

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

With the deepest of apologies, Hanes must inform you, dear reader, that there shall be no introductory article this month. Poor Hanes has been *slammed* at work, with no time there to goof off and write about wine, while holiday social commitments and the like have not allowed for the usual pockets of free time Hanes would allocate to *The Hanes Wine Review*. (From soup to nuts, it takes over 40 hours/month to build the beast.) The general idea is always to get the review out in the first few days of the month but no way that is going to happen unless it goes out as-is pronto. You get what you pay for in this world.

May Hanes suggest that you take this opportunity to peruse some of Hanes's greatest articles of the past? There's like six years worth of offerings, all of which remain *extremely pertinent* today. Here's the main page.

<http://www.haneswinereview.com/articles/>

And a couple of personal faves to kick the process off...

<http://www.haneswinereview.com/articles/0009rant.html>

<http://www.haneswinereview.com/articles/0101rant.html>

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**This month's big winners...** When factoring for "quality-price ratio," it's getting harder and harder to recommend wines from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The best non-luxury cuvee bottlings are all in the high \$30's and then some. Taking this into consideration, the basic 2004 "Cuvée Girard" from Raymond Usseglio is very enjoyable, especially for those whose palate doesn't prefer them too over-the-top and overly concentrated. Just over the cheapie price cutoff, the 2005 white Bordeaux from Chantegrive is a winner, a sign that when on, this producer can do it well. Covers all the bases for about \$16. 2005 smiled upon the house of Diochon and their old vine Moulin-à-Vent from Beaujolais is an excellent wine, worth the \$21 or so you shall fork out for it. Hanes isn't buying many 2005 German wines, too pricey with the weak dollar, and he has enough in his cellar for a lifetime of future drinking. What are being bought are mostly Kabinetten and below. In this vein, Zilliken's \$19 Riesling from the Saarburger Rausch vineyard is a kaleidoscope of flavors and recommended. Hanes's first taste of the 2005's from Vouvray producer Huet, the Le Mont Sec, was the usual super bottle of wine but it lacked that extra kick or "Mark of Zorro" or whatever you expect, especially with the Sec bottlings. Time will tell. Hanes doesn't drink much Port wine but the 10 Year Tawny from Niepoort for \$38 is freaking excellent and if *you* drink Port you should take it for a test drive. Been awhile since Hanes has had a wine from Livio Felluga, a producer from Friuli in Northern Italy. But, damn, if their 2005 Tocai Friulano is not one superlative wine! \$25 ain't cheap but it's worth it. A new producer to the Hanes gullet, Clos Figueres (alternately spelled as Clos Figueras, some legal reasons in Spain), from Priorat in 2004 made a very classy wine with restrained power. It's also \$75 a bottle which means Hanes won't be trying anymore soon. But if money is no object, you can go crazy over it.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** Château La Caminade is a good producer of wines from Cahors, France and they have branched out a bit to the Vin de Pays du Lot département for another Malbec-based winner, their 2005 a mere \$10 and worth it for sure. Tremblay remains a solid "QPR" Chablis producer and his 2005 basic AOC bottling is very tasty for \$15. Perhaps, though, not for hardcore Chablis fans. Hanes believes this is only sold directly by the winery and one or two Californian wine stores, but the non-vintage "Ojai Red" from Ojai in Santa Barbara is a very substantial wine for \$13, obviously made from some excellent "leftovers." Another "terroir" special is Granger's 2005 Beaujolais-Villages which is mucho stony and will satisfy traditional palates for \$15. The name La Cave du Vin Blanc de Morgex et de La Salle doesn't quite roll off the tongue. It's a wine cooperative in Northern Italy and they make a wonderful white wine from the Prié Blanc grape. Their 2005 is around \$15 and simply delicious, albeit Hanes's sister and sister-in-law couldn't understand Hanes's enthusiasm while it was being consumed.

**And the disappointments...** Judging a wine as young as the 2004 Château Montrose is a dicey proposition and the wise look askance at any person who thinks s/he can render a definitive call on these youngsters, both for the today and the tomorrow. With this in mind, the Montrose doesn't strike Hanes as a wine which will one day become a graceful swan. But if you like your Bordeaux ruff 'n' tuff, it seems \$60 is a decent price for the producer now. Hanes has never been that familiar with the wines of Borgogno from Piedmont. So, he coughed up the cash for a couple of cheapies, a 2005 Barbera and 2005 Langhe Nebbiolo. Both were "good" and traditionally made but, in the end, neither made Hanes a convert. Maybe next time. On someone else's nickel. There's not a lot of red wine made in Burgundy's Chassagne-Montrachet sub-area. With more or less good reason, witness Bernard Moreau's 2004 old vine bottling. Nice and all, but for over \$30 you want a bit more "give." It's fun sport among wine geeks to poke fun at Veuve Clicquot. And not entirely without cause. While bazillions of cases of their basic "Yellow Label" Champagne get sold each day, their *tête du cuvée* bottling, "La Grande Dame," is the subject of increasing debate. Has the quality been maintained? Is more being produced, lowering potential quality and/or leading to increased bottle variation? Hanes doesn't have the answers, Charles does. And he ain't saying. But Hanes can say that the 1996 vintage ROCKS for Champagne and the 1996 La Grande Dame is not up to snuff. A bottle was consumed with many other wine biz types who were all in accord. A new producer being currently discussed all over the internet wine world is Australia's Mollydooker. Hanes snagged a bottle of their basic Shiraz "The Boxer" out in Nuevo Jersey so he could say he tried it and the cool kids would let him into the club. Intentionally consumed among wine biz types while its identity was masked by a brown bag, the assessments were 50/50 pro or con at first.

After about an hour or two the wine had appreciably fallen apart and most had changed their minds to con. And, thus, into agreement with Hanes. 'Nuff said. Hanes has long admired the wines of Alto Adige's San Michele Appiano but he has now tried their Sauvignon Blanc "Lahn" enough times to know that this is not the wine of theirs he wants to drink, even though it is their cheapest at like \$14.

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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/oldervintages2006.html>

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

**Tagline #27:** "Why taste wine when you can drink it?"

Here's the order in which Hanes humbly provides the wine review information:

Winery/Producer Name  
Region of Origin, Appellation, Brand Name/Wine Style, Single Vineyard (if any applicable)  
Grape Varietal  
Vintage Year, Price Hanes Paid (if available), Alcohol Percentage (if available)  
Tasting Notes, Hanes's Numeric Score (on the traditional, yet inane, 100 point scale [which for Hanes truly begins at around 80 points and more or less ends around 94 points])

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

## CALIFORNIA RED

Ojai Vineyard, The  
Santa Rita Hills, Clos Pepe Vineyard  
Pinot Noir  
2003, \$44.99, 14.0%  
Pure ruby-violet in color, pools deeply in the glass, speckless with a strong mulberry hue left around the full rims. The nose is thick to the point of losing expressivity, still has a lot of cola, red licorice, meadow weeds and grasses, witch hazel going on with semi-sour red cherry, raspberry, watermelon fruit scents. Full-bodied, wears its weight well, as if it could fight nimbly in full body armor. Nicely framed by its tannins more than acidity, good skeleton. Again, has that cola edge, here a bit more herbaceous with supporting earthiness, pushes the envelope of getting a tomato skin touch. The raspberry, blackberry, cherry, strawberry fruit a mix of red/black fruit flavors, too densely packed to turn sweet. Offers an uptick of lemon to orange citrus here in the mouth as well. Dry finish, as if the material wearied during the third overtime. Impressively built, perhaps best revisited in some years.  
90

Ojai Vineyard, The  
Santa Barbara County, Bien Nacido Vineyard  
Syrah  
2003, \$29.99, 14.5%  
Fully opaque purple core, nudges blackness, thin if deeply saturated ruby-magenta rims, darkness puts the surface reflectivity into higher relief. Honey-coated baked ham, molasses, candied orange peel most prevalent in the nose, touch more floral than earthy, the blackberry, raspberry,

strawberry fruit comes at you tenaciously, might make you momentarily forget the trayf scrap scarfer scents. Full-bodied, handles its weight with aplomb, leans into you while also keeping to the song's beat. Within the rubric of its weight, hard to parse out the tannins and acidity specifically but you never feel like they are not there. The ham, game, molasses glaze flavors here too and a touch more linear and focused. The orange to grapefruit citrus infuses tangy zip into the currant, cherry, blackberry fruit, lively all the way to the end. On the whole, though, pulls up just a bit short, more bound than free and easy. Clearly wants to be taken seriously. 90

Ojai Vineyard, The  
Regional Blend, Ojai Red  
Blend  
NV, \$12.99, 14.0%  
The opaque purple core is close to black but has a warm glow to it, the wide ruby-magenta rims vibrant as well and turn pink at certain angles. The nose offers an abundance of fruit, the cherry, blackberry, raspberry, cranberry scents sink in deeply with their weight, there's charred or smoky edge, more akin to earth than oak, more herb-rubbed game notes as it opens. Full-bodied, dense and close to near immobile, takes a few extra seconds for your palate to register its presence. Has wide, thick-legged tannins which support and provide direction more than simply dry things out. Lemon notes and thyme and dill herbs quietly blend into the earthiness. Favors dark fruit, more currant, plum and cherry than raspberry or blackberry. The beef, blood, animal hide aspects appear more during the back half and remain a part of the whole. Good nuance for its size. Unspecified percentages of Pinot Noir, Syrah, perhaps other. 89

Dashe Cellars  
Dry Creek Valley  
Zinfandel  
2004, \$20.99, 14.5%

Great vibrancy in the crimson-violet core, bright red rims, on the whole clear enough to maintain transparency. While there's oak-derived vanilla cream, menthol, toffee, crème brûlée in the nose, a great deal of fluidity persists in the raspberry, blackberry fruit, some mountain air freshness, what it lacks in complexity it makes up for in basic enjoyability. Medium-bodied, smooth given its level of alcohol, very compact and well thought out, nothing sticks out of place. Unwraps cinnamon, ginger, orange spice, menthol and eucalyptus, earthy too. The tannins are suave and present from start to finish to keep things in line, acidity more there in the shadows. The red currant, red cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit has bite as well as sweetness. Basic in the best of ways, stays within itself. 93% Zinfandel, 5% Petite Sirah, 2% Carignane. 89

Ojai Vineyard, The  
Santa Maria Valley, Solomon Hills  
Pinot Noir  
2004, \$35.99, 14.0%

Trim, unblemished ruby-violet in color, maintains full intensity through to the full ruby rims, attractive shine across the surface too. Merde, peanut shells, damp earth, cola, matted grasses imbue it with a fairly funky profile in the nose, yet it remains smooth on the whole with only a desirable amount of turbulence in the raspberry, red cherry, strawberry scents, never becomes so homogeneous that you can just sniff it and uncritically enjoy. Medium to full-bodied, sucks on you as much as you suck on it, has more than enough sap to stick to every mouth pore. Hits you with some vanilla and caramel at first but not really overly oak. More so, develops its cola, grass, orange/lemon edge to slowly convince you of its Pinot Noir character. The acidity and tannins are mostly cloaked in the flesh of the wine. Rolls along with a heavy stride, not an out-and-out steamroller but nuance is not the first word it brings to mind. 88

Screw Kappa Napa  
Napa Valley  
Merlot  
2003, \$10.99, 13.2%

Extremely clear scarlet-violet color, clean and quite easy to see through, remarkably consistent to the rims. Good erectness in the nose, earthy, leathery and grassy in a good way, the vanilla aspect is lean and pleasingly lacking in softness, has snap in the raspberry, red cherry and almost strawberry scents, inches towards complexity but not at risking the familiar. Medium-bodied, the acidity gives it life from the attack on, shapes and pushes forward the red currant, cherry, blackberry fruit, no excess. Tannins adequate, seeks out a presence but not anything beyond a face in a crowd. Cedar chips, powdered flower petals, lemon/orange peel, iron, wet grill smoke weave in and out. Clamps down at the end, works hard to evince structure. 91% Merlot, 9% Petite Sirah. [Screwcap] 86

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Fritz Winery  
Russian River Valley  
Chardonnay  
2005, \$21.99, 14.2%

More shine than depth of hue, indistinct yellow gold, stops short of the rims, reflections give it life. Cotton candy and white chocolate introduce the nose, openly knit to relieve undue weight in the peach, pear, apple scents, as it dissolves the oak takes more of a majority position. Medium to full-bodied, lot of sweetness, thankfully also possessed of above average acidity for counter-balance. Very creamy and vanilla laden attack, all oaked up as expected. This ends up giving the orange, lemon citrus a sorbet edge. Admirably clear contours to the apricot, peach, pear, pineapple fruit. After some time a floral side bubbles up. Squared off finish, keeps moving forward if without nuance. 87

## FRANCE RED

Usseglio, Domaine Raymond  
Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Cuvée Girard  
Blend  
2004, \$35.99, 14.0%

The light violet color has a strong, almost dominant, red-ruby cast, hue runs completely to the rims where pure red rules, spotless throughout. The underlying herbaceousness in the nose is overshadowed by hard candy like sweet cherry, raspberry, blackberry scents, peppery but has a smooth presence in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, good framing acidity but everything about it speaks of serene, laconic smoothness. Not particularly acidic nor tannic but stands erect. Lemon peel, dried flowers, white pepper, pungently warm earthiness with a slow, easy lift to it. The mixed dark berry, black cherry fruit supple and not overly sweet. An excellent food Châteauneuf-du-Pape. 75% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre. 90

Vieux Télégraphe, Domaine du  
Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, La Crau  
Blend  
2004, \$49.99, 14.5%

Displays a red-ruby to purple core, unblemished and with attractive surface shine, the bright garnet red rims suggest an orange rimmed future. Lots of garden herbs, grass in the nose, wet wool, matted meadow flowers, milk chocolate, hints of anise, the red cherry, currant, cranberry scents reluctant to enunciate, dissolves rapidly but not necessarily short due to lack of material. Full-bodied, big boned beyond its ability to move swiftly, as if it needs to grow into itself. Dense tannins without being too drying. Orange peel, dried flower petals, sage, leather and earth all get to read aloud from the book, just speak slowly. Steady red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, has body and more determination than exuberance. Olive pits, wool and tree leaf aspects elevate through the finish. Compact ending. Appears to consciously seek old world manners. If you share the search, best as a mid-term ager. 65% Grenache, 15% Mourvèdre, 15% Syrah, 5% Cinsault. 89

Graillot, Domaine Alain  
Rhône, Crozes Hermitage  
Syrah  
2004, \$29.99, 13.0%

While clear, the black purple core dark enough to cross into opacity, measured segue into youthful red brick at the rims, color agreeable throughout. Confusing nose, appeals equally to the brain and loins, tar, black smoke, uncooked game fat, green olives and mineral dust have to find common ground with the powerful kick in the red currant, cherry, plum fruit scents. Full-bodied, a very cunning wine

that has done its homework and then some before hitting your palate, ensures there's something for everyone. The tannins are never arch but remember to stay in place. The ripeness shines through the currant, cherry fruit, sweetened at necessary junctures by vanillin oak and caramel. More than enough olive pit, leather, earth, minerals to suggest ageworthiness. But if you can resist the siren's song you may conclude that from today to three years hence may be its salad days. Say what you may but the glass empties quickly. 89

Diochon, Domaine Bernard  
Beaujolais, Moulin-à-Vent, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes  
Gamay Noir  
2005, \$20.99, 13%

Not filmy but there's a duskiness in the otherwise glowing ruby-purple core, no blemishes and turns to a very solid ruby to red-magenta at the rims, lack of color not an issue. Grippingly sour nose, not offputting the tart raspberry, strawberry, red cherry scents in your face, have the cut grass, minerally earth, lemon peel and violets as backup, has a good deal of length, will stay with you for as long as you want to keep sniffing. Medium to full-bodied, while semi-tart there's a considerable amount of raspberry, strawberry, blackberry fruit, really packed in there. That said, it's wrapped in a tannic gauze that absolutely prevents any sweetness for gaining the upper hand. Thick minerality as well as sweet tea leaf, stony earth and lemon peel. Has nice acidity too, sharpens overall. Betrays no sign of weakness on the finish, it'll stay as long as you will. Has personality without bragging about the fact. 89

Granger, Domaine Pascal  
Beaujolais, Beaujolais-Villages  
Gamay Noir  
2005, \$14.99, 12.5%

Immaculate ruby-violet core, easy to see through, barely drops in hue to ruby-magenta at the rims. Clean nose, impelled mainly by minerally dry earth, cut grass, lavender, the sour cranberry, cherry, raspberry scents cut into stone blocks in your nostrils, not a lot of variety in the scents but each one there has staying power. Medium-bodied, starts off with shale, crushed stone, tobacco ash, grass and lemon peel flavors, the acidity and tannins have power to spare and hold off the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit to almost the mid-palate. The floral dimension is powdery and not a big factor. Ends up an exercise is sucking on stones, earthy out the wazoo, leaves virtually no moisture in your mouth by the finish. [Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc] 88

Coulaine, Château de  
Loire, Chinon  
Cabernet Franc  
2005, \$14.99, 13.5%

Extremely saturated purple core, too clear for full opacity but close, vibrant glow throughout, helps to darken the ruby rims to near violet. The nose is real stinky at first, blows off some but retains a surfeit of merde, damp earth, animal fur, cigar ash and bell pepper, through all this attractive ripeness in the plum, black currant, black cherry fruit shines through. Medium to full-bodied, stretches well from cheek to cheek. Nice firming acidity coupled with more elevated bell pepper, herbal aspects lends snap to the attack. Cigar ash, limestone, minerals, iron and leather dig in for the long haul. Lemon and white grapefruit hold off until past the mid-palate. Rich and tangy cherry, blackberry, currant fruit holds its weight until well into the

finish too. Not especially impressive at first but does grow on you, the ripeness helps. Your sips repeat faster than you think. 88

Caminade, Château La  
Southwest France, Vin de Pays du Lot, La Caminade  
Cépage  
Malbec  
2005, \$9.99, 13.0%

Vividly clear glow in the red magenta to violet color, spotless with a highly reflective surface, fat ruby-magenta rims. Heavy but precise nose of saddle leather, black earth, dried tree leaves and merde, the black raspberry, cherry scents also draw within the lines, could use a little sloppy swagger to help it sink in better. Full-bodied, presents an onslaught of juicy currant, cherry, blackberry fruit that keeps coming at you even as the tannins too stay present, steadily sawing away at the sweetness. Lively acidity too, freshens it up and heightens the lemon/orange citrus and floral elements. Too young for the earthiness and leather, tar aspects to play a major role, the kind of wine that needs a year or so to fully come together. However, it has attractive linearity, balance and lack of unnecessary adornment. [Synthetic cork] 88

Montrose, Château  
Bordeaux, Saint-Estèphe  
Blend  
2004, \$59.99, 13.0%

Deeply saturated red-purple core, as dark as can be and still see through it, as much crimson as ruby in the rims, color stains the glass. The nose is as hard as stone in addition to being stony, let's you know what's in store for the tongue, the currant to red cherry scents punch as much as flow, and there's equal vanilla cream to cedar, tobacco, flint, dried flowers and dried animal hide. Full-bodied, the attack is almost all weight and density with little flavor to be had. With a lot of air time, you start to get that currant, cherry, plum fruit but the tannins are a mile wide and a mile deep and mean business. Seems like it could be a lot more herbaceous than it is, more slate, gunmetal, stone and general dust instead. Light peppery, spicy bite. Minimal florality here, maybe replaced by orange peel and cedar. Oak not as evident as in the nose. Hard as nails, hard to see it sufficiently softening, for the hardcore traditionalist who sucks on cherry pits for hours. 64% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot. 87

Guigal, E.  
Rhône, Côtes de Rhône  
Blend  
2005, \$12.99, 13.0%

Deep, unblemished crimson-red with dark and quite youthful blood red rims, excellent luster. Makes a big attempt to steamroll your nostrils with weight, thick-necked currant, cherry fruit scents, mentholated herbaceousness, almost smells like Vicks, mint leaves, celery, white grapefruit, plays its few notes well. In the mouth it's medium to full-bodied, stays velvety with peppery tannins for spark and extra weight. Thickly constructed as well here, leaves little room for fighting back. Dried tobacco, minerals, white citrus, earthy, keeps its reach within its grasp. Nice because it leaves you feeling it's a large production wine that wasn't overly massaged into homogeneity. Unspecified percentages of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre. 87

Moreau et Fils, Domaine Bernard  
Burgundy, Chassagne-Montrachet, Vieilles Vignes  
Pinot Noir

2004, \$31.99, 13.0%

Crystal clear red-ruby to violet in hue, because it starts out light at the core, less noticeable drop at the rims. Ash, cut grass, earth, tar comprise most of the nose, slowly unveils raspberry, strawberry, red cherry scents, has a pleasing funkiness about it but too light across the board to really soak in. Medium-bodied with a semi-astringent attack, the acidity too drying to maintain suppleness. While herbaceous, the initially sweet core in the cherry, raspberry fruit allows it to smile at you. Enthusiastically presents ash, minerals, grass and even bell pepper nuances. Nice open window to the soil but wish there were thicker curtains of cherry, raspberry fruit. Big sour twist on the finish. 86

Grange de Grenet, Château La  
Bordeaux, Bordeaux

Blend

2003, \$10.99, 12.5%

Very light, transparent brick red color with hints of violet, fades to dilute rims. The nose is somewhat empty too, even the expected herbaceousness is evanescent, a brief moment of cherry, raspberry scents, ashy minerality, shale, just not a lot going on. Light-bodied, sweet and smoky mouth entry, albeit not long lived. The raspberry, blackberry, red cherry fruit cruises without much effort, in both a good and bad way. Even the bell pepper, grass, earth, dried lemon peel are in short supply. Moderate tannins and acidity, this noticeable most due to the lack of flesh in the primary material. Just too simple to come close to holding your attention. 60% Merlot, 30% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. 84

## FRANCE WHITE

Huet, S.A.  
Loire, Vouvray, Le Mont, Sec  
Chenin Blanc

2005, \$28.99, 12.0%

Glassy, radiant white to yellow gold color, fully white and transparent at the rims. Stern nose, hyper-erect, featuring lemon/lime peel, saline, sage, fennel, seaweed, crushed white stone, hardened earth, peach and apricot fuzz, for all of its reticence does keep beaming you the message. Full-bodied, broad and steel-strong from one side to the other. The acidity crashes like a thick blanket, not so keenly honed but does maintain dryness to a point. The lemon to orange citrus element actually softens the palate and adds juiciness. Good fatness in the pear, peach, apricot, melon fruit without getting too fleshy. The stone, chalk element is highly polished, loses some grit as a result. Cleans up well on the finish yet doesn't stir souls. Yet? 90

Nerthe, Château Le  
Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape  
Blend

2004, \$35.99, 13.5%

Extremely deep golden color, takes on a vague bronze cast at certain angles, sparkly surface, sheds hue towards the rims. Big, blunt nose of mint leaf, flower petals, grilled nuts, just-picked ripe peach, apricot, pear, red apple fruit, lemon zest, cinnamon stick, opens well but betrays a slightly hollow presence, all perimeter. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, with the same clean contours and semi-empty feel, density have the solidity the weight suggests. Comes up

with mint, cinnamon, dried herbs, flowers and a little bit of vanillin creaminess for a foundation. The acidity is indeed more active than expected. Basic red apple, peach, apricot fruit, fruitiness helps it gain plushness as it warms. Light stoniness, a minor aspect. Very good for its type, which can often be uninspiring. Unspecified percentages of Clairette, Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Bourboulenc. 89

Tremblay (Domaine des Iles), Gérard  
Burgundy, Chablis, Vieilles Vignes

Chardonnay

2005, \$14.99, 12.5%

Basic yellow gold color, adroitly combines both surface reflectivity with layering below, rims adequately full. The nose is all European basement, damp but never rank, dried yellow apples, apricots, cinnamon, lemon custard, dewy flower petals, the minerality and grassiness contained in acceptably form to any observer. Full-bodied, this isn't the type of Chablis to satisfy the true aficionado, more of a "gateway drug." The acidity is soft, aided and abetted by the concentrated/dried yellow to green apple, pear, apricot fruit, sweet while not sugary. Lemon citrus again plays a big role, molasses too, floral dew, the sweetness is all natural, nothing evokes undue interference. Any chalk, shale, stone nuances displayed as signs of pedigree than personal expression. Damn tasty, why can't that be enough? 88

Chantegrive, Château de  
Bordeaux, Graves

Blend

2005, \$15.99, 13.0%

Highly transparent, bleached hay white, yet also with a yellow day-glo warmth that at times seems like it isn't even coming from the liquid, bends light nicely at the rims. The nose penetrates quickly and then softens, delivers pineapple, guava, nectarine, apricot fruit and zesty pink grapefruit scents before mineral earth and then an out of the blue bubblegum burst, active and reluctant to dissolve. Full-bodied, maintains forward momentum, drags its big bottom along. Has enough acidity and minerality to not appear full-on tropical, also lacks excess sweetness, but no lack of nectarine, peach, pineapple, pear, red apple fruit. The herbaceousness ever-present but in check and proportionate. Holds onto some tingle on the finish, even as the fruit fades. Accessible and slightly off-center too. 50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Sémillon. (Screwcap) 88

## FRANCE SPARKLING

Chiquet, Gaston  
Champagne, Tradition Brut  
Blend

NV, \$36.99, 12.5%

Attractively deep golden color without sacrificing reflectivity, very loose bubbles if steadily moving, they evaporate quickly when breaking the surface. Quite lemony nose with crystalline minerality, freshly honeyed bread, open and clean given its weight in your nostrils, the green apple, peach, apricot fruit scents generous and not too round. Medium-bodied, noticeably fizzy and jubilant in the mouth, borderline foamy. Less honeyed and much drier here with dusty chalkiness, the acidity comes close to making a fist. The green apple, pear, peach fruit stays lowkey while also very consistent. Develops a floral breeze through the finish, nice because it breaks up the solidity some. Still, real big finish and not lacking in the power for

length. 45% Pinot Meunier, 35% Chardonnay, 20% Pinot Noir. [Disgorged 3/31/06] 90

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin  
Champagne, La Grande Dame  
Blend  
1996, \$124.99, 12.5%

Tight, slow but steady moving bubble beads, they dissipate quickly when they hit the surface, has a solid gold color with a sense it will deepen, lighter at the rims. Honey dripped nose, features notes of brioche, concentrated apricot, peach, apple scents, hints at minerals but this doesn't develop, while it doesn't broaden into any real complexity, it does deepen as it sits. In the mouth it's full-bodied, very toasty, to the edge of being burnt, the charred quality impairs any freshness in the apple, peach, apricot, pear, strawberry fruit. The acidity acts as a cloak over things, doesn't oppose all the sweetness, just softly drapes over it. Lemon and orange citrus, mint, licorice contribute more towards its approachability than actual complexity. Stays on point the whole way through, without opening or developing with additional air time. Does not leave you with the impression it will make old bones. 64% Pinot Noir, 36% Chardonnay. 88

Falmet, Joël  
Champagne, Tradition Brut  
Blend  
NV, \$28.99, 12.5%

Few, if thick, beads, white to yellow straw in color, fully transparent rims, a strong foam accumulates around the edges. Fresh nose, very clean with ground minerals, lemon zest, licorice, chalk, apricot pit and peach fuzz, the more you sniff the more it gains density and bottom in your nostrils. Medium to full-bodied, at once very creamy in texture while lightened and aerated by mineral/chalk dust, lemon/lime peel, not complex but really tied together well. The apple, pear, strawberry, apricot fruit on the juicy side, could just about pass for a demi-sec. The acidity OK for the wine's overall character, keeps plugging away. Rich, substantial finish, not clumsy but more so gregariously approachable. 70% Pinot Noir, 20% Pinot Meunier, 10% Chardonnay. [L 01 06] 88

Billecart-Salmon  
Champagne, Réserve Brut  
Blend  
NV, \$34.99, 12.0%

Good dark golden coloration, does fade at the rims, real tiny bubbles gathered in wide groupings rather than true beads. Green apple takes precedence over peach, pear fruit scents, minimal honey notes if any, more by way of chalk and mineral, lemon peel, clean to the point of losing length. Medium-bodied, the lemon to lime citrus sweeter here, softens the mouth entry. Never truly hardens up either though, stays elongated and fluid. The acidity is perfectly fine and as expected without being incredibly drying. Swells in the mid-palate with peach, apricot, pear fruit. The fine bubbles translate into minimal mouth fizz. Broad finish, steely and not especially graceful, as if angered. Unspecified percentages of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier. [28206M] 88

## ITALY RED

Vercesi del Castellazzo, Azienda Agricola  
Lombardy, Oltrepò Pavese, Luogo della Milla  
Bonarda  
2005, \$13.99, 13.5%

Its frizzante nature evident as its poured a honeycomb of bubbles spread out over the glowing magenta-purple color, more scarlet red along the rims but with strong violet yet, very clean. The nose is exuberant in a compact way, crisply sour cranberry, red cherry, strawberry scents the bulk of the action, pretty nice dusting of minerality under it all, whipped up into the air by a floral breeze. Light to medium-bodied, would definitely be the latter without the fizz. Maybe more herbaceous than floral here, still, whatever it is brings the minerals to the fore. Guileless red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, comes right at and through you. Offers more by way of acidity than tannins but neither especially arch. An old school wine which has been made hard to appreciate by today's vinous fireworks. [Synthetic cork: Microcell] 87

San Gregorio, Feudi di  
Campania, Irpinia, Rubrato  
Aglianico  
2004, \$15.99, 13.5%

The purple in the core yields decisively to crimson-orange then remains impeccably consistent through to the rims, dark and trim. Dusty nose of leather, spice, licorice and stone ash, through this super-juicy blackberry, black cherry fruit scents cascade forward, manages an herbaceous twist before it dissolves. Medium-bodied, firm but in no way hard, the tannins still there but beaten into silence. Serves up more hard earth, stone, leather, dried grass, here alongside white grapefruit citrus. The fullness of the cherry, currant, blackberry fruit breaks through in stages, stomps good naturedly on the tongue to let the juice run. Still, in the end feels squarish and doesn't have a real natural flow. 87

Borgogno & Figli, Giacomo  
Piedmont, Langhe  
Nebbiolo  
2005, \$18.99, 13.0%

Light violet to red-ruby in color, clear throughout and noticeably consistent in hue until the very outer rims where orange dominates. Floral nose with an abundance of leather, herbs, orange peel, earth, shows excellent depth all the way through to the cherry, blackberry scents, lacking in delicacy in spite of thrust. Medium-bodied plus, puts on weight as it opens. Serves up rose petals, orange blossom with less aggressive tar, leather, earth nuances. However, here in the mouth it plays up a lot of the cherry, blackberry fruit to ensure optimal satisfaction. Light peppery prickle in the tannins but they are tame on the whole. Turns maybe a tick greener on the finish but really only noticeable if held in the mouth. A solid value for its type, if tannic and not quite "pretty." 87

Borgogno & Figli, Giacomo  
Piedmont, Barbera d'Alba  
Barbera  
2005, \$12.49, 13.0%

Offers consistent ruby-purple hues from the core to the rims, brightens some along the edges with no loss of hue intensity. Grippingly sour nose of red cherry, raspberry, pomegranate fruit, dark earth with wet grass, animal hide nips, has no lift as it's far too dense to expand or develop.

Medium-bodied, dry and tannic, maybe a touch too so, things kind of grind to a snail's pace before the mid-palate. Gives up orange spice, blood iron, earth and cracked leather, as in the nose it covers the basics but not much more. Adequate degree of cherry, blackberry fruit, lasts to the expected length. More herbaceous than floral but not a great deal of either. Given its lack of fluidity, fresh enough finish. A definite food wine crafted along traditional lines. 86

Capezzana, Tenuta di  
Tuscany, Conti Contini  
Sangiovese  
2005, \$8.99, 13.5%

Clear red-violet to beet ruby in color, a soft luminescence comes out at the rims. Overly ripe, juicy nose of plum, cherry fruit then cigar ash, tar, lemon peel, dried potpourri, turns herbaceous as it sits in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, somewhat uneven tannins and acidity make for a few bumps in the road during the attack. Follows up with a strong dose of cut grass and bell pepper before you can get it to settle down. After that, continues through mineral shards, earth and ash to cake the tongue. There's an underripe quality to the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, curious counterpoint to the nose, lacks natural flow. The grittiness remains long after the liquid is gone. (Screwcap) 84

## ITALY WHITE

Felluga, Livio  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Colli Orientali del Friuli  
Tocai Friulano  
2005, \$24.99, 13.0%

Brilliantly reflective yellow-brown straw color with clear rims, dances gracefully in the glass. Has a smoky, mineral nose with both lift and enough heft to sit solidly, mild glazed quality to the apricot, peach scents, plenty of zip in the tangerine/lemon citrus, does an excellent job of stoking the cracking embers in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, very mineral here in the mouth too, stone and chalk contribute as well, gently dusts the palate. Extremely dry, the acidity sharp and piercing, drives the zest in the lemon/orange citrus to its full potential. The smokiness comes on during the mid-palate, lingers through the finish. While there's a murmur of dried honey, minimal sweetness in the apricot, pear, red apple fruit. Compact, classy denouement. 91

Cave du Vin Blanc de Morgex et de La Salle, La  
Valle d'Aosta, Blanc de Morgex et de La Salle  
Prié Blanc  
2005, \$14.99, 11.5%

Has good enough shine to bolster the pale white gold hue, slightest of green edges, the rims fully emptied out color. Deeply smoky nose of wet sauna stone, limestone, all solid and not powdery thus doesn't spread easily, fried lemon peel accents, all this overshadows any florality as well as most of the peach, melon, apricot, pear scents, too heavy for true squeaky cleanliness. Full-bodied, sweeter attack than expected, the ship righted by a suitable beam of acidity alongside the chalk, stone, streamwater components. The white grapefruit, lemon citrus comes on sweet and sour, enough to suggest pineapple along with the pear, apricot, apple, green melon fruit. Smokiness persists throughout, not airy but this does relieve excess weight. Just sufficiently complex to intrigue while always focused on bringing a smile to your face. 90

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Bea, Azienda Agricola Paolo  
Umbria, Pagliaro, Santa Chiara  
Blend

2005, \$36.99, 13.5%

Deep golden color, not quite amber, the surface shine flattened out by the blunt hue below, hard to figure out visually. Lot of sulfur at first in the nose, as it blows off you get more earthy, stony parts, grassy at turns, eventually remembers to present the peach, nectarine, pear, guava scents, has a bit of mixed citrus, here too hard to grapple with. Medium-bodied, enters the mouth disjointedly, like there's too many thoughts at once. Juicy concentration lends an almost paste-like quality to the apricot, peach, yellow apple fruit but there's close to zero sweetness. More hard brown sugar added than liquid honey, minor lemon peel, the anise and cinnamon-led baking spices dust over any acidic bite it might have otherwise shown. Suggests some longer term ageability but probably gonna be at its best in 6-18 months. Unspecified percentages of Grechetto, Malvasia, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Garganega. 88

San Michele Appiano (St. Michael Eppan), Cantina  
Produttori

Alto Adige/Südtirol, Lahn

Sauvignon Blanc

2005, \$13.49, 13.5%

The green-white straw color is not strong enough to impede the flatness, no shine at all but some gold flecks at certain angles. Black licorice, lemon peel and ground minerals provide most of the love in the nose, calmly unfolds cantaloupe, pear, yellow apple, peach scents, only the vaguest of grassy bits, rests heavily in your nostrils, lazily reluctant to move. Full-bodied, even more dependent on weight and thick texture in the mouth. The cleanliness in the streamwater, stone notes unable to aid the so-so acidity in crispening things up. Lack of herbal bite also keeps the proceedings blunt and rounder than perhaps desired. The peach, pear, melon, red apple fruit remains consistent throughout and not too sweet, including the pink grapefruit citrus. Momentary murmurs of flower petals. Long finish due to sheer weight, needs more erect bearing. 86

## GERMANY WHITE

Zilliken, Weingut Forstmeister Geltz  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Saarburger, Rausch  
Kabinett AP #14

Riesling

2005, \$18.99, 8.0%

Strong yellow straw color, aided by a mild translucency, builds into more of a solid block appearance than layers. The nose is engagingly easy and soft, lemon pie, lilacs, ripe peach and apricot fruit, the stoniness a subtle undercurrent throughout, pushed down by fresh honey notes. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and quite sweet, the acidity helps to frame the attack but can't keep up the pace towards the back end. Floral, juicy orange, lime, pink grapefruit citrus soup with brown sugar spooned on top. The stone and streamwater aspects carve a larger niche here. Can't imagine more fully ripened apricot, pear, yellow apple, pineapple, peach fruit, no bite just friendliness. Lingering smokiness as it ends. A happy wine. 90

Königschaffhausen am Kaiserstuhl,  
Winzergenossenschaft  
Baden, Flaneur QbA AP #50  
Müller-Thurgau  
2005, \$11.99, 10.5%

Attractive reflectivity in the light brown straw color, mild enough to have dissipated completely by the rims. Floral nose, pronounced sweet ripeness evident if not inducing heaviness, lively and fresh tangerine, lime, pink grapefruit citrus, touch of youthful skin fizz to the peach, apricot scents, possesses full fruit while not overfruited. Light to medium-bodied, here the acidity is active enough to restrain any latent sugariness in the nectarine, peach, pineapple fruit, much more direct clarity in its presentation. Smoky, almost tarry or earthy element to it. While plenty of tangerine, lime citrus, it's more knit into the whole. Mild bitter turn on the finish, extends its presence but at the same time unravels it some too. 87

## SPAIN RED

Clos Figueras (Clos Figueres)  
Priorat  
Blend  
2004, \$74.99, 14.5%

Glowing violet core, dark enough to close in on opacity but too clean for that, displays a wide ruby circle, closer to red magenta at the outer rims. Chocolate and mint, flowers fill the youthfully large nose, cumin, ginger spice, starts to lurch a bit, the richness of the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit anchors it and keeps it steady. Full-bodied, very big but smooth and well-integrated, here there's very little perceptible alcohol. The plum, prune, black cherry, blueberry fruit stays long and sinewy, although at the end the tannins do start to flex and chain things up. Floral with an emphasis on orange blossom. Sweetened further by cinnamon and clove spice as well as dark chocolate. Not herbal at all while not earthy either. Shows hints at future leather and cedar aspects but not a fully open window into its future. Unspecified percentages of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Carignan, etc. 90

## PORTUGAL DESSERT

Niepoort, Vinhos  
Douro, 10 Year Tawny Port  
Blend  
NV, \$37.99, 20.0%

Very clean and not too light, has enough rich redness to hold onto some purple hues, doesn't show any orange nor yellow until the rims, without any blemishes. Gently expansive nose of orange peel, candied ginger, cigar wrapper, tar, milk chocolate and potpourri, the yellow raisin, date, fig fruit scents fresh and fluid, no alcoholic heat. Medium-bodied with a lot of follow-through weight-wise for a tawny, yet without get bogged down. Has a nice little herbaceous bit at first, wakes the tongue up, then segues into cedar, tobacco, orange spice, lemon peel, ginger, mocha and brown sugar reduction. Fine amount of acidity, both stands up straight and goes down smoothly. Again, fresh green apple and cherry flavors underscore its relative youth as do the fig, date flavors. Not very smoky, more like liquid smoke. Quite balanced and integrated, hard to find any reason to stop drinking it besides unconsciousness. Unspecified percentages of Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Tinto Cão, Tinta Francesa, Tinta Amarela, Tinta Roriz, etc. 91

Infantado, Quinta do  
Douro, Late Bottled Vintage Port  
Blend  
2000, \$26.99, 19.5%

Not dark enough for opacity, presents a deep violet hue core, more orange to scarlet along the rims, robust and steady throughout. While the nose is plummy and bursting with raisin, date notes, it shows admirable fluidity given its size, cinnamon stick, clove, lemon-honey, dark chocolate bits, at times suggests an inkling of fresh green apple. Medium-bodied and light of touch, calmly displays cinnamon and ginger spice, baking dough, golden honey, orange peel flavors. Good amount of acidity to contribute to the brisk pacing. Not all that sweet nor concentrated, has golden raisin, fig and date fruit more than being prune, more graciously alert blackberry, blueberry fruit too. While soft, gets dustier near the finish, evidence of fine tannins. Not that evolved yet, conjures up only trace amounts of tobacco, tar or cedar. Real smooth. Unspecified percentages of Touriga Nacional, Tinta Barroca, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Roriz. 89

## SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Mulderbosch  
Stellenbosch  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2006, \$17.99, 12.0%

Not so shiny but crystal clear, strong green aspect to the yellow straw color, if the hue was darker it would have more glow. Nicely enveloping nose without turning into a fatty, pairs strawberry, pear, apricot fruit with soft minerality, some minor lemon notes, about as much floral as herbaceous but not a lot of either, more satisfying than engrossing. Full-bodied, real tangy and energizing with substantially more lime, pink grapefruit citrus than found in the nose. Higher degree of minerality too, lots of tiny pinpricks in the mouth. The acidity not blunt nor piercing, fits in with its desire to activate and not dominate. Consistent peach, apricot, pear, green melon fruit, slight bitter twist on the finish. Well done. 88

## AUSTRALIA RED

Torbreck  
South Australia, Barossa Valley, Woodcutter's Shiraz  
Shiraz  
2005, \$23.99, 14.5%

Too clear to really achieve darkness in the ruby-purple core, turns to more pure red around the rims. Syrupy nose with mesquite grill smoke, thick cough syrup like plum, black cherry, blueberry fruit scents, molasses, really sticky and clings to your nostril pores too much for it to swirl and release. Full-bodied, here too sticks like dried sap, lacks movement and possesses little discernible tannins or acidity to give it life. Stewed prune, raisin aspects overshadow the blackberry, cherry, blueberry fruit. Molasses, caramel and sweet smoke mix with tea leaves, tar, earth and lavender, but to no real gain in aggregate. Little bit of orange peel/orange blossom. Dark chocolate, vanilla oak flavors slowly build through the finish. While a big, weighty presence in the mouth, lacks pacing and clarity. (Screwcap) 87



Mollydooker  
South Australia, The Boxer  
Shiraz  
2005, \$22.99, 16.0%

Pure black core, totally impenetrable, its shiny surface adds life, vivid scarlet rims. The nose is all but fully buttered popcorn, pralines, caramel, mint, begrudgingly makes room for the plum, black cherry scents, which are slightly surprising for not being too juicy, suggests and underlying minerality which never blooms. Full-bodied, densely extracted as if it is having trouble even turning around in your mouth. Much sweeter than in the nose, sugary plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit. As a result, the oak, while formidable, seems tamer, even if furnishing planks of toast, butter, toffee, brown sugar, vanilla/ coffee ice cream. Mintiness builds towards the end, activates some lemon zest and florality. Wood tannins about the only tannins to be had, no acidity. Has the subtlety of a tidal wave. Grapes sourced from 54% McLaren Vale, 28% Langhorne Creek, 18% Padthaway. [Screwcap] 87

## AUSTRALIA WHITE

Cape Mentelle  
Western Australia, Margaret River, Sauvignon Blanc -  
Sémillon  
Blend  
2005, \$16.99, 13.5%

High shine in the white gold color, light enough to stay consistent throughout, very pretty. Pure bell pepper driven nose, really only makes any room for chili pepper, if you can get past the herbaceousness there's an odd bubblegum note, not much by way of fruit, smattering of pear, peach scents at best. Medium-bodied, quite spicy and prickly, here there's a reversal with the spicy chili pepper leading the green pepper. Even with all the spiciness, its minerality does come through, dusty not solid. After a few sips, indeed, your mouth is tacky and noticeably dry, even if the acidity seems too broad to focus and give structure. Again, the peach, nectarine, pineapple, green apple fruit appears an afterthought. An oddity at present, perhaps for all time. 50% Sauvignon Blanc, 50% Sémillon. [Screwcap] 85

## NEW ZEALAND WHITE

Whitehaven  
Marlborough  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2006, \$16.99, 13.0%

Light yellow straw in hue, just enough color to disturb full transparency, does fade at the rims. The nose is more blockish than keenly penetrating, mild bubblegum accents among the pineapple, peach, apricot, green melon scents and chunky stone/mineral scents, lowgrade herbaceousness matches the equally low citrus and flower scents, too compact for airiness. Full-bodied, the acidity not very cutting but there's lots of tangy lime, tangerine, pink grapefruit citrus as well as a swift burst of chili pepper to spark things. More minerality and saline saltiness than herbal qualities. Here, though, the pineapple, nectarine, peach, guava fruit gets somewhat lost in the mix. Neither sweet nor dry, plays it right down the middle, Zero flaws, but does come across like it's playing it too safely. [Screwcap] 87