

In case anyone was wondering, working in the wine business sucks royally.

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**This month's big winners...** Le Clos du Tue-Bœuf from the Touraine area of the Loire makes most excellent wines and their 2009 red blend "La Guerrierie" is remarkable even by their standards. \$24 is a steal price and naturally makes it unsalable in North Carolina. Zenato is an Italian producer which can easily be slagged by wine geeks for making mainstream, by-the-numbers wine. And most of the time, slag away. That said, Hanes derived simple pleasure from their 2009 Trebbiano bottling from Lugana named "San Benedetto." It's just fun to drink so back off you bastards. Bryan Harrington of Harrington Wines seems to get little press but he makes some high quality Californian Pinot Noir, in this instance the 2007 Wiley Vineyard bottling from Anderson Valley. Both pretty and complex, Hanes can say it merits the \$45 price tag. It's been awhile since Hanes has said much about Turley's entry level "Old Vines" Zinfandel but the 2008 seemed like one of the better offerings in years so, yup, this remains a good value at \$25 per bottle winery direct. A bunch of wines imported by the Mosel Wine Merchant became available within North Carolina so Hanes simply had to sample a bunch. Tops among them is the 2009 Peter Lauer Riesling Ayler Kupp "QbA Fass 6 Senior" – unique in that it is aged "sur lie" in a combination of old oak and stainless steel. To Hanes, the oak comes through clearly and brings more complexity than distraction. \$28 seems about fair. Right behind in second place was the 2009 Clemens Busch QbA Trocken which hits the right notes as a "Trocken" wine without pushing it too far just 'cause it can. Which many Trocken Rieslings do. Again, \$23 or so appears acceptable for what you get in the bottle. Next up and just too pricey at \$17 for the value section, the 2009 Chardonnay "Hummingbird Series" from Clos LaChance in Monterey is a highly enjoyable wine with a lot going on, not all of which will have broad appeal. Hopefully it will appeal to broads. The 2009 vintage in Beaujolais remains contentious for many as regards ripeness and/or ageability, however, the 2009 Fleurie "Cuvée Tardive" from Clos de la Roilette is might fine drinking right now. Just make sure you empty the whole bottle as it's at \$30 now, ouchy. Hanes's first wine made from the Bukettraube grape was an unqualified success. The 2010 version from South African producer Cederberg was a delightful blend of fruit, spice and everything nice. And very well-priced at \$16. Alas, not much of it made so supply was almost gone before it got here, drats. Hanes never gets tired of drinking the Vouvray wines of Huet and as a result lauds them all but uniformly. The 2009 sec bottling from the Le Haut-Lieu parcel is "mind-boggling" (to borrow a phrase) and Hanes would buy a lot for the cellar if he had any money and he thought there was a future.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** Prosecco is kind of a category that doesn't lend itself to discussion of which producer is the best or the worst. It's usually all just kind of "Prosecco." That said, the latest "Extra Dry" non-vintage release from Trevisiol is damn good and a candidate for "cheap bottle of bubbly you always have in the fridge just in case." Not bad for \$15. For as many vintages as they continue to nail it, Hanes will laud Monpertuis's 100% Counoise blend from the Vin de Pays du Gard. The 2007 is every bit up to snuff as past vintages and at \$15 an easy buy. If someone likes Chianti Classico and just wants a basic bottle, they should be well served by the 2008 Fattoria di Bibbiani "Poggio Vignoso" bottling for like \$13. Fruity, floral, easy to access and digest. While also not feeling "industrial." The new 2009 vintage of Sasha Lichine's Languedoc blend "Le Coq Rouge" is out and is fruity and sweet and what you *can* sell for around \$13 these days. Should improve in bottle over the short term too. Bidoli in the Grave del Friuli makes a Sauvignon Blanc for about \$14 which is hard to see not selling once people taste it. The thing is, see, they have to taste it and Hanes cannot afford to keep an open bottle on hand at all time. Get peeps past the fact that it is from Northern Italy and you might just have a repeat customer. In searching for a new cheap Riesling the 2009 Schloss Koblenz (St. Christopher) Riesling Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Spätlese was a nice find at around \$14. Not sure of the production numbers but it seems there should be a bunch around to be had. The 2009 Monte La Sarda Garnacha from Spain offers more structure and non-fruit flavor that one normally expects for under \$15. Hence, it sells like shit.

**And the disappointments...** Tried a couple of cheap Merlots to see if they could find a place on the shelf, the 2007 Tortoise Creek from Clarksburg and the Leaping Lizard from Napa Valley. Both were subpar and the Leaping Lizard tasted like lizard. Hanes seems to remember having decent wines from Tortoise Creek in the distant past so maybe this is an aberration. The 2005 was very good so Hanes took a chance on the 2007 bottling of Château Haut-La Péreyre's Bordeaux Supérieur rouge. Alas, not so good, nowhere near the 2005 in flavor and overall value, being priced at about \$15. Next, how the mighty have fallen. While always questionably priced, it is safe to say that Hanes has consistently been a Jermann slut. Just luvs thens wines. Then there is the 2008 Pinot Grigio which is more pedestrian than 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Broadway after The Lion King lets out. \$26, methinks not!

Contrary to popular belief, it is true that Hanes can offer lukewarm reviews of wines imported by Louis/Dressner. Here, the 2009 Luneau-Papin Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie "Clos des Allées Vieilles Vignes" is good but not truly the sparkling, nervy bottle of Muscadet it should be. There, it's said. Like all wine geeks Hanes often gets suckered into purchasing wine that he suspects will not deliver as promised. But the itch to KNOW is too great. The 2009 Friulano from the Collio in Northern Italy made by Azienda Agricola Toros is one such wine. Well-conceived and even dapper, \$45 is waaaaay overboard pricewise here. Like waaaaay. Maybe some fancy sommelier can convince a customer this is *the* bottle they have to have tonight, Hanes is one and done with it.

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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/oldervintages2011.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

Harrington Wines

Anderson Valley, Wiley Vineyard

Pinot Noir

2007, \$44.99, 14.0%

Slight filminess to the cranberry red to violet hued core, as if minimally filtered, hard to gauge due to the aforementioned but the surface seems clean and reflective, color depth holds on respectably through the rims, little, if any, change in hue as well. There's a fullness to the nose which belies its nimble nature, excellent energy and movement found in the raspberry, strawberry, rhubarb, green apple fruit scents, the mixed white and pink grapefruit to lemon citrus juicy, the florality doesn't seek attention, just fills the spaces left to it, stone shards and parched brown earth there, no greenness at all although, at times, the alcohol peeks through. Medium-bodied, mostly light of touch but when it does press more deeply into the

tongue there's a velvety grip, catch. The acidity does a great job of framing the raspberry, strawberry, cranberry, apple fruit, allows both depth and snap. The grapefruit, orange citrus can put its shoulder into you but usually doesn't. After a few sips you notice that the tannin ain't no slouch, helps ground it and tease out more stone, earth, chalk notes. Ends with a kick across the finish line without sacrificing too much delicacy. Hides the alcohol well and keeps the focus on the lively fruit. 92

Neyers

Contra Costa County, Pato Vineyard

Zinfandel

2008, \$39.99, 14.6%

Very clear, the ruby tinged purple core is deep enough to keep full transparency at bay, the rims display crimson red, vermilion shading, nice surface luster. While the nose is open and agreeable, it is also wiry with no fat on its bones, flower petals and orange pulp add more cushion for the blackberry, blueberry, raspberry scents, toasted chocolate powder, menthol

rub and then a curious hot pepper swipe, has a mountain air quality, road scrub, dried earth and all. Medium-bodied, doesn't push it too far in trying to impress, at the same time the weight stays constant start to finish. Can't say much for tannins but the acidity breaks the surface now and then. This pulls out more mandarin orange, lemon and lower white grapefruit citrus. In turn it adds a bit of cranberry, sour cherry to the blackberry, boysenberry base. Chocolate, caramel, butterscotch there, overall the oak not an overbearing presence. The hard candy nature of the fruit extends the finish a few more feet. No rough patches to be found. 89

Housley's Century Oak Winery  
Central Valley, Lodi, Old Vine  
Zinfandel  
2007, \$19.99, 13.6%

Scarlet-purple hued core of good cleanliness and shine, the magenta to scarlet rims stay red even as gaining in transparency. This nose has a quiet confidence to it, doesn't get all jammy in the blackberry, blueberry, boysenberry fruit department, scents more black than red but bright like the latter, the orange to lemon citrus stretches out in your nostrils, more flowers than menthol, only a brush of chocolate and baking spices, happy to approach you without adornment. Medium-bodied and you really feel the lower alcohol content right off, allows more acidity and to an extent tannin show well and fashion a drier profile without high octane jamminess. By the same token, the blackberry, raspberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit displays focused leanness while easily lasting through the finish. A mild sourness comes from the lemon, orange, grapefruit citrus. Through the mid-palate the chocolate and eucalyptus blossoms to provide a coating grip. Pleasing to find the wine present traditional Zin characteristics without getting all in your face about it. 89

Turley  
Regional Blend, Old Vines  
Zinfandel  
2008, \$25.00, 15.6%

Sufficient filminess in the ruby tinged purple core to be opaque, thinner ruby-magenta rims but no less effulgent, glows with youth. The nose simply expresses a bushel of blackberry, blueberry, raspberry, cranberry fruit with a thick dew of floral water, vanilla fudge and toffee crunch distract momentarily, juicy orange slabs, the fruit comes across as bottom heavy enough that it never lifts and it is difficult to register more than fruit. Full-bodied, dense from beginning to end, however, the acidity can knock some of the fat off here and there as it moves forward. Pliant, not soft, as much contour and

buoyancy to the blackberry, raspberry, blueberry, apple, red cherry fruit as raw juiciness. The caramel, butterscotch, vanilla oak works hard to support the fruit and help coat your mouth pores. Orange blossom and lilacs don't lift but do keep it sweet. After a glass or two you have to give it credit, while simple, devoid of flaws and remarkably consistent and full to the very last drop. 88

Ancient Peaks  
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2008, \$19.99, 14.5%

While squeaky clean, the fullness of the violet core brings it close to full opacity, noticeably broad crimson to garnet rims, full of life and energy, exudes confidence in the glass. Ripe, dense plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit scents without a trace of excess sugar, brings mocha powder, caramel and toffee without the oak ever approaching being overbearing, mint and flowers, thick orange juice, displays a good deal of lift without betraying any alcoholic fumes. Full-bodied, plush and well-stuffed, a bit too heavy to call it "soft" even though there's nary a rough edge and the tannins are beaten like a veal cutlet. Sweet orange, tangerine citrus stays in the forefront, any turn to a more sour profile thwarted by oaky butterscotch, caramel, vanilla fudge flavors. Generously layered blackberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit has an incipient prune accent. Nods slightly at cedar or leather, right now this is an intelligent fruit bomb which should provide visceral enjoyment to its intended audience over the next 1-3 years. Who gives a shit about the rest. Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Syrah. 88

Brazin  
Central Valley, Lodi, Old Vine  
Zinfandel  
2007, \$14.99, 15.0%

Spotless and mostly transparent crimson tinged purple core, not much change towards the rim, more of a burnt red color. The caramel, butterscotch, milk chocolate scents help dampen the alcoholic burn in the nose, equal effort expended by the blackberry, plum, black cherry, boysenberry fruit to smooth things out, orange juice, mix of eucalyptus and meadow grasses, lots of overall power but strikes you as four-square, nothing new under the sun. Full-bodied but not really thick, more so just piles the sugary sweetness on to create the impression of weight. Better acidity than expected, alcohol less overt here, paced decently. The tangerine, grapefruit citrus jostles to the front and lends the brightness needed to zap some of the sugar in the blackberry, raspberry, blueberry, boysenberry fruit flavors. The oak reveals

butterscotch, toffee, not overdone, again helps to cover up some heat. Basically, just lots of fruit and sweetness without any secondary notes of, err, note. Fruity Zin lovers who want value will be pleased. 87

Tortoise Creek  
Central Valley, Clarksburg  
Merlot

2007, \$13.99, 14.0%

Unblemished but somewhat dark purple core, gives way to broad red-ruby to scarlet rims, decent saturation with a sleek surface sheen. The nose comes off somewhat flat, like it can't get its ducks in a row, no lack of raspberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, and with some floral mist and sour orange zest, even a dash of cocoa powder, has most of the elements there but they don't coalesce into a team. Medium-bodied, smooth enough, possessed of a subtle tannic foundation, lends grit and more texture to the cherry, blackberry fruit, which needs it given so-so length. Cocoa to mocha dry, the oak is minimal but shows like it sort of has to be there. More floral here, mint and orange peel help eke out breadth. Overall, it seems like a clean and honest wine, however, not one that gives immediate pleasure nor follows its own path enough to intrigue for its uniqueness. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 85

Leaping Lizard  
Napa Valley  
Merlot

2007, \$13.99, 13.5%

Clear ruby-purple core with a suggestion of brown, the rims brick red, like burning embers, interesting coloration, doesn't appear to have been messed with much. There's a certain rawness to the nose, kinda like sawdust and worn, cracked leather, strong acrid smokiness to animality, very pungent, masks most of the cherry, red currant fruit scents, underneath it all a good measure of pretty flower petals struggles to survive. Light to medium-bodied, here too the oak seems worn out and lacking in freshness, yet, the major component. Burnt wood, cedar chips, dried orange peels, kindling smoke, leather and flowers pressed in grandma's keepsake book are most of the action. The cherry, raspberry, currant fruit dry and lean and more or less gonzo by the finish. Wish there was more to say but this is just a ho-hum, fairly existentially flawed bottle of wine. (Synthetic Cork) 82

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Clos LaChance  
Monterey County, Hummingbird Series  
Chardonnay  
2009, \$16.99, 13.5%

Above average depth to the golden hue presented, bit of translucent shimmer, nothing worrisome about the hue lose around the rims, sits in the glass like it feels it belongs. Surprisingly smoky nose with jalapeño and pickle notes, a pleasing sort of sourness, high-toned pineapple, papaya, nectarine, green apple, pear fruit, supported ably by mandarin orange, grapefruit shades, for all of its ripe juiciness, gets up after you like it wants to take you down, has a stony, mineral quality but whereas most of the time this would be leading the edgy vanguard, here at the back of the line. Medium-bodied, has a clean feeling to it, the acidity has power but does not abuse it, through the mid-palate develops a dustier, drier mouth feel. That same pickle juice sourness pervades the mouth, not a bad thing but will be quite unexpected for those not, umm, expecting it. Good vibrancy, grapefruit, lemon citrus brighter than expected, has something akin to minerality but not just so, steady center to the green apple, pineapple, guava, pear, nectarine fruit. While it declines through the finish, this is a conscious part of the presentation, much better than an abrupt fall off. Challenging for the price. (Screwcap: Savin) 88

Hayes Ranch  
Regional Blend, California, Best Foot Forward  
Chardonnay

2008, \$11.99, 13.5%

Bright gold color, not especially deep, however, yellows out through the lighter rims, hazy below the surface, lazy on it. Musky floral, citrusy nose with lemon/lime, rose notes as well as softer yeast, white bread, pie crust notes, close to poached apricot, peach, pear, yellow apple fruit scents, vanilla pudding, cinnamon, delivers about all you want out of a Chardonnay at this price point with a judicious oaking. Medium-bodied, soft and almost milky, the yeast to lactose component softens things without any souring effect. Fruit cocktail of apricot, pear, peach, cherry, grape fruit, amazingly follows the script as if born to do so. No acidity, leans on its inherent weight to provide some semblance of structure. Creamy vanilla, butterscotch, marshmallow flavors help fill the center. Loses shape as it warms. Confectionary lemon, lime, orange citrus flavors. cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg spices conjure up more fruit pie sentiments. It's really quite crafty, gets you to like it in spite of your base instincts. Hard to argue the price, a credible choice for inexpensive Chardonnay. 97% Chardonnay, 3% Gewürztraminer. Sourced from Livermore Valley and Monterey County. (Screwcap) 87

Racchus Wines  
Regional Blend, Reserve  
Blend  
2009, \$13.99, 14.4%

Well-layered dark gold to amber in color, translucent enough to mask the weaker rims. The nose is fat and pungent, vanilla fudge and whipped cream, dewy flower petals, orange sherbet, whole cloves, generous pineapple, papaya, nectarine, green apple, passion fruit scents, for all of its weight kinda over-aggressive and the alcohol peeks through at times. Full-bodied, dense and fat here as well, moves at a slow, extended pace. Spicy, clove, ginger, pepper with zesty pink grapefruit, tangerine, lime citrus, curious for how it has such density yet can cut you like a sharpened knife. Moderate acidity, for whatever reason dries up some through the finish. Thick pineapple, papaya, guava, nectarine, apricot fruit. Some vanilla and caramel but less of the oak-like accents found in the nose. Certainly makes an impression as you sip. 58% Chardonnay, 9% Pinot Grigio, 6% Muscat Canelli, 5% Viognier, 5% Pinot Blanc, 5% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% French Colombard, 3% Marsanne, 1% Sémillon. 87

#### Napa Cellars

Napa Valley

Chardonnay

2009, \$18.99, 14.2%

Full golden hue, shiny surface while dull layering beneath, the rims are semi-dilute but no questioning the depth of the core. Classic Cali Chard oak to the nose, ginger and clove, spiced oranges, vanilla bean, butterscotch, overall more toast than creaminess, although softness and poached nature to the peach, apricot, apple, pear fruit scents bring their own round feel to your nostrils, floral as well but not too much else, not much else expected. Medium-bodied, the toastiness here cinches the belt an extra notch, buttered toast, same baking spices, gingerbread, butterscotch, few, if any, creamy accents. The orange to lemon/lime citrus juicy and sweet, still feels as if spiced. The cut of the oak creates an impression of racier acidity, hey, maybe it is there. Light pie flake aspect. Given efforts to showcase the peach, nectarine, apricot, pear fruit achieves a certain plushness but no heaviness and carves out a more or less average finish. At a 35,000 case production, hits the customer's sweet spot and should sell out with ease. 87

#### WASHINGTON RED

Cougar Crest

Walla Walla Valley, Anniversary Cuvée

Blend

2005, \$35.99, 13.9%

Not hazy but caught between clarity and an incipient opacity in the purple bruise to scarlet core, the rims coming on with an advanced brick red cast, not losing color but looks a few years older than what the label

says. The nose yields a good deal of oak, vanilla fudge, dill, butterscotch, milk chocolate, maple syrup, a fair amount of grassiness, less so earthiness, drying cedar, growing dried fruit character to the cherry, currant, blackberry fruit with accents of apricot and apple as well, pungent, however, could have more lasting power. Full-bodied as a result of the density of the fruit, sits squarely in the center of the tongue, not nearing your cheeks. On the whole soft, the tannins and acidity throw a few obligatory punches, a lot of what's here is wood tannin. Hence, abounds with flavors of caramel, butterscotch, molasses, mesquite smoke, fried butter. The dill drawn more into the herbaceousness and other herbal bits. Sugary, concentrated red currant, cassis, plum, cherry fruit, subordinate to the oak and weakens through the finish. White grapefruit, orange citrus brings some bite and contributes to a smokiness. It's alright, needs to dial back the oak. 44% Cabernet Sauvignon, 38% Merlot, 18% Petit Verdot. (Composite Cork) 87

#### Independent Producers

Columbia Valley

Merlot

2008, \$14.99, 13.5%

Red garnet to violet hued core, transparent, only change at the rims is that it ditches any pretense towards purple, unblemished surface melds into the whole below. Pine, licorice and anise seed team up with white grapefruit to tart up the nose before hard candy in character strawberry, red cherry, watermelon fruit hits the set, lilacs, more artifice than artificial here, uglier for all the makeup. Medium-bodied with a decline from attack to finish, just not a lot of primary oomph to make it the whole way through. Tannins come across as slightly underripe without getting grossly green. The candied nature of the raspberry, strawberry, cherry, apple fruit compensates adequately. Molasses, honey, butterscotch, vanilla bean steadily mixed into the whole. You can tell it's not an extracted, alcoholic mess but it still seems massaged. Orange, pink grapefruit, lemon pulp possesses a powdered drink nature. Easily going to fool lots of people into liking it but the emperor has no clothes. (Synthetic Cork) 85

#### FRANCE RED

Clos du Tue-Bœuf, Le

Loire, Touraine, La Guerrierie

Blend

2009, \$23.99, 12.5%

No filminess but there's a thicker warmth in the opaquely saturated purple core, broad ruby-magenta rims full of life, resplendent surface. The nose is pungent and billows like a pregnant cloud in there, the

peanut shells, merde wiped out by sharp white grapefruit notes, leather and fresh horsehide, earthen mud, wildflowers, wood smoke, cedar, even horseradish, fully ripened plum, black cherry, blackberry scents, as it opens keeps the shape but softens and lengthens some. Medium-bodied, tough and throws its shoulder into you from the start, crackles with minerals, stones, earth and green forest matter, tree bark. The white grapefruit, lemon citrus cuts a wide swath down the middle, opens the palate for the raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit. Tannin and acidity tries to get real assertive but the fruit squashes it. Suave brashness, when you think it's done, smacks you upside the head to prove you wrong. Unspecified percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon, Côt. 91

Monpertuis, Domaine

Rhône, Vin de Pays du Gard, Vignoble de la Ramière  
Cépage Counoise

Counoise

2007, \$14.99, 13.0%

Sparkling clear, a perfect mix of ruby and violet from core to rims, highly reflective surface, has a youthfully high gloss. The nose has a gentle penetration to it, the white grapefruit, minerals and floral dust forestall the advent of the sweet and sour raspberry, red cherry, pomegranate fruit which slowly adopts a dominant position, the straw and grass element powdery, at times verges on a muddy earthen funk. Medium-bodied, possesses a nice sappy grip while the acidity and, to a lesser extent, tannin prod things into a fairly steady fluidity. White grapefruit, lemon citrus brighten the already sour raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit, stony and grassy but not earthy nor herbaceous. The floral element crests now and then. This is arguably about as "fruit forward" as an old school, traditional wine gets, ever-present while woven into a full cloth. The acidity really takes hold through the finish, underscoring the stone, meadow grasses and citrus. A perfect food wine while also a delightful thirst slaking sipper. 90

Clos de la Roilette (Coudert Père et Fils)

Beaujolais, Fleurie, Cuvée Tardive

Gamay Noir

2009, \$29.99, 13.0%

Trim, clean ruby-magenta core with some violet thrown in, consistent to the rims where it just becomes a bit redder, real easy to see through with a sleek surface shine as well. Violets, lilacs and a candied cherry, raspberry, strawberry aspect give the nose a slightly confectionary nature, chocolate, cocoa with orange juice and only a thin coating of stone, chalk dust or twigginess. Medium-bodied, close to fat at times but really just youthfully chubby, start to dry up some through the mid-palate but you can't really say it's due

to acidity, maybe you might even give more points to the tannins. Super-ripe cherry, raspberry, strawberry, watermelon fruit, juicy orange, lemon citrus and mint, flowers, every aspect primed for pleasure. Milk chocolate and mocha in fine proportion. Flavorful finish, broad and good palate coverage. So much to enjoy now, not going to even get involved in debates about future development. 90

Voillot, Domaine Joseph

Burgundy, Bourgogne, Vieilles Vignes

Pinot Noir

2008, \$24.99, 13.0%

Light, squeaky clean and clear red magenta, garnet and lighter purple color, little difference from core to rims, only difference at the outside is a tinge of burnt orange. Fresh meadow breeze full of grass and wildflowers, hard candy red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit scents, the orange and white grapefruit citrus cuts through your nostrils with the ease of a sharpened machete, menthol and licorice freshen things, flicker of mineral dust, same for cocoa dust, very enjoyable and direct, no real earthiness or merde. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, firmly structured by both acidity and tannin, while never suggesting too much structure, allows a paced, steady flow of cherry, strawberry, watermelon, raspberry fruit through to the finish. The white grapefruit citrus here too plays a dominant role, close to stealing the spotlight. Close to zero greenness, just very acceptable grass and earth. As well as a suitable brace of mineral powder. Has energy to spare. 89

Champault et Fils, Roger

Loire, Sancerre, Les Pierris

Pinot Noir

2008, \$25.99, 12.5%

Squeaky clean, fully transparent rust red to garnet, barely a trace of purple, more apt to serve up some orange around the rims, highly reflective surface. The nose is not quite "delicate" but is semi-shy, bright and freshly scrubbed red cherry, raspberry fruit with a side dish of minerally smokiness, softly pulsing undercurrent of lemon, orange peel, closer to naked than unadorned. Medium-bodied, only the thrust in the acidity and lower tannins keep it out of light-bodied territory. Excellent ripeness in the otherwise dusty red cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit, lots of stone, chalk and mineral water. Lemon, grapefruit citrus has mild zest, inches the finish forward some. The smokiness is sweeter here, touches of caramel and toffee. Smooth finish, more than acceptable length, softens through the end. 88

Belle, Domaine de La  
Bordeaux, Côtes de Duras, Cuvée Barrique  
Blend

2005, \$16.99, 12.5%

Flat crimson to purple hued core, broad blood red rims with a rusty tint, good saturation while also clean and transparent at the outer reaches. Soft and fruity nose, grapey with cherry, blueberry, raspberry scents, very primary yet, as for the “barrique” part of the show, some toffee and buttered croissant but not that oaky, pressed flowers and orange citrus, touch of cedar, smells like it was bottled a few months ago. Medium-bodied, does a good job of palate coverage, soaks in quickly aided by cherry, blackberry, blueberry, black grape fruit and juicy orange to grapefruit citrus.

Caramel, butterscotch, dough flakes, milk chocolate a steady minor presence. The tannin and acidity not out for blood, however, do show up frequently enough to keep things on the up-and-up. Drier finish showing cedar, mesquite chips, brown earth, rose petals.

Crafted in a user friendly manner, each successive sip draws you in further. Unspecified percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec. (Composite Cork) 88

Grosbois, Domaine  
Loire, Chinon, Gabare  
Cabernet Franc

2008, \$20.99, 12.5%

Red-ruby inflected purple core, any filminess in the core dissipates towards the effulgent crimson to red brick rims, trim surface. In the nose flowers and orange juice set the stage for the bountiful cherry, red currant, blackberry scents, meadow grasses and hay, minimal green pepper or tougher herbaceousness, touch of earth, taken as a whole it's primary with decent Cabernet Franc typicity, if not grandeur. Medium to full-bodied, the fullness of the same cherry, blackberry, currant fruit hampered by a certain dryness, albeit this only in part attributable to the tannins, the latter adequate but by no stretch a major force. Orange, lemon pulp and sweet cedar help it soak in further. Towards the back half takes on a dried fruit concentration and slowed pacing. Shock of bell pepper welcome, teases out some dried lawn grass. The stone and earth a steady influence, this without imparting any distinct terroir. Tang and liveliness its strongest points, best consumed over shorter term horizon. 88

Basty, Château du  
Beaujolais, Régnié  
Gamay Noir

2009, \$15.99, 13.0%

Clear, unblemished ruby-violet core, sufficiently dark to stave off complete transparency, forceful coloration

through to the rims. Minerally, stony crinkle to the nose, pit and skin aspect to the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry scents, green apple too, the floral dimension brings gentleness, then sour lemon zest takes it in the opposite direction, only moderate fullness in the nostrils but keeps kicking for some time. Medium-bodied, strong frame with both the acidity and tannin at the right level to give it life and purpose as well as provide ample romping room for the strawberry, watermelon, apple, raspberry fruit. The minerally charge welcome, lesser stoniness as well, but it is the lemon/lime citrus which keeps you awake at night. Succinct finish, flavors alive but not intended to seek a punishingly long end. 88

Compagnie France Malbec, La  
Southwest France, Cahors, Oltis Expression de  
France Réserve Marie  
Malbec

NV, \$11.99, 13.0%

The core is a dark purple, the ruby only begins to show further out, on the way to brick red and scarlet hues, clear liquid, no filminess at all. The nose has an older, aged feel about it, prune, cedar and cigar box notes rule with crushed orange peels, cloves and sandalwood next, beyond the obvious dried fruit edge scents of plum, black cherry, black currant easily found, surprising lack of earthiness while, umm, not seeming that earthy either. Medium-bodied, sets itself squarely in the mouth, not immobile more not concerned to move. The prune, raisin right out there but not that sweet, plenty of dusty tannin to go around. Thus, the cherry to currant fruit stays bound up as well. In no way underfruited though, and supplemented by orange citrus spice and incense accents. More leather, earth and loam here, has a very natural, unforced feel to it. (Assemblage of 2002, 2004 and 2005 vintages, from the “Barrique Perpétuelle” practice) 87

90+ Cellars  
Languedoc/Roussillon, French Fusion Lot 21  
Blend

2008, \$17.99, 14.0%

Light dusky quality to it less evident in the straight-up purple core than around the red-magenta to dark ruby rims, surface has decent sheen. There's a wiry directness to the nose, brisk cranberry, red raspberry, red cherry, blackberry fruit scents, wildflowers and mint, dried orange pulp, zips by before more could develop, you do feel the alcohol fumes peek through now and then. Medium-bodied, benefits from very firm acidity, pares things down to the basics. Herbaceous in a good way, twiggy, leafy with accompanying earthiness and accents of olive pit and wet fur. That said, not that “funky” plenty of room for the cherry,

raspberry, rhubarb fruit to spread out. Orange, lemon citrus, little dollop of toffee, wafts of fluffy florality. Energetic finish, doesn't offer anything uniquely different but hard to not keep sipping. 60% Syrah, 30% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre. 87

Texier, Eric  
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône  
Blend  
2008, \$17.99, 12.5%

Nice darkness to the garnet to purple core, does so without obscuring the clarity throughout the liquid, the rims lighten only a touch to full ruby-magenta, surface is reflective and shine about where it should be. Pepper, pepper and more pepper in the nose, sour rhubarb, cranberry, raspberry, pomegranate fruit in the nose, lemon pulp and rind, finely ground mineral dust, smoky and meaty, behind that you get mint, anise and a honey glaze, very nice mix of scents and lively. Medium-bodied, wiry but has give, not a block in your mouth. The acidity is too aggressive and tends to attack anything with sweetness in it, be this the honey, the lemon to white grapefruit citrus, or the plum, raspberry, cranberry, apple fruit. Too dry, this allows for a woody herbal element to take too much territory. Still, the stone and mineral elements work well and that vague smokiness adds energy. Not as dominant as in the nose but the pepperiness is there. Almost counter-intuitively, softens as it finishes and soaks a touch more into the palate. 80% Grenache Noir, remainder Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Bourboulenc. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 87

Lichine, Sasha  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Oc, Le Coq Rouge  
Blend  
2009, \$12.99, 14.0%

Opaque purple core, luxuriously slow fade to saturated pink-magenta to ruby rims, cleanliness evident there, light reflects off the surface brightly. Thick, fruity nose of raspberry, cherry, blackberry, boysenberry, also hits you with serious bubblegum and banana notes, peels off in slabs, orange juice, mint jelly and, really, not much else, extremely primary. Full-bodied, overloads on the fruit, lots of cherry, blackberry, raspberry, sweet and sugary if somewhat absent at the finish line. Mixes in caramelized brown sugar, milk chocolate and molasses to deepen its approachability. The orange citrus sweet as well, No acidity, the tannins have a life maintaining pulse at best. Sugary enough that it is difficult to gauge other aspects, again, mint and flowers. One thing is for sure, this is a fruit forward, how can I please you, kind of wine that should even become more so with a few months of bottle time. 51%

Merlot, 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Syrah, 2% Grenache. (Screwcap: Stelvin Lux+) 87

Haut-La Péreyre, Château  
Bordeaux, Bordeaux Supérieur  
Blend  
2007, \$14.99, 13.0%

Attractive dark violet hued core, thinnish red magenta rims reveal underlying clarity, saturated but not heavy handed about it. Anise, grass, lemon pulps, parched earth and cracked leather give the nose a more roughhewn character that it likely intended, attenuated cherry, red currant, blackberry fruit, thrust but not juice, something like slowly decomposing autumn leaves, light burnt dark chocolate, it's not really a "country wine" as much as underripe and struggling to hide the fact as best as possible. Medium-bodied, displays some phenolic immaturity causing an astringent dryness and truncated flow, tannins not in proportion to the whole. Twigs, grass, tree leaves and earth alongside sun-baked leather is not setting a welcoming table for what cherry, currant, raspberry fruit there may be. The orange, lemon citrus dried out some, not even that much spritz. Vague accents of flower petals and chocolate. This is a quality château which normally delivers above this level. Perhaps some crap vintage circumstances. 55% Merlot, 45% Cabernet Sauvignon. 84

## FRANCE WHITE

Huet, Domaine  
Loire, Vouvray, Le Haut-Lieu, Sec  
Chenin Blanc  
2009, \$29.99, 13.0%

Brownish yellow straw color, too solid and block-like too have layering, just density, strong rims with about as much surface sparkle as could be expected. The nose comes alive with mineral and stone dust, could get you to sneeze from dryness were it not for the spoonful of honey and orange blossom quickly dropped into the mix, the nectarine, pineapple, pomegranate, kiwi fruit scents incisive at first, broaden and turn ever so creamier as it warms, in turn smokier when colder, leaves you with the impression there's room to fill out. Medium-bodied, fleshy attack with beeswax, honey, lemon to lime pie leading the way, doughy qualities more baked flakes than raw dough or yeast. The acidity falls on the plus side, may get to show more cut once the baby fat is gone. Sweet and savory green apple, pear, nectarine, pineapple, papaya fruit, not juicy enough for full-on tropicality. The creaminess is more like freshly whipped cream than lactose. The stone, mineral, streamwater components maintain a lowkey, yet consistent, presence, hard not to play second fiddle to the fruit and citrus today. High



quality juice, delicious today, maybe more so down the road. 93

Gahier, Michel  
Jura, Arbois, Les Crêts  
Chardonnay  
2006, \$26.99, 12.5%

Qualifies as an “orange wine,” yet retains as much dark gold as zinc, uncut block in the glass, translucent, given its solidity curious loss of hue around the rims surface effortlessly reflective. With baking spices, yeast, raw pie dough and honey, there’s definitely an oxidative quality to it while keeping an admirable amount of freshness via the green and yellow apple, pear, peach and green melon fruit, the lemon and lime citrus sweet but tangy too, vague hint of spearmint as well as jalapeño, at times smoky but not that stony nor minerally. Full-bodied, the acidity is sneaky, not wicked but above average and picks its spots when to appear. More of that briny edge, welcome for how it energizes the lemon, grapefruit citrus and teases out additional stone and clay like notes. Well honeyed with beeswax and lanolin, almost evocative of Chenin Blanc. Mint and lilacs, clean contour to the peach, apple, pear, apricot fruit, youthful, especially as here the oxidative qualities are much lower. There’s yeast and dough, less sweet spices. Strikes an agile balance between both sweet and sour and sweet and dry. Arguably improves closer to room temperature. 89

Grange (Pierre Luneau-Papin), Domaine de La Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Clos des Allées, Vieilles Vignes  
Melon de Bourgogne  
2009, \$17.99, 12.0%

Dulled yellow straw color, good concentration but no shine, what’s there sticks around through the rims, sits in the glass like a block of jello. Noting the saline and mineral components, the nose comes off as a touch soft and creamy, focuses on peach, apricot, pear fruit scents, flower petals and juicy, rather than sharp, grapefruit, lemon citrus, moderate lift, more so just satisfying fullness, no real smokiness. Full-bodied, here to you get an unusual creamy and soft texture, the acidity is slightly above average but not sufficient to stiffen the spine. Still, flavorful with poached peach, apricot, nectarine fruit with whipped cream on top, vanilla bean and then a mix of tangerine, mandarin orange, lime citrus. Does a wonderful job of filling the mid-palate and then slowly tapering off through the finish. While a pleasurable drop, not what one might consider to be textbook Muscadet, lacks nervosity. Yes, nervosity. (Composite Cork) 88

Mourgues du Gres, Château Rhône, Costières de Nîmes, Les Galets Dorés Blend

2009, \$15.99, 13.5%

Light yellow hay color, blends light sufficiently to skirt watery transparency, surface shine where it ought to be, can’t really loss much hue depth at the rims. Even with the nose it’s clear this is a wine that shows better closer to room temperature than well-chilled, gaining richness and grip to bolster the dewy florality, lemon/lime pulp, ginger and yellow apple, pear, apricot fruit scents, before disappearing hits you with an unexpected smokiness, sauna stones and sun-baked minerals and sand. In the mouth it’s medium-bodied with another surprise by way of hard-nosed acidity. The honey and white grapefruit to lemon notes play off of each other adroitly, keep an internal tension present. The apple, pear, melon, apricot fruit honed down to the basics, little excess flesh. As stated before, warmer it softens and gets more floral while ditching greener nuances. At times has a raw nuttiness. This is a wine which needs food and the correct pairing to boot, will reward the effort. 40% Grenache Blanc, 30% Vermentino (Rolle), 30% Roussanne. (Composite Cork) 87

## ITALY RED

Vigna Rionda S.S. di Massolino Fratelli, Azienda Agricola

Piedmont, Dolcetto d’Alba

Dolcetto

2008, \$19.99, 13.5%

Clean, unblemished violet to magenta hued core, mix of magenta and scarlet red through the broad rims, transparent further out, hard to imagine it more vividly colored. Dusting of cocoa on top of the bright, tart raspberry, cranberry, pomegranate fruit, all red and all penetrating, curiously the white grapefruit citrus not as punishing as it might be, not herbaceous but displays a stony, earthy side, excellent airy lift but in no way thin. Medium-bodied, the acidity and tannin push about as hard as possible before starting to dampen your ability to enjoy the wine, structure not an issue. Puckeringly sour cranberry, pomegranate, raspberry fruit, too much so for raspberry or other sweeter fruit flavors. Close to no trace of oak, not such if used or not for this wine, again a trace of cocoa or mocha powder. The white grapefruit, lemon citrus brings added wattage. Stone shards, brown dirt and hay to tree bark deepen traditional feel. Definitely a food wine, otherwise, you better be fully awake for it. 89

Bibbiani, Fattoria di  
Tuscany, Chianti Classico, Poggio Vignoso  
Sangiovese  
2008, \$12.99, 13.0%

Unblemished dark purple core flirts with opacity, yields to wide garnet red rims with a brighter magenta aura, sparkles decently in the glass. Fruity nose full of sturdy plum, cherry, blackberry, fig fruit, pressed flower petals, lemon reduction, mint leaf, cinnamon and sweet cedar, primary as if pressed just hours ago, more primary presence than Chianti presence without getting sloppy or stupid. Full-bodied, sweet and layers itself densely onto the tongue, not as much grip as sheer downwards pressure. Low tannin and acidity lets the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit bound about unchained, aided and abetted by caramel, milk chocolate tones. Orange reduction, mint, cedar, molasses, this is one Chianti that drinks like a Napa Merlot. Which if you're trying to sell to people who like Napa Merlot is a good thing. Extremely floral, adds to its candied nature. Immense charm regardless of typicality. (Composite Cork) 85% Sangiovese, 10% Canaiolo, 5% Malvasia. 88

Alessandria, Gianfranco  
Piedmont, Barbera d'Alba  
Barbera  
2008, \$23.99, 14.0%

Clear red-ruby color with a slight darkening to violet in the core, full transparency, fully hued rims. Strong merde and matted wet grass and earth in the nose, takes time for it blow off in favor of cranberry, red cherry, blackberry fruit scents, spritz of white grapefruit in there along with crushed roses, muscular and penetrates with a sharpened edge. Medium-bodied, same story here in the mouth just with acidity to increase the overall sharpness and cut. Patina of dark chocolate and caramel to the sour red cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit. The white grapefruit, lemon citrus keeps you puckering from first to final sip. Damp earth, clay, twigs and underbrush, maybe even a touch of olive pit. For what it's worth, it's all in good balance, simply a laser blast of nervous energy. Heavily suggest it be viewed as a food wine. 88

Casabianca, Fattoria  
Tuscany, Chianti Colli Senesi  
Sangiovese  
2007, \$12.99, 13.5%

Fully transparent, some violet in the otherwise brick red to garnet coloration, the burnt red rims bring out orange ember tones as well, clean surface, really looks like a Chianti. There's a strong cheesy quality to the nose at first, starts to blow off into lactose before dissolving fully, pine sap and crushed oranges complement the candied cherry to raspberry fruit

scents, offers some fresh leather but veers away from earthiness, does have damp forest floor matter though. Medium-bodied, no weight loss whatsoever from start to finish. Tannin soft, acidity has slightly more get up and go. Sweet cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit holds its own throughout, the lemon, orange citrus sweeter here which helps. Pine, flower petals, licorice fill the center, yielding over time to earth, stone, old kindling wood and fallen leaves. The sweetness of the fruit is the attention grabber but this is certainly more than a fruity wine, especially at the price. (Composite Cork) 87

## ITALY WHITE

Zenato  
Veneto, Lugana, San Benedetto  
Trebiano  
2009, \$15.99, 13.0%

Fairly rich golden color which helps it fill the center of the glass, drops off to almost hueless transparency around the rims, semi-flat surface, does what it needs to make you aware there's liquid in the glass. Honeyed melon, apple, pear, apricot fruit flood the nose, close to overripe, lemon meringue, cinnamon and a spoonful of freshly whipped cream, no structure, minerality, grassiness, just sugary goodness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, not much acidity but doesn't lay there like a slug either. It's sweet and makes no bones about it, maple syrup and honey, cinnamon and cream, all support the ripeness of the yellow apple, pear, peach, apricot, cantaloupe fruit. Offers a floral spritz as well, trying hard to be pretty. Spreads itself cheek-to-cheek so there's ample momentum to get it to the finish line. Complexity is not even a concern here, accepting this, there is a lot of simple fun to be had. (Composite Cork) 88

Toros, Azienda Agricola  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Collio  
Friulano  
2009, \$44.99, 13.5%

Layered shimmer to the otherwise clear yellow to white straw hue, well done in filling out the rims too, average surface reflectivity helps deepen appearance in the glass. The nose borders on soft but, really, it's just so full that there's no room for angles or edges, leads with a light saline touch before unloading the fresh pear, green apple, peach, green melon fruit scents, lemon meringue pie with a slice of lime, the florality too damp to lift, at the penultimate moment brings out mineral dust to get things slightly airborne. Medium-bodied plus, gains full traction across the palate, sappy grip on your mouth pores. Elevates the stone, streamwater here but takes the lemon, lime, orange citrus mist even higher. The acidity comes right at you, really cannot

afford to waste movement in combating the sheer fatness of the mouth feel. Peach and apricot segue into sharper nectarine, pineapple, green apple flavors. Conversely, there's a creaminess which blossoms through the finish. The floral musk consistent start to finish. Each successive sip proves that this is a carefully and intelligently put together wine. While, concurrently, proving it's not close to warranting the price. 88

Bidoli

Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Grave del Friuli

Sauvignon Blanc

2009, \$13.99, 12.5%

Light luminescent glow to the yellow straw color, deepens things and teams up with a translucent layering, rims solid given overall mildness of hue. The nose starts off with a crinkly mineral-driven bite, vague nod towards pickle brine, bell pepper and green grass but just as easily finds itself inclining towards flowers, lemon to orange pulp and licorice, the apple, pear, apricot fruit lean and racy, digs into your nostrils without being overtly invasive. Medium-bodied, cagily plays the middle of the field, uses the acidity create a more angular presence and play up the lemon, white grapefruit citrus while also brings out a softer florality, this particularly present through a creamier finish. Anise and sage herbs, not as grassy here as in the nose, the minerals and stone try to weave into the whole. Apricot, apple, pear, passion fruit flavors dart around rather than soak in. Quality "split the difference" Sauvignon. (Screwcap) 88

Jermann

Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Pinot Grigio

2008, \$25.99, 13.0%

There's the beginning of an amber orange to the otherwise still dark gold color, hangs tough through the rims, not dull but average surface shine. The nose is odd, starts off with clean stone, streamwater and white smoke notes before succumbing to flabby peach, apricot, pear scents, mixed white citrus and honey, not particularly expressive and simply comes across as if forced to offer more richness and "oomph" than the material is capable of. Full-bodied and heavy, same general assessment can be made of the wine in the mouth, it's simply misshapen. The flavors are vivid, lots of tangerine, lime citrus, honey and close to poached or fruit cocktail peach, apricot, pear, apple, cherry fruit but no real life or personality. Not much refreshing about the acidity. Lemon/lime citrus with a hint of white grapefruit. It really does taste like Pinot Grigio, which may be for the worse since it just reminds you of what is missing. If you had it as a "white wine" at, say, a gallery opening you'd be mighty

pleased. But as a high end Italian Pinot Grigio, this is not what the doctor ordered. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 84

## ITALY SPARKLING

Trevisiol

Veneto, Prosecco di Valdobbiadene, Extra Dry

Prosecco

NV, \$14.99, 11.5%

White straw in color with a slight yellow deepening, whole lot of carbonation going on, glass about a third full with rising bubbles, creates a consistent foam around the surface rims, just pretty to watch. While the nose has a clear mineral component, the lightly honeyed peach, apple, pear scents as well as orange pith shine brightest, brush of baked pie dough, otherwise keeps it simple and straightforward, as it should. Full-bodied, displays a pleasingly firm acidic spine to accompany the ripe orange and lemon citrus, honey to green apple, apricot, pear flavors. The fizz has a tough steadiness to it, not fluffy nor soft, but keeps coming at you, more churn than foaminess. The honey brings out a glance of caramel or molasses, yet, as labeled, it is dry through the finish. "Extra Dry," that's up for interpretation. Stream pebbles and washed slate more than minerals. However you want to slice it, it represents high quality, balanced Prosecco for the price, more than just a cheap "toast" sparkler. 89

## GERMANY WHITE

Lauer, Weingut Peter

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Ayler, Kupf, QbA Fass 6 "Senior"

AP #6

Riesling

2009, \$27.99, 12.0%

Standard gold appearance, slightly worn, deep core with a sizeable drop off nearing the rims, surface shine about average. Equal sparkle and grit to the nose, juicy lime, tangerine citrus on the sweeter side while the mineral and stone powder mops up aggressively, fetching floral side, good concentration to the apricot, peach, nectarine, apple scents, not heavy handed but insistent, touch of whipped cream, too dense to really lift but no denying its presence in your nostrils. Full-bodied, has a semi-creamy mouth texture, particularly as it warms, but the acidity hits you bluntly to the head at the same time. The fruit digs in first, lots of ripe, not sugary, apricot, papaya, peach, nectarine, kiwi flavors. The tangerine, tangelo, lime citrus in turn sweet with a zesty undercurrent. A coconut to vanilla custard element pops up now and then. At the same time, the stone, mineral water parts bring decent freshness. Strikes you as trying to "push the envelope" and whether it succeeds or not will depend on personal

tastes. It is immediately enjoyable and easy to guzzle, not sure deep adumbration on it will reward. 90

Schloss Koblenz (St. Christopher), Weinhaus Mosel Saar Ruwer, Piesporter, Goldtröpfchen, Spätlese AP #218

Riesling

2009, \$13.99, 8.0%

Palest yellow allowed by law to white straw in color, given the lack of hue presents a solid, blockish presence in the glass, you can see a few bubbles clinging to the walls long after the pour, shimmers enough to avoid full transparency. Powdered sugar, honeysuckle, orange to tangerine reduction, molasses, close to dried fruit concentration in the apricot, peach, pear, yellow apple, cantaloupe fruit scents, to its credit for all of the sweetness achieves a solid lift and airy feel, in no way leaden. Medium-bodied, for the price offers up surprisingly fresh acidity to match up with the sugar, molasses, maple syrup and soft drink quality lime, tangerine, lemon citrus. Tangy pineapple, apricot, nectarine, mango fruit, dry enough to not be lushly tropical, benefits for it, better pacing and thirst quenching capabilities. Croissant flakes, fresh pie crust find a place. The flavors are vibrant throughout and the acidity becomes more and more a saving grace as you drink it. (Screwcap) 90

Pfeffingen, Weingut

Pfalz, Spätlese Trocken AP #11

Scheurebe

2009, \$34.99, 12.5%

Solid, luminescent yellow to green color, not deep but squats like a block in the glass, minor loss along the rims, flat surface. Crinkly, dry nose without getting too sharp or dried out, produces white grapefruit, pressed rose petals, keen pineapple, nectarine, papaya, peach fruit scents, a dusty chalkiness, spring water, has a very clean, fresh lift while at the same time appears to take pains in reeling itself in, nothing exotic allowed. Medium to full-bodied, not heavy on the tongue yet its chiseled muscularity makes you have to draw each sip into your mouth. The acidity strikes the right tone, not too withering. Pink and white grapefruit, tangerine and splash of lime citrus. As much saline as chalk, white stone dust, savory. Pineapple, nectarine, pear, papaya fruit has activity but not the resonance to fashion a full finish. No real grassiness nor herbaceous qualities, has a "chewing a piece of straw in your mouth" character. Thin veneer of honey at times. Cerebral food wine, It slowly wins you over, particularly as it warms. But don't turn the cap counter-clockwise expecting flashy fireworks. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 89

Clemens Busch, Weingut

Mosel Saar Ruwer, QbA Trocken AP #17

Riesling

2009, \$22.99, 11.5%

Mild green tinge to the semi-pale golden straw base, decent clarity if lacking in general sparkle, little loss at the rims. High degree of salinity to the nose, almost like you are sniffing at an ocean breeze, white smoke, chalk dust, sour white and pink grapefruit, close to pickle juice, the pineapple, green apple, passion fruit scents in no way severe but get right to the point, tries to use the florality and honey to soften the brunt, to little lasting effect. Medium-bodied, firm but yielding in its own way, especially as it warms. Sharp, focused green apple, pineapple, nectarine, guava fruit cuts through the palate like a cleaver. The acidity is not overbearing for the density of the primary material, however, could take another toke or two and mellow out. Lime, lemon, mandarin orange citrus patch out on your tongue. More stone, and wet stone at that, than metallic minerality. The floral lift is concise and precise. This wine puts the zip in zing. 89

Steinmetz, Weingut Günther

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Mülheimer, Sonnenlay, Spätlese\* AP #4

Riesling

2009, \$23.99, 8.0%

Dilute yellow to white hay color, merest glint of green, transparent with a gentle layering effect in the glass to distort your vision, nothing unusual about the surface shine. The nose tries to hit you with as much white grapefruit, lemon citrus as it can muster before settling into a creamy textural groove, pear, peach, pineapple, apple fruit scents, light and playful smoky stoniness, nice touch of floral water, primary and youthfully juicy. Medium-bodied with excellent palate saturation, coats your tongue before the acidity can even attempt to dry things out and focus the proceedings. Gloriously sweet yellow to red apple, pear, persimmon, apricot, pineapple fruit, loaded with baking spices and tangelo, pink grapefruit juice. Hints very subtly at an underlying milkiness. Light accents of stone and spring water. More by way of maple syrup. The more you sip, in spite of the credibly dry finish, you realize it is a cultured "fruit bomb" that is likely best enjoyed for immediate indulgence than longer term prospects. 89

Knebel, Weingut Reinhard und Beate

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Winninger, Brückstock, QbA Feinherb AP #4

Riesling

2009, \$22.99, 11.5%

Good depth to the core, very bright yellow, glistens well, solid rims, mild layered shimmer, perfect sheen across the surface. There's a lot more apricot, peach,

nectarine, pineapple, papaya fruit in the nose than gets through, the lemon curd, white grapefruit citrus also stymied some, likely by the stone dust but more so just the “structure” writ large, florality fares better, opens it up some, not overly smoky nor metallic just wound tight, even near room temperature. Medium-bodied, fuller general presence due to the blanket of acidity which dries out the tongue and plants it like a cement block in the mouth. The peach, apricot, red apple, pineapple, green melon fruit starts off quieter but lasts more evenly and longer. Orange, lemon, lime citrus sweeter here than in the nose, while not necessarily sweet nor maybe even “Feinherb.” Quinine, licorice and rose petals blend in adroitly. Lighter element of pickle brine. Stays fresh from start to end, suffers from trying to achieve too much at once. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 87

Stein, Wein-Erbhof  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, St. Aldegunder, Himmelreich,  
Kabinett Trocken AP #3  
Riesling  
2009, \$23.99, 9.5%  
Faded green to yellow hay color, light enough that there’s no difference core to rims, you can see a bit of bubbly fizz inside. At first the nose shows a touch of bubblegum and banana but this is buried by metallic minerality, slate, sauna stone smoke, white grapefruit pith, apricot and peach pit to skin notes, some floral dust, just a lean and mean fighting machine, no quarter given. Medium-bodied, crazily acidic, one of those enamel strippers. Iron flecks, shale, mineral chunks and tart white grapefruit to lemon citrus has your tongue backpedaling right off. Herbaceous but even this is not strong enough to gain major traction. Hard to gauge the true amount of apricot, pear, apple fruit because there’s no juice there. Which is one way of saying this is one very dry wine. Somewhere underneath there’s flowers and dried honey. This is really for “trocken sluts” only, otherwise it’s like getting slugged in the jaw. 87

Später-Veit, Weingut  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Piesporter, Domherr, Kabinett  
Trocken AP #2  
Riesling  
2009, \$18.99, 11.5%  
Average yellow to white straw color, no green, transparent with the merest gauziness, surface luster unremarkable (whoops), sort of just there in the glass. The nose is high-toned without getting sharp, just has a natural preference for the higher register. all lemon to lime peel, stone to slate, peach and apricot fuzz and pit, even the florality seems wiry, ho herbal notes but slight burning fall leaves aspect, appears to prefer cleanliness and directness over depth. In the mouth

it’s medium-bodied with a quite firm, muscular feel, hardly budes, as if frozen during the attack. No lack of lemon, orange, white grapefruit citrus but dry and more pith than zest. The pineapple, pear, nectarine, star fruit zips here and there but never settles down. Light suggestion of mint, anise, any flower petals muter. Here there is a green streak, very much in keeping with the whole, yet not exactly friendly. Dry does not mean lacking in substance and this, while not flawed, needs more meat on its bones. 86

## HUNGARY WHITE

Királyudvar  
Tokaj-Hegyalja, Sec  
Furmint  
2007, \$21.99, 12.5%  
Dark yellow gold to orange in hue, while has a decent translucent layering you can see through it, hangs solidly through the rims and there’s an overall cleanliness to it. A brief burst of vanilla cream in the nose gives you pause, then it’s all fresh peach, pineapple, nectarine, green apple fruit and sweet pink grapefruit, tangerine mist, merest hint of green grass, firmed up by stone and pebble notes, floral in a subtle manner, light pickle juice touch, more direct and deep than complex. Medium-bodied, imbued with a very sturdy acidic frame which keeps the pieces flowing together, even if at times restraining a single voice or two. More minerally here, able support for the pineapple, papaya, nectarine, green apple, bosc pear fruit. The citrus comes across as a more 50/50 mix of sweet and sour, pink to white grapefruit, orange to lemon flavors. Only when it gets closer to room temperature do you get the vanilla/caramel swirl effect. There is certainly a lot going on here without obviously striving for complexity, this said, might benefit from a little more clarity of purpose. 88

## HUNGARY SPARKLING

Királyudvar  
Tokaj-Hegyalja, Henye, Tokaji Pezsgő Brut Méthode  
Traditionnelle  
Furmint  
2007, \$31.99, 12.0%  
Loads up bubbles fill the glass, big and fat, nothing fine here, creates a credible initial foam, the color is a pure yellow gold, very clean and sparkling, “fun” presence in the glass. While there’s some baking dough and flakes in the nose it’s really driven more by lemon citrus, green apple, pear and apricot fruit, fresh if not especially minerally, gains staying power from a certain subtle creaminess of texture. Full-bodied, the bubbles have a tighter weave than you’d expect from looking at it, factor in the broad, burly acidity and

there's no lack of muscles. Conversely, it displays some sweetness in the form of white grapefruit, lemon citrus and apricot, peach, kumquat, green to yellow apple and melon fruit. Some licorice, flowers and honey. The minerality not that metallic but blends with some stone to keep it on an even keel. Long presence, no bitter, green or underripe notes. A very good sparkling wine, not quite sure how one would guess it's made from Furmint. 89

## SPAIN RED

Leceranas, Bodegas  
Vino de la Tierra del Bajo Aragón, Monte La Sarda  
Garnacha  
2009, \$12.99, 14.5%

As bright ruby red in the core as purple, unblemished and fully clear throughout, not much hue change through the rims except for diminished purple, just red there. There's a certain sprightly leanness to the nose, breezy strawberry, raspberry, rhubarb fruit scents with strong floral lift, mixed orange and white grapefruit citrus and an almost crunchy dried grass aspect, parched earth, while light weight-wise has excellent staying power. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, possessed of a mellow tannin dusting with the acidity popping in to stretch out the end some. Same lively raspberry, red cherry, strawberry, watermelon flavors, good mix of sweet and sour in the tangerine, white grapefruit citrus, at times appears to conjure up a little mineral bite. Much more floral than herbaceous, however, as in the nose, the grassiness helps set a positive tone and pacing and frames the overall sweetness, including the milk chocolate accents. Grows on you with each sip. (Composite Cork) 89

## PORTUGAL DESSERT

Warre's  
Douro, King's Tawny Porto  
Blend  
NV, \$16.99, 19.0%

Seems to be trapped between an orange brown and more youthful blood to brick red, hue diminishes around the rims, however, the vivacity of the overall color almost belies its tawny status. Fresh red cherry, red grape, raspberry impelled nose, cinnamon and ginger spice, orange peel, molasses, as with the color remarkably youthful, hard to say how long the wine spent in barrel to achieve tawny status, funnily the rum notes bring out green apple as well, no meaningful complexity here. Medium-bodied, some sips lighter, no burn so gotta give it credit with the 19.0% and all, glides across the tongue, little lift or inner mouth perfume. Repeats the basic message of apricot, grape, peach and apple fruit along with orange,

tangerine citrus reduction. The baking spices curiously lost in the sweetness, hard to find clear voice in the cinnamon, nutmeg, cola and vanilla bean. Maple, molasses, caramel, as much as you want. Not surprisingly, leaves you with a super-friendly impression. You might be able to move a lot of units but this is a damn wimpy tawny as such. Unspecified percentages of Touriga Nacional, Tinta Barroca, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Roriz, Tinto Cão, etc. 86

## SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Cederberg  
Cederberg  
Bukettraube  
2010, \$15.99, 13.5%

White straw hue with green flecks, transparently clear and vivid, has very good presence for its relative colorlessness. Ripe peach, cantaloupe, apricot, nectarine scents with strong honey and lemon custard elements, generous floral musk, soft vanilla cream, all about being friendly and engaging. Medium-bodied, softish acidity makes it cascade and soak into every crevice, excellent sourness in the tangerine, grapefruit, lemon citrus, at the same time brings a powdered sugar aspect. Tangy, tropical pineapple, papaya, nectarine, peach, apricot, melon fruit dances energetically on the tongue. That creamy vanilla to whipped cream element persists throughout. As well, floral with ginger to cinnamon spice. Infectiously fun. (Screwcap: Savin) 90

Fairvalley  
Coastal Region  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2009, \$11.99, 13.5%

Bright yellow gold color, "clearly" transparent, overall sparkle hides most of the hue loss around the rims, simple and unadorned glass presence. Initial creaminess to the nose blown away by tangy lime, white grapefruit citrus, tar and minerals, chalk dust, the peach, nectarine, pineapple fruit scents dig in nicely without getting mean, some licorice and lilacs pretty things up, touch too muscular to really lift. Full-bodied, lots of traction and grip in the mouth, this even with very good activity in the acidity. As one might expect, reflects the tar, volcanic ash, clay, wet minerals one normally gets from most South African wines, that's right I said it. The peach, apricot, nectarine, pineapple, green apple fruit has zip and lasts fully to the end. Might even carve out a larger presence than the grapefruit, mandarin orange citrus. At the edges lurks a vanillin, whipped cream softness. Sheer weight and lack of herbaceousness strongest calling cards. (Screwcap: Savin) 88

## AUSTRALIA RED

Raw Power  
South Australia  
Shiraz  
2008, \$14.99, 14.9%

Luminescently opaque core of deep purple rather than black, the rims are a typical saturated ruby-magenta to scarlet in hue, likely to leave your tongue well painted. Does not betray its alcohol level, in great part due to the thickness of the plum, blueberry, blackberry, black cherry scents, more orange zest than menthol, the oak is quite tame with cocoa and ground coffee notes, were it less dense you suspect you'd get a pleasing floral breeze. Full-bodied, very ripe, however, not sugary nor jammy. Has tannin, and to a greater extent, acidity to pare away any excess from the blackberry, blueberry, boysenberry, persimmon, cherry fruit. Juicy orange, lemon citrus brings a touch more sourness to the proceedings. The eucalyptus elevates slightly here, same for the coffee, caramel, chocolate oak nuances. Retains its full body through the finish. Has more structure than you usually get at this price, without giving up the fun in the fruit. (Screwcap) 89

## ARGENTINA RED

90+ Cellars  
Mendoza, Lot 7  
Malbec  
2009, \$13.99, 13.9%

Dense purple colored core, extends through to very thin ruby to magenta rims, heavily saturated, trim and shiny surface. Densely fruity nose of plum, cassis, blackberry fruit, close to reaching prune territory, wet and juicy orange to grapefruit scents, tree leaves and straw but not green, forest breeze freshness helps cut the muscularity, not a lot of oak going on, no scents coalesce clearly, leans heavy and hard on the fruit to impress. Full-bodied, offers a bit of dry, sandpapery tannic grip, this short-lived in favor of chocolate, butter notes and an avalanche of plum, black currant, black cherry, boysenberry fruit, not sugary, just fully ripened. Menthol, eucalyptus notes seem more belonging to a Napa wine. Sappiness extends the finish, not to even suggest that the fruit drops off, it don't do no such thing. Doesn't necessarily evince itself in terms of flavor but the acidity rises to craft a lipsmacking end. Succeeds mostly on energy and vibrancy of primary flavors. 88

Marguery, Casa Vinicola Familia  
Mendoza, Casa Marguery  
Malbec  
2008, \$15.99, 14.0%

The deep purple core just achieves opacity, the sleek and shiny surface integrates it with the saturated garnet, red magenta rims. The nose can't quite shake a peanut shell element, allowing for this, one still gets ripe, jammy plum, blackberry, black cherry scents which cling to your nostril pores, pulpy orange juice, Vicks mentholated rub, very subdued, if any, oak presence, the herbal notes are more fleshy and thick than bitter, green. Full-bodied, full bear hug of your tongue, not shy about layering itself all over. here toffee and caramelized brown sugar. Sweet, sour tangerine to mandarin orange citrus with some grapefruit as well. Thick, dewy florality too. Cut it with a knife style plum, cassis, blackberry, boysenberry fruit that you need to wash out of your mouth with a hose. Any tannin seems woody, the acidity feels more natural. Chocolatey finish with even more toastiness. Not a great deal of structure or terroir but it is a big cannonball into the mouth that gets everyone on the side of the pool wet. (Synthetic Cork) 87

Proviva  
Mendoza, Maipo  
Malbec  
2009, \$10.99, 13.8%

Close to transparent in spite of the darkness found in the squeaky clean ruby-purple core, very slow turn towards garnet and red-magenta around the rims, high gloss surface as well. The sourness of the black cherry, black currant, blackberry fruit substitutes for real depth and resonance, brings out parched brown earth, peanut shells and dried out leather, does have credible orange blossom and clove spice, not much staying power. Medium-bodied, too dry for its body weight, the tannins come close to astringency. The clove, ginger spice dry as well, the orange to lemon citrus dry pith. Can you guess yet that the mouth feel is dry? Black cherry, blackberry, Italian plum fruit front-loaded, suggestion of prune. There's a woodiness to it, not oaky as in a creamy, softer manner. At the very end seems to develop a slight pickled touch. Hard to guess at what it thinks you should like about it. (Synthetic Cork) 83