

The Hanes Wine Review, February 2015 Edition

Mailing list wine once more drives Hanes's consumption patterns. Winery success is predicated on finding suckers who want to at least try one bottle of every wine they can, offer 20-30 different bottlings a year and, whammo, you're rich. So it seems when Hanes gets offerings 2-3 times a year from Turley and Bedrock. Hard to say no but Hanes is learning how. Credit card limits will do that for you. This time around was also marked by sampling four new Californian white wines in one period, that has to be a record of sorts in recent years.

Finding it hard to pull the trigger on German or Austrian wines of late. Not that they do not offer enjoyment, it's just the prices. It's always the prices. Same as for Californian Zinfandel. Maybe it's the "we're as good as them" syndrome but everything that looks truly interesting is now \$30+. Maybe Greece will exit the Eurozone and this will cause prices on Californian Zinfandel to drop like a stone. Who knows. This month a concerted effort to try at least a few South American wines bore decent fruit. Get it, fruit? Grapes? Hilarious.

It's odd. Hanes started to "get serious" about wine in 1997. In the subsequent 18 years Hanes has naturally developed a particular fondness (or not) for certain wineries. You know, followed them over the years, looking forward to the new vintage of a wine tried over many, many different vintages. Then one day you wake up and, bam, the winery is gone. The owner retires. Or they sell the property. Things don't work out financially and they go broke. It's just odd to have witnessed the heyday of a winery and then see it fade to black. It's like remembering Derek Jeter as a rookie and here he is retired.

Wine is not a product like Coke or Pepsi. Wine has a shelf life as does a winemaker's interpretation of grapes. Sometimes this is jarring. You just expect a new vintage of a certain winery like the seasons change. But there it is, they ain't making no more of that wine, sonny. The lesson is enjoy the wine you have, there may not be a next year.

* * * * *

This month's big winners... The Dusi Vineyard in Paso Robles has traditionally produced very ripe grapes and wines of uncommon richness. Not always complex but "cut it with a knife" type of richness. The 2012 Turley Zinfandel from this vineyard is a clear throwback to these past wines, this said as high praise. High alcohol too at 16.3% but who cares, it tastes great and you get buzzed quicker. Folks Hanes respects said nice things about Broc Cellars. So, looking for the new 2013 vintage of the "Vine Starr" Zinfandel, snatched one up. Good wine, I get why these Europhile wine geeks appreciate the wine. But for \$32 it was nice to have tried it once, likely that any future sampling of Broc Cellars will be on someone else's dime. Or \$40.

The best \$20 and under picks... It's quite curious and Hanes even asked around. But the wines of Filliatreau in France's Loire Valley just don't get no love. Which is odd because they actually taste *good*. It's not like they blow you away but they exhibit a clear, natural expression of the Cabernet Franc grape and come unadorned by winemaking tricks. Both their 2012 "La Grand Vignolle" bottling and their 2013 "Château Fouquet" bottling clock in under \$20 and, for Hanes, they stack up just fine against any other wines of this type at the price. Well, if the cognoscenti want to spend \$30 to \$60 or more to chug Cab Franc, they can leave these wines for cheapskates like Hanes. Achaval-Ferrer deserves props for making tasty wines with backbone and personality, not always pandering to what it is believed critics or customers want. Their basic 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon from Mendoza, Argentina has heft and is pretty much what you want in a dinner-based Cabernet. Back when people were shorter, lived closer to the water and wines were not stupidly priced, Hanna was a winery which made respectable wines at a fair price. Good to see this has held in part, at least in regard to the 2013 Russian River Valley Sauvignon Blanc. Competence at \$14 or so, pretty nice result. To find value you sometimes have to trade down on the scale of prestigious vinifera. So, if you want a solid white wine for \$10, the 2013 Haut Bourg made from the Grolleau Gris grape in the Loire is a good bet. While lacking in acidity it has flavor, smoothness and it is in fact \$10. Similarly, the 2013 Lugana from Pilandro called "Terecrèa" is excellent value at about \$11. More punch to it, good supplementary flavors to the fruit core.

And the disappointments... It was some sort of legal matter which forced Bedrock to label their 2013 single vineyard Zinfandel "Belle de Jour" and not the true vineyard name. Probably for the best in the end since the wine was very tiring and unenjoyable to drink. About \$38. Been some time since a wine from Melville has been swilled,

thought it might be worth a shot to try their 2013 Santa Rita Hills "Estate" Chardonnay. Whoops. Boring wine, like zero personality here. \$22 which could have gone to a bottle of basic Chablis, oh well. Hard to call it a "disappointment" in the strong sense, however, the 2013 "Cuvée Pif" from Clos Roche Blanche was bound up by its structure and it was difficult to get at the enjoyable bits of it. May buy a bottle or two to throw in the cellar and hope time softens it. This winery's owners are retiring and so any fans of Clos Roche Blanche needs to horde what is out there while there's still time. Pretty sure 2014 will be the final vintage bottled under this name. From the Beaujolais region, Hanes had not sampled any wines from Domaine des Nugues. A salesperson recommended their sparkling Gamay "Made by G" and, well, why not. Hanes will tell you why not, it is not interesting wine. Thankfully, this lesson only cost about \$16. Don't know what was up with this Tannat wine but the 2011 from Uruguay's Viñedo de Los Vientos was not up to par based on previous experiences with the wine. Only cost \$12 so not complaining too loudly, just always enjoy rooting for Uruguayan Tannat so the misses sting more.

All contents of this electronic mail are copyright 2015 by Marc Hanes. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any format without written prior permission is prohibited.

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/oldervintages2015.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)

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Dusi Vineyard
Zinfandel

2012, \$42.00, 16.3%

Semi-dusky ruby-purple color, along the rims you get more ruby to scarlet red, full but not really glowing. The nose is richly stuffed with plum/prune, boysenberry, blueberry fruit scents, a few notes of green apple, adds in licorice, menthol, orange pulp, caramelized brown sugar, releases well given its weight. Full-bodied, thick yet capable of movement, intentionally languorous, has tang if hard to attribute acidity as the reason. Mint, menthol, molasses, caramel, pancake

syrup and orange marmalade add to its vivacity. Juicy, syrupy prune, raisin, maraschino cherry, blackberry fruit. However, as in the nose, it does not push things too far, allows you to relax and not feel assaulted. You never texturally perceive the alcohol. Kind of a throwback to earlier Turley wines. 91

Turley

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Dragon Vineyard
Zinfandel

2012, \$45.00, 15.7%

Scarlet red neck and neck even with purple, more beet red around the rims, lots of color but not crazy saturated, close to transparent. Concentrated, syrup-like character to the raspberry, blueberry and cherry fruit, molasses and maple syrup, some buttered popcorn as well, modicum of mint and orange peel,

focuses on a steady delivery of sugary fruit. Medium-bodied, a bit surprising it does not feel heavier as there is density here too to the blueberry, blackberry, pomegranate fruit. Not tannic per se but there is an astringency which stunts the fruit just short of the finish. That said, the oak seems more woven into the whole here and any caramel, butterscotch proportionate. Nutmeg, mint, sweet tea leaf, suggestion of pine, just really wants to keep the message simple and compact. Easy to drink and smooth enough you do so. 90

Bedrock Wine Co.

Russian River Valley, Carlisle Vineyard

Zinfandel

2013, \$38.00, 14.9%

Opaque purple core, the dark ruby rims shift into a pinkish cast as well. Perfumed nose of strawberry, watermelon, raspberry fruit, has a musky florality, touch of eucalyptus, then milk chocolate to caramel, given its concentration it really is not fruity per se and ends quietly enough. Medium-bodied, here it is surprisingly lighter in body, spreads a web of tannin which is steady and checks the hard candy like sweetness of the green apple, strawberry, watermelon, blueberry, red cherry fruit. Even the orange juice element brings a naturally juicy sweetness. Patina of cocoa, light chocolate. Has a refreshing pucker through the finish. Comes across as versatile and light of touch. 90

Broc Cellars

Sonoma County, Vine Starr

Zinfandel

2013, \$31.99, 12.5%

Overall it's more of a bright cranberry red color than purple, brilliant shine, transparent, hint of pink at the outer rims, shimmers well in the glass. There is a syrupy, jellied quality to the strawberry, raspberry scents in the nose but no heaviness nor overripeness, minty with lighter menthol accents, more of a dusty stones aspect than earthiness, clean and direct. In the mouth it is medium-bodied with a fresh, sour appeal of raspberry, cherry, cranberry fruit, "red fruit" all the red. Has sweetness for sure but it's not what this is about. The acidity pulses throughout and it maintains a fast pace. Its freshness does help to mask the relative lack of dimension, certainly no overt oak present but also no noticeable eucalyptus nor citrus. Again some stones to hard packed earth. Streamlined enough that you need to focus or it will swiftly whiz by you. 90

Turley

Alexander Valley, Vineyard 101

Zinfandel

2012, \$42.00, 15.5%

Plum purple colored core, on the dusky to murky side, shows red rust to dull crimson rims, not much glow. Puncher styled nose, hurls itself at you, jabs of plum, boysenberry fruit, pine needles, lavender, baking spices, cocoa powder, after some time you get some menthol lift. Medium-bodied, strong acidity which contributes to the pucker during the attack, bright orange citrus evident alongside blueberry, Italian plum, cherry fruit flavors. Softens a tiny bit through garrigues led wildflowers, pine, dried milk chocolate, then comes across with a mineral earth element too. Stays active, does not relax into the palate, result being a truncated finish. As savory as it is sweet. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma Valley, Bedrock Vineyard, Bedrock Heritage Blend

2013, \$38.00, 14.6%

The reddish purple core just shifts over into opacity, turns a softer red at the rims, just a subtle difference. With some chocolate influence in the nose, it's primarily raspberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, mild herbal scruffiness to it, hints of orange marmalade, overall straightforward. Full-bodied, short of heavy, not too, too sweet but certainly ripe, solid blueberry, raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit. Juicy lemon, orange citrus an able supplement. The oak is light, judicious dose of caramel, cocoa. Does not express a strong tannic nor acidic punch without getting flabby as a result. Meadowy grass and earth, more breezy than damp. Over time it takes on a more hard candy fruit nature. Delivers what it promises but doesn't bowl you over. Approximately 55% Zinfandel, 30% Carignane, remainder unspecified percentages of Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Grand Noir de la Calmette, Syrah, Tempranillo, Trousseau, Mission, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. 89

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder

Malbec

2012, \$45.00, 14.5%

Saturated and opaque purple core, heavy set red magenta rims, glows radioactively. Mainly floral paste and orange reduction to the nose, some dusty cocoa powder, the plum, black cherry scents have a deceptive fullness given their quiet nature, light earthiness, not challenging the intellect with diversity. Medium-bodied, chalky mouth feel, has pleasingly higher sense of acidity and stays smooth overall. Even more floral here than in the nose, all violets and lilacs. The fruit is blueberry, cherry and some plum but that

acidity keeps it all fresh and avoids heaviness. Very little oak presence, if any, shades of stone shards and dried grapefruit pith. Chewy, blockish finish. Good wine that stays at a safe remove. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Napa Valley, Oakville, Oakville Farmhouse, Oakville Farmhouse Heritage

Blend

2013, \$55.00, 14.5%

The purple core has more glow than impenetrability, the rims a stately magenta that can suggest pinkish shades. The nose is dense enough to render it immobile, the plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit has an old vine mellow fragrance to it, steady jolt of more sour grapefruit to orange citrus, does not evince an untoward amount of oak, nor does it evince much else. Full-bodied and bottom-heavy, pushes down into the palate as if it does not want to budge. Can't finger tannin or even acidity for this as neither aspect seems youthfully aggressive. More concentration than sweetness in the blackberry, currant, plum fruit, no attenuation at the finish. Again, the citric bite is the main supplementary element. You get a bit more caramel and toffee here. If you want to dredge more up you can but it's probably interpretational. Unspecified percentages of Negrette, Zinfandel, Mondeuse, Petite Sirah, Carignane, Ruby Cabernet, etc. 88

Sandlands

Sonoma County

Carignane

2012, \$28.00, 14.2%

While it would be hard to imagine a more saturated purple core, it is not quite opaque, the rims seem to hesitate before choosing scarlet over pinker red hues. Floral dew and milk chocolate spread widely over the raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit in the nose, fun over thoughtfulness, there might be a touch of wet leather or earth in there but it leans big on the fruit to hold your attention. Full-bodied, hard to say it has a great deal of measurable acidity, however, it feels like it has acidic zip and there's more herbal and citric zest than the nose suggests. White grapefruit turns the fruit more to cranberry, blueberry, raspberry. The oak turns woody, the cocoa roasted more than creamy. Would benefit from an extended floral lift. Very good wine that might want to show its roots more. 88

Turley

Regional Blend, Old Vines

Zinfandel

2012, \$25.00, 15.5%

The luminescence adds depth to the basic violet core, shifts to wide ruby rims, transparent in spite of its solid

overall coloration. The nose is on the blunt side, plum, black cherry, blackberry without many red fruit scents, orange pulp, low level of eucalyptus, close to no noticeable complexity yet likewise no alcoholic burn. Full-bodied and heavy on the tongue, semi-sticky even without a tannic presence, or acidity for that matter. Here you derive more raspberry, red cherry to top off the blackberry fruit base. Also additional floral and minty notes, caramel to milk chocolate. Any mixed citrus only showing during the finish. Nothing remarkable but covers all the bases and leaves you satisfied. 88

Hesperian Wines

Napa Valley, Anatomy No. 1

Cabernet Sauvignon

2012, \$19.99, 14.2%

Clear purple core, wide dark ruby rims, good degree of saturation. The nose at first features bell pepper, earth then veers into bubblegum, butterscotch, caramel and chocolate, credible cassis to black cherry scents, has a little better lift than you might expect. Medium to full-bodied, some acidity and tannin but on the clumpy side, the sweetness of the cherry, blackberry, currant fruit aided by caramel, toffee, coffee ice cream nuances, does need the oak to counterbalance the bell pepper, herbal qualities. The drying finish truncates the length of the fruit. Has personality if not always endearing but at least not a boring wine per se. 88

Bedrock Wine Co.

Russian River Valley, Belle de Jour Vineyard

Zinfandel

2013, \$38.00, 14.0%

Pure purple core falls short of complete opacity, the thick and dark rims favor scarlet over magenta, very saturated overall. The nose is dominated by caramel popcorn, after that is hot butter and butterscotch, not the most engaging of first impressions, menthol and witch hazel next, when the blueberry, blackberry scents arrive they seem an afterthought, not particularly pungent. Medium-bodied, sheds weight after the attack as well as loses general thrust. The oak is extremely prevalent here as well, butterscotch, caramel, caramel, at times too it like running a gauntlet of department store perfume counters. Seems to have sufficient acidity to breathe life into the otherwise sluggish blueberry, boysenberry, cranberry fruit. Something clamps down at the end to create a palate puckering effect. Wears you down quickly. 86

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Hanna

Russian River Valley

Sauvignon Blanc

2013, \$13.99, 13.2%

Pale, fully transparent white straw hue with a green tint, minimal color left at the rims, good plus level of shine to it. Lemon to lime driven nose, splash of vanilla, has a distinct herbaceous edge, once you get past that you receive plush apricot, peach scents aided by a generous powdered sugar coating. Medium-bodied, here too it's a battle between grassiness and super-sweet sugariness. The lime, lemon, pink grapefruit very "soft drink" on nature. Comes close to bell pepper at times in terms of that grassiness. Mainly green apple, kumquat, peach, apricot fruit, moderate "pit fruit" character. The acidity is strong and feels natural enough. Adds something floral in an indistinct manner. Right where it needs to be. (Screwcap) 88

Abrente

Sonoma Valley

Godello

2013, \$23.00, 14.1%

The straw color is fairly deep and at some angles even takes on a light amber cast, overall it layers more than sparkles. Smattering of whipped cream to deepen the green melon, pear, apricot fruit scents, all well-ripened, mild floral element wafts in and out, sand and mineral dust vaguely present, sufficiently easygoing and open that the lack of heft is not a real issue. Medium-bodied, close to exact replica of the nose but even sweeter, riper here, this in spite of more than adequate acidity. Whipped cream, powdered sugar, cotton candy, rose petals, perhaps this teases out strawberry, cherry fruit alongside the pear, apricot base. The stone, sand, chalk type component tends to appear most retronasally or as a lingering imprint. Mid-palate is kinda hollow. Nice enough, no flaws, nothing to get super jazzed about. 87

Sandlands

Amador County

Chenin Blanc

2012, \$24.00, 12.8%

The golden color is deep yet dull, hints at amber at certain angles, moderate diminishment around the rims. At first the nose is pure, unvarnished vanilla and caramel, confectionary, with a little time there's a smokiness and mixed white citrus, even then it betrays not a whit of fruit, refuses to answer any questions. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the adequate acidity has no time to assert itself before all of that butterscotch, caramel, vanilla cascades forth. Floral

with a lemon, orange sherbet accompaniment, again cannot escape the candied, confectionary character. To be fair, apricot, peach and yellow apple flavors come through clearly. Any stone, smoke or such appear as afterthoughts. Happy and genial wine which in the end doesn't display a distinct, unique personality. 87

Melville

Santa Rita Hills, Estate

Chardonnay

2013, \$21.99, 14.0%

Soft glow to the paler yellow straw color, fetching shine to it. Strong tang to the nose from the orange, grapefruit citrus, in turn crisp peach, apple, pear scents, just a smidgeon of vanilla, good nostril penetration but nothing about it is showy or voluptuous. Full-bodied, round with adequate tenseness, drying texture. The acidity seems average yet keeps it focused enough. The lime, tangerine citrus is obvious but mild. The green apple, apricot, pear fruit has more contour than ripeness. Brings out cinnamon and ginger but nothing here screams oaky Chardonnay. Seems neutral more so because it consciously aimed for it rather than because this flowed naturally from its being. (Composite Cork) 87

FRANCE RED

Filiatreau, Domaine Paul et Frédéric

Loire, Saumur-Champigny, La Grande Vignolle

Cabernet Franc

2012, \$19.99, 12.5%

Full, dense ruby-purple hue, much redder rims, lively prettiness. Dusty nose of ash, earth, fallen leaves and bark, the bell pepper is subtle and stays out of the way of the cherry, blackberry fruit, notes of orange zest, has a good lengthy presence. Medium-bodied, excellent framing tannin so it sets itself in the mouth firmly yet never becomes too dry. Active across the board, tangy grapefruit to orange zest, bright bell pepper and grassiness. More than adequate stoniness. Surprising ripeness in the blackberry, cherry, raspberry fruit. The ash, cement, earth elements echo longest through the finish. Almost modern in its purity yet shows respect for a traditional profile, great choice for those not familiar with Loire Cabernet Franc while sure to please those who are. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc Select700) 90

Puffeney, Jacques

Jura, Arbois, Poulsard M

Poulsard

2012, \$29.99, 12.5%

Bright blood red to scarlet in color, while clear and transparent it still manages to layer down into the

glass, full rims with a suggestion of orange. The nose is crushed stones, parched earth and sour cherries, some dried tree leaves as well as tea leaf notes, gets right down to it and doesn't waste words. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with as velvety a texture as possible given how staunch the acidity is. Fully ripened cherry, raspberry fruit, brightened by a shock of white grapefruit. The stones, poor dirt has a vague tarry element as well. A few nuances of rose petals. It persists very nicely through the finish, both in terms of flavors and palate grip. 89

Filliatreau, Domaine Paul et Frédéric
Loire, Saumur, Château Fouquet
Cabernet Franc

2013, \$16.99, 12.5%

Straightforward ruby-violet color, nicely vivid throughout, attractive clarity. Pure, fast paced nose of pebbles, meadow grasses, cigarette ash, rose petals, displays mostly red fruit – cherry, raspberry, even a touch of strawberry, has purity to the point of evanescence, incredibly neutral. In the mouth it's light-bodied, floral and openly knit, the tannin becomes present at the end while it is the acidity which keeps it pulsing out of the starting blocks. And this is what heightens the grapefruit aspect, stones and rocks. Evenly balanced raspberry, cherry, strawberry, sneakily sappy and sinks into the palate. No real deep complexity yet satisfies in an upfront, candid manner. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc Select700) 89

Clos Roche Blanche
Loire, Touraine, Cuvée Pif
Blend

2013, \$17.99, 12.0%

Fairly luminescent ruby-violet, more glow than darkness, rims achieve full transparency. The nose is minerally unto salty, no real bell pepper but grassy to a large extent, has a sour orange citrus component, the cranberry, red cherry, pomegranate fruit comes off as good naturedly sour, ends with a flourish of both black pepper and saddle leather. Light to medium-bodied, the layers of tannin create an impression of weightiness. Pulverized stone, mineral and earth rough up the mouth during the entry. The herbal, grassy thing clearly in play. Through this all the ripeness of the cherry, plum, blackberry fruit is evident, darker complexion here than in the nose. The citrus as much white grapefruit as orange. There's little soft or pliable about it, you would need to wait some time to see if the fruit will last to the point where the structure relaxes. Roughly two-thirds Cabernet Franc, one-third Côt. 89

Jorel, Domaine
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de France, Pésquies
Grenache

2012, \$20.99, 14.0%

Warm glow to the resonant violet core, at the rims there's more scarlet to brick red than the expected ruby, unblemished with fine shine. Crinkly, dusty nose, more minerals than stones, firm cherry to blackberry fruit scents, not as sugary as many versions of the grape, otherwise it's fairly inert and inexpressive, maybe some herbal matter. Full-bodied, tannic and blunt, clumps of dried grass, earth and broken stones. The watermelon, cherry, strawberry, green apple fruit is tightly wound. After awhile there's cocoa notes to be had. With its chewy texture it seems uninterested in flowing. Needs food to soften its edges. 87

Pont de Nyons
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône
Syrah

2012, \$7.99, 14.5%

Clean ruby-violet color, consistent throughout with a slight turn to a pinkish cast furthest out. Faint touch of leather, meadow grasses but minimal funk, has a candied freshness in the blackberry, raspberry fruit scents, more of an orange reduction, dark chocolate, uncomplicated and heavy enough to prevent lift. Medium-bodied, dry and semi-tacky, not really that stony nor earthy but something is tempering the ripeness of the red cherry, raspberry to strawberry fruit. The white grapefruit to orange citrus is sour and draws your attention. Notes of chocolate help to fill in the sweetness void. Comes up with a light textural prickle to the ending. Innocuous red wine. (Screwcap) 87

FRANCE WHITE

Haut Bourg, Domaine du
Loire, Vin de Pays du Val de Loire
Grolleau Gris

2013, \$9.99, 12.0%

Mostly a pale white hay color with some inclination towards yellow, clear but not transparent, some layering there. Freshly floral nose, no muskiness, closer instead to bubblegum, pear, peach, yellow apple fruit, at times close to cherry, subtle undercurrent of chalk or seashells but it is generally so soft and genial in the nostrils this element doesn't persist. Full-bodied, has a plush, round presence which is like one of those pink Spaulding balls stuffed in your mouth. The inactive acidity leaves it a bit flat footed. Smokiness squares off against honeyed notes, indecisive either way. The apricot, peach fruit tastes like pits, pear and apple like skin. This doused in floral water. Some might find it sweet but it drifts off nicely at

the end before any sugariness could accrue.
(Composite Cork: Diam3) 88

Puffeney, Jacques
Jura, Arbois
Savagnin

2011, \$34.99, 13.5%

Somewhat flat and block like appearance, worn gold to light amber in hue, doesn't leap out of the glass at you visually. The nose zigs and zags all over the map, honey, lanolin, candle wax, green apple to pear scents, challah bread, lemon curd, furniture polish, warm butter, each sniff differs, particularly as the wine's temperature changes. Full-bodied, sits squarely on the tongue. As can be the case with flor based wines, it needs strong acidity to keep it honest and on a at least meandering linear path. Here, though, the acidity is about average at best, likely hurts extension through the finish too. Plenty of nuttiness, doughiness and baked pie crust goodness. Lemon, mint, honey and tea leaf notes, the apple, pear, apricot fruit has juicy freshness. Rose petals and mushroomy earth take it in opposing directions. The type of wine which is hard to review as each bottle will probably have its own personality. 88

Blanchet, Francis
Loire, Pouilly-Fumé, Cuvée Silice
Sauvignon Blanc
2013, \$17.99, 12.5%

The surface shine does not prevent it from pooling down into the glass, has a basic yellow hay to straw color, entirely usual. Floral and honeyed nose, credible pear, apricot, yellow apple scents, if there's citrus it is white grapefruit, once the honey recedes the smokiness peeks out. Medium-bodied, the acidity starts out well and then flattens, thankfully there's a deep juiciness here to the grapefruit, tangerine citrus, this extends the sparkle. Sauna stones and flint accents produce an underlying bitter bite. It uses this to twist and turn and thus mask any relative shortcomings in the apricot, apple, pear fruit. Remains a consistent value for the appellation. 88

FRANCE SPARKLING

Nugues, Domaine des
Beaujolais, Made by G
Gamay Noir
NV, \$15.99, 9.0%

It's a deep purple to magenta hue but its vast foaminess is what you mostly notice, fills the glass easily, under the surface thick and active beads spread throughout. The otherwise bright cherry, raspberry scents are on the heavy side, it smells very primary, a few notes of stone but not much else on the

table here. Full-bodied, has broad palate coverage and strong pétillance. Runs the full gamut from strawberry, raspberry to black cherry, blueberry, plum, whether red or dark in complexion, it's sweet. Bare glimmer of orange peel along with baking spices. Under all that fruit is a foundation of stone, earth so there is a moment of freshness. Too monochrome to really hold your interest. 87

ITALY RED

Montalbera, Società Agricola
Piedmont, Ruché di Castagnole Monferrato, La
Tradizione
Ruché

2012, \$19.99, 13.5%

Crystal clear ruby-red in hue, about as transparent as red wine can be, bright shine, some color loss at the rims. Offers a floral mist in the nose, the grapefruit zest is equally strong, the strawberry, raspberry, cherry fruit pleasingly steady, mild patina of cocoa, as pretty as it is, there is too a subtle earthiness. Medium-bodied, sweet hard candy feel with a slightly creamy texture. The grapefruit, orange citrus has a decided sour bite and prominence. Floral here too with greater sweetness in the strawberry, watermelon, cherry fruit. The acidity is on the low side and the earthy, leafy qualities diminished. It may be considered too approachable by lovers of more traditional Piedmontese wine. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 89

ITALY WHITE

Pilandro, Azienda Agricola
Veneto, Lugana, Terecrèa
Trebiano

2013, \$10.99, 12.5%

Layered gold in the glass fully distorts your vision, thins out at the rims, more of a block than a resplendent surface. Those has energy while slowing down to let the sweetness fully register, powdered sugar, pink grapefruit pulp, mint, pear, apricot, persimmon fruit, at the penultimate moment finds a rubber, earth cornerstone to thrust forward off of. Full-bodied, lays itself completely across the tongue from start to finish. Nectarine, papaya, peach, apple melds into pink grapefruit, blood orange citrus, tang outpoints sweetness. The acidity has power and does not pick sides, seems to favor the underdog in the moment. Licorice and pine rise through the finish. At times you expect rounder, softer contours but it does not slow down. Very interesting. (Synthetic Cork: enoPE) 89

SPAIN RED

Cesca Vicent

Priorat

Blend

2012, \$16.99, 15.5%

Purple core quickly gives way to crimson, brick red hues, clear and close to full transparency. You get raspberry, strawberry jam in the nose, pungent orange zest, hint of milk chocolate and ginger spice, on the whole it's primary and quite fruity. Full-bodied, candied fruit of watermelon, strawberry, raspberry, highly acidic which gives it a big pucker. In contrast to the violets led floral dew, the orange and white grapefruit citrus adds sourness. A stony, dusty element adds textured dimension. Has cocoa and sweet baking spices but does not evince much oak presence. The higher octane alcohol is clearly present although the fruit's sweetness remains a forgiving element. 40% Grenache, 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 10% Syrah. 88

CHILE RED

Clos des Fous

Valle del Cachapoal, Alto Cachapoal, Grillos Cantores

Cabernet Sauvignon

2011, \$15.99, 13.5%

As much bright rust red as there is violet in the core, purer brick red around the rims, sparkling and clear throughout. The nose smoothly blends cherry liqueur, rose petal, candied orange peel, cedar and sandalwood scents but it all takes a back seat to the big bell pepper component, overall muscular lift, very pungent given the few ingredients it involves. Medium-bodied, sappy to velvety in texture, not much tannin yet has a black peppery bite. Plum, cassis, black cherry, all sweet and well-ripened. Diversifies via lavender, potpourri, mesquite smoke, chocolate, licorice, cedar accents, here it admirably fights against the bell pepper hegemony. There is a certain classy nature about it, strives to be respected. 88

ARGENTINA RED

Achaval-Ferrer

Mendoza

Cabernet Sauvignon

2012, \$19.99, 14.5%

Opaque purple core, dull crimson rims of good width, has an attractive semi-brooding quality to it. Curious note of rubber to the nose, dense plum, cherry compote fruit, mildly sluggish, cedar and orange spice, has muddy earth but not barnyard character, a real plugger, never fatigues but does run out of new things to say. Full-bodied, acidity helps frame the plum,

cherry, boysenberry fruit, taut and zesty. The caramel, butterscotch, cocoa display a clear oak presence but remain entirely in proportion to the whole. Intelligently fits in orange zest, tree bark, tar, leather. Not overly dependent on its primary fruit attributes and shows signs of decent tertiary development. Its firmness is a decided plus, built for big steaks without getting muscle bound. 89

Cobos, Viña

Mendoza, Felino

Cabernet Sauvignon

2012, \$16.99, 14.3%

Crimson-tinged purple core, full-on dusky brick red rims, sleek appearance. Ground up and powdered green grass infuses the nose, parched earth, there's also cedar, vanilla bean, coffee notes, displays ripe if not especially expressive plum, cherry fruit scents, also has a fairly manufactured, plastic aspect. Medium-bodied plus, creamy and smooth texture, the caramel, vanilla, butterscotch more noticeable here. Floral with sandalwood incense notes, lower degree of mesquite smoke and mint. The plum, black currant, cherry fruit consistent throughout, squarish and keeps its shoulders broad rather than stay nimble. Still, not clumsy yet does not use its power to achieve a clear goal. Not going to disappoint many who buy it. 87% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc, 5% Petit Verdot. 87

URUGUAY RED

Vientos, Viñedo de Los

Canelones, Atlántida

Tannat

2011, \$11.99, 14.0%

Black core, some purple peeks out along the crimson red rims, no filminess but too dark to call it clean. Inert nose, basically plum, black currant fruit along with a smattering of mocha powder, cowhide, tar, no movement at all, perhaps a touch reductive. Medium-bodied, you can tell right off that it possesses a great deal of tannin, even if this is massaged decently enough to spare the tongue pain. Spicy and peppery, plenty of merde and leather. The grapefruit pith plays a minor role. Dull plum cherry, currant fruit but it does bluntly persist to the finish line. Smoky, foxy ending ratchets up the general sourness. Too brawny for its own good. 86