

The Hanes Wine Review, July 2018 Edition

More of the same for Hanes. Could easily have had a May 2018 edition. Work on this started June 8th. But here it is July 1st. So, it's the July edition!

As noted a couple editions ago, interstate wine shipping is getting tougher and tougher for retailers (not necessarily wineries). Another recent attempt in New York State to basically forbid the import and/or purchase of "gray market" wines, forcing both retailers and restaurants to buy their stock solely from wholesalers. Not every wine lover knows it but much wine — mostly older vintages but some current vintages as well — is purchased by the retailer/restaurant in places like Europe and legally imported in the United States outside of the importer and/or wholesaler of record. For example, let's say a wholesaler in Belgium or a winery in France has stock to sell and they don't care who they sell it to. Someone in the US may say, hey Belgian wholesaler, I will take those 20 cases of Château Marmoset and ship them to the US. The wine may be cheaper than could be acquired in the US or the wine may be highly allocated and the purchasing party got shut out or just wants more to sell. Who cares. Point is that the wholesaler lobby does not appreciate this "end around" and is pushing legislators in their pocket to close the loopholes. If they do so, this will have a direct negative impact on wine buyers' ability to find older vintages or rare, allocated wines per se. It's also likely to affect wine auction houses as the property auctioned is closer in existential status to retailer stock than winery direct stock. That is, it's private property being traded outside of the established three tier system for alcohol sale. And, for what it's worth, a lot of restaurants and some retailers get stock by buying at auction.

Lots of lobbying money flying around. Pair this with the increasing attention being paid to interstate tax collection and it's likely to get worse before it gets better. Hanes can easily see the blanket prohibition of both interstate retail wine sales as well as very close scrutiny of the fulfillment of auction house winnings to prevent out of state delivery. Even with increasing efforts by the retail lobby and end consumers, they are not contributing the same dollar numbers as the wholesaler lobby and the latter would likely just keep increasing their spend to win in the end. We'll see. Getting cut off from buying at auction would save Hanes substantial money each month. He might even pay off the credit cards.

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This month's big winners... Curses that Hanes only bought one bottle of the 2015 Jerome Galeyraud Côte de Nuits-Villages "Les Retraits" as it was gosh darned delicious. But at \$47 it was pricey and Hanes wanted to try it before committing. Perhaps some shall show up on the secondary market. Hanes had not tried a Daniel Boulard wine since the 2010 vintage so grabbed a bottle of Chiroubles "Chatenay" and it was fantastic for only \$26. Hanes already buys tons of Beaujolais but gotta try more Boulard going forward. Don't get around to too many wines from Dirty & Rowdy but a bottle of their 2017 "Unfamiliar" Mourvèdre was opened and it turned out to be a fresh and lively drop and very fairly priced at around \$23 or so. Having now become acquainted with their wines, for the Hanes palate the regional Pinot Noir bottlings from Vincent Wine Company are every bit as good as the single vineyard bottlings at a lower price in the \$20's. The wine boards are abuzz with talk of Xavier Gérard in the Northern Rhône. Tried his 2015 Saint-Joseph "Le Blanchard" and this bottle backs up the hype. Alas, here too Hanes waited too long to try it and was all gone before more could be acquired for the cellar. \$40 was pretty fair for it. Here too new to Hanes is the Domaine des Ardoisières from the Savoie and their 2016 Jacquère called "Silice." Zesty, good energy and pacing and at around \$22 about what you will be paying these days for this "hot" region.

The best \$20 and under picks... Don't drink them as often as should be the case but had an enjoyable Finger Lakes Riesling, this being the 2016 Hermann J. Wiemer "Dry" bottling for \$18. Plenty of aroma and flavor albeit drinks more like a semi-dry. Thumbs up. Over the years the Loire producer Verdier-Logel steadily delivers and the 2016 Gamay from the Côtes du Forez called "Le Volcanique" is no exception. Structured, complex and in no way shy. Costs around \$17. A new producer to Hanes, the Mas del Périé made a nicely rustic Cahors, their 2016 "La Roque" bottling. Honest wine, \$20 is probably as much as you'd want to pay for it though. Vajra's 2015 Langhe Rosso kitchen sink blend is an excellent value and represents the Piedmont well for a great \$16 price. They might be turning over to the 2016 vintage, hard to say. Hanes used to drink a fair amount of wines from Robert Weil in Germany's Rheingau. Heck, he used to get Christmas cards from them. But things change. Seeing their basic

QbA "Tradition" bottling for a fair \$18, snagged it and sipped it. Good stuff, plenty of nervosity, more dry than sweet. Worth a try for sure.

And the disappointments... Although Hanes is not the biggest fan of Turley's stylistic turn away from "fruit bombs" there's still rarely dud wines. But the 2015 Dragon Vineyard Zinfandel just never came together and wasn't much fun for the \$45 it cost. Another disjointed wine was the 2015 Santa Rita Hills Pinot Noir from Crawford Family. Tried a few of their wines and this one didn't match up to the other too, puckering and alcoholic, not sure what happened here. Costs about \$42. Being a fan of Patrick Jasmin's Côte-Rôtie wines Hanes thought to check out the less expensive 2016 IGP Syrah they call "La Chevalière." Not impressed, lacking in depth of flavor as well as length, sigh. At about \$23 will wait to try another vintage on someone else's dime. Although by no means a "disappointment" in the true sense of the word, Hanes's bad luck with Foillard's Morgon "Cuvée Corcelette" continues with the 2016 vintage. Never seem to catch these at the right time or they just need age and shouldn't be touched young. Anyway, Hanes has a few bottles in the cellar to find out in 12-18 years. Price is usually in the high \$30's. Hanes has a passing familiarity with the wines of Domaine Ledogar from Southern France. And Hanes likes Carignan. But the purchase of their 2016 "La Mariole" Vieilles Vignes bottling did not turn out that well, tight and dusty, albeit decently priced around \$16 or so. It is becoming clearer as the sample set grows that Timorasso is not ever going to be Hanes's favorite grape. Went back to the well with the 2015 Massa "Derthona" and just left one unmoved. Close to \$30 price too. Yet another deposit in the "if you open it, Hanes will drink it" bucket. After the ballyhooed 2015 German wine vintage Hanes was unsure how much dinero he was going to plow into 2016 wines. Having liked the 2015's from Falkenstein, went for the 2016 Riesling Niedermenniger Herrenberg Spätlese Feinherb. Ehh. Didn't suck but not very fun or engaging either. Hanes knows a few German wine fans who favor Falkenstein 2016 over 2015 so the wines should sell without Hanes backing up the truck for them.

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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/oldervintages2018.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 July!

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

Alexander Valley, Vineyard 101

Zinfandel

2015, \$44.00, 15.3%

Mostly scarlet red throughout with a deepening into a gauzy purple at the core, bright and lively without saturated glow. There are alcoholic fumes to the nose followed on by plum, green apple, strawberry fruit, a bit scattered in this regard, sour orange pulp, milk chocolate and pine, pleasing mentholated lift at the end, not too dulcet which is nice. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and compact, shows a better than average tannic and somewhat acidic structure. That noted, you get more prune and date here laid over the more basic plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit. Consistently citrusy with a continuance of the menthol and pine. Uptick in savory garden herbs in the mid-palate before the dried fruit density smothers all else. Slowly grows on you and in no way overwrought. 90

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder

Syrah

2015, \$48.00, 14.5%

More fuzzy black than purple in the core, looks bruised, heavy crimson rims continue the medieval look. In the nose the floral mist gets run down by burnt buttered toast and mocha as well as moments of beef jerky, eucalyptus accents help break up the solidity of the plum, black cherry scents, big and rolls on like a tank, youthfulness does not let any grace show through yet. Full-bodied if more fluid here, this in the face of noticeably strong tannin. Same basic story here with the youthful oak of coffee beans, mocha, caramel dominant and slowly pulls back from the spotlight. Gushes boysenberry, blueberry to Italian plum fruit, more jammy in texture than sweet per se. Grill smoke, meat fat with nutmeg, potpourri nuances. Poses a challenge in divining its future, in the end the structure seems impressive enough to hold it together as the baby fat fades. 90

Harrington Wines

Regional Blend, California, Hard Luck

Blend

2015, \$25.00, 13.7%

Warm ruby red color with a touch more violet in the core, gauzy and not crystal clear nor close to opaque, zero hue loss at the rims. The nose features black licorice, violets, witch hazel with sage, bay leaf notes, candied cherry to strawberry fruit, wonderfully penetrating lift, goes on for miles. Light to medium-

bodied, the acidity gives it a puckering jolt from the outset and tends to squeeze hard at the finish too. Same licorice, pine, rose petals, and orange pekoe tea. Turns quite savory towards the end. So heavy is the perfume musk that it could be easy to miss the ripeness of the raspberry, red cherry to strawberry fruit, touch of apple as well. Quite captivating. 50% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 25% Mission. (Composite Cork) 90

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma Valley, Weill a Way Vineyard

Syrah

2014, \$55.00, 14.8%

Very dark purple yet it comes with an impressively spotless clarity, the crimson to scarlet rims hum with energy, sleek like a panther. The nose sufficiently packed that its density challenges you to parse out the elements, big floral dew then molten butterscotch and caramel, bacon grease, cleansing waft of eucalyptus before you sink into the plum, black cherry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, surprisingly nimble going off the nose and right off the bat shows a refreshing acidity. Tangerine, lemon citrus zesty and flighty, rose petals, lilacs and mint. Does display fried butter, toffee, gingerbread notes, however, the oak is not out of control nor tiresome. Closely layered cherry, cassis, plum, blueberry fruit, more sugary than sour. Worth cellaring, fruit will last and there's good reason to believe nice tertiary elements will evolve. 90

Dirty and Rowdy Family Wines

Regional Blend, California, Unfamiliar

Mourvèdre

2017, \$22.99, 12.5%

Bright watermelon to ruby red in hue, super clean with full intensity through to the rims. Really strong and airy lift to the nose, swirls around offering rose petals, orange blossom, strawberry to raspberry fruit, a mutter of leather, not especially complex but ever so pretty and fetching. Medium-bodied, dances around the tongue. Varies among light baking spice notes, orange reduction, leather, loamy earth to tea leaf. Then twigs and meadow grasses do much of the filling out. Fresh and fruity strawberry, raspberry, blueberry fruit with a pleasingly tart punctuated end. There is a milky creaminess which smoothes it out. Youthful and presents no reason to age it. 85% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah, 5% Grenache. Grapes sourced from Monterey, Mendocino, El Dorado, Amador Counties. 90

Turley
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Rattlesnake Ridge
Zinfandel
2015, \$44.00, 15.9%
Even with a glow to it the dark purple core remains fully opaque, the red ruby to magenta rims equally rich if modestly transparent at the outer edges. The nose is slightly wound up and only doles out the blueberry, boysenberry fruit scents in a miserly fashion, more breadth in the orange peel and pine cone accents, lightly mentholated lift at the end. Full-bodied, more muscular and dense than heavy, able to produce sufficient tannin at the end to secure a clean finish. Gentle meatiness to it, sauvage game rather than something like baked ham. Garden herbs and mukhwas spice it up some but not peppery. Green apple and apricot influence in the cherry, blackberry, plum fruit base. Could actually use some more fruit to even out the bumps in the road. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.
Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Griffin's Lair
Vineyard
Syrah
2015, \$45.00, 14.2%
Clear and trim purple core that brushes against opacity, broad scarlet red with more of a warm glow than saturated look. Maple syrup, molasses and uncooked bacon bubble up in the nose, fleshy black currant, cherry fruit, violets and stony earth, while dense appears to heading off to sleep for a few years, not overly expressive. Medium-bodied with a good bit of tannin to create a more imposing profile. Raspberry, blackberry, blueberry fruit on the main, ripe but sour. Caramel and molasses grow in stature as it opens. Minty and floral to a point, gets submerged by the finish. Nice jolt of orange citrus near the end, almost grapefruit. Has an abundance of primary material but too bunched up and squished together at the moment to enjoy the elements on their own. Mainly Syrah, remainder Viognier. 89

Harrington Wines
Mendocino County, Mendocino Ridge, Zeni Ranch
Zinfandel
2016, \$30.00, 13.3%
Very light filminess helps to deepen the scarlet red core into purple territory, bright cranberry red rims, visually energetic. Edgy and penetrating nose, features sour white citrus, quarry stone shards, meadowy grassiness, and a medicinal element, firm cherry, blackberry fruit scents not fighting against you but not welcoming either. Medium-bodied, taut with no excess flesh nor wasted words, dives right into the white grapefruit, tar, tea leaf aspects, a bit unfamiliar territory at first. Garrigues like florality, pine sap, while

there is a certain vanillin and buttery creaminess at times the acidity ensures it is short lived at best. Zesty cranberry, Bing cherry, blueberry fruit zips quickly across the palate. Compact but not inexpressive. Likely more versatile and food friendly than most Zinfandel wines. 89

Harrington Wines
San Benito County, Siletto Vineyard
Cabernet Sauvignon
2015, \$30.00, 13.5%
Good clarity, ruby influenced purple core, more red ruby to blood red towards the rims, no preternatural saturation. Fresh nose, while there's cedar, leather and tobacco wrapper notes the star of the show remains the blackberry, black raspberry to cherry fruit, lighthearted and sprightly, accents of caramel and dark chocolate help it soak into the nostrils more even as it remains taut. Medium-bodied and wiry, no lack of flesh but any fat trimmed away. Herbaceous and earthy and there's a good argument to be made more acidic than tannic but both in spades. Citric edge to go with pine, tea leaf, cigar leaf and savory herbs. The cranberry, cherry, blackberry fruit has plenty of snap. Youthful power now, only mildly oaky, could develop nice tertiary elements in a 6-10 year horizon. 89

Dilécta
Santa Barbara County, The Tiller
Blend
2013, \$46.00, 15.4%
Densely glowing purple core, with equally fuzzy wide crimson rims, you see it as if you had first stared too long into the sun. Nose of blueberry syrup, raspberry jam and then mint, balsam wood and menthol rub, the oak toast, burnt cocoa and hard butterscotch candy evident throughout. Full-bodied and generally velvety when it doesn't feel like a water balloon squishing around the mouth. Perceptible acidity is greater than expected and able to carve off enough fat to let it flow. Same candied blueberry, strawberry, raspberry to apricot fruit, generously sweet. Mint, menthol and mesquite grill smoke largest supplement. Big but not clumsy, if you are in the mood for an old school fruit bomb this is well made. 86% Syrah (Kimsey Vineyards), 14% Grenache (Glenrose Vineyards) 89

Dilécta
Regional Blend, Central Coast, Unorthodox
Syrah
2013, \$46.00, 15.5%
Clean purple core that nudges into opacity, the rims a dark blood red, brick red, all without any saturated glow. Nicely floral nose supplemented by cocoa powder, cinnamon stick, mesquite grill smoke, the blackberry, boysenberry and lesser blueberry fruit

nically perfumed and add to the lift. Medium-bodied, displays good fluidity and any rough edges smoothed out well. The tannin has a calm steadiness, not much acidity, Bountiful lilacs and violets, butterscotch and crème brûlée sweeten it without turning things too softly creamy. Likewise for candied orange peel and jammy cherry, cassis, blueberry fruit coats the tongue. Not heavy enough for a “fruit bomb” but all the components are there. (Sourced mainly from Caliza Vineyard (Paso Robles)) 89

Crawford Family Wines

Santa Barbara County, Ballard Canyon, Kimsey Vineyard

Grenache

2015, \$36.00, 14.5%

Gauzy but bright ruby red to pink plum flesh in color, holds on decently through the rims. Some Band-Aid and sulfur like funk to the nose but there’s no holding back the jammy ripeness of the strawberry, raspberry fruit scents, touch of potpourri musk, sweet baking spices, as it opens gets stonier, no sign of overt oak, clean and straightforward. Medium-bodied with a sappy grip, sticks well to the mouth pores. Here there’s a chocolaty note and some molasses, however, there is restraint in the ripeness of the strawberry, red cherry, blueberry fruit which helps give it shape and thrust. Candied orange peel, lilacs and the same dry underlying stony, earthy qualities. Good transparency, a few years of cellaring should tighten it up further. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 89

Crawford Family Wines

Santa Rita Hills, Zotovich Vineyard

Syrah

2015, \$48.00, 15.0%

Pitch black core, the purple only comes out further out just before the saturated crimson red rims, no haze, perfectly clean. The nose keeps broadening and deepening, filled to overflowing with plum, cassis, cherry compote scents and smoked beef ribs, eucalyptus, violets and buttered toast, not insanely oaked and does show signs that desirable tertiary aromas might develop. Full-bodied and at the same time firm and trim, no fat on the bones. Creamed coffee, butterscotch and dark chocolate betray more of an oak presence here. More floral and has a nice orange blossom touch too. On the whole comes across as more structured by acidity than tannin. That same plum, cherry, blackberry fruit consistent and never too sugary. Does finish a bit short. Easy to drink for its scale. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 89

Cowan Cellars

Bennett Valley, Moaveni Vineyard

Syrah

2015, \$28.00, 13.0%

Clean purple core, garnet rims, vivid color throughout and energetic. Forward nose of elderberry, blackberry, and cranberry, focused lift and good punch to it, extremely brief moment of caramel, butterscotch before a heavy floral musk and stony earthiness take the lead, the mixed white citrus a touch late getting to the party, no funkiness at all but a note of rubber lurks at the outskirts. Medium-bodied, framed by tannin and a great deal of acidity which pushes you back a few steps but doesn’t sap all the juiciness. More earthy and stony here with nary a trace of oak, comes across as having experienced vine stress in that it doles out its words judiciously. Violets, orange peel, darker currant, blackberry, boysenberry fruit of a sour nature. The finish is surprisingly long for a wine as bound up in the structure as it is. Primary material should hold up for at least 7-8 years of aging. 88

Harrington Wines

El Dorado County, Fion Mór

Pinot Noir

2016, \$35.00, 13.1%

The surface has a bright and semi-metallic sheen to it, light ruby violet hue core, the broad rims more pure scarlet red, albeit with clarity as much as hue intensity. There’s a smoky and then earthy demeanor to the nose, campfire wood smoke and grill fat more than any sous bois funk, pungent lift, concentrated cherry, blackberry fruit to the detriment of expressivity, no greenness, more so that tarry earth, no ignoring its presence. Full-bodied and nicely layered, the acidity pretty good given its ripeness. More citrusy here, mostly lemon, but that smoky, tarry aspect remains dominant throughout. Liqueur-like sweetness to the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, you feel the concentration. Savory herbs and black tea leaf, made in a decidedly muscular style. 88

Dilécta

San Luis Obispo County, York Mountain, Shadow Canyon Vineyards

Syrah

2013, \$46.00, 15.4%

Glowing purple core, its cleanliness is evident and in spite of its opacity, fat brick to blood red rims. The nose smells like freshly ground coffee with molasses, baked ham and plum/prune to blackberry fruit scents, gets smokier as it opens and the alcoholic fumes more noticeable. In the mouth’s full-bodied and layered if not compressed. No real sense of tannin nor acidity. Butterscotch, vanilla fudge, milk chocolate and more of that creamed coffee, loaded with sweet and creamy

oak. Retains sufficient smoky grill notes to create a minor lift. Superripe plum, cherry, black currant fruit, oozes across the palate. Throw back styled wine, pumping up the oak and fruit to “11.” Zero clue on where it might go with significant aging. 88

Dilécta

Santa Barbara County, Bien Nacido Vineyards
Syrah

2013, \$46.00, 15.2%

Thickly opaque purple core that closes in on black, the clarity comes through in the deeply hued crimson to sunset red rims. The nose has a jammy to liqueur like quality, raspberry, blueberry, to cherry scents, floral with dark chocolate and coffee hard candy notes, at first there’s an offputting rubbery accent but it does blow off with time. Full-bodied, more dense than chubby, fills the mouth to the brim. Not much movement, somewhere in there are some tannins trying to swim towards the light. Molasses coated ham nuance but hard to call it gamey. As in the nose, the star is the blackberry, blueberry to cherry fruit, albeit not as juicy as you might think. Violets and cola bean, the oak is not out to bludgeon you, modicum of vanilla, chocolate and buttered toast. Comes off as four square. 88

Halcón

Mendocino County, Yorkville Highlands, Estate,
Esquito

Blend

2016, \$32.00, 14.2%

As crimson red as it might be purple, transparent throughout, fresh red rims. Brawny mix of meadow grasses and earth in the nose shorten the time that the raspberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit gets to spend on stage, light coat of maple syrup, just not giving much even with some air time. Medium-bodied, strong tannic punch gives it added mouth presence as well as, for better or worse, dull the palate some. Savory with sage, oregano accents and tart lemon citrus topping it off. Chained up feel in the cherry, raspberry, blueberry, strawberry fruit, not flowing. Stony and earthy, particularly at the end as it gets drier and drier. Have to guess this is not ready for prime time. 70% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah. (Composite Cork) 88

Halcón

Mendocino County, Yorkville Highlands, Estate,
Alturas

Syrah

2016, \$32.00, 13.5%

Dark core which gets close to black, good breadth in the brick red to crimson rims, you might say it looks a bit older than it truly is. Ginger, cumin spice and

orange peel hit the nose first, beef jerky and muddy earth, quiet undercurrent of caramel, the plum, black cherry to currant fruit comes off as inert, not too densely packed but the nose seems inert. Full-bodied, admirable level of acidity breathes life into it and give it movement. Otherwise, same story in the leafy herbaceousness and earthiness. The meaty qualities don’t transfer to the palate. High-toned sourness in the plum, cassis, blackberry fruit, shortens presence. Not sure what to say here, it’s chunky and lacks decisiveness, however, the primary material is without flaw. Where it goes is anyone’s guess. 97% Syrah, 3% co-fermented Viognier. (Composite Cork) 88

Turley

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Dragon Vineyard
Zinfandel

2015, \$45.00, 15.8%

Clear throughout, what violet is in the core equally met by red ruby, the rims a vibrant garnet red, nicely hued without that saturated glow. The nose seems a touch mute, the raspberry to blueberry jam scents come through no problem, then suggestions of menthol, molasses, sage and marjoram, some grill smoke but that’s about it. Full-bodied, soft but in no way flabby, just lacking in the sort of tannin or acidity which builds muscle. Good twist from the sourness in the blueberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit, most of the thrust during the first half, finishes with some green apple and apricot. Milk chocolate, toffee and a momentary brush of mint add needed sweetness. Arguably earthy finish but really it’s just that something has to fill the void once the fruit trails off. 87

Crawford Family Wines

Santa Rita Hills

Pinot Noir

2015, \$42.00, 14.0%

Very good clarity to the rust red to purple core, the sleek surface uniform through to the slightly more ruby rims. Crisp, toasty nose of scorched earth and campfire ashes, dried meadow grasses and a splash of mixed white citrus, the cherry, cranberry to raspberry scents taut and piercing. Medium and close to full-bodied due to the gluey sappiness it possesses. Its girth can distract from the plus level tannin and acidity, both of which are welcome. Runs a bit hot and stings the back of the throat. Big time jump in the level of white grapefruit citrus, large pucker factor. Candied strawberry, raspberry to blueberry fruit, in turn tart and puckering. The toastiness consistent but does drop down a notch. Not bad but does come across as disjointed. Grapes sourced from Bentrock, Babcock, Radian, Zotovich Vineyards. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Turley
Napa Valley, Turley Estate
Sauvignon Blanc
2017, \$28.00, 12.4%

White straw to pale yellow in hue with washed out rims. Smooth and velvety textured nose of whipped cream, lemon sherbet, rose petals with a soft undercurrent of minerality, gently expressed apricot, peach, strawberry fruit scents, as it warms the pungency tightens up the weave. Full-bodied and heading towards heavy, with a syrupy texture. With low acidity the melon, yellow apple, apricot, peach fruit hugs the tongue. Vague allusion to asparagus and a pinch of mineral sparkle. The blood orange citrus more sugary sweet than sour. Not a lot of nuance, broad shouldered finish, just keeps on rolling forward. 88

Santa Barbara Winery
Santa Ynez Valley
Sauvignon Blanc
2016, \$12.99, 13.7%

Yellow to brown straw in hue, translucent but not dull, fills glass fully. Very floral nose with powdered sugar, orange sherbet, peach to apricot fruit and some damp chalkiness but no real minerality, overall soft and sweet. Full-bodied, even softer here with zero perceptible acidity. Extremely sweet with dried apricot, peach, nectarine to pineapple fruit topped with molasses. Soft drink character to the orange, lime citrus. Does have an herbaceous element at the end, notes of asparagus. Fills the mouth cheek-to-cheek and in the end tastes enough like a Sauvignon Blanc but never would it be confused with, say, Sancerre. (Synthetic Cork) 87

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Littorai
Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Vin Gris
Pinot Noir
2017, \$30.00, 12.3%

Resplendent salmon pink to orange, 100 watt shine in the glass, all but hueless rims. Tart nose of cherry skins, green apple, pear fruit, pebbles, and lemon pith, all treble and no bass, so swiftly paced that it's gone the moment you register its presence. Medium-bodied due to the extract and strong grip it possesses, nothing easy drinking about it. Goes heavy on the sour lemon to at times white grapefruit citrus which in turns heightens a mineral edge. Strawberry, pear to red cherry fruit ripe while more sour than sweet. Slashes through the palate with a regal bearing which defies you to enjoy it. Certainly a very well made wine but not that fun to sip. (Screwcap: Stelvin Lux+) 88

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OREGON RED

Vincent Wine Company
Willamette Valley, Ribbon Ridge
Pinot Noir
2016, \$29.00, 13.1%

Filmy red-ruby to magenta, glows well throughout the glass. Presents a nose of raspberry jam, cherry compote, orange marmalade and candied ginger, with a little time it develops a light herbaceous touch, however, this never becomes a big element. Full-bodied, glycerol like and rich, neither acidic nor tannic but its weight is enough to ensure forward momentum. The raspberry, blackberry, cherry fruit thick and sweet. Offers a floral musk as well as orange juice and baking spices in support of the fruit. At the end has a touch of brine and metallic earth. More fleshy than finely chiseled. 89

Vincent Wine Company
Willamette Valley
Pinot Noir
2016, \$23.00, 12.5%

Cranberry red to violet core with more pinkish magenta rims, transparent with a vague gauziness to it. There's a brightness to the nose while also a syrupy thickness to the red cherry, raspberry scents, interesting contrast, a dollop of butterscotch sweetens it further, even the mandarin orange to tangerine more sweet than sour, some mineral dust and a light swipe of brine, no messing around with the basic recipe. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with velvety grip, sticks to the pores well. Hard to register much acidity but the tannin nudges it forward. Elevation in the sourness of the cranberry, raspberry, strawberry fruit. The citrus fades into the background but more floral here instead. Plump and round and could benefit from 2-3 years of slimming down but very nice now. 89

OREGON WHITE

Antica Terra
Willamette Valley, Aequorin
Chardonnay
2015, \$90.00, 14.8%

Filmy but has a solid shiny glow to it, no drop off in the hue to the rims. There is some whipped cream, butterscotch to the nose but it's mostly fresh with floral notes, lime zest, just picked pear, kiwi, pineapple, peach scents, touch minty, admirable persistence without being pushy and dissolves at the right moment. Full-bodied, creamy vanilla and whipped cream do frame the attack, however, the oak is knit in well as it progresses. Brightly sour lime and lemon citrus the main factor throughout. Powdered sugar adorns the pear, apricot, papaya fruit, lots of zestiness

to it. The floral side may not be flashy but most consistent element. Not angular but not round either takes some hard turns through the palate. Quite nice. 90

Antica Terra
Willamette Valley, Aurata
Chardonnay
2015, \$90.00, 13.8%

The gold hue is deep and even at this young age shows signs of an easy segue to a light amber, pools well even if there is intensity loss at the rims. The nose is a cavalcade of oak, coconut custard, vanilla fudge, butterscotch and buttered toast, really overpowering, crisper lime scents help, some mint, the apple, pear to apricot fruit scents all but totally lost in the mix. Full-bodied, replicates the nose closely although here there is a bitter nuttiness as well. Coconut oil, butterscotch, vanilla bean and molasses, oodles of sweet oak. The acidity may actually be stronger than the primary material can take. Rose petals and lilacs, lime sherbet, close to cotton candy. Really hard to understand what the goal was, particularly since it is evident that no expense was spared in its creation. 87

NEW YORK WHITE

Wiemer Vineyard, Hermann J,
Finger Lakes, Seneca Lake, Dry
Riesling
2016, \$17.99, 12.0%

Rich golden color, sits deeply into the glass, nice surface shine yet the depth of hue might suggest an older wine. Violets and lemonade give lift to the nose, classic array of apple, pear to peach, lightly honeyed and then smokier as it warms. Full-bodied with no lack of tang, from the first sip it seems sweeter than a full on "trocken" wine. Lemon to white grapefruit citrus more juice than zest and here the honey spreads widely, almost waxy. Pungent florality. The acidity is where it should be, does its best to wash off any extra sugariness. Apricot, peach to pineapple, persimmon, finishing with a green apple pucker, lively presence. Packed with flavor, only quibble might be regardless of what the measurements say, should taste drier. 89

FRANCE RED

Galeyrand, Jerome
Burgundy, Côte de Nuits-Villages, Les Retraits
Pinot Noir
2015, \$47.99, 13.0%

Bright ruby red, clean and full of youthful sparkle. Bouncy, robust nose of raspberry, strawberry fruit, mixed citrus and pressed flowers, smattering of grassiness, super clean with a dusty stone appeal,

rolls forward effortlessly in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, delicate and flighty emphasizing rose and lilac led florality. The lemon and orange citrus neither nor sour nor sweet, fits well with all of the cinnamon, nutmeg spice as well as tea leaf, clay and brown earth. No excess flash to the melon, strawberry, raspberry fruit flavors and the moderate savoriness fills in the white spaces left open by the fruit. Its pacing allows you to explore each stage slowly. Generous and welcoming. 91

Gérard, Xavier
Rhône, Saint-Joseph, Le Blanchard
Syrah
2015, \$39.99, 13.5%

Opaque and mildly luminescent purple core, heavy set crimson rims, plenty of hue intensity throughout and spotless as well. Tarry, mineral nose with smokiness and a roasted gaminess too, olive pits and a stiffening herbaceousness, the florality and the currant to black cherry fruit get lost in the shuffle some. Medium-bodied with firm tannin but its the acidity which puts a jolt in things and allows the savoriness to become ascendant. Garden herbs, leather, black olives and a few briny notes open up the palate for cured beef and spiced orange peel. Gets earthier as it opens. Ripe but not sweet plum, currant, cherry fruit. More inner mouth perfume than flavor persistence due to the structure which lengthens the floral dimension. Needs a good 5-7 years to soften. 90

Baudry, Domaine Bernard
Loire, Chinon, Le Clos Guillot
Cabernet Franc
2015, \$34.99, 12.5%

The darkness of the purple core in good part masks what appears to be fairly hazy liquid, bright crimson to blood red rims, quite expressive. The nose is rife with bell pepper, tar, graphite, and animal fur, were it not for the abundantly ripe cassis to black cherry fruit it would come off as sauvage and in an aggressive profile. Medium-bodied, dusty tannin immediately coats the mouth, almost sandy in feel. Nice burst of white grapefruit citrus pairs with that green pepper to create a tingling sensation. Tobacco wrapper, tar, campfire wood smoke steadily fill it up. As in the nose no avoiding the ripeness of the plum, currant fruit, while possessed of a sour bite, layers thickly. In spite of its structure and depth of fruit leaves you thinking it's more a medium term ager than long term. 90

Terres Dorées (Jean-Paul Brun), Domaine des
Beaujolais, Morgon
Gamay Noir

2016, \$22.99, 12.5%

Bright cranberry red throughout with a patina of violet, shiny and clean, sparkles in the glass. Rose petals, orange blossom, cinnamon stick and dusty earth and crushed stone comprise the majority of the nose, its herbaceous side more obvious than the raspberry, red cherry fruit scents, good overall clarity among the parts. Medium-bodied, firm tannic foundation, dry but not exceedingly so. More mixed white citrus here which complements the grassiness and contextualizes the latter. More roundness to the cherry, blackberry to blueberry fruit, fully ripened if sour. Sweet baking spices and a spoonful of honey take some edge off. Sappy, sticky finish, lingers for a good while. Approachable now and no reason not to believe it has the structure to age. 90

Bouland, Daniel
Beaujolais, Chiroubles, Chatenay
Gamay Noir

2016, \$25.99, 13.0%

Brush of violet to darken the core a bit otherwise it's all cranberry red to ruby, high sheen to the surface. Stone shards, sand and twigs to fallen autumn leaves give the nose its character, sour raspberry, rhubarb, red cherry scents, leathery, minimal if any trace of flowers or citrus but at the same time nothing feral or animal. Full-bodied, makes an immediate impression with its formidable tannin, one would be hard pressed to complain about any lack of structure. Herbaceous and here there's a full dose of white grapefruit and lemon. An unexpected amount of sappiness in the raspberry, blueberry, boysenberry fruit, while tart it's very longlasting and vivid. Tarry and stony finish, along with that tannin sort of grinds to a halt at the end. Given its density and solid primary material should go long distance. 90

Lapalu, Jean-Claude
Beaujolais, Brouilly, Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir

2016, \$24.99, 12.5%

Scarlet infused purple core, youthful brick red rims, clear if on the dark side throughout. Band-aid and rubber in the nose, stinky, slowly dissipates to allow the raspberry, rhubarb, strawberry fruit to shine through, lemon zest, damp earth, pine, comes across as unevolved and not showing much. Medium-bodied, entirely different story in the mouth where there's peppery bite, white citrus tingle and grassy snap. A lip smackingly juicy sourness pervades the blueberry, raspberry to cherry fruit, lasts fully into the finish. Leather, tea leaf, anise and sage fill it out some. Very

good tannic and acidic structure, perhaps to its detriment at the present stage. Throw a few down into the cellar and check in 7-10 years. 90

Michel, Domaine Johann
Rhône, Cornas
Syrah

2015, \$39.99, 13.5%

Trim opacity to the purple core, just happens without looking serious, straight up clear ruby rims, fresh appearance. Herbaceous nose with licorice, violets for contrast, earthy and stony in a clean, linear way, the red currant, red cherry fruit scents consistently stay a step behind the rest. Medium-bodied, while firm and possessed of a steady tannic spine there's not a lot of complexity nor hints of that to come. Super sour white grapefruit, stone and earth splattered meadow grasses, more floral when first opens then recedes with air time. Mid-palate shows a touch of buttered popcorn. Here too the plum, currant, cherry fruit revs it up but doesn't put it into gear. Plump now but has good structure for the vintage if it does not in the end up simply astringent. 89

Verdier-Logel
Loire, Côtes du Forez, Le Volcanique
Gamay Noir

2016, \$16.99, 12.5%

Light glow to the violet core, just opaque, the red magenta rims broad and equally fat and warm. Tart blackberry, raspberry filled nose, completely ripe and balanced out by rock dust and a brush of tarry earth, becomes more herbaceous as opens with a curious note of bell pepper, might come across as feral were it not for the fruitiness. Medium-bodied, the tannin and more so acidity just as the right level to shape and firm without overextending their stay. That said, the black cherry, blackberry fruit front loaded and steadily supplanted by white grapefruit, stone shards, twigs and sticks, and leather. Seems more savory than sweet at times. Pleasing transparency and personality, if not always friendly. 89

Balagny, Julie
Beaujolais
Gamay Noir

2016, \$26.99, 11.0%

Washed out ruby red core, fully transparent, even more attenuated watermelon pink to zinc orange rims. Very breezy and openly knit nose with great lift, lightly scented with strawberry and apple fruit, rose water, licorice and meadow grasses, almost gone before it starts. Light-bodied although it puts on weight as it progresses through the palate, the opposite of the usual course. Lemon peel, pressed flowers and damp stone, can't call it taciturn but few words spoken.

Retronasally there's a bit of animality and fur. The cherry, raspberry fruit fades some at the finish even though as noted the overall weight increases. The low alcohol level is noticeable, not dilute but you don't feel the buzz. A perfect lunchtime bottle of wine. 89

Bejon, Claire et Florent
Loire, Touraine, Picrochole
Cabernet Franc
2015, \$21.99, 13.0%

Cloudiness deepens the purple core into full opacity, more transparency found in the gauzy red ruby rims, on the dull side. Rubber to muddy earth funkiness in the nose, slow to blow off, underneath are thick slabs of cherry, red currant fruit, borderline jammy, light dose of lilacs and something approaching menthol, kind of all over the map. Full-bodied, tangy and sour overall profile, starts off leathery with tree bark, tea leaf and cedar nuances. As it progresses across the palate the white grapefruit citrus starts to sparkle and while there's a playful grassiness there's minimal if any bell pepper. The finish filled all but completely by tart red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, hard to avoid the puckering. You can still taste long after you swallow. 89

Foillard, Jean
Beaujolais, Morgon, Cuvée Corcelette
Gamay Noir
2016, \$37.99, 13.5%

Dull reddish purple, filmy crimson to brick red rims, the core more translucent than opaque. Savory nose of dried herbs and meadow grasses, pulverized stone and white grapefruit pith, comes off as rugged, never quite delivers the florality but the cranberry, raspberry, blueberry scents eventually coalesce. Full-bodied and more dense than openly knit, pushes down into the palate. Peppery at first before all the stoniness and earthiness anchors things. The mixed white citrus helps it sparkle some. Thick wedges of red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, neither especially sweet nor sour, a few notes of green apple. Subtle undercurrent of lavender. Doesn't strike you as particularly acidic nor tannic. More and more this seems like a wine you have to catch very young as it shuts down quickly and becomes disjointed. 89

Clos de la Roilette (Coudert Père et Fils)
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Cuvée Tardive
Gamay Noir
2016, \$22.99, 13.0%

Consistent ruby violet throughout with a slightly more scarlet cast at the rims, shines deep into the glass, clean, extremely pretty wine. The nose comes across as reticent, all stone, earth and wood smoke, mild forest floor funk, the red cherry, blackberry fruit scents

more muscle than fluidly juicy scents, air time does little to change things. Medium-bodied, surprisingly fierce tannin gives the palate a jolt and restrains what here is ripe and succulent blueberry, raspberry to blackberry fruit. Stony with periodic jolts of white grapefruit, now and then the herbaceousness verges on bell pepper with notes of sage and parsley. At the finish the fruit does manage to fashion an inner mouth perfume but not showing any supporting florality. 89

Périé (Fabien Jouves), Mas del
Southwest France, Cahors, La Roque
Malbec
2016, \$19.99, 13.0%

"Black light" glow to it, positively oversaturated with purple and red magenta, opaque core with thin rims, looks otherworldly. Smells kind of reductive at first with peanut shells, cow patties and flatulence but there's so much ripe plum, cherry to almost prune fruit that it overcomes the former, concentrated floral musk, not airy, some leather and then something menthol like but not horribly complex. Full-bodied, a touch of spice, lavender and orange peel at first then the blackberry, cherry, currant fruit slowly flattens most else. Good tannic spine, however, it releases early enough for you to enjoy a calm, balanced finish. Hint of wood on the finish, spicy, with supporting leather, earth. If you give it a decant and time to open it has nice old school ruggedness and the funk mostly dissipates. 89

Garon, Domaine
Rhône, Côte-Rôtie, Les Triotes
Syrah
2015, \$62.99, 13.0%

Glowing purple core, opaque, heavy red magenta rims with a touch of pink, resplendent surface shine. Dense blueberry, raspberry, strawberry jam in the nose, syrupy feel, molasses, incredibly primary even with a semi-dusty nostril texture, mocha and vanilla bean, molasses, sinks deeply into your nostrils, fruit driven. Full-bodied and layers itself thickly right from the start, mocha and cocoa more than molten chocolate, mint and caramel. The acidity percolate swell but there's not much there to get the fruit really swirling. Caramel, blueberry, raspberry, strawberry, a lot of bright berry fruit. Way too youthful to make any call. 88

Ledogar, Domaine
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de France, La Mariole
Vieilles Vignes
Carignan
2016, \$15.99, 12.5%

Heavily saturated purple core, opaque glow, clear and densely hued red magenta rims, just bursting with color. Moment of violets in the nose but it's mainly stony earth, parched and dry, the plum, black cherry

fruit scents inert but there's no doubting the volume of it all. Full-bodied, while it's sweet the tannin has formidable power and pushes across the palate like a big wave. Spicy, more mixed citrus here as well as a natural cocoa powder and a tick up in merde, barnyard funk. The density of the plum, currant, cherry fruit is quite amazing, again it is sweet but does not feel like liquid. Takes some time to unwind enough that the florality can enunciate clearly. Chewy, dusty finish. Probably could have benefited from a solid 3-4 hour decant. 88

Betton, Domaine Christelle
Rhône, Crozes Hermitage, Caprice
Syrah
2016, \$23.99, 13.0%

Core as black as it is purple, quite clean with transparent and saturated crimson rims, glows in the glass. Overripe plummy nose with cherry, blackberry preserves, firms up some with air time, cocoa powder, dried beef fat and violets, not oaky per se but it's always there in the background, needs to shed weight. In the mouth it's full-bodied, has sufficient tannin and acidity to create a sense of forward motion as well as dry up the finish. Still, it's a plump wine with the emphasis on the cherry, plum, blackberry fruit, same as the nose. Mixes in twigs, bark and leaves, at times there's a mild astringency. Otherwise, violets, anise, maple syrup and molasses fill in the crevices. With its fruit forwardness and pungent inner mouth perfume there's a lot to like but hard to see any reason to age it. 88

Jasmin, Domaine Patrick
Rhône, Indication Géographique Protégée des
Collines Rhodaniennes, La Chevalière
Syrah
2016, \$22.99, 12.5%

Straightforward ruby-violet core, dark but not close to opaque, the rims a red to pink magenta hue. At first the nose seems floral but swiftly moves onto leather, animal fur and tarry earth, no funk per se but rustic, the cherry, raspberry scents direct and move with alacrity, succinct dissolve without seeming short. In the mouth it's light-bodied and buoyed by zesty acidity, fresh and lively feel. Stones and pebbles and caked dried earth replace the nose's leatheriness. White grapefruit grows exponentially, however, more sweet than sour. Garrigues and something minty with savory garden herbs in reserve. The cherry, blackberry, cranberry fruit sour and part of the chorus, not the soloist. Finish is tactful, you would not complain if it lasted a bit longer. 88

Fleurie, Château de
Beaujolais, Fleurie
Gamay Noir
2015, \$14.99, 13.0%

Deep purple core nudges into opacity, the crimson to burnt orange rims have a "going medieval on you" serious look. Extremely heavy, dewy nose like a wet wool blanket, cherry and raspberry jam, potpourri, menthol, orange pekoe tea, sticky morass in your nostrils makes it hard to differentiate scents. Full-bodied, similar construction in the mouth with densely packed layers of cranberry, red cherry, raspberry fruit smushed against orange peel and lilacs. Ground coffee and grill smoke top it off. Just maybe there's some stoniness under there but this is about as close to a "fruit bomb" as cru Beaujolais can get. Okay acidity, something during the finish raises the specter of underripe phenolics. Not sure it will ever right itself. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Ardoisières, Domaine des
Savoie, Vin des Allobroges, Silice
Jacquère
2016, \$21.99, 11.5%

Autumnal gold and brown hues to it, translucent and shows more concentration around the rims than the core, average surface luster. The nose has a pronounced doughy aspect to it, almost leesy, whipped cream, honeyed and inclines towards being heavy, more focus found in the apple, pear, apricot pit fruit scents, lemon zest scurries about in the shadows. In the mouth it's a whole different story, medium-bodied, firm and linear with excellent activity in the acidity. Zesty kumquat, pineapple, nectarine to green apple fruit with a light mineral underpinning. No real distinct flavor but more general citrus presence. The finish displays a floral touch and broadens some across the palate. Nice clean racing lines and upbeat pacing. 89

Gérard, Xavier
Rhône, Condrieu, Marmouzin
Viognier
2014, \$48.99, 14.0%

Bright straw gold, nicely layered with a resplendently shiny surface. Fairly linear nose of flower petals, orange peel, mint and ginger root, languid lift in the peach, apricot scents, just content to unfold as slowly as possible. Medium-bodied, firm but not stern, nutty with a touch of yeast. Sour blood orange, tangerine citrus front loaded into the attack. Firmly contoured peach, apricot, pear, cherry fruit barely softened by notes of honey, molasses and whipped cream. The acidity level is very good for the grape. Nice stoniness

at the end. Steady, metronome character, no deviation from the script laid out at the start. 89

Arches de Bellivière, Les
Loire, Vin de France, Confluence
Chenin Blanc
2016, \$25.99, 13.0%

Basic yellow straw color that pools well into the glass and never seems dilute, soft green aura. Honeyed nose, black licorice, maraschino cherry to peach, nectarine, white grape scents, revs up the smokiness on the back end, however, not a vast amount of stoniness and nothing suggests a future of broad tertiary aromas. Medium-bodied and noticeably muscular, the acidity lacks cut but certainly has a strong handshake. More honey, molasses, licorice and mint, quite pretty and with a dry enough texture that the flavor's richness isn't too dulcet. White grapefruit, lemon citrus of moderate proportions. The fruit swells mostly at the finish, green melon, apricot, pineapple and star fruit. On point and drinks better with a good chill. (Composite Cork) 88

FRANCE ROSE

Marquilliani, Domaine de
Corsica, Rosé Gris de Marquilliani
Sciaccarellu
2017, \$29.99, 13.5%

Pale yellow more than any pink hue, more dull than shiny, watery rims. Pungently floral nose with tangerine to orange zest, melon, pear, apple fruit scents, sunnily honeyed, wet chalk, guileless without coming across as simple. Full-bodied, honeyed and dense, glues itself to the palate. Tangerine and pink grapefruit zest, pineapple, green melon, apricot fruit with a tropical patina. Gets sweeter as it warms yet avoids becoming cloying. Huge violets led floral perfume. Thus, hard to call it a refreshing thirst slaking style of rosé but it does offer a kaleidoscope of flavor which steams forward until fully exhausted. 90% Sciaccarellu, 10% Syrah. 88

FRANCE SPARKLING

Suenen, Aurelien
Champagne, Oiry, Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Extra
Brut
Chardonnay
NV, \$64.99, 12.0%

Pours a big mousse, covers the surface for some time. Clean and sparkly golden color, bright shininess. The nose is yeasty and sour and almost briny, lemon alongside apple, pear scents, the chalkiness does not get past the pickled quality, fills out with time but mostly has you back on your heels. Medium-bodied,

big foaminess through the attack then immediately turns quite dry. Given this the lemon, lime citrus has a sherbet character before eventually falling prey to the relentless acidity. Past the mid-palate there's considerable mouth parching dusty stone and chalk. The sourness keeps tightening through the finish. (2014 base year; disgorged 06/12/2017) 88

ITALY RED

Vajra, G.D.
Piedmont, Langhe Rosso
Blend
2015, \$15.99, 13.5%

Bright and shiny cough syrup red with fresh blood red rims, immaculately clean. Beautifully fresh lift to it, leather and earth are present but it's the floral mist which gets things swirling and the candied cherry to strawberry fruit scents which leave the most lasting imprint. Light-bodied, clean and linear, the acidity keeps it pulsing while the tannin slows it down. Touch more herbal here and turns very lemony as well. Modicum of earth but none of the leather to animal hide the nose suggests. Close to syrupy strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit, clings to the mouth pores. Most floral retronasally. Gosh darn complete and a steal for the price. Unspecified percentages of Nebbiolo, Dolcetto, Barbera, Pinot Noir, Freisa, Albarossa. 90

Schiavenna, Azienda Agricola
Piedmont, Barolo, Serralunga
Nebbiolo
2013, \$37.99, 14.5%

As much brick red as purple in the core, clear with sunset intensity level reds and oranges, easily holds your gaze. Campfire smoke, cracked leather and orange pekoe tea fill the nose first, black licorice and witch hazel, vague meadowy background noise, no nonsense black cherry, blackberry fruit, there's an inviting openly knit quality to how the scents play together. Full-bodied, moderate astringent greenness at first in the attack. Then the ripeness of the plum, cherry, dark berry fruit as well as orange to grapefruit citrus gets assertive. Tannin is good but when assessing the primary material and structure it seems like a medium term ager. More leather, earth and tea leaf, job well done in providing more matured flavors to supplement the fruit. 89

ITALY WHITE

Borgo del Tiglio di Nicola Manferrari, Azienda Agricola Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Collio
Sauvignon Blanc
2015, \$23.99, 14.0%

Bright and shiny, seems more green than white straw, for as light as the hue is it possesses a glowing quality, not much difference at the rims. Quartz, minerals and juicy lemon to lime citrus swirl about the nose, the peach and cherry scents resonant and long, licorice and sauna smoke, only mildly herbaceous until it warms. Full-bodied, while big and broad-shouldered it does not lack for acidity which consistently shoves it forward. Sauvignon Blanc is not the wine you typically think needs to shed baby fat but this is one. Tropical mango, apricot, pineapple with more red cherry fruit, much more juicy than dry. Adequate amount of stone and streamwater accents but not especially minerally. The pink grapefruit to lime citrus gets the saliva going at the end. 90

Valentini, Azienda Agricola
Abruzzi, Trebbiano d'Abruzzo
Trebbiano
2013, \$129.99, 12.0%

Very light filminess to the straw gold color, fades a touch at the rims. The nose is quiet and serene, wet pebbles, light nail polish touch, lemon peel, green apple and apricot pits, even an extended decant not coaxing it into giving up much. Light-bodied, taut and linear, zips through the palate like a speeding bullet. The acidity is sinewy but doesn't throw its power around and releases appropriately. Pear, red apple, apricot fruit dry and wiry, no weakling though. Allspice, nutmeg dusting. Very lemony in a resinous manner, like pith on your fingers, then turns tarry at the end. 90

Massa, Azienda Agricola Fratelli
Piedmont, Derthona
Timorasso
2015, \$28.99, 14.0%

The gold straw color lacks expressivity, moderate surface shine yet dull below even if with noticeable clarity per se. Lively nose if somewhat full and bottom heavy, molasses, mint, apricot skin, peach, vanilla wafer, lemon peel, Jackie Gleason like nimbleness, keeps moving to the very end. Medium-bodied, starts off with a dose of vanillin cream. Luckily the acidity is savage enough to make your eyes open wide. Spicy with good minerality, softens with lilac and honey notes. Steadily juicy peach, apricot, pear, green melon fruit. That acidity ensures consistent forward momentum. Focused but not necessarily unfriendly. 88

GERMANY WHITE

Weil, Weingut Robert
Rheingau, QbA Tradition AP #17
Riesling
2016, \$17.99, 10.5%

Pale white straw color, fully transparent, in spite of this looks more layered than shiny. Rose water and sour lemons in the nose, wet stone, crisp without seeming lean, glimmers of apple and pear but hardly any fruit presence here and you don't mind, its purity is what attracts. Medium-bodied, feels gently fizzy and the acidity wastes no time scrubbing away at the tongue. Chalk, limestone, dry without being dusty. Lemon, blood orange citrus zings with pinpoint accuracy. Allows for pressed flowers yet the florality comes off as muffled. Peach, nectarine, pineapple to star fruit flavors, sour without puckering. On the whole, lots of pushing but then pulling back on the intensity. Would stand up to many foods but a pleasing sipper on its own too. (Screwcap) 89

Falkenstein, Hofgut
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Niedermenniger, Herrenberg,
Spätlese Feinherb AP #3
Riesling
2016, \$24.99, 8.5%

Color shifts now and then, sometimes more pale yellow, other times more green-white, flat if not gauzy, dispersed bubbles cling to the glass sides long after the pour. Tight weave to the nose, mint, fennel, to gluey rubber elements next to wet stone and mixed white citrus, mild mannered cherry, red apple, apricot fruit scents, not particularly longlasting. Medium-bodied, much more life in the mouth, the acidity muscular and clenches your jaw right out of the gate. Garden herbs, limestone, here loses most of the rubber component and adds more whipped cream to vanilla notes. Give the cherry, melon, apple, pear fruit credit for standing up to the acidity. Bitter nuts and salty savoriness complete the finish. Borderline austere, for a Spätlese Feinherb could have more "give" to it. 88

AUSTRIA WHITE

Ott, Weingut Bernhard
Donauland, Wagram, Am Berg
Grüner Veltliner
2016, \$17.99, 11.5%

Clean and sparkly, the shine leaps out of the glass, aple yellow to white straw with a green tint at the rims. Light and pretty nose with a floral mist, lemon zest, stream stones and licorice, barely a trace of snap pea or anything herbaceous, displays apple, pear, apricot to persimmon fruit scents, has the scripted

aggressiveness of a tango. Full-bodied, firm and close to resistant, grapefruit frames a sour mouth entry. Pineapple, green apple, pear to apricot fruit, has tropical bite but not the juicy richness. The acidity seems at a “plus” level but not withering. Here it delivers with an asparagus, grass aspect that heightens its taut nature. Rose water and anise soften its features through the finish. Not in the unctuous style of the grape, more unbridled energy than sustained reverb. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 89

SPAIN RED

Alegre Valgañón

Rioja

Tempranillo

2015, \$19.99, 14.1%

Clear purple core, the reddish influence gains prominence as it reaches the fresh brick red rims, transparent and spotless. The citrusy, floral lift tethered to the palate by the weight of the musk and dark cherry, blackberry syrup scents, there is some vanilla, coconut, butterscotch in the background but it never takes command, piney breeze and orange pekoe tea leaf lift it up anew. Soft and quite ripe, no tannin nor acidity to speak of, however, there’s no flab or fat on it. The oak is less than crianza level and neutral. The overall feel is dry and this elevates through the finish. There’s it is quite floral with a supplement of white grapefruit and blood orange. Maybe earthy or tarry but this is a wine obviously crafted to have nothing sticking out. Approximately 75% Tempranillo, 25% Garnacha. 88

AUSTRALIA WHITE

Pewsey Vale

South Australia, Eden Valley, Individual Vineyard, Selection

Riesling

2016, \$12.99, 12.0%

Pale yellow straw, blockish but not without shine, hint of green at the edges. Warm rubber in the nose, like a Spaldeen in the sun, lemon and pink grapefruit zest, chalk dust, basic pear, apple, peach fruit, entirely dominated by that rubber aspect with full texture. Full-bodied, brawny acidity that coats the tongue more than slice and dice. The rubber pulls back some, supplemented by petrol accents. More white grapefruit with that lemon, adds tang and plays well with an underlying mineral stoniness. Now and then it seems to present a floral lift but it never really catches. The peach, yellow apple, pear fruit dances in the shadows. It’s nice at an introductory level but that’s about it. (Screwcap) 87