

The Hanes Wine Review, January 2017 Edition

Finally getting around to making a bigger push in trying 2015 German wines, a much ballyhooed vintage. On the whole they have been solid and nothing yet has been lackluster. Hanes had not been buying German wines in quantity for some time. In that time the trocken (dry) style has become ascendant. Hanes still prefers the sweeter Prädikat wines, especially if the acidity level is high for balance. Always a contrarian, that Hanes. Most of the best wine disappeared from the shelves quickly, not finding many Auslesen around and what's there is expensive as hell. For example, J.J. Prum Wehlener Sonnenuhr Auslese in 2001 vintage was \$26.99 and in 2015 vintage it is in the \$50's to \$60's. Hey, I thought we were in an extended period of low to zero inflation? Price also keeps Hanes away from the high end Grosses Gewächs bottlings (besides their being dry).

Anyway, the wines *are* good and if you like German Riesling and money is no object, no sense in not checking out what is left on the shelves. Top drawer names like Schäfer-Fröhlich, Fritz Haag, Schloss Lieser, J.J. Prum, Von Schubert, or Zilliken are going to cost you. But there's decent quality across the board, particularly if a basic level QbA style wine is fine by you.

A kind reader asked Hanes to provide some insight into how and where Hanes drinks his wine and beer. If you've ever seen Hanes "in action" there's no great secret. Most of the wine and beer Hanes consumes (that gets written up in a tasting note) is Hanes sitting at his desk and typing the verbiage into the computer. This without accompanying food. The Hanes Way is to treat tasting notes analytically and try to separate the liquid in question from context, analyze it on its own. Which anyone will tell you will favor some wines and the opposite for others. That's life. Sometimes Hanes is forced to write a tasting note at the dinner table or out at a BYO restaurant and pesky food potentially interferes or the lighting is not perfect for up close observation of the multi-hued character of the wine. Sigh. But, really, the vast majority of tasting notes are done at the Hanes desk, typed right into Filemaker. The rest of the bottle may be consumed later with dinner but rarely would that result in an amendment to the note.

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This month's big winners... Other shiny things had gotten in the way but finally (before the vintage ran out) Hanes bought a bottle of 2013 André & Michel Quenard old vine Mondeuse from the Savoie. \$22 and a steal at that, great flavors of the grape and very user friendly. Will look for the 2014 version. And yet another winner from France, the 2015 Mas Coutelou "On Peut Pas Vraiment Dire Que" Syrah from the Languedoc. About \$24 and a very pretty wine, extremely drinkable. Furthering the Mondeuse kick, the 2014 Vin de Savoie from Romain Chamiot was another yummy wine, slightly more than the Quenard at \$27. But worth it, especially if you want your Mondeuse to have that "sauvage" edge. Took some searching but Hanes found a bottle of Costa Graia's Piglio Superiore wine from Lazio, Italy, made from the Cesanese grape. \$30 and worth it, impressive and enjoyably in your face, a nice change of pace experience. Unique for the "sur lie" aging, Steinmetz's 2015 QbA from the Geierslay vineyard was pretty interesting and worth a try by any German wine lover, price around \$28. Clean and straightforward Rhône Syrah, the 2014 Saint-Joseph "Sainte Epine" from Domaine Laurent Habrard has lovely fruit and a friendly disposition, worth the \$35 price. Not all that much Roussanne from Savoie makes it to the USA (mostly for whites it's Jacquère and Altesse) but these can be wonderful wines. So it went with the 2015 Gilles Berlioz "Les Filles" which was not cheap at \$36 but was a wine of pedigree which can please now and age.

The best \$20 and under picks... While a perennial favorite, the 2014 Domaine du Cros "Lo Sang del País" from the Fer Servadou grape was just off the charts good. And \$16. Wines like these are always the best counter-argument to a vast array of competent but overpriced domestic wines. In the end, underlying cost structures are not the consumer's problem. Hanes can spend \$35 to \$40 on an okay (and oaky) Californian wine and not get anywhere near the satisfaction you can get for \$16 from places like France and Italy. The 2015 Les Vins Contés Loire blend called "R15" is a pleasing kitchen sink style blend that adroitly puts the pieces together and is fairly priced at about \$19. Seems like 2013 was a good vintage for Cantina Valpantena's Valpolicella Ripasso called "Torre del Falasco." Still quite cheap at \$10 and punching way above its weight. A good candidate for house red.

And the disappointments... Had been looking for it, found it, then was "ehh" on it — the 2015 Laurent Saillard Loire Gamay called "La Pause." Pretty sure Hanes had it at a big tasting and made a note to get a bottle. Not a bad wine, just not the "find" one hoped for at around \$22 (the price range where you feel pleased with a "find").

Same basic story with the 2012 Agarrus Rhône blend named “Les Toiles.” The quick first impression led to a bottle purchase and it didn’t make that follow-up positive impression. Hey, only \$20 so you want to play, you gotta pay. Having respect for the Piedmontese producer Guido Porro, tried their 2012 Langhe Nebbiolo “Camilu” but that was a mistake. Underripe and no fun at all. \$25 was the price, not sure if this vintage sucked or if even this entry level bottling needs more time to find itself. First experience with a wine from Cruse Wine Co., their 2015 blend called “Monkey Jacket.” It was alright. Props to them for making wine out of less popular grapes such as Valdiguié but one has to also assume there is an underlying reason these grapes are not incredibly popular. \$33 is just about the going price for wines like these. Was not keen on the 2014 Bodega de Edgar Central Coast blend called “Toro de Paso” and made from a curious blend of Tempranillo, Grenache and Cabernet Sauvignon. \$48 is waaaaaay too much for this but why even bring that up? Hanes felt it was time to delve back into Central Coast red wines and there you have it, folks. Having quite liked the red wine “Corail” from the Château d’Arly Hanes decided to try their 2011 Jura Chardonnay “à la Reine.” Alas, fairly dull and uninteresting wine. What can you do? Spend \$25 to find out, that’s what you can do.

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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/oldervintages2016.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 January!

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Rattlesnake Ridge
Zinfandel
2014, \$44.00, 15.6%
The brightly glowing sunset red hues shine through the purple core and certainly dominate the rims, good clarity throughout. Big time ripeness in the nose, plum, cassis, blueberry scents of a syrupy nature, plenty of eucalyptus and pine as well as outsized caramel, butterscotch tones, the alcohol makes it run a bit hot. In the mouth it’s full-bodied, spicy with ginger and cumin spice to enliven all that sweet chocolate,

caramel, toffee, coffee oak. Densely layered blackberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit sweet while also holding its shape and general firmness. There is a savory dimension as well, focused mainly on sage, basil and wildflowers. Large enough in scale that it rolls on and on through the finish. The alcohol may overpower some but it also fuels the intensity. 90

Sandlands
Regional Blend, California
Carignan
2014, \$28.00, 12.8%
Deep plum purple hued core with broad red-ruby to scarlet rims, too dark to shine too much. Large-scaled flatulence first in the nose, needs some time to blow off and moderate into blueberry, blackberry scents,

violets and a vague underlying stoniness, noticeable amount of buttered popcorn and caramel, pulls up on you without quite closing down. Medium-bodied, peppery and both tannic and acidic, well structured while capable of relenting into a slow paced forward movement. Sour blueberry, raspberry, rhubarb fruit with a lemony edge. The stoniness here eclipsed by stronger vanilla, butterscotch tones. Very good inner mouth perfume, you can feel its weight of it. But at the same time it does not sacrifice cut. Grapes sourced 50% Lodi, 50% Contra Costa County. 89

Lagier Meredith
Napa Valley, Mount Veeder
Mondeuse
2014, \$45.00, 14.3%

Trim and spotless appearance, the just opaque purple core extends far into the rims where there too the hue is purple with magenta. The nose tries to get high-toned but too much vanilla and no real pepperiness, it is a touch leafy in spite of the fully ripened plum, blueberry, raspberry fruit, then brings out a light citrus touch and dissolves with some leathery notes. Medium-bodied, soft and juicy, here too the vanilla slathers the experience before you can get to any tar, earth, tea leaf and twigs. The blueberry, blackberry, plum fruit has more tautness than expected, without being short, tart. Here you get more white grapefruit to eventually puncture the vanilla and butterscotch. Keeps its weight leaning forward through to the finish, burst of white pepper at the end. Still, needs sustained bite and focus to succeed at a higher level. 89

Harrington Wines
Regional Blend, California, L'Avventura
Blend
2014, \$25.00, 14.1%

Dark garnet core that brightens into a bright brick red along the rims, quite clear throughout with surface luster. Straw, field grasses and a hint of leather and grill smoke bring moderate complexity in the nose to the candied cherry, raspberry scents and floral musk, the fruitiness lessens with air time. Full-bodied, while not overly thick it is firm from the attack through to the finish so you always know it is there. Here you get a great deal more crisp oak as well as vanilla, buttered toast notes. Orange juice and something mint-like trot alongside that hard candy sweet cherry fruit, here gets closer to strawberry or even watermelon than any darker fruit. The meaty smokiness outpaces any florality. Has good acidity and there's a freshening pucker at the end. Leaves you thinking it's the Montepulciano which won out in the end. 67% Sangiovese (Siletto Vineyard, San Benito County), 33% Montepulciano (Gianelli Vineyard, Tuolumne County). (Composite Cork) 89

Edgar, Bodega de
Santa Barbara County, Ballard Canyon, Kimsey
Vineyard, E2 (E-Squared)
Blend

2014, \$47.99, 15.1%
Blackish purple core which is close to opaque, crimson red rims give it a more aged look. The nose can be a bit high-toned with shellac and rubber notes, more smoky than floral, there's a curious lack of power-through in the blackberry, raspberry scents, as if they just lost focus. Medium-bodied, big floral dew here with no lack of caramel, coffee and toffee notes. A quite odd burst of green pepper comes out of nowhere, the black pepper more expected. Here the cherry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit displays greater consistency and verve. After enough sips you can tease out a mineral backbone. Leaves you thinking they are sleeker racing lines under all the baby fat and creamy oak but unsure when they will possibly surface. 60% Grenache, 40% Syrah. 89

Cruse Wine Co.
Regional Blend, North Coast, Monkey Jacket
Blend
2015, \$32.99, 12.2%

On the whole clear and transparent, as much ruby red as purple and not much difference from core to rims, average surface shine, nothing unusual visually. The nose is somewhat gassy, however, there's sufficient strawberry, red cherry, rhubarb fruit to balance out the merde and horsehide notes, there's an inertness to it so it becomes difficult to tease out much more than this. Medium-bodied, flat mouth feel in general even as it can prickle the tongue. The tannin seems clumpy which plays up the leafy, twiggy aspects. The sourness in the cherry, cranberry, rhubarb fruit belies an almost candied sweet core. Here you get a white grapefruit jolt which slightly pushes back the leather and sous bois type stuff. Interesting wine, smells and tastes interesting, as in fun to try but not sure you'd want to plow through a case of it. Approximately 50% Valdiguié, remainder Tannat, Syrah, other field blend grapes. (Synthetic Cork) 88

Edgar, Bodega de
Regional Blend, Central Coast, Toro de Paso
Blend
2014, \$47.99, 15.1%

Opaque black core, thin fresh blood red rims, well-saturated, no haze. The nose at first suggests a floral side before an avalanche of chocolate, wood spice, buttered popcorn and café au lait cover things fully, even the ripened currant, cherry to plum scents make minimal headway in the face of the oak. Full-bodied, grainy texture one assumes comes from said oak, more of a roast and toast than creaminess here. Mint,

anise and orange zest dab some makeup on it. Clumps up and all but ceases forward momentum through the mid-palate. The plum, cherry fruit more chewy than wet and juicy, ends with green apple sourness. Lots of vanilla at the end. Pretty make straight out of the Central Coast late 90's play book, ripen that fruit, slather on the oak, steamroll tongues left and right. 70% Tempranillo, 20% Grenache, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. 86

Adelaida Cellars

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Cybele Blend

2013, \$16.99, 15.5%

Dullish brick red color, a touch burnt in complexion, average clarity if lacking in sparkle. The nose shows muddy earth and minerals as well as kindling wood smoke before getting around to truncated cherry, raspberry scents, no real creamy oak presence and vaguely floral. Medium-bodied, on the tannic side with a good deal of spiciness. Tends to leave some burn behind in the throat yet it's not aggressively alcoholic. The florality fares better here and lightens the concentration of the hard candy strawberry, cherry flavors. Grinds to a halt prematurely. It's adequate and fairly priced but requires smoothing out. 37% Grenache, 21% Mourvèdre, 18% Cinsault, 14% Counoise, 10% Syrah. 86

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Remix Wines

Regional Blend, California, Somm Blanc Old Vines Blend

2014, \$32.99, 13.8%

Shiny surface, a bit dull and blockish underneath, light golden core with hueless rims. You get violets and anise in the nose, some sweaty, horsehide notes, orange spice, teal leaf, herbs before steadying into pineapple, guava, nectarine fruit with a touch of tart green apple. Light-bodied but has ballast and can anchor what's there on the palate. Has a citrusy lemon to lime mix with beeswax accents. Notes of vanilla pudding softens the mid-palate while it is capable of being a touch toasty at times too. The acidity is decent and soaks up a decent portion of any excess sweetness. As it warms it develops a nuttiness and more of the toastiness. Likely needs additional short term aging for further integration. 73% Sauvignon Blanc, 27% Sémillon. 89

FRANCE RED

Cros, Domaine du

Southwest France, Marcillac, Lo Sang del Païs Fer Servadou

2014, \$15.99, 12.5%

Glowing purple core with equally effulgent crimson red rims, vibrantly colored to distraction, clean with no filminess. The concentrated cherry, blackberry fruit scents have brawn to spare but still no match for the tar, bell pepper, leather and meadow grasses, explodes out of the glass and no offputting funkiness. Medium-bodied, incredibly fresh with mouthwatering acidity and broad tannin as well. The bell pepper element is dominant as is the tar, mud, leather and to a lesser extent merde. Twiggy and leafy without outright green herbaceousness. The sweetness of the cherry, raspberry to blackberry fruit is a great balancing factor and helps it soak into the palate. That said, there is an immense retronasal perfume, mainly that bell pepper. A pure delight to drink. If you like bell pepper flavor in your wine. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 91

Quenard, André & Michel

Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin, Vieilles Vignes Mondeuse

2013, \$21.99, 12.0%

Opaque blackish core with fiery red rims, deeply hued throughout and looks like a bruiser. There's a decent amount of merde and mud to the nose, smells like a pig rolling around in the dirt but there's ample dark fruits as well and herbs and wildflowers, likely needs a decant to show prettier. Full-bodied, redemptive here as bursts with plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit accompanied by grapefruit to blood orange citrus. More floral with ginger to cinnamon spice. Fresh leather replaces the barnyard aspect, its ripeness continues to impress the more you drink. The acidity is high and this aids in maintaining a savory side, not as sweet as it is fruity. Gets stonier over time with a mild tarry quality. Very approachable and offers great value. 91

Mas Coutelou

Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de France, On Peut Pas Vraiment Dire Que

Syrah

2015, \$23.99, 13.5%

Warm and fuzzy purple core, the haze extends through the garnet red rims, mild saturation. An initial funk quickly blows off leaving the nose rife with a pleasing floral breeze, ginger, spiced oranges, and compactly ripe plum, black currant fruit scents, intimation of wet leather, however, it's primary and fruity through and through. Medium-bodied and

extremely light on its feet, flows seamlessly even if there's a slight grittiness to the texture. Bright raspberry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit here, energetically zips about. Violets, orange peel, anise come close to replicating the nose, adds in stone shards and brown dirt for good measure. Gulpable and gone very quickly. 90

Chamiot, Romain
Savoie, Vin de Savoie
Mondeuse
2014, \$26.99, 12.0%

Clear purple core yields easily to red magenta and scarlet hues, fully colored rims without undue saturation, quite sleek looking. Tar, merde and tire rubber first in the nose then levels itself into cut grass, stone and cranberry to red cherry fruit scents of equal ripeness and sourness, puts on some weight with air time. Medium-bodied with nice grip, the tannin not afraid to exert some power. Oodles of white pepper to spice up things, white grapefruit zest and crushed stone bring added dimension. Full ripeness in the cherry, currant, cranberry fruit, generally darker fruit but retains sourness. Very long finish allows it to turn earthier with tar and graphite notes. Clean and avoids any animal nuances. approachably styled. (Synthetic Cork: Nomaticorc Select 500) 90

Habrard, Domaine Laurent
Rhône, Saint-Joseph, Sainte Epine
Syrah
2014, \$34.99, 13.0%

Scarlet purple with a lighter ruby hue at the rims, while spotless has the depth to approach opacity, lots of visual youthful vigor. Basil, oregano and mint adorn the robust cherry, blackberry fruit scents, light vanillin oak with a toasty lift, actually clenches up the longer you hold it in the nose rather than get airy and light. Medium-bodied, the acidity makes the mouth entry tart and puckering, however, the sweetness of the blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit not to be denied. In the mid-palate the creamy oak really takes hold and smoothes out the remainder of the presentation. Minty here as well with sweet herbs, anise and spiced orange, extremely approachable. Close to no gamey or leathery qualities, leans heavily on the fruit to impress. And succeeds at that. 90

Lemenicier, Jacques
Rhône, Cornas
Syrah
2014, \$49.99, 13.0%

While clear and spotless, there's also a certain duskiness to the purple core, closer to black than any vivid saturation, the rims a standard scarlet red of moderate richness, the surface shine very nice. High-

toned and pure nose of cranberry, sour cherry and currant fruit, tar and white grapefruit pith, fallen leaves and lavender, runs the full gamut. Medium-bodied, very juicy, its youth shows via a fairly big blast of butterscotch and caramel through the attack. Cleans up thereafter with lots of grapefruit and tart cherry, cranberry fruit. That said, the texture overall is sappy and clingy. Displays more acidity than tannin and does not dry out through the finish. Again shows a tarry earthiness and wet leather dimension. Perhaps at times a bit slick but has the verve and skeleton to turn into something of note down the road. 90

Puffeney, Jacques
Jura, Arbois
Pinot Noir
2012, \$39.99, 13.0%

Straightforward ruby-purple color, mild haze without seeming cloudy, full rims where already there's a natural bricking. Sour lemon and grapefruit, leather and tar infuse the nose, matted straw but not close to being green or herbaceous, hard contour to the cherry, dark berry scents, on the whole tends to clench up. Medium to full-bodied, very strong acidity contributes to a tart, puckering feel. Minerally and noticeably leathery with animal fur overtones. Taut white grapefruit scrubs and unglues the liquid in the mid-palate. Hints at strawberry in between cherry and blackberry pillars. Rugged, unshaven, touch peppery through the finish but manages some sappy cling which extends its presence, especially with air time. Requires a few years of cellaring. 90

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon, Cuvée MMXIV (Cuvée Marcel Lapierre)
Gamay Noir
2014, \$49.99, 13.0%

Leans more to crimson than ruby red, modicum of purple at the core, dark and fairly brooding. The nose has a considerable amount of stone dust and parched soil to it, rugged and close to tight, might be a sign of it shutting down, wildflowers, no moisture to the florality, cranberry, cherry to blackberry scents, more muscular than juicy. Full-bodied, pretty much the same story in the mouth with the added component and a broad net of tannin cast over things. Spicier here with cinnamon, ginger notes and lemon zest laid over that stony, earthy base. Has a savory herbs component as well, enough going on that you may often overlook that cherry, cranberry fruit. Sets inside very broadly in the mouth. Shut down or not, needs aging to perform maximally. 90

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon, Camille
Gamay Noir
2014, \$39.99, 12.0%

Bright cranberry red throughout although there's also a suggestion that it will turn a red-brown brick with age, perfect clarity. Smoky nose with a somewhat sulfur or flatulence edge, there's a firmness to the cherry, blackberry scents which resist easy flow, more stony than minerally, hint of grapefruit but not displaying much breadth at the moment. In the mouth it's full-bodied with a willingness to show off power, has tannin and acidity to spare and compact enough to hit with authority. Dustier here which teases out the minerals along with stone powder, dried pith quality to the white grapefruit. Faint touch of caramel buttresses the sugary core of the cherry, raspberry to strawberry fruit, could be jammy had it a more easygoing character. The florality submersed in the structure. Likely starting to close up but should have the stuffing to go some distance when it decides to open up again. 90

Vins Contés (Olivier Lemasson), Les
Loire, Vin du France, R15
Blend
2015, \$18.99, 11.0%

The liquid is clean although there's crud in the bottle neck and visible chunks at the bottle bottom, straightforward ruby-purple core with scarlet rims. The nose is leathery and wooly with getting gamey or sweaty, no real funk, bright strawberry notes balanced by dark cherry, blackberry, light mixed white citrus, has a pleasing solidity to it. In the mouth it's full-bodied, noticeably dry albeit in no way lacking for plum, cherry, cranberry fruit. Lavender, white grapefruit and stone appear, all but entirely loses the leather found in the nose. Achieves a swirling lift at the end, surprising for its weight. Persists long after you swallow. Solid offering, best with food to counter the heft. Grolleau (30%), Gamay (20%), Pineau d'Aunis (20%), Côt (10%), and Pinot Noir (20%). 89

Guiberteau, Domaine
Loire, Saumur
Cabernet Franc
2014, \$29.99, 13.0%

Dark without losing clarity, the purple core switches with ease to rust red, brick red hues while also hinting at an orange aura developing over time. The nose displays a lot of merde and burnt matchstick notes at first, these slowly fading away in favor of bright red currant, cherry notes and minerally earth, mild leatheriness, comes off as youthfully unevolved. Full-bodied, thicker and more layered than expected, kind of like walking through quicksand. Here you get the bell pepper, black pepper and a definite elevation in

stony, minerally accents. Towards the rear there's a slight pucker from white grapefruit. The fruit is tart yet longlasting and grippy, cherry, currant, cranberry and Italian plum. The tannic structure fine for its relative fruit level, should easily go for 8-9 years without losing much. Yummy, what it lacks is the ability to excite. 89

Breton, Guy
Beaujolais, Morgon, Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir
2015, \$29.99, 14.0%

Clear and transparent from the violet core to the red magenta rims, no lack of saturation, shimmering surface. Stony, dusty nose, mixes in violets and cranberry, cherry scents, there's a fresh openness to it, primary yet without a hint of overripeness, lingers well given its basic inclination to succinctness. Medium-bodied, spicy with ginger, clove notes. Lemon zest keeps it on the tart side. Yet, here the fruit is closer to a plum base with darker supplementary cherry, blackberry flavors. Violets and lilacs do give pretty lift in the mid-palate. Has that same stoniness and cleanliness, more peppery than spicy in a broad manner. Some tannin to prop it up but likely close to best now until 3-4 years out. 89

Gay et Fils, Domaine Michel
Burgundy, Chorey-Les-Beaune, Vieilles Vignes
Pinot Noir
2013, \$27.99, 13.0%

Clear ruby-purple that is lightened by a reddish influence as it moves outwards, a touch washed out rims. Tea leaf, sandalwood and bark leaves come through first in the nose, however, more than ample blackberry, raspberry, cherry scents which are more muscular than pretty, blunt force. Medium-bodied, the acidity gets the weight in motion but it is not "refreshing" per se. Green apple and strawberry takes a decisive lead over cherry, raspberry, makes it tart but softens very well into a broadening sweetness. Hint of caramel and wood spice along with ginger, incense, this without the oak being obtrusive. Big perfume through the finish, weighty yet ends brightly. Upbeat personality, ready to drink now but should hold at least medium term. 89

Seguin, Gérard
Burgundy, Bourgogne
Cuvée Gérard
Pinot Noir
2014, \$19.99, 12.5%

Light filminess to it, bright ruby to plum red, could see it taking on an orange aura over time, fully transparent. Clear herbaceous, grassy component to the nose with a tilled earth underpinning, verges on funky, sage and marjoram spice, latent lemony zest, given the

thickness of the raspberry, strawberry scents it's curious how they hang back out of the spotlight. Medium-bodied, very nice framing acidity and tannin, possesses good mouth traction. More baking spices and orange here, the grassiness folded in to the whole. Especially on the back half the cherry, raspberry fruit comes on strong, hard candy sweetness and concentration. Not particularly delicate nor cerebral but no oaf, satisfying. 89

Texier, Martin

Rhône, Vin de France, L'indigène

Grenache

2015, \$19.99, 13.0%

Ruby red to violet in hue, clean and very full through the rims, nothing remarkable visually, just deeply colored throughout. While fresh, there's a wooly texture to the nose which amplifies the volume of the raspberry, strawberry, rhubarb fruit scents, stays primary with moderate support from flowers and lemon, it's clean to the point of being devoid of much else. Medium-bodied, does a good job of creating traction on the tongue without losing forward momentum. Slightly darker complexion of blackberry, cherry alongside the raspberry fruit. Leather to animal fur scurries around the edges, maybe some stone and pebbles but here too it's about as straight forward as it gets. Sometimes simple pleasure is enough. 88

Vins Contés (Olivier Lemasson), Les

Loire, Vin du France, Poivre et Sel

Blend

2015, \$21.99, 11.5%

Bright cranberry to plum red in color albeit with a mild haziness to it, consistent throughout. Good white pepper bite to the nose with supporting herbaceousness, a touch wooly to leathery, definitely has an animal funk going on, the red berry to red cherry scents do get lost in the mix, this likely hurts its staying power. Medium-bodied, sets down on the tongue with authority and has the structure to grip strongly. More of twiggy earthiness and leather to animal sweat, however, there's a lot more sappy ripeness here in the strawberry, cherry, raspberry, watermelon fruit flavors. The peppery qualities appear mostly at the end. has more of a metallic than citric bite. Curious wine, it's good but not all that easy to cozy up next to. 90% Pineau d'Aunis, 10% Gamay Noir. 88

Grave, Château La

Southwest France, Cahors

Malbec

2013, \$17.99, 13.0%

Reddish purple core that turns to a brick red, scarlet cast around the rims, fair level of clarity. Spicy nose,

light peppery and herbaceous touches, cowhide, good freshness in the cherry, blackberry scents, you can feel it filling the nostrils like a pregnant rain cloud.

Medium-bodied, dry with a nice tannic punch as well as peppery tickle on the tongue. Behind the tree bark, leaves and leather is a burst of maraschino cherry, raspberry fruit, redder here. Through the mid-palate white grapefruit adds to the pucker. Almost shows a floral side but relents. Rustic with the kind of formidable tannin Cahors used to display regularly, best served with a stew or fatty beef. In no way underfruited. 88

Saillard, Laurent

Loire, Vin de France, La Pause

Gamay Noir

2015, \$21.99, 12.5%

Semi-cloudy purple to plum red in hue, the rims equally dark if more of a general ruby cast. Funky, sort of reductive nose with peanut shells, wet wool, damp earth and merde overpowering the tart cranberry, cherry scents, texturally it is quite thick and all but immobile in the nostrils. Full-bodied with equal heft in the mouth, squats powerfully on the tongue. Here, though, there's acidity to lend some freshness and sense of movement. Adds in lemon and white grapefruit as well as a moderate stoniness. Not as funky here, some merde left. Cloves and sandalwood lift through the finish. Still, in the end it's sluggish and lacks crisp contours. No overt flaws but does not compel thoughts of a repeat purchase. 87

Alexandrins, Domaine Les

Rhône, Drôme, Eclipse

Tannat

2014, \$19.99, 13.0%

Purple core than is closer to black than ruby, more scarlet red out at the rims, no filminess nor overt visual blemishes. Peanut shell and burnt buttered toast appear first in the nose, crisp floral mist too, then slowly cherry, blackberry fruit that throws one bigger punch then recedes. Full-bodied, especially through the attack and then sheds some weight moving forward. The tannin has kick but still not where one might expect based on comparable wines such as those from Madiran. This allows the plum, cherry, red currant fruit to run hither and yon, at times it's downright fruity. Strong floral component here too with an addition of orange blossom. Cleaner, no peanut shell or funk and highly approachable, almost makes you wish it were a bit chewier. (Composite Cork) 87

Venier, Christian
Loire, Vin de France, Le Clos des Carteries
Blend

2015, \$21.99, 12.5%

Soft gauziness to the violet to ruby red color, rims remain strongly hued. There's a fluffy texture to the nose like wet cotton balls which may trick you into thinking there's funk there but it is on the clean side, hay and straw, maybe some brown dirt, the fruit a semi-concentrated rhubarb, strawberry, cherry array, struggles to maintain pungency. Full-bodied, presents more heft an density than expected making it move at a slowly measured pace through the palate. The strawberry, raspberry, green apple darkened slightly by black cherry. Tannin higher than what it might need to flow, tends to grind into the tongue. Giving it air time allows some mixed citrus to show but basically there's not much going on. Still, a few years in the cellar could conceivably contribute to a more supple, openly knit wine. 80% Gamay Noir, 20% Pinot Noir. 87

Agarrus

Rhône, Duché d'Uzes, Les Toiles

Blend

2012, \$19.99, 13.5%

Gauzy appearance, the purple at the core pales before the broad brick red rims, looks advanced beyond its age. There's a core of sweetly candied berries in the nose but this often shunted aside by wet wool, leather and earth elements, never close to unclean, however, there's not much to support the fruit in developing a "pretty" profile. Medium-bodied, firm and a bit standoffish, the clay and stone here too take a sizable lead over any blackberry, raspberry to cherry fruit. Tannic through the attack but does soften by the finish. Allows itself a fleeting glimpse of pressed flowers and orange pith. It's ruggedly honest but it is hard to get past the blunt force felt with each sip. 75% Syrah, 15% Grenache Noir, 10% Cinsault. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Berlioz, Domaine Gilles

Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin-Bergeron, Les Filles
Roussanne

2015, \$35.99, 12.5%

Dense in appearance, the dark golden color imbues it with a block-like solidity, more than adequate surface shine gives it an attractive countenance. Voluptuous nose of honey, orange spice, mint and lanolin, plenty of heft in the peach, apricot fruit, hints of persimmon, more enjoyable as a choral whole than parsed. Full-bodied, starts off very broad and shakes off weight as it progresses in the mouth. Derives sweetness via honey, glazed nuts, candied oranges and lilacs, the apricot, pear, peach fruit is almost so dense that it

loses sugariness. The acidity is sort of sneaky, does not seem strong until the finish where it really mops up things. Well-perfumed while staying tactful and avoiding bombast. Gives you every reason to suspect it could age well and change for the better. 90

Huet, Domaine

Loire, Vouvray, Le Haut-Lieu, Sec

Chenin Blanc

2015, \$32.99, 13.0%

Dense golden color, block-like, too youthful for amber but hints at its coming, the rims lose some hue. Good smokiness to the nose, almost caramelized, more upwards lift than muscular thrust, sour tropical character to the pineapple, papaya, nectarine scents, yet there's also a delicacy to the floral scents as well as tangerine to pink grapefruit zest, overall interesting contrasts abound. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a firm acidic structure, the flavors do lose some intensity at the end. That said, excellent stoniness and salinity throughout and the textural tension made up for richness of flavor. Again, offers pineapple, green apple, pear to star fruit flavors, more tang than sweetness. Hint of sugar through the mid-palate welcome and likely to help sustain the total flavor profile as it ages. 90

Chamiot, Romain

Savoie, Apremont

Jacquère

2015, \$18.99, 11.5%

Layered golden look, draws your gaze into the glass, almost getting towards bronze at the rims, looks heavy. The nose has a pleasing smokiness to it, the minerality trumps the otherwise full floral breeze, orange zest and mint drift in and out, the fruit is mainly pear, apple to apricot scents and not a major factor. Full-bodied, presents a honeyed profile at first then the acidity shaves off the sweetness. This in turn allows the fruit to develop kumquat, persimmon to kiwi flavors to match the more basic cherry, apricot array. Keeps that minty freshness and is able to remain fluid given its relative weight. The orange citrus contributes here. Does not offer the same level of stone or mineral found in the nose. Clean, fresh finish. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 89

Clos du Tue-Bœuf, Le

Loire, Vin de France, Le P'tit Blanc du Tue-Bœuf
Sauvignon Blanc

2015, \$15.99, 13.0%

Good depth to the golden hue, consistent core to rims, even some time after the pour lots of tiny bubbles clinging to the glass sides. The nose starts off a touch funky and briny with a metallic to tarry smokiness, then reaches out with peach, melon scents, whipped cream

yet without distinct citrus presence. Medium-bodied, presents most of its heft up front and then slowly sloughs off the body moving forward. Average acidity, not soft but soaks into the palate a little faster than expected. Same peach, apricot, melon to cherry fruit, ripe and round. Here maybe there's sweet tangelo or pink grapefruit notes. The minerality sparkles at first before subsumed in a general creamier mouth feel. Interesting mostly for its contrasting elements, although easy enough to inattentively gulp. 88

Arlay, Château d'
Jura, Côtes du Jura, à la Reine
Chardonnay
2011, \$24.99, 13.0%

Well deepened golden hue which at some angles verges on looking amber, it both pools solidly into the glass and provides some surface luster, as expected looks older than it is. Butterscotch, pie dough, honey and lemon drops comprise the majority of the nose, starts to develop some smokiness but relents, the pear, apple, to peach scents are simple and unassuming. Full-bodied, soft if not quite sluggish, does not show any overt acidity and as a result comes off sweeter than may be desired. Highlights that yeasty, doughy element plus the butterscotch, toffee accents. Needs to warm some but there's more concentration in the cherry, red apple, pear fruit. Lemon and some mineral water freshness welcome at the end. Overall, too dull to hold your interest for long. (Composite Cork) 87

FRANCE SPARKLING

Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin
Champagne, Rosé Brut
Blend
NV, \$65.99, 12.5%

Good depth to the salmon pink color. Extremely aggressive pétillance, fills the glass and surface constantly. The nose comes off as dry and lean with succinct cherry, raspberry scents, pinch of lemon peel, undercurrent of minerality. In the mouth it's full-bodied and heavy even as all those bubbles churn away. Dry in a broad way, not pinpoint in feel. Has lemon, orange citrus, chalk, anise, at times even a bit herbaceous. The strawberry, cherry fruit makes an initial thrust forward then quickly tapers off. Lots of blunt force, not clumsy per se but lacks subtlety. Close to savory at the end and too dry to display much yeastiness. Not much aftertaste, just lingering weight. Unspecified percentages of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay. 87

ITALY RED

Costa Graia
Latium/Lazio, Piglio Superiore
Cesanese
2013, \$29.99, 14.0%

Filmy and opaque purple core, contrasted sharply by the glowing sunset orange to red rims, looks like it caught on fire. Initial animal fur to rubber funkiness slowly blows off to reveal rich plum/prune and cherry fruit, matted straw and garden herbs help stabilize it, a bit too heavy to achieve a breezy lift. Full-bodied, even spicier here with clove and cardamom notes, here you get hints of pressed flowers, lavender and orange peel. Still, it's that animal hide and leather which takes up a lot of space. Although the abundant ripeness of the plum, cherry fruit does have its say. Stays this side of sugary or dried fruit nature, some chocolate accents. Hard to gauge through the density but something like acidity brings pucker at the end. A big wine that acts like a big wine. 90

Valpantena, Cantina
Veneto, Valpolicella, Torre del Falasco Ripasso
Blend
2013, \$9.99, 13.5%

Good clarity, the core is more blackish red than any purple hue, brick red rims of above average vibrancy. While generally light on its feet the nose offers as much prune, raisin as plum, cherry scents, deepened further by chocolate notes and then a floral musk, almost with a piney scrubbing sensation, only flaw is shortness, lack of persistence. Medium-bodied, were it not for the boisterous acidity would feel fuller. But the added freshness is welcome and invites in grapefruit, stone and straw, hat notes. Less emphasis on prune, more on blackberry, cherry fruit. The chocolaty burst softens and extends the finish. Flavorful without overstaying its welcome. Unspecified percentages of Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella. 89

Musso, Azienda Agricola
Piedmont, Barbera d'Alba
Barbera
2014, \$11.99, 13.5%

Blackish red in hue with dense crimson rims, sort of burnt ember appearance. Earthy nose, more meadow or field than barnyard, anise, flowers and fully ripened cherry, blackberry scents, fairly open and breezy given its heft as well as youthfully unevolved. Medium-bodied, here the acidity trims it up and creates nice pacing. Still, remains on the sweet side spotlighting the dark cherry, berry fruit as well as mixed citrus tones. At times suggests black licorice and certainly floral. The oak has a crisp profile and is more positively additive than necessary per se, toast and baking spices. Does

turn a touch coarse through the finish, otherwise performs well and particularly so at the price. 88

Benevelli di Massimo Benevelli, Azienda Agricola Piero

Piedmont, Barbera d'Alba, Bricco Ravera Barbera

2013, \$23.99, 14.0%

The ruby-red core is clear and on the main transparent with youthful brick red rims, good fullness of hue throughout. The nose is suavely rugged and direct in a simple fashion, leather, white grapefruit, maraschino cherry, fresh in spite of the heaviness, not overtly earthy. Medium-bodied, tannic entry sets it strongly in the mouth, drying. Slowly unveils plum, dark berry fruit embellished by sweet herbs, licorice and mixed orange to grapefruit citrus. Peppery tingle at the end along with leather, more stone than damp earth, barnyard influences. The finish extends well in spite of its formidable structure, the fruit does not diminish and is able to fashion sufficient inner mouth perfume. The acidity cleans it all up nicely. 88

Farro, Cantine

Campania, Campi Flegrei

Piedirosso

2012, \$6.99, 13.0%

Not much purple to it, turns from black to red to orange as it progresses outwards, somewhat washed out furthest out. Mud, merde and rubber give the nose a sort of reduced character, smoky cherry scents, leather, matted straw, on the whole of few words if not reticent. Light to medium-bodied, tangy entry, stings the tongue, acidity is sharp. Takes awhile to unwind but does relax enough to provide maraschino cherry, strawberry to watermelon flavors, brightly candied red fruits. Leathery more than earthy, now and then a bit of white grapefruit comes through. Much cleaner than the nose suggests. Fairly blockish and does not seem to "progress" through the mouth. But it's honest and guileless and that counts for a lot these days. 87

Porro, Azienda Agricola Guido

Piedmont, Langhe, Camilu

Nebbiolo

2012, \$24.99, 14.0%

Gauzy purple with a reddish influence, washed out rims, throwing a lot of sediment. Stewed and borderline reduced nose of plum, cherry fruit, metal shavings, leather and tar, needs substantial air time to lose most of its funkiness, no flow to it. Medium-bodied, dry and tannic, twiggy with tree bark, leaf notes. Seems underripe were it not for the borderline prunish, plum fruit, not sure about the phenolics here, sour if not bitter. Licorice and pressed flowers struggle to give it some makeup and at the end the fruit turns

towards strawberry, green apple. The parts just don't fit together. 86

GERMANY WHITE

Steinmetz, Weingut Günther

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Wintricher, Geierslay, QbA Sur Lie AP #20

Riesling

2015, \$27.99, 11.0%

As much white straw as golden straw, somehow distorts your vision in spite of the basically hueless rims, above average shine, quite pretty all together. Smoky nose with a noticeably high level of lime, lemon zestiness, the doughiness comes through clearly and actually expands that smokiness rather than soften it, rubber takes up more ground than any focused-to-a-vanishing-point apple, pear, peach pit fruit scents. Full-bodied, the "sur lie" treatment glaringly obvious, doughy and yeasty and helps it stick to the palate as the acidity does its best to rip the enamel off your teeth. Lime, tangerine, pink grapefruit citrus abounds here too, super-sour pineapple, nectarine, green apple, papaya fruit. The rubber less evident while the smokiness there, just closer to the wings. Retronasally it's all yeastiness. Extremely intriguing wine, not sure how it will age but makes you want to know. 90

Spreitzer, Weingut Josef

Rheingau, Hattenheimer, Engelmannsberg, QbA Feinherb AP #17

Riesling

2015, \$20.99, 11.0%

Above average shine to the green to yellow hay hues, transparent with some visual distortion, rims close to colorless. The nose has a pleasingly cleansing lift to it, offering a blend of rubber, black licorice and wet slate to accompany the succinct peach, pear to red apple scents, curious lack of citrus, prettied up some via a powdered sugar dusting. In the mouth it's full-bodied with the acidity acting more as structural beams than a slimming or focusing factor. Here though you do get some pink grapefruit, tangerine nuances to enliven the peach, apricot, pear fruit and tease out a bit of pineapple. Good underlying stone and mineral water but you'd be hard pressed to consider it terroir driven. Florality opens well through the finish, retains that anise to licorice edge. Very drinkable. 89

Lieser, Weingut Schloss

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Lieser, Niederberg Helden, Spätlese AP #9

Riesling

2015, \$27.99, 7.5%

Light golden straw color, very reflective with a fair amount of tiny bubbles clinging to the glass sides.

Smoky nose of minerals and warm stone, at times seems like quartz, a very light creaminess helps the ripe nectarine, peach, pear scents expand, not much citrus presence but offers a steady florality. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, while very sweet it has the acidity to match it and create flow and shape, albeit there's no real pucker to it. Sweet cherry, peach, apricot fruit, doesn't quite get to pineapple. Lilacs and violets, here the smokiness woven in and most noticeable at the end. Overall, it's more wet slate and clay than minerals. Good compactness and persistence, should develop clearer lines as the plumpness of the fruit recedes. 89

Lauer, Weingut Peter
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Ayler, Kupp, QbA Fass 6 "Senior"
AP #61

Riesling

2015, \$26.99, 11.5%

Basic golden straw color with a few glints of green, good shine and draws your gaze into the glass as well. There is a yeasty, doughy quality to the nose, mint and black licorice, slowly unfolds apple, pear, apricot fruit, has generally round contours in the nostrils, with air time you also get additional salinity and stone dust, a bit too compacted to really soar. Medium-bodied, the acidity wastes no time clamping down and drying things out. The brunt lessened some by those doughy notes and some vanillin accents. Here the fruit takes on a more cherry, peach tone with apple in support. Also delivers a greater level of orange citrus and savory herbs. Overall, it's this savoriness which wins out. It finishes strongly with both chalk and stone, at times even some clay. Seems like it will need time to figure itself out. 89

Schäfer-Fröhlich, Weingut
Nahe, Bockenauer, Felseneck, Kabinett AP #13

Riesling

2015, \$31.99, 8.0%

Semi-flat yellow straw, more towards brown than green, block-like, looks quite like what you'd expect, light touch of fizz clinging to glass sides. Mineral water and chalk give the nose a clean profile, some farm animal gases now and then, burnt rubber, attractively deep cherry, apricot to red apple fruit scents, as the wine opens the florality grows appreciably, overall masks the sweet ripeness well. In the mouth it is medium-bodied with more flesh noticeable during the attack, trailing off at the end. The acidity sparkles but never draws blood, no pucker at all. The fruit here more green apple, pear to green melon, not tart while nothing you'd come close to considering as tropical. Stream water and stones, needs to fully warm for you to receive any whipped cream notes. Tactful and

powerful both, feels like a Kabinett level wine and should reward medium term aging. 89

Prum, Weingut Joh. Jos.
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Wehlener, Sonnenuhr, Kabinett AP
#9

Riesling

2015, \$28.99, 8.5%

Light golden straw color with about as much green tint, layers enough to make it somewhat translucent, especially allowing for the vast amount of bubbles pressed against the glass sides. Has that initial sulfur blast to the nose, gaseous merde, then a light smokiness and chalk to slate notes, a bit of orange citrus pulp to add weight to the succinct cherry, apricot, pear fruit scents, not that expressive even with air time but one suspects not for lack of something to say. Medium-bodied, the acidity firms it up, particularly entering the mouth, and drier than expected. Mild fizz, offers more by way of stream water and wet pebbles, serene compactness. Barely hints at diesel nuances today. The dryness of the texture lends the fruit more tartness and leans it towards pineapple, star fruit as well as peach and apricot. Needs time. 88

Adam, Weingut A.J.
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Dhroner, Hofberg, Kabinett AP #8

Riesling

2015, \$25.99, 8.5%

Glassy appearance with a yellow straw hue, full rims, nothing unusual nor out of place. While the nose feels full it's also compact with little wasted motion, the peach, apricot, red cherry scents march right in with whipped cream and mint next in line, the mixed citrus notes do not quite take hold, while pure it is primary with minimal stone, mineral nor rubber accents. In the mouth it's full-bodied and the acidity has a lot to contend with and on the whole is up to the task and firms things up and allows for welcome pucker and tartness. The grapefruit, tangerine citrus more active and here there's pineapple and papaya to pair with the peach, apricot base. Floral more than minerally, no sign of any rubber or diesel notes. Clean and direct, does not leave one thinking dramatic change in profile is in its future. 88

Haag, Weingut Fritz
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Brauneberger, Kabinett AP #3

Riesling

2015, \$25.99, 8.5%

Good depth to the golden hue while remaining very reflective and shiny, really sits solidly in the glass though. An initial touch of rubber and smoke in the nose fades swiftly before more potent whipped cream, vanilla fudge scents, the apricot, cantaloupe, peach to pear element has breadth and staying power,

manages to avoid smelling like fruit cocktail. In the mouth it's full-bodied and fleshy, the acidity on the softer side. Here it does go full-on fruit cocktail with cherry, peach, apricot, mango and pear flavors, syrupy consistency. However, in turn the rubber component scales it up as well and has credible stoniness. Even for an entry level wine you expect more focus and snap from this producer. Chug 'em if you got 'em. (Screwcap) 87

SPAIN SPARKLING

Naveran, Caves
Penedès, Cava, Brut Nature
Blend

2014, \$14.99, 12.0%

Light straw color, quite bright and shiny, very strong and hyperactive streams of bubbles. Green apple, pear fruit brightens the nose with supporting lemon notes, equal parts minerals and vanilla, more clean and brisk than nostril filling. Medium-bodied, good heft in spite of the overall dryness. Much more lemon here and even lime, provides flavor before chalky and stony accents take over. Basic fruit flavors of peach, apple, pear but they are consistent and stay ahead of the dryness. When slightly warmer you get some florality. Nice for how it can avoid creaminess and stay focused, tactful. But in the end could use more flavor. 40% Macabeo, 30% Parellada, 20% Chardonnay, 10% Xarello. 87