in character, just not sure what would separate it from the pack. 86

Praxis  
Monterey County  
Pinot Noir  
2006, \$19.99, 13.5%

Dark ruby to plum purple in color, surface shine is nice, below there's enough bending of light and vision to avoid transparency, straight up red ruby rims. There's an herbaceous, twiggy streak to the nose which distracts from the super-sweet raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit scents, cola and mandarin orange citrus notes pick up the fruit some, any florality has a fluffy, wildflower feel rather than dewy petals. Medium-bodied, pretty much the same in the mouth, the greener, herbal notes outrace the rest and the raspberry, red cherry fruit. There's a sort of rough, fizzy texture to it, this makes tannin appear more perceptible than acidity, drying factor. Cola, cocoa, orange to lemon citrus ride in, at the same time an odd jalapeño pepper sourness pervades. For the better, though, the sweetness of the fruit makes it all the way through the finish. 85

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Pride Mountain  
Sonoma County  
Viognier  
2007, \$42.99, 14.6%

Has sufficient surface shine to mask the dullness of the worn yellow gold color beneath, what hue is there holds

well through to the rims. Very musky nose with heavy set floral dew, orange blossom, licorice, curiously the apricot, peach, pear, green melon scents a fairly minor component, possesses textural creaminess more than overt oakiness. In the mouth it's much spicier, which comes in handy as the creaminess only takes up more ground here. Touch of bitter nuts, alongside the tangerine, lemon, lime zest manages to add zesty kick where the softer floral inner mouth perfume should be. Much more concentrated and sugary apricot, peach, nectarine fruit with a dried fruit consistency. Clings to your mouth pores more than extends through the finish. While arguably leaden of foot, could be considered a viable guilty pleasure. 87

Foley Vineyards, Robert  
Napa Valley  
Pinot Blanc  
2007, \$27.99, 13.5%

Medium grade golden color with a hint of green flecks to it, average reflectivity, does hold its hue decently through to the rims. At first there's a marshmallow, vanilla pudding softness to the nose, turns to a more sour apple, apricot, pear scents, slides a pinch of nutmeg and cinnamon spice in there, however, curiously vacates the nostrils before truly starting to settle in. Medium to full-bodied, mild fizzy quality to it, slightly interferes with the acidity's ability to cleanse. A strong flavor of banana comes through and cloaks the nectarine, green to yellow apple and pear fruit flavors. The ginger spice adds heat rather than richness of flavor. The marshmallow, vanilla fudge thing doesn't go away but does pull back a little. Keeps its weight and fullness through the finish but also gets that sour twist. Passable in the many senses of the words. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 85

## OREGON WHITE

Benton-Lane  
Willamette Valley  
Pinot Gris  
2007, \$15.99, 13.5%

White straw in color with as much green as yellow tint to it, light fizz stays around after the pour, highly reflective and, duh, transparent, yet without sacrificing a certain visual solidity. Baking pie smoke, whipped cream, orange sherbet, cinnamon dust and a spray of floral perfume forge a soft, inviting nose, the aforementioned strong enough that the apricot, pear fruit, while no weakling, seems a decided afterthought. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity slashes a bit more than you'd expect and appears at general odds with the more friendly demeanor of the whipped cream, vanilla bean, cinnamon and ginger spice. That said, the former does amp up the tangerine, lime citrus, more zest, less juice. The dry, close to powdery, mouth texture restrains the pear, apricot, pineapple, green apple fruit. Not a bad drop, but seems slightly slapped together and then dressed up to hide the fact. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 86

Rockblock  
Rogue Valley, Del Rio Vineyard  
Viognier  
2006, \$29.99, 14.8%

Fat luminescent glow to it, mostly green with a deep golden underbelly, flat and dull surface with minimal shine. Pickle juice, jalapeño blend curiously in the nose with vanilla cream and orange sherbet scents, any florality not that

pronounced, insufficient grip in the peach, pear fruit scents which might tilt things overall away from that initial acrid blow. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and, for better or worse, the pickle juice and jalapeño even more dominant. Thankfully, more left here in the peach, apricot, nectarine fruit to lessen that blow. More juice than blossom in the orange, lime citrus component. Creaminess minimized yet still no lacking for vanilla, fresh butter flavors. Never really finds its footing and while not hot per se, you notice the alcohol right off. 84

## FRANCE RED

Vernay, Domaine Georges  
Rhône, Saint-Joseph  
Syrah  
2006, \$34.99, 12.5%

Deep purple color of good opacity, sleek surface shine, the rims mainly red-ruby with only a hint of magenta. Big old merde and black mineral earth profile in the nose, sharp-toned currant, cherry fruit and lemon zest, has a suggestion of dark chocolate and touch of floral breeze, then turns to burnt game fat over time, keeps switching gears enough to keep your interest level up. Medium-bodied, presents heavy duty white grapefruit citrus with a very palpable stone, dried brown earth component. The acidity beats the tannins by a country mile, but second place still finishes. Floral and yet armed with that vague chocolaty edge that does not evoke real oakiness. Really tightens up for the best past the mid-palate, pacing picks up with each sip. Touch of green olive, raw bacon. Relentless tenacity. 91

Graillot, Domaine Alain  
Rhône, Crozes Hermitage  
Syrah  
2006, \$37.99, 13.0%

Dark purple core surrounded by wide ruby-magenta rims, easily transparent in spite of the depth of hue. The nose has admirable penetrating power, olive pits, merde, sour cherry and red currant fruit alongside metallic mineral shavings, the dashes of white grapefruit and flowers left things before the final dissolve. Medium-bodied, very fresh acidity frames the mouth entry and focuses the raspberry, red cherry, currant fruit, stays "red" in character. The tannin does not really dry out the tongue until past the mid-palate. The white grapefruit to orange citrus sweetens up the whole, in turn countered well by stone, iron, grass and light earthy nuances. The richness of the fruit lasts easily to the end. Has a lot of the expected things, experienced best when taken as a whole rather than analyzing parts. 90

Chave, Yann  
Rhône, Crozes Hermitage  
Syrah  
2006, \$34.99, 13.5%

Light enough violet core that the flickers between transparency and opacity, that said, these darker hues deepen the otherwise ruby-magenta rims, nice surface shine. The outsized floral perfume in the nose carries the show but there's some reductive funk too, through these both comes some mineral and metal shard scents as well as robust red currant, cherry, blackberry fruit scents, undeveloped. Medium-bodied, the initial splash of raspberry, red cherry, currant fruit big enough that you don't really notice the tannins clamping down until you swallow. Certainly floral, accompanied by orange citrus,

sweet tea leaves, stone shards, iron flecks, yet, again, minimal earthiness nor gaminess. Gains good traction on the palate and lingers very well. While not providing many hints today, would be interesting to revisit down the road. 90

Jasmin, Domaine Patrick  
Rhône, Côte-Rôtie  
Syrah  
2005, \$65.99, 13.0%

Red-purple hued core, more crimson to bright brick red at the rims, plenty of surface reflectivity. The nose explodes with merde at first, levels off into pine as well as sour cherry and red berry scents, also gets some dirt-caked stone, lemon peel, develops a fine floral perfume with air time. Medium-bodied, fine grain to the tannins but pretty damn dry. The white grapefruit element jumps right out at you, then licorice, pine and stone, followed on by tea leaf and a mild vanilla cream. The acidity slides in through the mid-palate, lends tang to the cranberry, red currant, red cherry, raspberry fruit. Tactful wine, chooses to quietly kick you under the table rather than slap you in the face. 89

Châteaumar, Domaine de  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, Cuvée Bastien  
Grenache  
2007, \$14.99, 14.5%

Straightforward ruby-purple in color, good clarity which allows more magenta to show through the rims. The nose framed by a wet smokiness and leather, animal fur, saltlick and damp hay, the strawberry, raspberry scents also juicy and add to the overall "wet" character, mild orange peel and chocolate nuances before it's all gone. Medium-bodied, good traction and release, a rhythmic skipping across the palate. Admirable tannic grip, channels the sweet strawberry, raspberry fruit and opens up the tongue to the grill smoke and fat, charred driftwood, merde as well as metallic notes. Blockiness of the stone element lessens its presence. The orange, lemon citrus stronger here and juicier. Remains very flavorful through an extended finish. (Synthetic Cork) 88

Pral, Domaine  
Beaujolais, Beaujolais, Cuvée Terroir  
Gamay Noir  
2007, \$14.99, 12.0%

More dark violet than ruby to its color, not much shift at the rims, given darkness no mistaking its clarity and spotlessness. There's a dusty minerality or earthiness to the nose which provides pleasing counterpoint to the sour red cherry, pomegranate, strawberry fruit scents as well as lemon zest and lemongrass notes, at moments suggests merde, good density but could stand additional lift and perfume. Medium-bodied, very well-structured, the tannin evident from the word "go." Acidity in play as well, heightens the presence of the white grapefruit to lemon citrus. While there's no paucity of strawberry, raspberry, blueberry fruit, does tend to get bound up in said structure. Again, no real grassy streak but displays stony poor earth and a dusting of chalkiness. Even as it dries out the palate towards the end, sourness of the fruit lends vibrancy. A solid bistro quaff. 87

Pépière, La  
Loire, Vin de Pays du Jardin de la France, La Pépière Côté  
L6007  
Malbec  
2007, \$14.99, 12.0%

Light murky glow to the red magenta to violet hued core, like a shallow still pond, the rims, dull ruby to dark pink, about average surface shine. The nose offers a moderately broad burst of red currant, cherry, close to strawberry fruit, this anchored by solid merde, damp earth/mud, matted straw, last week's orange rinds and cowhide, not a lot of lift nor length but the initial statement is firm. Medium-bodied with a dense bottom which keeps the proceedings wrapped around the tongue. Don't ignore the tannin, but the acidity snaps at you like a wet towel and amplifies the sourness of the cherry, currant, raspberry fruit. Lemon to white grapefruit citrus, grass, tea leaves, mineral shards and metallic earth on the menu here, much less merde and general barnyardiness. The wattage never goes down through the finish, giving it air time will reward you. Does kind of wear you down some, best consumed with a hearty meal. [Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc] 87

Grands Bois, Domaine Les  
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône, Cuvée Les Trois Soeurs  
Blend

2007, \$14.99, 14.5%

Fat glow to the opaque purple color, this continues through and enlivens the super-saturated ruby to pink magenta rims, rests confidently in the glass. The alcohol kind of peaks through in the nose, however, the richness of the black cherry, blackberry, blueberry scents extinguish this well, blends in cocoa toast, garrigues, charred driftwood, meadow grasses and pebbly dirt. Medium-bodied with a good tannic backbone to firm up the black cherry, plum, blackberry fruit. Here adds a little more grapefruit or lemon citrus, eats some space away from the pressed flowers and meadow breeze. The toast and burnt qualities remain, although they don't always seem like oak. Stays juicy through the end, the tannin not out to spoil the party. Grainy texture left as residue. 65% Grenache, 20% Carignan, 15% Syrah. 87

Cairanne, Cave de  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, Le Pas de la Beaume  
Blend

2006, \$11.99, 13.5%

Standard ruby-violet hued core, stays red garnet at the rims even with a flicker of pink magenta, good clarity throughout. Persistent raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit in the nose with a mixture of garrigues, chocolate, twigs, orange peel, clove and even cola nuances, neither heavy nor flighty in feel, just there when you need it. Medium to full-bodied, here, in spite of the surprising tannic spine it grinds through rather than walk at a brisker pace. A little more herbaceous and twiggy here, the floral side diminished and the white citrus appears later in the game. Retains the semi-candied strawberry, raspberry, blackberry fruit nature but this tails off through the mid-palate. Attractive and not desperate for your attention, probably needs food to show best. 76% Grenache, 8% Syrah, 8% Cinsault, 8% Carignan. 87

## FRANCE WHITE

Cassagnoles, Domaine des  
Southwest France, Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne,  
Cuvée Gros Manseng Reserve Selection

Gros Manseng  
2007, \$10.99, 13.0%

Solid white to yellow gold color of excellent resplendence, the color solid to the rims while squeaky clean and

transparent. In the nose the smoky minerality met by an odd lactose note, then lemon/lime zest, high-toned potpourri, black licorice and mineral water joined by green apple, apricot, pear fruit scents, at times suggests a pinch of chili pepper. Medium-bodied, there is a light creaminess to the texture which, while fleeting, softens the brunt of the mouthwatering acidity, keenly edged lemon, lime, tangerine citrus as well as mixed stony and metallic notes. Snap, snap, snap in the pear, apple, peach fruit, not lacking in depth but prefers to flit about. Pushes against your mouth walls without gaining undue weight, releases so as to join with the lift. Could drink a gallon without noticing. [Screwcap: Kapvins] 91

Sauzet, Etienne  
Burgundy, Puligny-Montrachet  
Chardonnay

2006, \$58.99, 13.0%

The worn yellow color neither dull nor shiny, looks more like a liquid solidified in the glass, hue remains solid through the rims, attractive for its fullness. Toffee and honey glazed bread cascade into the nose, lilacs and candied orange peel keep filling it up until a smoky minerality starts to firm things up, never quite gets there but adds linearity to the basic apricot, peach scents. Medium-bodied, tactful density, while reluctant to flow not aggressively tightly wound. The oak shows more of a fine toast and spiciness here, more space ceded to lime, tangerine citrus, the mixed flowers and mineral dust, metallic shavings. A touch of sourness adds pineapple, nectarine flavors to the apricot, peach base. Spot-on, requires more length and perhaps intensity to be considered superb. 90

Plaimont, Union des Producteurs de  
Southwest France, Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne,  
Colombelle

Blend  
2007, \$9.99, 11.5%

Very light white gold in color, not washed out just no hue really, as one would then expect, fully transparent. Explosive nose of pineapple, guava, papaya fruit and pink grapefruit, lemon citrus, in no way shy, more grassiness than minerality but some of the latter, smoky enough to suggest chili peppers, no relaxing here. Medium-bodied, the weight is front-loaded and falls off thereafter. The acidity is above average but no machete, yet with the zesty pineapple, nectarine, papaya, star fruit flavors it's a non-issue. Then blends in the white to pink grapefruit and lemon citrus. Through the mid-palate relaxes sufficiently to release some flower petals. The mineral or stone elements minor, the cut grass not as sour either. If you want energy in the mouth, it comes cheaply here. 70% Colombard, 30% Ugni Blanc. [Screwcap: Stelvin] 89

Tariquet, Domaine du  
Southwest France, Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne,  
Ugni Blanc - Colombard

Blend  
2007, \$8.99, 10.5%

Clean and mostly transparent golden brown color, significant lose of hue around the rims, sparkling surface primary positive attribute. While not a great deal of weight in the nose there is admirable punch in vanilla cream and cinnamon, ginger baking spice parts, the former makes the florality more dewy than lifting, very light white citrus spritz completes the performance. Medium-bodied, here the cinnamon, clove, ginger, coriander spice more in

charge, virtually dominating the attack. That vanilla creaminess less obvious, perhaps due to the sharpness of the acidity. However, it does lend a poached feel to the peach, pear, apricot fruit. The pink grapefruit to lemon citrus breathes more kick into the proceedings. In turn it might add to the heightened presence of mineral dust and chalk. A touch bitter on the finish, gets your mouth puckering. That said, friendly with uncommon breadth of flavors for the price. 70% Ugni Blanc, 30% Colombard. (Screwcap) 88

Lafage, Maison  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, Côté Est  
Blend  
2007, \$11.99, 13.0%  
Simple white to yellow straw color, attractive resplendency and pooling down into the glass. In the nose the ripeness of the melon, pear, apricot fruit as well as the dollop of freshly whipped cream tamed some by a crystalline smokiness and swift herbaceous snap, minor wafts of lemon citrus, anise and flowers, lifts without losing weight and presence. Medium-bodied, verging on being fuller, however, the acidity springs into action early and introducing a good bit of fluidity and pacing. Here, the floral dimension more in the lead, the lemon to orange citrus sweeter. As one might expect, the stone and white smoke element lessened. Very consistent fullness in the pear, apricot, melon, peach fruit without becoming tiring. Perfumed finish. 50% Grenache Blanc, 30% Chardonnay, 20% Marsanne. 88

Alary, Domaine Denis  
Rhône, Vin de Pays de la Principauté d'Orange, La Grange Daniel  
Roussanne  
2007, \$15.99, 13.5%  
Light translucency bolsters the blockishness of the fat golden color, slight blanching at the rims. Anchors itself well in the nose without losing all sense of freedom of movement, still inert feel to the honey and floral dew, light whipped cream topping to the apricot, pear, peach fruit, thick and round in shape, some minerals, no real nuttiness, the orange, lemon citrus heavy pulp. Medium-bodied plus, here you get the bitter nuts and more aggressive white citrus array. Gets close to bringing out an herbaceous streak, the acidity not keen edged enough to finalize this. Licorice and violets pleasing addition. The nectarine, golden apple, melon, apricot fruit more energetic bursts than consistent presence. Mouth ends up pretty dry by the end. Yet, weight and super-structural breadth most noticeable part of the finish. 88

Gerbeaux, Domaine des  
Burgundy, Mâcon-Solotrè, Le Clos  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$15.99, 13.0%  
In spite of the paleness in the yellow straw coloration, there's a warmth to it which helps it fill the glass well, layers nicely and not much hue loss at the rims. The nose offers more density and throughout than scent intensity, that said, there's pleasant chalky smokiness, fried lemon peels and some wildflowers alongside taciturn apricot, peach, yellow apple scents. More of the same in them mouth, full-bodied with a broad outer skeleton which too does not lack for stuffing. As a result, there's not much pacing nor movement, but this may or may not bother. More floral here, some lift, sweeter nature to the lemon,

orange citrus too. The acidity performs admirably in breaking up some of the density, at the same time doesn't impede juiciness developing in the apricot, pear, peach, green melon fruit. Well done, if does wear down the palate some. (Screwcap) 87

## ITALY RED

Noussan, Franco  
Valle d'Aosta, Vallee d'Aoste, Torrette  
Blend  
2006, \$28.99, 13.0%  
Brick red to purple hue core, above average clarity with scarlet to brick red rims, not much significant change inside-out. At first the nose produces abundant raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit, only to subsequently develop a smoky leather and game dimension, subtle breeze of orange and white grapefruit zest and a pinch of milk chocolate as well as sandalwood musk. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, for its relative lack of heft, the tannins provide plenty of grip and stickiness. Same sweet, almost jammy, quality to the strawberry, raspberry, blueberry fruit, relieved by said tannins. Retains a smoky, leathery edge here but not as prominent as in the nose. The orange citrus sweeter and a more robust floral side emerges. Requires a good deal of air time to show at its best. At least 70% Petit Rouge, remainder 30% unspecified red grapes. 89

Hofstätter, J.  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Meczan Pinot Nero (Blauburgunder)  
Pinot Noir  
2007, \$23.99, 13.0%  
Deep ruby-violet color while remaining crystal clear and unblemished, turns to a slightly more washed out red along the rims, excellent reflectivity. Actively herbaceous nose, smoky as in burnt earth, super-sour raspberry, red cherry, cranberry scents, strong billowing action in the nostrils, light mixture of grapefruit and orange peel, too taut overall to get much more out of it. Light to medium-bodied, gains presence via the raucous acidity. Can't shake that twiggy, leafy character, not offensive but you have to like that kind of stuff. The tartness remains in the cherry, raspberry, cranberry, green apple fruit, alongside a not-so-sweet liqueur to hard candy feel. The orange, lemon citrus elevates here, helps the fruit remain present. Sulfur-like notes come out through the finish, contributing to a shortened ending. 86

## ITALY WHITE

Nusserhof (Heinrich Mayr), Weingut  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Blaterle VINO da Tavola  
Blatterle  
NV, \$28.99, 12.5%  
The pale yellow-green color boosted by a day-glo nature, rims fully transparent. Scrubbed fresh nose of licorice, tangerine zest, sage, lemon Pledge, whisper of apricot, peach fruit, offers more mineral or stream water notes than minerality per se. Medium-bodied, very firm mouth feel makes it heavier at times. The acidity is broad, blankets as it dries, not especially sharp-edged yet completely persistent. Derives a sour edge from the lemon to grapefruit citrus which colors the pear, apricot, apple fruit, brings a pit/skin character. By the third or fourth sip it has saturated all your mouth pores, full-on grip. As in the nose, softer stone, water notes than minerally bite. That said, a certain overall bitterness continues through the

finish. Raw nuts or anise seed at times. Given its intensity, releases some at the end. 2007 vintage version although not labeled as such [L07]. 88

Vinosia  
Campania, Beneventano  
Falanghina  
2007, \$16.99, 13.0%

White to yellow straw in color, haphazard diffusion of light below the surface, thus really neither transparent nor translucent, quietly fills the glass nicely. The nose has lilacs, sweet spices, orange to lemon zest, glazed ham notes, relaxed pear, apple, peach scents with a somewhat medicinal, witch hazel aspect, without really seeming to get up into your nostrils. Medium-bodied, its sinewy build helps it retain a muscular feel in the pear, apple, apricot fruit while likewise yielding in good part to nutmeg, ginger spices and tangerine to lime citrus bite. The acidity on the whole content to just play its part. Florality takes hold nicely through the mid-palate. More weight-driven and thicker than many Falanghina wines but that may not be a bad thing, (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 87

Terlano (Kellerai Cantina Terlan), Cantina  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Terlano Classico, Terlaner  
Blend  
2006, \$20.99, 13.0%

Yellow straw color with equal parts green and zinc orange, definitely bends whatever light tries to penetrate the surface. Fruit pie and glazed crust permeate the nose, mineral smoke, orange rind, have to like how it keeps zigging and zagging as you try to pin it down. Medium-bodied, at once open and spicy as well as woven more tightly by the acidity and the tart quality of the green apple, pear, apricot fruit. No excess here, lean and ready for a 20 mile hike in full gear. Lemon/lime peel, steel flecks, stone bits, does not allow any one element to outstrip the rest. Perhaps as a result, you never feel as if the florality truly spreads its wings. Fills your mouth and doesn't let you get complacent. Knock ten bucks off the price and you have a winner. 60% Pinot Bianco, 30% Chardonnay, 10% Sauvignon Blanc. 87

Bertani, Cav. G. B.  
Veneto, Delle Venezie, Duè Uvè Pinot Grigio & Sauvignon  
Blanc  
Blend  
2007, \$19.99, 12.5%

Very shiny brown to hay gold in color, accretes well depth-wise while extending through the rims as well. Mild cream to the nose, then you get dried yellow and red apples, pear and peach fruit too, pressed flowers and lemon/lime citrus, not especially expressive but does stick around with what it's got. Medium-bodied, credibly presents at once a thick bottom with a more zesty spray comprised of lemon, orange citrus and floral mist. Not lacking in acidity but favors that tongue-hugging weight over and above a sense of quicker pacing. The apricot, peach, nectarine, apple fruit steady as she goes, same intensity level at finish as at start. Brightens into a semi-cleaner finish, not quite refreshing but allows you to take additional sips without getting bloated. 50% Pinot Grigio, 50% Sauvignon Blanc. 87

Haas, Franz  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Delle Venezie, Kris  
Pinot Grigio  
2007, \$10.99, 12.5%

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Brown-yellow straw in color, somewhat flattens out in the glass, not much surface shine but what's there color-wise holds through the rims and down into the glass. Simply constructed nose of lemon/orange zest, a pinch of mineral dust, succinct peach, apricot, pear fruit scents and a pinch of flowers, nothing complex, just makes sure it covers all the basics. Medium-bodied, in the true spirit of playing it safe, stays close to the presentation in the nose, only substantive additions would be the acidic bite as well as, conversely, a creamy underbelly. The lemon and orange citrus, florality and peach, apricot fruit lead the way. Followed on closely by streamwater and stone notes, more fresh than substantial. It's the kind of bottle of Pinot Grigio that you wouldn't feel burned having bought but wouldn't seek out again. 85

## SPAIN RED

Can Blau, Cellers  
Montsant  
Blend  
2007, \$16.99, 14.0%

Unblemished ruby-violet, same coloration but darker at the core, the rims sparkle a touch more. Blackberry, blueberry pie in the nose, sweetened pie crust, molasses, glazed oranges, not a blessed scent that ain't sugary. Medium-bodied, surprisingly tannic attack, sets you back a few paces. Raisin and date mix with blackberry, black cherry fruit flavors, stays on the black fruit end of the spectrum. Smattering of florality along with orange peel, clove and cinnamon spice. Smokiness here breaks up the sweet spectrum. Falls a touch dead near the finish line, spark just goes out. Tacky residue coats the tongue afterwards. 40% Mazuelo, 40% Syrah, 20% Garnacha. 85

## SPAIN SPARKLING

Avinyó  
Penedès, Cava Brut Lot 8204  
Blend  
NV, \$16.99, 11.5%

Pale white straw color about all there is, highly transparent, allows full view of the flurry of both huge and tiny bubbles, all of which persist for some time after the pour. Clean, pure nose of fresh lemon zest, white mineral powder, stream water, trace of baked croissant flakes, maybe licorice, otherwise restrained pear, apple fruit scents, moderate length. Medium-bodied, quite foamy mouth presence, once this subsides some you immediately pick up on the cleansing, drying acidity which is in no way shy. Does have that same lightly honeyed bread quality, especially as it warms, however, the minerality, stoniness loom large. The lemon citrus element fits in here and amplifies the aforementioned. The overall dryness inhibits breadth in the pear, apple, peach flavors, this is not the one to pick if you want an abundance of fruit. Needs to pull back some on the fizz. Unspecified percentages of Macabeo (Viura), Xarel-lo, Parellada. 88

## PORTUGAL RED

Sogrape, Vinhos  
Dão, Grão Vasco  
Blend  
2006, \$6.99, 12.5%

Very light purple colored core, dusky scarlet hued rims, strong for what's there. Dusty nose with dried spices, chocolate powder, sharp-edged currant, red cherry



scents, salty with smoky notes as well, pine cone, not very earthy, simple presentation. Light to medium-bodied, sour and tangy raspberry, red cherry, pomegranate fruit, given the lightness you notice the tannin right away digging into the tongue. Herbaceous with twig and bark elements, the lemon peel brings more tartness to the table. The fruit lifts to the roof of the mouth prior to the final dissolve. Small suggestion of dried flower petals. Exhausts itself trying to hold your attention. Unspecified percentages of Jaen, Alfrocheiro, Tinta Pinheira, Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz. 86

## **SOUTH AFRICA WHITE**

Simonsig  
Stellenbosch  
Chenin Blanc  
2007, \$11.99, 13.5%

Plenty of solidity to the gold, brass color, some brownish hues, average shininess given the frozen blockiness below. Baking spices, pink grapefruit and lemon give the nose sufficient dimension to downplay the ripe pear, yellow apple, apricot, melon fruit scents, possesses a certain smokiness which alludes to absent white pebbles and chalk, while fat on the whole not incapable of some lift and perfume. Full-bodied with richness unto overindulgence, there's a poached or candied nature to the apricot, pineapple, nectarine, pear, passion fruit flavors. The acidity needs a kick in the butt yet things never get soupy nor sleepy. Tangerine, lemon, lime citrus on the sweet side, a nice foil to any grassiness or wooly qualities. Keeps shoulders squared through the finish, no petering off. 87

## **AUSTRALIA RED**

Luchador  
South Australia, Gigante  
Shiraz  
2006, \$18.99, 15.5%

Dense purple core achieves opacity, that said, clear with a natural fade to crimson and garnet red at the rims. There's a certain sluggishness to the nose which suggests excess manipulation, the fruit is a lighter watermelon, raspberry, red cherry in nature, keeps the caramel and molasses accents under control, whisper of eucalyptus, avoids the sort of density which would muffle the scents. Medium-bodied, shows its tannic spine swiftly, dampening the sweetness of the prune, raisin elements through to the black cherry, plum, blackberry fruit. The acidity works in concert with the orange/lemon citrus and pine, adds considerable fluidity. At the end the vanilla cream reemerges strongly. Unlike many others, consciously stays within itself. [Screwcap: Auscap] 87

R Wines  
South Australia, Strong Arms  
Shiraz  
2007, \$12.99, 15.0%

The dark purple core close to black, no problem achieving opacity, the rims a heavy brick red to garnet in color, more somber than vibrant. Polished vanilla ice cream, toffee, caramel infused nose, very smooth with ripe plum, black cherry, blackberry scents and no trace of alcoholic burn, small bursts of orange citrus and eucalyptus. Full-bodied, much more menthol and eucalyptus here as well as more evident alcohol. Element of green apple in the plum, blackberry, cherry fruit, all of which is ripe but not necessarily sugary. Not much to be said for the tannins

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nor acidity but not soft either. Average length on the finish, last to vacate are the caramel, butterscotch, vanilla fudge oak flavors. One of many, potable as such. [Screwcap: Auscap] 86

## **CHILE RED**

Montes  
Colchagua Valley, Apalta Vineyard, Alpha  
Syrah  
2006, \$21.99, 14.5%

The density of the purple core pushes it into opacity, dark ruby rims, however, not excessively saturated, pools solidly in the glass. The butterscotch, caramel oak in the nose is highly polished and densely woven so as to not unduly take up space, the floral and ginger spice dimensions add lift to the sweet plum, blackberry fruit scents, maybe a hint of forest pine but this is a nose crafted for visceral, basic pleasure. Medium-bodied, equally silky smooth in the mouth with just enough uneven tannic roughness to convince you it has structure. Loads the cherry, plum, black raspberry fruit in the mouth entry to mid-palate, does decline subsequently. This initial sweetness brings out tangerine juice, floral dew and more butterscotch. Possesses above average fluidity, moves fairly effortlessly. If it could finish like it started, you might have something. 87

## **ARGENTINA RED**

Achaval-Ferrer  
Mendoza  
Malbec  
2007, \$23.99, 13.5%

Completely unblemished dark purple core, makes very little room around the rims for any ruby or red magenta hues, seamless opacity makes it appear like frozen liquid in the glass. Very focused and sinewy nose filled with pine cones, white grapefruit, mountain trail dust and stones, there's some watermelon and strawberry shades among the raspberry, red cherry fruit scents, only a slight vestige of woodiness for oak, penetrates well enough to linger for some time. Medium-bodied, has some tannic bite, but one suspects that the acidity is the culprit when it comes to the gentle textural fizz and forward motion impetus. A patina of prune adds depth to the otherwise "red" raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit. More floral here in the mouth, the grapefruit sweeter and with less bite. That said, very little "soft" about the wine, has excellent energy and pacing. Comes up with a mineral, stony side as well. Extends through the finish without effort nor attracting attention to itself. 89

Hormigas, Altos Las  
Mendoza  
Malbec  
2007, \$12.99, 14.6%

Pretty much a black purple core, appears easily achieved, transparency comes out through the yet dark red-ruby rims. There's a forced fruitiness to the nose, as if the plum, cherry, black raspberry scents were squeezed for every last drop, some coffee or mocha notes, the oak toasty rather than creamy in effect, starts to develop a floral dimension but doesn't follow through, in fact, little follow-through in general. Medium-bodied, quickly plays the fruit card with black currant, cherry, blackberry flavors. When these start to dissipate, you're left with a skeleton of orange citrus, dried flowers, mixed sweet spices and the

roasted coffee, toasted bread and cocoa powder. There is evidence of tannic dryness but it lacks smoothness and evenness, may be coming from many sources. Overall, the palate suffers from the same lack of integration and harmony found in the nose. (Synthetic cork: Diam) 85

Proviva

Mendoza, Maipo

Cabernet Sauvignon

2007, \$10.99, 14.0%

Pleasingly deep purple color, provides the all but obligatory saturated ruby-magenta rims, very solid looking. Butter spread, butterscotch, honey lurch into the push-up bra wearing plum, cherry fruit scents, for as sugary as it is produces an odd pickled edge, blunt feel, doesn't penetrate very deeply into the nostrils. Medium-bodied and fueled by fruit squeezed to death, the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit possess close to nil natural flow. Allowing for this, there is good heft and persistence to the fruit. The tannins bunch up in parts and feel kind of clogged up. Does present a moderate dose of flowers and lemon citrus. As for oak, there's some toast and burnt notes but nothing which bespeaks of overt slathering. Fits neatly into its slot, no reason for it not to sell, no reason to buy it. (Synthetic Cork) 84

## ARGENTINA WHITE

Riojana Cooperativa, La

La Rioja, Famatina Valley, Santa Florentina

Torrentés

2008, \$8.99, 12.5%

All but completely white in color, hint of brown in the very core, has some surface shine while also some translucent shimmer below. The nose presents as much herbaceous and asparagus notes as flower petals, as it warms the orange and grapefruit scents really take hold, something evocative of oil in there, linear character to the apricot, peach scents, almost gone before they are there. Medium-bodied, strong acidity and textural powderiness gives it plenty of traction in the palate. The herbaceous thing does not subside, odd for the grape, but not entirely unpleasant. No lack of spark in the orange, lemon and grapefruit citrus, while at the same time more give in the nectarine, pineapple, apricot fruit. Almost hits you with jalapeño pepper at times. It has personality and stands up for itself, just not sure it's what one would "expect" before popping the cork. (Synthetic Cork) 87