

The Hanes Wine Review, June 2007 Edition

It's summertime, not that Hanes ever notices, working in a windowless basement at 55 degrees. Time for a few kind words of advice for summertime imbibing. Things easy to forget, but the price one pays may stain your black heart forever.

First and foremost, while appropriate advice for all seasons, it is most needed during the summer heat. *Don't drink your whites too cold nor your reds too warm.* Whether it's in an ice bucket in a restaurant or in a cooler in some backyard, white wines lose a lot of the bouquet and can deaden the tongue when served too cold. Hanes, what's too cold? A good rule of thumb is that if the bottle or glass starts to show condensation or moisture on the outside of the glass it's too cold. Humidity has a direct effect on this phenomenon, the more humid it is the more condensation is likely to appear. It may be a pain in the ass but don't just leave the bottle in the cooler of ice water nor let the dumbass waiter insist on keeping the wine in an ice bucket. You're not getting what you paid for if the white wine is too cold. Same thing with red wines, chilling them down in ice or a refrigerator to about 60° to 65° Fahrenheit can ensure that they stay crisp and fresh with more focused fruit flavors. Chilling helps to heighten the perception of acidity, a good thing for food-friendly, higher in acid red wines. It also helps to lower the perception of alcohol, not a bad thing with all the wines being sold these days at 14% or higher. Remember, chill the bottle, don't put ice cubes in your wine glass. Please.

Warm weather, large gatherings, outdoors fun. What adds conviviality to a soirée more than sparkling wine? *Summer is a great time to drink inexpensive sparkling wines.* Spanish Cava, Italian Prosecco, Brut Sekt wines from Germany or Austria, sparkling Vouvray, hell, even sweeter wines like Moscato d'Asti or Brachetto d'Acqui can be lots of fun for all. The bubbles help to freshen and cleanse the palate and sparkling wines are more versatile with food than many at first believe. The bottles almost always get consumed quickly enough that their going flat isn't really a concern. And, hell, if people want they can even add some orange juice and make mimosas. Even the host's poodle likes to drink sparkling wine during the summer, just ask her.

Not all rosé wines are sweet. Rosés are *not* made in the exact same manner as White Zinfandel so do not taint the former with nightmares of the latter. There are like bazillions of bone dry rosé wines. They can have great structure with plenty of nuance. If not served too cold! French rosé wines remains Hanes's faves but there's excellent ones from Italy and Spain too. The only real downside to experimenting with rosé wines is that the best ones can cost between \$15 and \$25. But that's life in the big city. Otherwise, rosé is great because you can bring an expensive bottle to a party and no one else will touch it so you can drink it all yourself!

On that note, *summer parties are very useful for experimentation.* If it's rocking and the attendees are consuming at a brisk pace, the bottles will get sucked down pretty quickly. You can reduce your overall exposure to wine-buying risk by spreading it among the assembled. Open a bottle you purchased as an experiment, pour yourself a big glass and let the wolves fight it out for the rest. If it sucks then you don't have to drink the whole damn bottle. After you finish your glass, go find the other bottles you brought to the party and then hid in the bookshelf and repeat the process. You ensure you get a glass of each wine without having to make a meaningful commitment (never a good thing). Conversely, make sure you open every other bottle you can see and get a taste! Who cares if the whole thing gets consumed or not before the party ends? Why'd they put it on the counter if they didn't want anyone to open it?

Following up on this, summertime means more parties. A big part of this is the diversity of foodstuffs. The hosts make this and that. Guests bring a little of X or a little of Y. *This is a good opportunity to experiment with food and wine pairings.* You're never going to eat a lot of any one thing, it's much more likely that you'll take a small portion of a lot of different things. As a result, you can sip wine with a much broader array of choices than were you at a restaurant or in a home eating a more "planned" meal. Have some grilled shrimp with a Cabernet! A turkey burger with a Sancerre! Potato salad with Primitivo! Some of the experimental combinations will suck but, again, it's not like you have to pair the wine and food for an entire evening. Just plop yourself in a corner, fill 2-3 plates with food and surround yourself with six glasses of different wines and start matching. Works for Hanes every time.

Don't let the casual atmosphere of summer get-togethers spoil your wine geekery. *Whether at a dinner party or outdoors fiesta, always use a real wine glass.* Drinking good wine from a plastic cup is lame, as if the point of being with friends or family is to enjoy each other's company and conversation and not just have more wines available to scribble tasting notes on. Not! You know where the good glasses are kept, don't be shy about going into the cabinets and getting some quality crystal with which to enjoy your Pinot Noir or Greco di Tufo. If the hosts don't own adequate stemware, don't let that deter you from enjoying the party. Bring your own glasses! Hanes likes to use the stemless "O Series" from Riedel for this purpose, less likely to break in transit or if some guest's lousy brats are running around and knocking into the table. So what if people stare at you as you break out the real glasses, they should have thought ahead too. Losers.

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This month's big winners... The Côtes de Provence is just one of those regions you think about paying more attention to but, err, you drink something else. That said, Hanes took a flyer on Sauveuse's 2005 "Cuvée Carolle" and this blend of Rolle and Ugni Blanc was quite pleasing for about \$17. Buy more Provençal wines! It can be offputting for some that Basque wines are made from grapes that sound like a tribe of cannibals from the South Seas. Be that as it may, Amesguren's 2006 rosé crafted from 50% Hondarribi Zuri and 50% Hondarribi Beltza and called "Rubentis" is a very interesting and satisfying wine, albeit for \$20 or so. Never tried anything before from this new-to-Hanes Californian

producer but there was admirable restraint as well as complexity in Saxon Brown's 2005 Syrah from Sonoma. Not over the top nor over-fruited. Past being the "new hot thing," Walter Hansel quietly cranks out very nice wines that express being of Californian origin while remaining focused on letting the nature of the grape type stay in the spotlight. In this vein the 2005 "The North Slope Vineyard" Pinot Noir from the Russian River Valley is worth the tariff. Everyone likes Blaufränkisch, it's what's for dinner. Or breakfast or lunch. Put some 2005 Markowitsch Blaufränkisch from Austria's Carnuntum region in your Cheerios and be happy, especially as it's only around \$16. The basic red wine bottling from Burgundy's Ghislaine Barthod called "Les Bons Bâtons" is hit or miss for Hanes. In 2004 it's a hit and one of the better sub-\$30 Bourgogne Rouge wines out there, a dying breed for sure. Same can be said for de Montille's 2004 Bourgogne Rouge at \$25 or so, albeit constructed in a more rustic style.

The best \$15 and under picks... In the ever-changing world of wine it's good to see a basic producer keep producing quality basic wines without taking the assessment in some pejorative vein. Witness the 2005 Chenin Blanc "Dry" from Dry Creek Vineyard in Clarksburg, California. Still around \$12, still a tasty bottle of wine vintages after first tasting this specific bottling. Can't promise that it's made in any quantity but if you can find the 2006 Nebbiolo-based rosé from the Valle d'Aosta (they call it the Vallée d'Aoste but whatever), get the "Larmes du Paradis" made by a local cooperative winery. \$15 well spent. When hearing the name of the Argentinean bodega Tittarelli, Hanes cannot stop himself of thinking about the Dan Akroyd skit on SNL back in the 70's where Akroyd discusses the painter Titian. You either understand this or not. Either way, Tittarelli's 2006 Torrontés reserva called "Rivadavia" is a nice little find for about \$11, plenty of citrus and flowers. Most else of the sub-\$15 wines Hanes tried this month sucked.

And the disappointments... While perhaps not a stunning disappointment, the name Bruno Giacosa on a label raises the expectation bar. Which was not exactly met by the 2005 Nebbiolo d'Alba. At \$34 there's other Nebbiolo wines in that price range or less to purchase. Rats. Not quite sure what Shafer was trying to do with the 2004 "One Point Five" bottling of Cabernet Sauvignon but Hanes expects more breeding from this producer. Especially for over \$60. Yo. German producer Ansgar Klüsserath confuses Hanes, some wines great, others ho-hum at best. Anyway, the 2005 Riesling Kabinett from the Apotheke vineyard in the town of Trittenheim was one of the latter. Sucks to be Hanes. The bloom is fully off the rose for Hanes and the venerable Ridge winery. The 2004 Geyserville Zinfandel-based field blend is nowhere near this bottling's past earned reputation. Answers the question of why it took so long for this vintage of the wine to be released to market. Waited to see if it would ever taste better then just needed the coin. Ohh, the shame. Enthusiastically endorsed by a co-worker, plus the bottle was open and free, Hanes tried the 2005 "Three Thirteen" homage to the wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape by Californian producer A Donkey and Goat Winery. Let's just say that at \$42 Hanes will buy more CdP, thank you. Even though he stopped buying CdP because they are \$42. Hanes doesn't taste too many Beaujolais wines from the cru named Chiroubles. The 2005 from Cheysson ain't making him search for more. Ack.

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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/oldervintages2007.html>

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

Tagline #32: "Red, white or pink, none goes down the sink!"

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

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

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Saxon Brown

Sonoma Valley, Flora Ranch Chalk Hill

Syrah

2005, \$34.99, 14.5%

Resplendently glowing black-purple core, dense magenta rims hum with warmth, very visually impactful. Pungently floral nose, mesquite grilled meats, brown sugar, orange marmalade, close to syrupy texture in the currant, blackberry, cherry scents, dash of cinnamon, firms up just when you think it's getting diffused. Medium-bodied, clearly constructed acidic frame, the tannins add a dustiness which dulls the orange, lemon citrus some. Floral mostly through the attack, fades in favor of minerals, dried beef, bell pepper and earth. The currant, boysenberry, cherry, cranberry fruit is semi-sour, crests in the mid-palate. Continues to tighten up with air time. 90

McPrice Myers Wine Company

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Beautiful Earth Blend

2005, \$28.00, 15.4%

An opaque gauziness takes the purple core towards darker blackness but the glow of the red-ruby rims brightens things sufficiently in the other direction. There's a momentary glance of mint, oaky cream and caramel but the velvety voluptuousness of the plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit sweeps it under the rug, some tea or sweet tobacco leaf, regrettably the alcohol prevents one from letting anything else settle into one's nostrils. Full-bodied, sweet and jammy, however, not in an especially obvious way, more so not interested in restraining its exuberance. Some graininess in the tannins but it's the sheer bulk which keeps it going. Caramel, toffee, whipped cream remain in proportion and allow for some lemon meringue pie, cinnamon notes. When you swallow and start thinking there could be further critique but it's more fun to just take another sip. 84% Syrah, 8% Grenache, 8% Mourvèdre. 89

Loring Wine Company

Santa Rita Hills, Clos Pepe Vineyard

Pinot Noir

2005, \$53.99, 14.1%

Just as much red-ruby as violet in the core, hell the whole thing since it's one whole sheet throughout, perfectly spotless and relaxed in the glass. Meadow grasses and wildflowers blend with cola and lemongrass in the nose, the raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit scents have just as much snap to them as juiciness, the oak toast fine enough to embellish and not seek the spotlight. Medium-bodied and then some, uses its weight to increase mouth grip, hugs the insides of your cheeks. Fruity, sure, but it doesn't feel the need to slap you with unnecessary sugar on top of the cherry, raspberry fruit. Earthy and grassy yet neither in an especially dried nor wet fashion. Lemon zest and lower grade flower petals drift on by. Interesting and well thought out but just falls short of hitting just the perfect pitch. [Screwcap] 89

Hansel Winery (Hansel Family Vineyards), Walter

Russian River Valley, The North Slope Vineyard

Pinot Noir

2005, \$35.99, 14.4%

Strong red influence throughout the light purple core, the crimson rims are full and well-hued. Oak toast and wood smoke spring first into the nose, softer vanilla and cola with a pleasingly rougher herbal nature, the raspberry, red cherry fruit has a hard candy nature, not sugary but more so sweet in a very concentrated manner. Medium-bodied, displays good balance and harmony throughout without sacrificing a sense of progression. Fresh acidity keeps the lemon to white grapefruit citrus sparkling as well as adds snap to the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit. Cola, cocoa powder and lemongrass lend nuance, the mineral qualities add a pleasing scrubbing against the tongue. Doesn't lose any thrust through the finish, nice and fat ending with a good measure of spiciness to boot. 89

Holdredge

Dry Creek Valley

Zinfandel

2005, \$24.99, 15.4%

Quite nicely unblemished, light violet puts up no fight when the ruby-magenta wants to shine through instead, more pretty than impressive. Innocently jammy raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit scents, sugary by nature not intent, buttressed by custard, butterscotch, flower elements, however, there's sufficient alcoholic burn to distract and then some. Full-bodied in an effortless way, here does not betray the alcoholic heat that the nose does, smoother if not exactly polished. The grass, straw and dry brown earth ably supplemented by caramelized brown sugar, mesquite chips and eucalyptus. There's a brusque nature to the cherry, strawberry, raspberry, watermelon fruit, candied, sure, but not going out of its way to impress. Has an earthy, borderline mountainous, feel to it. Funny because it's so squarely in the middle of bombastic fruit and more restraint that it's likely to not fully please many, the curse of treading the middle road. 88

Shafer

Napa Valley, Stags Leap District, One Point Five

Cabernet Sauvignon

2004, \$62.99, 14.9%

The inky black core is as opaque as ink should be, the thin ruby-violet rims glow with a warm luminescence. Coconut and vanilla custard, dill, clove spice introduce the nose and turn the lights out too, in between there's abundant plum, cassis and cherry fruit, get the dogs and flashlights but no search is going to turn up much else. Full-bodied, richly layered yet somehow not woven into a tightly integrated whole, there's skips in the record. Mint, milk chocolate, sweet smoke, toasted coconut rule the roost, the dill here less of a factor. The tannins not especially suave yet capable of tempering the excesses of the sugary plum, cherry, blackberry reduction soup. Leather and earth appear as if by rote. Doesn't break a sweat keeping its weight through to the finish, no noticeable fall in the flavors either, albeit it's not a silky smooth denouement. Has a spine, no doubt, but lacks the effortless manners one normally associates with the producer. 98% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Petit Verdot. 87

Outpost

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain

Cabernet Sauvignon

2004, \$65.00, 14.8%

The black-purple core yawns its way into opacity, the scarlet to fresh blood red rims barely wide enough to register, even with its depth the surface shines like

polished glass. The nose bursts with gingerbread, cinnamon, freshly whipped cream, mint, molten toffee and sugary cassis, blackberry, black cherry fruit scents, alcoholic fumes knocks it a bit off balance. Full-bodied, for all of its velvety weight does an admirable job of remaining nimble. Not as omnipresent vanilla, caramel, mint, ginger oak flavorings here but that's as attributable to the massiveness of the cherry, plum, blackberry fruit as anything else. Tannins grainy and unconvincing. Smattering of earth, wood smoke and leather. Granting this, far too young to fairly judge its ability to develop meaningful tertiary nuances. Drink now because its big and bodacious. 87

Loring Wine Company
Santa Rita Hills, Cargasacchi Vineyard
Pinot Noir

2005, \$52.99, 13.7%

Trim and fully integrated red-garnet to violet in color, perfectly hued through the rim, with above average clarity. Very smoky nose but not quite roasted, mostly burnt wood and ashen earth but makes room for fresh orange juice, strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit scents and lesser level of dried flowers before ending with caramel punctuation. Medium-bodied, oddly light of touch if not at moments somewhat dilute. Comes across as more driven by tannins than acidity although neither gruff and tuff. The white citrus blunted by floral water, caramel and white fudge notes, although to be fair not excessively oaky. The strawberry, watermelon, raspberry fruit starts to taper off by the mid-palate, buoyed by the sweetness of that caramel. But still ends in an increasingly herbaceous manner, some cola and pine nut nuances. [Screwcap] 87

Herman Story Wines
Santa Ynez Valley, Larner Vineyard
Grenache

2004, \$34.99, 15.1%

Fully opaque black-purple core, you'd have to dig a hole to China before you see any light in it, razor thin ruby-magenta rims hum with menace. Liqueur-like consistency to the nose, clingy with notes of rum-dipped raisins, chocolate covered cherries, toffee and maple syrup fudge, not full of alcoholic fumes yet just sniffing it you sense you gonna get drunk drinking it. Medium-bodied, actually not as over the top as you expect from the nose, more balanced and thinned out, the acidity here capable of cinching the belt tight enough to disguise any fat. Robust currant, cassis, cherry, blackberry fruit with thrust and not pushiness. The tannins start to accrue past the mid-palate and leave it on uneven ground. Nice notes of tree bark, earth, lemon peel, meadow grasses. The oak not given as free rein as in the nose, still no paucity of toffee, vanilla crunch, fried butter shades. That said, sweeps that under the rug by the finish and keeps it cleanus. Sneaking suspicion that you may like it more for the unintended components than the converse. 87

Ridge
Sonoma County, Geyserville
Zinfandel

2004, \$34.99, 14.9%

Its filminess helps it condense into easy opacity in the purple core, hardly shifts to red-ruby rims, flat and has to lean on darkness to impress. The oaky nose features vanilla and caramel yet not especially thick, apricot paste combines with cinnamon-spiced plum, cherry, blackberry scents and mint oil to make what's there familiarly

attractive, not much else going on. Medium-bodied, the hints in the nose fully delivered on in mouth, virtually disappears from your mouth by the mid-palate, definitely leaves wondering what the flub. Cinnamon and ginger spice tag team with orange spice to try and cheer the team on, eucalyptus and mint join the chorus. However, the watery plum, cherry, blackberry fruit can't even come close to discharging their duties. Can't blame the acidity nor tannins, nothing out of the ordinary there. Lots of oaky residue to powder the finish, does little to soften the overall presentation. Disappointing. 75% Zinfandel, 18% Carignane, 7% Petite Sirah. 85

Etude
Napa Valley, Carneros
Pinot Noir

2005, \$46.99, 14.1%

The violet light enough to fully share the stage with the red-ruby, perfectly consistent until the magenta-tinged rims, spotless and of a perfectly even plane. Cola, garden herbs, sweet smoke and a certain mushroomy earthiness set the stage in the nose, exerts effort to appear serious, in the process probably stifling the raspberry, green apple, cherry scents more than necessary, not oaky but not expressive of place either. Medium-bodied, bitter attack furnishing tomato skins, metallic rust, grass and dried lemons, has sufficient earthiness to ditch some of the sourness. But by then, the cherry, cranberry, strawberry fruit already destabilized. Has the floral and cola notes to soften the brunt yet it's not a wine that easily puts you in an agreeable mood. The acidity presents itself as a lowgrade throb, toying with the threshold of recognition. A few meaty bursts past the mid-palate. An awkward wine that may be trying to do too much, thus sacrificing the fewer things it could excel at. 85

Donkey and Goat Winery, A
Regional Blend, California, Three Thirteen
Blend

2005, \$42.99, 14.2%

Dusky purple core, passes into opacity, the ruby rims have just as much pink magenta in them as red. Noticeably ripe with an explosion of sweetly spiced raspberry, red cherry jam, there's something reminiscent of rubber and plenty of alcoholic fumes, some orange blossom and chocolate powder and vanilla toast and that's it. Full-bodied, the heat also throws it off balance here too, jagged edges and lacking in the shocks to absorb an uneven road. Again, plenty ripe in the raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit department and garnished with adequate flowers, orange citrus and mint. But even the oak can't salve the wounds left by the rough tannins and alcohol. Turns kind of plastic at the end, both in flavor and character. Unspecified percentages of Mourvèdre, Syrah, Grenache. 85

Peirano Estate
Central Valley, Lodi, The Heritage Collection
Cabernet Sauvignon

2005, \$12.99, 13.8%

Light red-purple hued core, fades to mostly transparent youthful red brick colored rims, very clear throughout. Light touch of sourness to the raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit scents, more vanilla cream than oaky toast per se, more wet wood or tobacco smoke than leather or earth, no one element out of proportion to the others. Medium-bodied, the relative lack of weight makes the oak much more prominent here, great deal of vanilla cream, molasses and buttered toast. Candied sweetness in the

cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit, gets sweeter the more you sip it. Mild herbaceousness, nothing to distract too, too much. Same level of leather or merde/earth mixture. Tannins soft, acidity not much stronger. Good from the perspective of cleanliness and fruitiness but too simple to get really interested in it. 84

Edmunds St. John
Regional Blend, The Shadow
Syrah

2002, \$11.99, 13.9%

Neither especially clear nor opaque, as much red-ruby as purple in the core, the former wins out to fashion wide, semi-dull rims. Matted herbal matter, wildflowers and pine form the cornerstone of the nose, curious lactose notes, not enough plum, cherry, blackberry fruit scents to mask the alcoholic fumes. Medium-bodied, rounder contour to the cherry, currant, plum fruit softens the mouth entry, however, it starts off balance and ends the same way, lurching feel. Violets, orange peel and eucalyptus cover some blemishes and there's momentary allusions to gaminess. No matter, there's just something wrong about it, plastic or unnatural. Short and with little harmonious flow. Paging Dr. Moreau. Tasted twice with, you know, consistent notes, from bottles purchased at two different stores literally weeks apart! Grapes sourced from Durell, Parmalee-Hill, Wylie, Fenaughty, Bassetti, Rozet Vineyards. 83

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Dry Creek Vineyard
Carmel Valley, Clarksburg, Dry
Chenin Blanc

2005, \$11.99, 12.5%

Brightly reflective green to yellow hay in color, deepens into translucent pools below, very full rims, quite attractive. Beeswax, dried honey and orange peels come forth first in the nose, the stony side lacks dustiness or moistness hence it clenches things up, perhaps even elevating the sourness in the nectarine, pineapple, green apple, peach fruit scents. Full-bodied, lots of texture and viscosity, if the acidity wasn't so brawny it might not even be able to sludge through to a mid-palate. White grapefruit and orange zest give a good effort in trying to brighten things and there's that semi-tropical tang in the pineapple, papaya, nectarine, apple, pear fruit. But dry it is, just as the label promises, there's not the kind of juiciness which gets a wine flowing forward. Has a kind of stony, "poor earth" appeal to it, dust bowl. Given the preceding, releases well on the finish, not airy but you can feel it unknotting. 88

Alfred, Domaine
Edna Valley, Chamisal Vineyards
Chardonnay

2005, \$25.99, 14.5%

Considerably deep golden color, verges on amber at some angles, while unblemished it still nowhere near transparency due to the heavy layering below the surface. Sweet honey and cinnamon add to the dried apple and pear profile in the nose, slowly run down by heavy cream, vanilla ice cream and toasted butter oak, soft patina of flowers but it flakes off with but a few brushes of your fingers. Full-bodied, if not outright fat, orange sherbet, cinnamon, ginger and clove with fried butter and mint to boot, energetically aggressive mouth entry which forestalls the registering of the concentrated, dulcet apricot, peach, nectarine, yellow apple fruit. The acidity is average for its

type, doesn't come off as sloppy or anything. Indeed, for its weight it moves adroitly and keeps forward momentum up. The oaky flavors don't really let up, though, granting they do mesh well with the whole and feel in place. (Screwcap) 88

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Kosta Browne
Russian River Valley, Rosé of Pinot Noir
Pinot Noir

2006, \$23.99, 14.2%

Visually interesting as the rims have a day-glo magenta brightness to them while the core is a dull garnet to scarlet hue, spotless but not transparent, entirely different from each angle. The nose shows a certain sourness, as if from extended skin/stem contact, more bass notes than treble, earth and twigs temper any playfulness in the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry scents. Full-bodied, same general approach in the mouth, kind of gets caught in the middle, trying to be serious at the expense of simple fun. Tart cherry, raspberry, watermelon fruit comes with a lemony sting, You get more stone, earth and dried grass here, so does merit the efforts to craft a rosé you have to treat as more than a quaffer. Becomes slightly more sugary on the finish. Would be kind of cool to be a fly on the wall during the thought process of its making, seems like it could have gone in many directions. (Screwcap) 85

WASHINGTON WHITE

Seven Hills
Columbia Valley
Viognier

2006, \$19.99, 14.2%

Slight brownish tinge to the yellow straw color, not especially clear nor translucent, sits in the glass as if it's slowly congealing. The nose explodes with honeysuckle, orange blossom and mint, sweet tangerine and lemon citrus too, while supple the apricot, pear, yellow apple fruit scents too light to forge quite a presence. Full-bodied, its density slows down the mouth entry and keeps it pretty much glued to the tongue. Clove and ginger spice do add some spark and the orange, tangerine citrus zesty too. The floral dimension spread somewhat too widely, loses pungency. The oak cream not overbearing but also contributes to the downward pull of its flesh. Basic peach, apricot, pear, apple fruit meets the normal threshold of savoriness. Could stand a little more grace but not hard to throw back. 86

OREGON WHITE

Montinore Estate
Willamette Valley
Pinot Gris

2006, \$11.99, 13.9%

Possesses a golden brown hue which gives it an aged look despite the pretty surface shine, fairly strong dropoff in color intensity around the transparent rims. Floral nose without being overly pungent, very apple-driven as well, barely room for peach or pear scents, otherwise not a lot more going on. Medium-bodied, clean and fresh in the mouth while also holding onto its weight completely throughout. A little spicier here with something like malolactic fermentation induced creaminess, not oak produced. The meadow florality persists, tempered by an increased percentage of stones and streamwater. The

apple fruit better accommodates the peach, apricot, pear peers, no real sweetness more like autumn harvest fruit stored in a basement and concentrating in the cool darkness. Slight bitterness on the finish of nuts and lemons helps reenergize it a touch. 88

Belle Pente Wine Cellars
Willamette Valley
Pinot Gris

2005, \$17.99, 13.6%

Hard to note the luminescent glow in the yellow color given its paleness, yet fills up the glass with something close to absence, stays consistent with what it has from core to rims. The airy openness in the nose disguises the grip in the pear, apple, peach, green melon fruit, the sweet spice element bolsters the floral side, has a certain honeyed aspect as well but never comes close to being unduly sugary, just does what it does. Full-bodied, impressively broad mouth entry, doesn't waste any space in the process of laying the honey, brown sugar, orange spice notes, The florality helps the center swell and not take itself too seriously. A decided surfeit of peach, apricot, nectarine, red apple fruit, there whenever you need it. The acidity cannot be excused of remiss of duty but still no sense asking more of it than should be expected. Stays one step ahead. 88

FRANCE RED

Baudry, Domaine Bernard
Loire, Chinon, La Croix Boissée
Cabernet Franc

2004, \$28.99, 13.5%

Achieves enough depth in the purple core for opacity, still the vibrancy of the ruby rims helps them spread widely, pleasing surface shine. The nose is well-stuffed yet maintains clarity, bursts with cigar ash, bell pepper, dried orange peels, wet stone and ripe raspberry, red cherry, currant fruit scents, takes time to unfold completely. Full-bodied, a good portion of its weight comes from the layers of tannins pushing downward on the tongue. The orange citrus tang and wavering floral swipes pretty up the attack before the leaves, grass, tar, tobacco, brown earth push most all else to the side. Given the aforementioned, the cherry, raspberry, red currant fruit starts out behind the eight ball and barely gets above a muffled cry, more or less gone by the finish. While young and tannic there is excellent integration and fluidity so there's reasonable expectations it will improve. 90

Barthod, Domaine Ghislaine
Burgundy, Bourgogne, Les Bons Bâtons
Pinot Noir

2004, \$26.99, 13.0%

Red-garnet in color with passing moments of violet or ruby, consistent from core to rims, clean but with a rippling across the surface which prevents transparency. Meadow flowers blend with tobacco ash, mineral dust and dried tar to mellow out the sugary aspects in the red cherry, raspberry fruit scents, achieves fullness but not heaviness. In the mouth it's similarly constructed, has the acidic and tannic structure to remain clear-headed, even as the sweetness in the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit runs towards becoming candied. Furnishes your tongue with lemon to white grapefruit citrus, dried flowers, same ashen earthiness and lesser herbaceousness. Plenty of polish and doesn't throw its heft around unnecessarily.

Enjoyable in that nothing quite leaps out at you, more comfortable as a choral whole. 90

Oratoire Saint-Martin, Domaine de l'
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône Villages Cairanne, Réserve des Seigneurs

Blend
2005, \$19.99, 14.5%

Enough blackness in the core of the purple bruise core to more than take it into opacity, you have to figure the only reason there's red ruby in the rims is because the liquid has thinned out as the glass tilts, otherwise it would be just as purpleal, good shine throughout. Fairly reductive nose, rubber tire, passed gas, tar, black earth yet at the same time stable plum, cherry, blackberry fruit scents, displays an incipient floral side which should grow as it settles into itself with more bottle time. Full-bodied, has a tacky, powdery texture which makes it stick to the tongue. This in turn brings out a cocoa powder touch to the sweeter mixture of orange, lemon citrus and raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit. The acidity adds freshness now but it strikes you that in the longer run it will be the tannins which keep the house clean and orderly. Here there is more of a sense of stony earth and tree bark, leaves. The floral side sits semi-silently on the sidelines, waiting for permission to speak. Good wine that doesn't back down but needs at least a few more months to integrate. 60% Grenache, 30% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah. 89

Trénel Fils
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Clos des Moriers
Gamay Noir
2005, \$24.99, 13.0%

The rich ruby-violet color hits a perfect pitch of clarity as well, complete saturation through the rims, can't possess more depth without pushing opacity. Smoky earth, tar and fallen tree wood blossom through the nose, sour orange peels add to the already bracing punch in the cranberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit scents, minimal herbal qualities, not a "pretty" nose but convinces with brief, declarative sentences. Medium-bodied, possessed of a solid tannic skeleton which doesn't go for the kill but capable of maiming if so desired. More floral here, particularly during the attack, but submerged under the structure and stony earth, hilly scrub bushes, orange and lemon peels and touch of fennel and rosemary. The cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit firm throughout, reluctant to release its juiciness but never disappearing below the radar. Even after granting it extended time to open it, barely budges. Hard to figure out what strategy would get it to be more expressive save the hope of years of sleep. 88

Montille, Domaine Hubert de
Burgundy, Bourgogne
Pinot Noir
2004, \$24.99, 12.5%

Incredibly spotless crimson red to purple in color, glows throughout even with a slight dip to orange at the rims. The nose is like waiting ten minutes for some guy to get out of the bathroom and then once he's gone realizing why, humid bag of grass, sea salt and saline water, sour oranges, the red cherry, cranberry, raspberry pair well with the wildflowers and a kind of wet smoke thing, needs lots of time to unwind. Medium-bodied, appears exactly as expected, all earth, merde, wet minerals and tree bark. The tannins are not thick but awfully persistent and bring out the sourness in the strawberry, cranberry, red cherry,

pomegranate fruit. Not especially long yet this is not a sign of weakness, expected tightness. Orange and white grapefruit infused finish, touch grassier too. Pricey, yes, but arguably worth it. 88

Grands Bois, Domaine Les
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Villages Cairanne, Cuvée Maximilien
Blend

2005, \$14.99, 14.0%

Strong red infusion through the purple core, fairly wide red-ruby rims, a visibly nonchalant confidence in the glass. Full nose, both broad and deep, producing garrigues, spices, orange peel, tea leaves, glazed ham, wet earth, little truly unusual about it, just comes together really well with the raspberry, blackberry, red cherry scents. Medium-bodied, starts off with an acidic burst which sets the tone for what would be softer wildflowers, orange reduction, mint and bare touch of caramel and chocolate. Smooth tannins, up to the task yet really just part of the general supporting structure for the cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit. Strives to satisfy rather than stimulate and chooses correctly. 55% Grenache, 35% Mourvèdre, 5% Syrah, 5% Carignan. 88

Croix Belle (Jacques Boyer), Domaine La
Languedoc/Roussillon, Côteaux du Languedoc, La Croix Belle

Blend

2004, \$15.99, 13.5%

Dense crimson-purple core, downright brooding, blood stained ruby rims, clear given its menacing saturation. Craggy stone earth, leather, green olives, kosher salt and grilled spiced shish kebab build through the nose, billows like a storm cloud with lightning flashes of currant, sour cherry and cranberry scents. Full-bodied, credit goes the brawn of the acidity to even be able to cut through the muscle of the white grapefruit, burnt grass, leather, dried game and poor earth. Equal thickness in the cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit, however, moves at a glacial pace, slowed down further as the tannins take hold. Here the olives and flowers get suffocated. Bound up in its structure, needs a massage or something to loosen up. 40% Syrah, 20% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 20% Cinsault. 87

Cairanne, Caves de
Rhône, Vin de Pays de la Principauté d'Orange, Secret de Campanie

Blend

2006, \$8.99, 13.0%

Light and clear red-ruby to violet colored core, narrowest of magenta tint at the outermost rims, entirely spotless and clear enough to see through effortlessly. The nose gives up some mineral dust and chalkiness but not especially set on letting you know it's there, some grapefruit to orange citrus, tanned animal hide as well as moderate strawberry, raspberry, red cherry scents, however, doesn't stick around for any extended period of time. Medium-bodied, gains some more grip and presence here via the ripeness in the same strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit, albeit devoid of sugary appeal. Never herbaceous so it remains smooth from start to finish, same pleasant degree of stone, mineral chunks and earth, not intensely so but highly credible. Hits you too with that refreshing lemon, white grapefruit burst too. If there's an ultimate undoing it's the truncated finish, gets you

interested and then pulls a disappearing act. 60% Grenache, 30% Carignan, 10% Cinsault. 85

Cheysson, Domaine
Beaujolais, Chiroubles
Gamay Noir

2005, \$15.99, 12.5%

Equally ruby and violet in the glass from core to rims, very shiny surface, crystal clear but not transparent as in too lightly hued. The nose is like someone dumped clumps of wet grass, earth and pebbles in there, cherry pits, raspberries, strawberries, not especially ripe and ends with a more ashen profile. Medium-bodied, follows up with more of the same in the mouth, very dry and tannic, borderline oppressively so. Beyond the stones, parched earth, lemon peels and bags and bags of cut grass not much to be had. Bitter edge through the cherry, strawberry, watermelon, raspberry fruit, no softness at all. Hints at some floral notes but killed in the crib. Have to say this is not a case of a wine that needs more air time or age to settle into itself. It's just surly. 84

FRANCE WHITE

Sauveuse, Domaine de la
Provence, Côtes de Provence, Cuvée Carolle
Blend

2005, \$16.99, 13.0%

Dull golden color, some transparent pooling but really it sits a sluggishly as a pond without a summer breeze to its name. Oodles of apple juice in the nose, green, yellow and red, pear and pomegranate fruit too, noticeable mint and lemon juice as well, heaviness weighs down the floral nuances. In the mouth it's full-bodied with the same emphasis on dried apples and concentrated juice. Brings with it a cinnamon and nutmeg spice edge, if not the pie crust notes normally associated with such. Underneath the relaxed, mature ripeness lies acidity of good brawn. The orange and lemon citrus flavors round and soft, match well with the overall tenor. As it settles into itself past the mid-palate you get more stoniness and warm stream water elements. Full weight through the finish, even as the flavors fade it presses against your mouth's flesh. 70% Rolle, 30% Ugni Blanc. 88

Puffeney, Jacques

Jura, Arbois

Savagnin

2002, \$32.99, 13.5%

Orange-amber darkens the golden base color throughout, reflects light well across the surface while more like a still pond below. Nutty, rice pudding, orange pekoe tea leaf infused nose, the reduction is like, duh, dried honey, pressed flowers and then a modicum of pear, apple, peach fruit, comes across as alcoholic but not in terms of overripe heat, more like you can discern it's been steeping in itself for awhile. Medium-bodied, the acidity is sharp and cuts right through the bullshit. This brings out the dusty vanilla powder, crushed nuts, anise seed elements. As oxidized as it is, stays fresh, as expected, cruises into third with a stand up triple. There's a drawn-in and truncated feel throughout the pear, apple, melon, peach fruit, however, it is as it should be. The sort of wine that defies vintage comparisons, not a "product" but vinified in such a way that vintage based nuances don't mean shit. 88

Chidaine, Domaine François
Loire, Montlouis, Clos Habert
Chenin Blanc
2005, \$23.99, 13.0%

Good amount of reflectivity in the golden color, mostly yellow with some orange flecks, as concentrated as the core is, fades along the rims. Soft and juicy nose of peach, apricot, yellow apple and pear fruit, the honeyed notes sweeten the tangerine citrus scents, all quiet on the stone front. In the mouth it's full-bodied, has a solid core which begins to get diffuse further out, that is, starts off taut but spreads perhaps too broadly as it settles into the palate. The acidity seems fine, not weak nor especially compelling for its bite. All about the plush apricot, pear, apple, melon, peach fruit with the sweet tangerine, lime citrus a close second. Cinnamon spice, brown sugar and lilacs float through like puffy clouds. For all of its blowsiness does end on a firm note and never gets too sweet. Just not sure how it pulls this off. It's enjoyable while at the same time it doesn't quite impress you as being capable of gaining extra complexity. 88

Bourdon, Domaine
Burgundy, Mâcon-Villages, Les Pierres Dorées Vieilles Vignes
Chardonnay
2005, \$12.99, 13.0%

Attractive shine across the surface, presents a basic yellow straw color with green flecks, normal fade along the rims. Scents of lemon sponge cake, white stone, mint, for a nose knows when to keep its mouth shut lest the imbiber realize there's not much more to say beyond the average peach, pear, red apple fruit scents. Medium-bodied, not crisp but clean and easy to discern. Good acidity, draws out orange, lemon citrus, flowers and mint leaf accents, certainly gussied up. Glides effortlessly, only hits you with some mineral dust to grind the tongue here and there. Full center of peach, apricot, pear fruit, no sloughing off through the end. Hard to get really excited about it but absolutely nothing wrong with it either. 87

Touzot, Domaine Jean
Burgundy, Mâcon-Villages, Vieilles Vignes
Chardonnay
2005, \$10.99, 12.8%

There's some real nice sparkle in the golden surface, stays real rich below as well, only minor loss around the rims, if not for the shine would appear more advanced. Mint, flowers, orange to lemon citrus zest, the nose is light and sprightly even as the apple, pear, peach scents anchor it down, a case of when the old vine designation on the label actually cashes out in reality. Medium-bodied, very good job of laying itself on the tongue, sweetly spicy, buoys its lemony bite, the floral dimension gets a few seconds to speak. There's some kind of cider aspect to the fruit, apple, pear, apricot, peach, it's like some cold European cellar where fresh fruit is sent to age. Slowly. Not much to say about the acidity but it displays adequate pacing and dryness. For the price, exactly what it should be and then some. [Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc] 86

Adam, Jean-Baptiste
Alsace, Réserve
Gewürztraminer
2005, \$21.99, 13.0%

There's a layered shimmer through the pure gold color, glittery surface, the visual fatness of the liquid compensates for weakly hued rims. Just unshelled raw

nuts, orange blossom and mint frame the pleasing nose, the sweet spices maintain an angular feel, continuous thickness in the clean peach, apricot, pear, green melon scents, no extra fat. Medium-bodied with the density to stride authoritatively forward, as in the nose, not voluptuous yet not dropping off at any point either. Led by the orange, lemon, white grapefruit citrus and stream stones before expanding into a floral dew. Not as nutty as in the nose, but there. Slight dip in the center in the pear, peach, apricot, melon fruit but its general weight helps it regain direction. Never pisses you off. [Screwcap] 86

Adam, Jean-Baptiste
Alsace, Tokay Pinot Gris Réserve
Pinot Gris
2004, \$17.99, 13.0%

Deep golden hue, fully unblemished, evident even through the translucency, OK concentration through the rims. Manages a mildly tropical profile in the nose, pineapple and mango find themselves next to the nectarine, apricot, pear fruit scents, its general weight a key attribute, splash of licorice, lowkey florality and orange sherbet, more steady than spectacular. Medium-bodied, round, mouth-filling attack which features lemon, orange citrus, cinnamon spice and pear, apple, peach, nectarine fruit. Something starts to tighten it up and slim it down by the mid-palate but it's hard to finger the acidity. Even as this occurs, brown sugar notes elevate through the finish. Mixes together an acceptable blend of flavor and cleanliness. [Screwcap] 85

Adam, Jean-Baptiste
Alsace, Réserve
Pinot Blanc
2005, \$13.99, 12.5%

Pale yellow straw in color, somewhat gauzy, overall lack of hue helps it appear stronger around the rims, less contrast. Lemon custard, flower water and mint comprise most of the quiet nose, lower levels of both stone and peach, pear, apple fruit, inoffensive yet nondescript. Light to medium-bodied with a thick enough bottom to gain traction, mild spiciness too helps elevate presence. Fair amount of juiciness in the lemon, lime citrus, average follow-through in the apricot, yellow apple, melon fruit. Not much acidity, neither dry nor especially sweet. As it tries to accrue space, the stone and streamwater components cloaked by the spiciness. Doesn't do much to convince you that you're sipping on it. [Screwcap] 84

Adam, Jean-Baptiste
Alsace, Réserve
Riesling
2004, \$13.99, 12.0%

Semi-translucent yellow hay color, even throughout, mild diminution around the rims, above average surface shine. Light of touch in the nose, mostly floral mist, orange zest, lighter element of wet stone, the pear, apple fruit scents even lighter of touch, dissolves with rapidity. Medium-bodied, good breadth during the attack but it sheds its weight precipitously as it moves forward, leading into a somewhat watery finish. Leans heavily on the lilacs, roses and orange blossom for a center with a few moments of spice. No real grip in the pear, apple, peach fruit, comes across as underripe. Just the briefest suggestion of petrol. Not that much going on, just kinda is. [Screwcap] 83

FRANCE ROSE

Raffault, Jean-Maurice
Loire, Chinon, Rosé
Cabernet Franc
2006, \$14.99, 12.5%

Very pale salmon pink, comes with a metallic zinc tinge, moderate surface shine, even through the colorless rims. Minerally nose with tart orange and lemon citrus accents, airily constructed, especially as the smokiness wafts upwards, the cherry, raspberry, watermelon scents of good length given their relative quietness. Medium-bodied, possesses enough mouth-watering acidity to really brighten the mouth entry and point a spotlight on the lemon, orange citrus, flowers and tart cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit. The mineral dust, chalk and general dustiness in no way dampens its verve but does serve to provide enough counterpoint for above average complexity. Slight elevation in the florality at the end. (Synthetic cork) 88

FRANCE SPARKLING

Chiquet, Gaston
Champagne, Cuvée de Réserve Brut
Blend
NV, \$44.99, 12.5%

Bright golden color with more loose bubbles than beads but they remain active, achieves a calm demeanor in the glass. Pear, peach and red apple fruit scents make for an inviting profile in the nose, equal degree of crisp toast to minerality, barely any honeyed tones, lowish on the lemon too, fresh but becomes rounder the more you sniff. Medium-bodied, set upon a firm foundation of heavy whipped cream. Not sweet but there's a ripeness to both the peach, apricot, pear, cherry fruit as well as the lemon/orange citrus which takes the punch out of the powdery minerality. The acidity gets cranked up around the mid-palate and does bring out sufficient wet stone notes to ensure no residual sweetness at the conclusion. Good persistence in the mouth weight, it's not like it just disappears on the finish. Approximately 33% Pinot Meunier, 33% Chardonnay, 33% Pinot Noir. (Disgorged 7/7/06) 88

ITALY RED

Rugolin, Azienda Agricola Corte
Veneto, Valpolicella Classico Superiore, Ripasso
Blend
2003, \$26.99, 14.5%

There's a dark blood red tinge to the plum red colored core, helps to noticeably darken the red-ruby rims to a mere tick below that which it encircles. That's literary. There's a dusting of nutmeg and cinnamon across the cherry, plum fruit scents, however, the nose is on the quiet side, flutters of lemon, cut grass and leather and that's about it. Medium-bodied, supported by a wiry tannic structure which highlights more of the stone, fruit pit, grass and lemon peel over any sweet spice or even the cherry, blackberry fruit. Brings on black licorice, fennel and anise seed elements with time. The orange to white grapefruit citrus parts also build over time. Crafted in a sturdy fashion, you can see the dirt under the farmer's fingernails, makes you want to bite off chunks of bread in your teeth or something. If you want soft and accessible, pass it by. Unspecified percentages of Corvina, Molinara, Rondinella. 88

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Mascarello, Bartolo
Piedmont, Dolcetto d'Alba, Vigne Monrobiolo - Ruè
Dolcetto
2005, \$24.99, 13.0%

Ruby-violet in color, crystal clear while remaining dark throughout, full red-scarlet rims with a hint of orange, complete saturation. Plummy, almost grapey nose, floral dew permeates the other cherry, raspberry fruit scents, orange citrus reduction, comes up with touches of Granny Smith apple at times, oddly devoid of other elements. Full-bodied, suave tannins keep it dry without putting too much starch in its pants. The cherry, plum, blackberry fruit is overripe while at the same time as devoid of sugar as possible. Some herbal bite, flowers and orange/lemon citrus, more solid presence in the earthiness and leather. Pulls up somewhat short, due to its being currently bound up in its structure? 88

Giacosa, Casa Vinicola Bruno
Piedmont, Nebbiolo d'Alba
Nebbiolo
2005, \$33.99, 13.5%

Immaculate ruby-garnet color, fairly prismatic beneath, there's a moderate lightening at the rims, more orange hued there. There's a reticent quality to the nose, has the leather, dried rose, earth, orange peel you need, dollop of cherry, raspberry fruit, just not really open for business. Full-bodied, a bit more accessible here in the mouth, splashes in a puddle across the tongue. At the start the cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit sweeter but the tannins clamp down and pare things to a trickle, even if steady. Touch of cedar, vanilla before more earth and stone step forth, moderates into dried orange/lemon peels and licorice. Doesn't achieve the hoped for depth yet too focused in demeanor to take this for a final judgment. 88

Ruffino
Tuscany, Chianti Classico, Aziano
Sangiovese
2005, \$12.99, 12.5%

Crystal clear ruby-violet, dark even given its clarity, presents fully red rims. Easy to understand cherry, currant, raspberry fruit, slightly grassy, maybe a touch of earth but defanged for your drinking pleasure. Medium-bodied, round and smooth, smattering of lemon and stone touches but, again, there's nothing to get in the way of the rolling waves of ripe cherry, raspberry fruit. Not too sugary, just real ripe. Sweet tea leaves come on to create a sense of difference. Average acidity and tannins, sure they were measured to the minutely correct level. It's just what it is, why comment? It tastes very good, each sip exactly the same as the ones before and after. 86

ITALY WHITE

Terlano (Kellerai Cantina Terlan), Cantina
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Winkl
Sauvignon Blanc
2005, \$23.99, 13.0%

Bright mix of white and yellow straw, glitters in the glass, mostly transparent and the rims devoid of hue yet so sparkly easy to not notice. Lively nose, while loosely woven the fabric moves as a whole, lemon spritz, powdered white stone and sand with a soft and steady floral undercurrent, the pear, apricot, apple fruit fuzzy with as much skin and pit as pulp to offer. Medium-bodied with good grip and a certain natural creaminess which helps it soak in further. Impelled mainly by streamwater, minerals, sand and shale,

as a result not most vivid experience nor the longest. The herbal tones come out through the mouth entry and color the appearance of the lemon to white grapefruit citrus, stealing the latter's zing. Same just-ripe aspect here to the peach, apricot, pear, apple fruit, barest suggestion of nectarine or pineapple. Semi-bitter, twiggy finish with bark and fallen tree leaf notes. Recognizable as Sauvignon Blanc while remaining a step off-center. 88

Mastroberardino, Azienda Vinicola Michele
Campania, Fiano di Avellino, Radici
Fiano

2005, \$21.99, 12.5%

Thin golden color, moments of sparkle across the surface yet it's more or less lacking in luster below, nothing out of the ordinary here. Honey, lemon oil, licorice, violets pick up most of the pieces in the nose, hard to parse out the lemon citrus and pear, apple, apricot scents, has sweetness but not the depth to make this last. Medium-bodied, here in the mouth the sweetness achieves more length, lemon to lime citrus gives up cut for breadth. More floral, if indistinct. The peach, pear, apricot, apple fruit nicely scrubbed, has direction without having to give up the ability to soak in some. The licorice, anise thing still going on, gains clarity through the sufficient acidity. Does an exemplary job of touching all the bases but doesn't find any one thing to excel at. 88

San Giuliano, Feudi di
Sicilia, Vento di Majo
Blend

2005, \$11.99, 13.5%

There's a certain lifelessness to the gold color, green tinge, like a still pond, changes without leaving a trace of what it may have originally looked like, pools into more or less a blockish appearance, not unattractive but. The nose has this good-natured clumsiness about it, like it gregariously cannot control the lime, lemon pie, anise, floral paste, bit more shape to the apple, pear, apricot scents, and old friend whose pros and cons you long ago put to rest. Medium-bodied, full if soft, its plushness pours itself steadily upon your tongue, sweet spices, licorice and a touch of pie dough blend with freshly opened lemon peel and wildflowers to create a swell in the middle. The acidity fulfills minimal FDA requirements. Very good wine for those with short attention spans. Unspecified percentages of Chardonnay, Catarratto, Grillo. [Synthetic cork: enoPE] 87

Inama, Azienda Agricola da
Veneto, Soave Classico
Garganega

2005, \$12.99, 12.5%

Translucent shimmer below the very shiny golden surface, transparent rims, nothing visually special about it yet attractive in its normalcy. Honey-lemon tea, sprig of rosemary, streamwater, candied peach, apricot, pear, cherry fruit and a touch of guava too, sneaky sort of density, lightly arrayed but gains hold as it warms. Medium-bodied, same thing as in the nose, very different character cold versus warm, much more change than usual. Starts off with mineral water, wet chalk and lemon peel, moves onto thick slices of pineapple, guava, nectarine, apricot fruit. Adequate acidity, yet obviously not enough to hold the wine's shape. Hard to figure out, better to throw in the towel on analysis and slurp. 87

ITALY ROSE

Donnas, Caves Cooperatives de
Valle d'Aosta, Vallée d'Aoste, Larmes du Paradis Rosé
Nebbiolo

2006, \$14.99, 13.0%

Has the most intensely day-glo pink-orange-magenta color imaginable, so shiny and lustrous it seems artificial or at least radioactive. There's a deceptive simplicity to the fruitiness in the nose, all that watermelon, strawberry and raspberry still seems like there's more, albeit not especially grassy, floral nor citrusy. Medium-bodied, has the consistency to appear fatter, as in the nose plays few cards but plays them well. Leads with the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry, watermelon fruit while also pumping up the volume on the semi-sweet lemon to orange citrus. Rose hips, momentary pauses of stoniness do punch in for work. Excellent acidity dries up any spillage while also not binding things too tightly. Can be taken seriously of just happily thrown back. Lingers for some time as it finishes. 89

GERMANY WHITE

Weins-Prüm, Dr. F.
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Ürziger, Würzgarten, Kabinett
Feinherb AP #10

Riesling

2005, \$19.99, 10.5%

White to yellow straw in hue, while lightly colored shines like a star, any translucency shows around the rims, bending light easily. Moderate chalk and powdered stone in the nose, lemon pie and flower water soften it appreciably, has a full center from the cherry, peach, red apple fruit scents, seems like you might get some brown sugar but doesn't follow through. Full-bodied, good skeleton that's widely spaced. For all of its density stays very dry and plays up mineral water, stone, chalk and steam rising off hot asphalt. The attack features a panoply of apricot, peach, pear, pineapple, yellow apple fruit that gets stuffed in the trunk of the Cadillac by the mid-palate. More length in the lemon, white grapefruit citrus, more zest than juice. Not dynamic per se but stays in your head, you don't mindlessly relax when sipping on it. 89

Clüsserath, Weingut Ansgar
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Trittenheimer, Apotheke, Kabinett AP
#1

Riesling

2005, \$16.99, 8.5%

Greenish yellow hay color to it, brightens around the rims as well as takes on more depth, not the most lustrous surface, some fizz visible long after poured. Sweet, borderline candied, nose of cherry, apricot, peach, nectarine fruit as well as honey, brown sugar and mint, comes with an intense peanut butter element which bespeaks of sulfur and such. Medium to full-bodied, even sweeter in the mouth with cherry, strawberry, peach, apple, pear fruit, comes with a reduced, syrupy texture. The visible fizz translates into a light pétillance in the mouth, enough so to separate and lift and create more room for chalk, white stone bits. The lime, lemon, orange citrus also sweet but not as concentrated. The acidity average at best, minimal cut, especially for the prädiikat. Smooth and soft finish, soaks in like a summer rain. 86

Kühl, Weinhaus
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Way Kühl QbA Dry AP #38
Riesling
2005, \$9.99, 10.5%

Adequate shine in the yellow straw color, block-like in appearance, not layered, very good fullness through to the rims. Attractive density in the nose, there's enough dusty stoniness in the nose to partially hold the ripe peach, pear, apple, cherry fruit scents at bay, more honey and glazed pie crust than you'd expect in a trocken wine. Full-bodied, much fruitier in the mouth with large-scaled strawberry, red cherry, pear, red apple, apricot fruit, concentrated and sweet. This carries over to the tangerine, lemon, lime citrus, definite "-ade" character to it. Not to say it lacks acidity nor sufficient stoniness, for it does have both, more that it would a lot to restrain the former. Serves up elevated rubber notes through the finish and does end with increasing dryness as well. [Screwcap] 85

Hessen, Weingut Prinz von
Rheingau, QbA AP #71
Riesling
2005, \$10.99, 11.5%

Pale yellow straw, the lack of color partially compensated for by a faint luminescent glow and general lowgrade translucency, it's there. Golden apple, peach, pear nose, some lemon and lime citrus, basic chalk and mineral dust with a suggestion of rubber, absolutely nothing wrong with how it smells but nothing of real note either. Medium-bodied, throws most of its weight upfront into the attack and then recedes in a clear manner. The lemon, lime, white grapefruit citrus a larger part of the show here. Same could be said for the florality. Downside to this is that the peach, apricot, cherry, pear fruit not the most gregarious chap at the party. The acidity comes across as stronger than needed given the lack of oomph in the primary material. Not bad but hard to get excited here. [Screwcap] 84

AUSTRIA RED

Markowitsch, Weingut Gerhard
Carnuntum, Spitzerberg
Blafränkisch
2005, \$15.99, 13.0%

The basic purple core brightened by red-ruby, warm and wide more red-magenta rims ensure there's vivid color from any visual angle. The sparkle in the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit makes the nose easy to enjoy, then there's the counter-blow of white pepper and cut grass, more complex for it but then you have to work, ends with elevated floral musk and, oddly, some alcoholic fumes. Full-bodied, has sufficient tannins to allow it to hug the palate as it moves forward as well as mop up any excess juice and then some. White grapefruit, pepper, grass and quartz stone give it very find depth, the red cherry, raspberry fruit completely ripe yet not sugary. A slight dip at the finish, by then the tannins have indeed gathered strength. No problem enjoying this. 90

Schiefer, Weinbau Uwe
Burgenland, Eisenberg
Blafränkisch
2005, \$19.99, 12.5%

Nicely deep ruby-violet in color with above average luster, no problem segueing to luminescent magenta rims. You feel the ripeness in the cherry, red currant scents as much as smell them, there's actually more present

leather, clumps of grass and earth, stone and something akin to white pepper in the nose, not funky per se but not scrubbed into a state of arch cleanliness either. Full-bodied, same tactile sensations in the mouth, has very good tannins but never seems dry as in parched, just knows when to blanket the sweetness. The cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit pretty much done saying what it has to say by the mid-palate, cedes the podium to the stone, mineral, earth, grass, lemon peel components. A consistent experience, while not lacking in sense of motion impresses most for its lack of dips or lapses. 88

AUSTRIA WHITE

Angerer, Kurt
Kamptal, Kies
Grüner Veltliner
2005, \$14.99, 12.5%

Slight gauziness takes some of the sheen out of the surface, well-hued with gold and green flecks, holds confidently through the rims. Sweet nose of pink grapefruit, tangerine and lime citrus, white pepper and fine mineral dust, the citrus brings out any tropicality in the nectarine, pineapple, peach, apple fruit scents, doesn't quite bloom in this department. Medium-bodied, despite possessing very credible acidity it also possesses a certain creaminess which smoothes it out, adding weight and subtracting bite. The pink grapefruit sweetness persists here yet kept in place by the zestier pineapple, papaya, nectarine, apricot fruit. As much mineral water as out-and-out stoniness, minimal herbaceousness. Holds both its weight and flavor intensity through the finish, all you want is a sharper blade. 88

SWITZERLAND WHITE

Côte-Uvavins, Cave de La
Romand, Vin de Pays Romand, Dubaril
Chasselas
2005, \$13.99, 11.5%

White to the lightest yellow straw possible in color, despite the lack of hue has a definite translucent shimmer while also showing a slight fizz as well. The nose has a breeziness to it, like the breeze done blown all the scents away, smoke and earth there, a slight pickled edge, this balanced out by ensuing honeyed notes, no real fruit to speak of. Full-bodied, much fatter in the mouth than the nose would suggest, while it remains dominated by mineral water, slate and limestone type accents, there's a richer core of peach, apricot, apple fruit alongside a kind of vanilla creaminess which may be attributable to malolactic fermentation, time on the lees or act of god. Pinch of orange blossom, lilacs and honeyed nuts create a bridge from the mid-palate through the finish. The acidity is average at best. At once has more substance while less of an impact than you'd think. 86

GREECE WHITE

Megapanos, Alexandros
Attica, Spata
Savatiano
2005, \$11.99, 12.0%

There's an orange tinge to the rich golden core, translucently viscous, clings to the glass, moving slowly, holds its density well through the finish. Golden honey and floral dew permeate the nose, raw pie dough, orange spice, basic apricot and peach fruit scents, very round and

soft, a well-stuffed pillow. In the mouth it's full-bodied and creamy, blending in nutty and chocolaty aspects with the vanillin base. More of the glazed pie dough thing, however, with acidity here to whip it at least partially into shape. Not much room for the florality to spread out, resulting in more clogging the lane by the apricot, pear, melon fruit. The lemon citrus elevates through the finish helping it to end more cleanly. Decently consistent experience from start to finish. 87

SPAIN RED

Santa Rita, Sociedad Agraria de Transformacion
Mancha, La, Veronés Joven
Tempranillo
2005, \$11.99, 13.5%

Just enough density in the purple core to create a filmy opacity, slight segue to red garnet rims, nothing unusual about its appearance, just appealing in a basic manner. Light, snappy strawberry, raspberry fruit in the nose, gets swiftly overrun by an earthiness and fresh leathery quality that isn't rustic but doesn't want to hear the bubblegum music either, not much else going on, probably for the best. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, smooth but not due to a lack of grip nor, worse, intentional smoothness. Just nice and simple, the tannins proportionate to the sweetness level of the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit. Minimal grassiness, some cocoa dust, orange peel, leather yet not really so interested in doing more than just making you want to take another sip. 87

Can Blau, Cellers
Montsant
Blend
2005, \$18.99, 14.5%

Just, just enough depth in the purple core to get all opaque like, seamless transition to wide red-magenta rims, trim and unblemished throughout, well-attired. There's a jammy quality to the raspberry, cherry, cranberry fruit scents but without the sugariness, roasted coffee beans and cocoa swiftly make themselves known, softened some by caramel poured on top, takes great pains to ensure that nothing else is getting through beyond these two basic components. Medium-bodied, has a grainy grittiness to it which keeps it grinding while also has the acidity tugging it towards a sleeker profile. The anchor in the middle remains the ripe strawberry, raspberry, cherry fruit, never too sweet, rather just flavorful. Moderate degree of earthiness with stone chunks, however, as this starts to gain hold gets superseded by clove spiced ham and caramelized brown sugar. Little bit of florality, lacks sufficient flow to flesh out the finish completely. Not a pushover, if you are on the same page with it, the conversation will last well into the night. Approximately 35% Cariñena, 35% Syrah, 30% Garnacha. 87

Panarroz
Jumilla
Blend
2005, \$6.99, 14.0%

Cloudy glow in the rich purple core, bare shift to dull crimson to dark ruby for the thin rims. Jammy nose of powdered sugar, concentrated plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, sweet baking spices, candied lemon drops and a touch of smokiness, forward and settles easily in your nostrils. Full-bodied, slight greenness to the tannins otherwise it's all fruit, all the time. More prune here to

sweeten up the already super-ripe plum, cherry, blueberry, blackberry fruit. Momentary suggestion of leather or animal hide but lower in the departments of citrus, flowers or sweet spices. Maintains both its weight and fruit flavor intensity through an extended finish. Perfectly respectable for the price, you get what you pay for in this world. You hope. Unspecified percentages of Mourvèdre, Grenache, Syrah. [Synthetic cork] 86

Abad, Bodega del
Bierzo, Abad Dom Bueño Crianza
Mencia
2001, \$21.99, 13.5%

Dusk-like black core fades to crimson orange rims, plenty of bricking already, while impressively dense not especially vivacious. The nose is very prune-y at first but opens into puffs of smoke, cherry, blackberry fruit, lightly roasted game, burnt cocoa powder, pressed wildflowers, vanilla reduction, has this oddly deceptive ability to seem like it's going to deliver more sense of place than it does. Full-bodied, there's a heaviness in the cherry, currant, blackberry fruit which, when combined with the vanilla, coffee, cocoa flavorings, just pastes it like paper glue to random parts of your mouth. Kind of herbal but not, it's not that it has a sense of progression as much as it bounces around. The acidity has more power than the tannins but both are capable of taking the wheel at will. Leaves you unsure what to make of it, some sips please, others, ah, don't. 86

Sierra Cantabria, Bodegas
Rioja
Tempranillo
2005, \$11.99, 13.5%

Fully saturated ruby-violet from core to rims, light enough for complete clarity throughout, the outer rims shift to a pink magenta tinge. For the nose, if you stick your head inside a clove spiced ham and inhale that's all you need to know, raisins and currants, honey, lemon custard, end of story. Light-bodied, possesses all the elements of the nose just without the fullness, the balloon punctured by pointed acidity. Baked ham, clove, honey, orange spice, just cut and paste the last sentence here. The oak treatment is clumsy and can't add the more regal cedary aspect Rioja is known for. Attenuated cherry, raspberry fruit, while admirably erect lacking in length. Watery finish, threads unravel with alacrity leaving just that acidic throb at the end. 83

SPAIN WHITE

Nekeas, Bodegas
Navarra, Vega Sindoa 50% Garnacha 50% Cabernet
Rosé
Blend
2006, \$8.99, 13.0%

While pale, the salmon pink coloration comes with a brightening metallic orange cast that adds to its attractive glowing hum. Touch of cream pie feel to the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry scents in the nose, minimal grassiness a bonus, slice or two of orange fruit like it was dropped into a bowl of sangria, starts off full and then slowly tails off at a controlled, steady pace. Medium-bodied, starts to gain traction through the attack before the acidity acts as a grease, making it slip forward. Rose petals and orange blossoms gussy up the strawberry, red cherry fruit. As in the nose manages to restrain the herbaceousness which wants to come out to play. In the final analysis comes off too four-square, not really missing

anything except to ability to excite. 50% Garnacha, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon. 85

Mein, Viña
Ribeiro
Blend

2005, \$16.99, 12.0%

Bright and highly reflective yellow straw color, fully transparent at the rims but hard to care as it dances nimbly in the glass. Fresh and very openly knit nose, lemon and lime tang all dry and crinkly, considerable amount of chalk dust and fine mineral powder, the green apple, pear, melon fruit clean and taut, not a lasting impression made, some mint accents. In the mouth it's light to medium-bodied with a firm acidic spine, very erect posture. This too highlights the minerality and stoniness as well as the lemon citrus, not necessarily to the detriment of the same apple, peach, pear fruit but not helping it gain grip either. Dry and would be tacky were it not for the bite in the acidity. An active presence in your palate, however, probably needs food or it might be hard to chug down more than a couple of glasses. 80% Treixadura, 15% Godello, 5% Albariño, Loureira, Torrontés. 88

Naia, Bodegas
Rueda
Verdejo

2006, \$13.99, 13.0%

Nice clarity in the yellow straw color while still capable of some layering, the latter helps keep its visual appeal through the much paler rims. Sparkly nose of lemon and white grapefruit zest, mineral dust and metal shavings, enough to just about make you sneeze, if you can hold out there's a fair amount of apricot, peach, yellow apple fruit scents. Medium-bodied with an impressively glyceric grip, coats the tongue like rubber cement. Equally impelled here by lemon and white grapefruit citrus, the stone powder and minerals a close second. A minor dash of flower blossoms helps to make the peach, pear, apple fruit more recognizable. But it tends to peter out somewhat quicker than might be desired. Easy sipper level. 86

SPAIN ROSE

Amesguren
Getariako Txakolina, Ameztoi Txakoli Rubentis
Blend

2006, \$19.99, 11.0%

Very light watermelon pink in color, were it not so reflectively glowing it would appear washed out, the rims fully bleached out, some visible fizz. Evanescent nose of mineral water, roses, cherry blossoms and fresh strawberries, more airy than air. Medium-bodied, largely attributable to the thick acidic skeleton, dry and powdery without sacrificing a steady sense of forward movement through the mouth. Bright lemon citrus, lingeringly sweet and sour. Minerals, pulverized stone, chalk and streamwater imbue it with a solid sense of place. The florality has no dewy, musky aspect yet stays perfectly consistent throughout. Has a natural sort of intensity, at peace with itself and not overly concerned with being judged. Lots of saline residue on the finish. 50% Hondarribi Zuri, 50% Hondarribi Beltza. 90

SPAIN DESSERT

Alvear
Montilla-Moriles, Dulce Viejo Solera
Pedro Ximénez
1927, \$59.99, 16.0%

The moderately deep brown core has good clarity and willingly releases into more yellow rims, coloration could be offputting to the uninitiated. The nose is fairly nutty, sweet golden raisin and date fruit give it ballast, follows up with candied lemon peel, sweet tea leaves, caramelized brown sugar and pie dough. Full-bodied and ultra-velvety, hard to imagine more layers piled into your glass. Aggressive black licorice leads off through the attack, gives it a fresher airiness which in turn releases more lemon, pressed flowers and grilled nuts. Seems to possess a credible amount of acidity, able to cut through the sweetness of the raisin, date, fig and black cherry fruit. Stays smooth and balanced throughout without dropping an iota of weight. Incredibly easy to down multiple glasses. (Screwcap) 92

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Rudera
Stellenbosch
Chenin Blanc
2005, \$19.99, 13.5%

Somewhat flat yellow gold color that can deepen to a light amber at some angles, while lacking in surface shine the hue it does possess makes it through to the rims. Salt, saline water, wet minerals and rust act in concert in the nose to give it a serrated feel, aggressively pushes any orange citrus and pear, apple, peach scents to the sidelines, a few notes of black licorice sneak back in. In the mouth tasting temperature makes a big difference, as the formidable acidity has a much keener edge when cold and a more muffling blanket quality as it warms, either way ready for the big leagues. Not so dry, though, that you cannot enjoy the pineapple, peach, nectarine, guava, apple fruit at least through the mid-palate and same can be said for the lemon, orange citrus. No lack of minerals, stream water, wet stone and chalk, not quite as domineering as in the nose. Impressive and, no doubt, intentionally so. 89

AUSTRALIA RED

Pirramimma
South Australia, McLaren Vale
Shiraz
2004, \$22.99, 14.0%

Not so incredibly onyx-like but the purple core is still pretty much opaque, moderate girth in the crimson red rims, fills the glass completely with color for sure. The nose is all mint chocolate and witch hazel, soft due to the former, arch due to the latter, syrupy blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit scents fit in here and there, not displaying any nuances oak cream can't steamroll. Full-bodied, has an artificial bitterness to it that could pass for tannic or acidic structure but really it's more an annoyance than positive presence. Mint, eucalyptus, candied oranges, both white and milk chocolate add to the flavor but not the character. The plum, cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit sweet yet any undue sugary qualities resolved by the mid-palate. What it is is an average wine with more thought put into it and thus an extra \$10 per bottle. 85

CHILE WHITE

Quintay, Viña
Casablanca Valley
Sauvignon Blanc
2006, \$15.99, 13.5%

Virtually transparent, bleached straw at best, surface reflects well, even throughout with what it has. Herbaceous nose, burning grass, bell pepper and chili peppers, good intensity without pushing its advantage, guava, peach, pineapple fruit gain added spark from sour pink grapefruit notes, knows what it does best and sticks to it. Medium-bodied but has enough traction as well as piquant heat from the chili peppers and white grapefruit, lemon citrus to take up every inch of your mouth fully. The minerals and chalkiness more dusty than invigorating, once you recognize them as such, they aren't adding much. Hey, that rhymes. More of that guava, papaya, nectarine, apricot fruit, sweet as in dried fruit, not wet and juicy. Ultimately satisfying but more so for those who are not fetishizing harmony over verve. [Screwcap] 88

Kingston Family Vineyards
Casablanca Valley, Cariblanco
Sauvignon Blanc
2006, \$15.99, 14.5%

Close to complete colorless, excellent sparkle across the surface while capable of bending the light enough below to fashion a presence in the glass. Uncommon strength in the chili pepper notes in the nose for a Chilean version of the grape, that and the smoky minerality make it hard to derive much else, grassiness trumps the peach, apple fruit scents, despite the chilies and relatively high alcohol doesn't burn your nostrils. Light-bodied, zesty acidity combines with those chili peppers to deaden the palate enough that it's too raw to register flavors with precision. More floral here with clearer definition in the lemon, orange citrus as well as peach, apricot, melon fruit. Becomes increasingly herbaceous as it moves forward through the mouth until it dominates the finish. Seems like it wants to bull rush your mouth so you can't find your balance to assess it fully. 87

Geo Wines
Casablanca Valley, Cucao
Chardonnay
2006, \$10.99, 13.5%

Vivid richness in the golden core, touch more zinc orange tones around the rims, not translucent per se but there's a distortion effect below the surface. Collected nose, keeps a clear message of pear, red apple, peach fruit, mint and orange citrus, little sense of stone nor earth but basically it more than delivers on its promises. Full-bodied, equally smooth and cannily able to present an unified front to the imbiber, there's genius in sticking to a simple routine. Satisfying depth in the peach, apricot, pear, melon fruit with a restrained profile to the citrus and stone components. Manages to keep the florality ahead of the grassiness. The acidity is above average but leaves you feeling the is not entirely the result of nature. More bite than expected, as with so many, a bonus for some and a minus for others. 87

ARGENTINA RED

Viñatero, La Posta de
Mendoza, Lujan de Cuyo, Angel Paulucci Vineyard
Malbec
2005, \$16.99, 13.7%

Velvety deep purple core, fully opaque with heavy set, dark ruby rims, definitely chooses richness over vibrancy. The nose features plump cherry, plum, blackberry fruit to the exclusion of much else, a breeze of floral perfume and orange peel but minimal earthiness and such. In the mouth it's full-bodied and broad yet with sufficient acidity to carve away excess flab. Same degree of richness in the plum, currant, cherry fruit, not too sweet, just eminently fruit-driven. More orange to white grapefruit citrus here, lends needed bite. The earth and leather higher too if not vast per se. Displays some grit in the tannins as it progresses through the mid-palate, leaving some residue on the finish and increasing mouth presence. Sturdily constructed and without flaws, however, not especially interesting to consume. 87

ARGENTINA WHITE

Tittarelli, Bodega
Mendoza, Rivadavia, Reserva
Torrontés
2006, \$10.99, 14.0%

While transparent in terms of color with only the lightest of white straw shades, there's a faint gauzy quality which prevents it from being crystal clear. Beautiful citrus lift in the nose of tangerine, lime, lemon, dances nimbly, soft wafts of mint leaf too, easy to miss the peach, apricot, pear fruit, really nothing else to say nor anything which needs to be said. Medium-bodied, its grip at first surprises you given how open the nose is, fills it up from cheek-to-cheek. The lime, tangerine citrus has a lot more zest and bite here too, however, the peach, apricot, melon fruit still somewhat overshadowed by the rest. The floral dimension broader and even edgy, not necessarily a softening component. Notes of bitter almonds on the finish a welcome twist. Not the kind of wine you can just chug but gotta like its verve for the price. 89