

The Hanes Wine Review, May 2017 Edition

As finances become more troublesome for Hanes, he frets about what he spends on wine. Really he frets about *not* spending money on wine, all the potentially mind blowing wines he is not buying. Not that he really *needs* more wine but when is that ever the point.

Since September 2002 Hanes has charted how many wines he reviews in each edition as well as the prices. He breaks this down into four categories: under \$15; \$15 to 24.99; \$25 to \$49.99; and \$50+. Back in 2002 you could actually get a lot of great wine for under \$15, hah.

From September 2002 to May 2017 Hanes has reviewed herein 7,423 wines. Of these:

31% were under \$15

33% were between \$15 and \$24.99

30% were between \$25 and \$49.99

6% were \$50+

As one might expect, the percentage of “under \$15” has waned over the years. The high water mark for this category was December 2009 at 70% of the wines reviewed that edition (46 total wines). Since the beginning of 2014 the highest percentage for this category has been 27% and the lowest 7%.

The 50+ category has been historically the most stable of them all. There was a period from April 2004 to April 2006 when this category hit numbers like 16%, 20%, 17%, 24% and such. Hanes was reviewing a lot of wines he tasted for free back then and his friends were richer. But since June 2006 it’s only been in double digits eight times. Rich friends of Hanes, why hast thou forsaken him?

The real “meat and potatoes” has always been “between \$15 and \$24.99” and “between \$25 and \$49.99.” But it is striking to note how these two categories have slowly swapped dominance. From the inception of tracking this data through early 2012 the former had the upper hand and often broke above 40%. But since March 2012 to the present, it is the latter which is much more likely to break over 40% of wines reviewed, with a high of 67% in October 2015. Part of this can be Hanes’s fancy pants tastes. But anecdotally it seems that the data also supports a clear rise in general wine prices (assuming Hanes really has not changed his buying patterns all that much, which he hasn’t). \$30 for a wine today just doesn’t seem a big deal while back in 2002 a \$30 wine better damn well rock the rock.

Hanes can also aver that if one wants to try unique or idiosyncratic wines in California you basically *start* at \$30 and go up from there. Whereas in many parts of Europe you can start at \$20 even today. Hanes has not run the numbers but if he averaged the price of Californian wines he has purchased over the past five years that average will easily top the same average of wines from France, Italy or Germany. And it’s why Hanes tends to stick with a few favored Californian producers and rarely experiments with new stuff from California. The price of admission is just too high and you don’t find the equivalent of a new cheapie Chinon or Rhône Syrah or Cahors.

Anyway, it’s sad that over time the “under \$15” category has made less sense and tells a less interesting story. Had Hanes known prices would go up so quickly he would have tracked it at under \$20. Of course, he still has all the raw data in the database but he’s too busy drinking to extract it and start over from scratch. There’s no going back in life.

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This month’s big winners... Hanes has only had the Turley Zinfandel from the Zampatti Vineyard twice, 2013 and now the 2014 (although it seems they have sourced grapes here since the 2007 vintage). Based on these samplings this could easily be considered one of their more pleasing bottlings. \$38 is stiff but arguably worth it. Unsurprisingly, Hanes quite enjoyed the 2015 Lapalu “Cuvée des Fous” from Brouilly in Beaujolais. One of the few cru Beaujolais wines from 2015 that Hanes sees improving with age. \$36 is stiff but what can you do. It’s a total embarrassment but Hanes has never before had a wine from the Gringet grape. Knowing that Belluard is a producer coming into greater vogue, Hanes had to get with the program. The 2015 “Les Alpes” from France’s Savoie is their entry level Gringet and \$33 later, you can make an argument it is worth it. It is rare to find a white

wine from Crozes Hermitage so Hanes was tempted to try the 2015 from Laurent Habrard. Well, good Marsanne can be quite good and this one is. Could even call it a value for \$27. Hanes had been meaning to try a wine from Frantz Saumon for some time and that time has come. The 2015 “Minéral+” from Montlouis is delicious Chenin Blanc with the potential to age. For \$28 or so, it’s a buy. It’s funny when a very well respected producer kind of falls out of fashion as seemingly has happened with the Mosel’s Joh. Jos. Christoffel Erben. Yet, when you taste one it’s usually pretty good, witness the 2015 Ürziger Würzgarten Riesling Kabinett. Sweet and citrusy and lots of fun, even if \$28 for a Kabinett makes one sad.

The best \$20 and under picks... Hanes has always had a soft spot for the Gewürztraminer wines from Navarro in Mendocino. So it is little surprise that he enjoyed their “Alsatian blend” wine labeled as traditional Edelzwicker. Attractively sweet and forward, there’s a lot of flavor here to like and comes with a nice \$16 price too. The “entry level” Syrah from Aurélien Chatagnier from the Rhône’s Collines Rhodaniennes area punched above its weight for \$20. Fruit, structure, and personality with room to improve medium-term. Yes, please. Never a “great” wine but usually perfectly serviceable, the 2015 Ferrandière Malbec from the Languedoc was one of the better vintages of late for this bottling, made all the better by the \$8 price tag. Meets all expectations. Never heard of Fabrice Gasnier from Chinon but their 2015 “Les Graves” bottling is a tasty drop of Cabernet Franc for a fair \$15 or so. Deserves a tip of the cap. Similarly, Complices de Loire after last month’s tasty Pinot Noir followed this month with their own Chinon, the 2014 “La Petite Timonerie” and it too for \$16 delivers the goods. The prices for the best Chenin Blanc in the Loire continue to creep up. So it’s nice to find Filliatreau’s 2015 Chenin called “Linnéa.” A super value for \$15. Like the Ferrandière, the basic Chardonnay from the Languedoc made by Domaine de l’Olivier is a party wine all night, \$7 for a wine both recognizably Chardonnay and with its own riff. Hanes did have a positive Württemberg, Germany experience this time around. Beurer’s “Weiss Trocken” white blend proved very competent and a versatile food wine, no problem paying the \$19 for it. If you have to drink cheap Spanish Garnacha, then the 2015 Espelt “Old Vines” bottling from Empordà ain’t bad for \$12 or so. Not massaged into grotesquery.

And the disappointments... On the other side of the coin, the Turley Zinfandel from the Dusi Vineyard usually delivers lots of fruit and power but the 2014 version showed too much alcoholic heat and on top of that finished on the short side. You pay \$43 for access to these very old vines but they missed the mark this time. Having been impressed by this bottling since it was offered, the 2014 Trousseau from Sandlands lacked clarity of purpose and verve and one hopes that this was just a momentary blip before a return to greatness in 2015. They hold the price at \$28 which is likely below what the market would bear. Not exactly sure what to make of the 2015 Julie Balagny basic Beaujolais bottling. Really want to like her wines more but there’s a wild and unstable character to the wine which is hard to get past. \$26 for a basic AOC bottling is aggressive too. Same general verdict for the 2015 Pierre Cotton Brouilly, just too much funk in the trunk. \$33 is the price for such wine. As this is Hanes’s first time with wine from Cotton, likely to try at least one more going forward. Tried to get down with the 2015 Laurent Saillard blend of Pineau d’Aunis and Gamay Noir called “Scarlette” but it is just too natural for Hanes. The \$23 it cost is probably fair if your groove is extremely natural wines. Hanes has had very good luck in the past with wines from Piedmont’s La Casaccia. However, the 2015 Freisa lacked the charm and flavor expected. Even though only \$15, it was, sigh, a disappointment. Never tried a wine from Campania’s Terra di Briganti but, man, was their 2015 Aglianico one mean natured SOB. Even for this oft surly grape, this was offputting. Luckily it was only \$19 (less on sale even, bonus). It has become abundantly clear that Trollinger is not Hanes’s cup of tea. Little enjoyment found in the 2015 Andi Knauss “Without All Trocken” from Germany’s Württemberg region. As news is out on the Savoie, the next “somm” play is likely Switzerland. Tried the 2014 Chappaz “La Liaudisaz” bottling made from the Fendant grape. On the imperious side, shows no interest in warming up to you and leaves you unsure why you tried to make friends. \$33 on top of it. Will dip down into this well again but not expecting as much next time.

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Unlike *those other* professional reviews, Hanes only will share what he likes if it is *currently available* in stores for immediate purchase. If these wines are not to be found in some of your local stores, they suck and that’s not Hanes’s fault.

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on the *older (or non-imported) wines* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/oldervintages2016.html>

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on *beer* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/beer.html>

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

Winery/Producer Name

Region of Origin, Appellation, Brand Name/Wine Style, Single Vineyard (if any applicable)

Grape Type

Vintage Year, Price Hanes Paid (if available), Alcohol Percentage (if available)

Tasting Notes, Hanes's Numeric Score (on the traditional, yet inane, 100 point scale (which for Hanes truly begins at around 80 points and more or less ends around 94 points)

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder

Syrah

2014, \$48.00, 14.5%

Despite a warm underlying glow the core is dark and black enough for opacity, the rims a blood to brick red, quite dark as well. Piercing nose of tar, green grass, black olive and white grapefruit pith, direct beam of cherry pits, pomegranate, cranberry fruit, no nonsense nor wasted motion. Medium-bodied, while it does put on some weight with air time the acidity keeps it firm and compact. Savory herbs, beef bouillon, tar and a whole lot of grapefruit give it immense zest. Blueberry and boysenberry join the sour cherry, cranberry fruit here, little simple ripeness but not underripe either. Uptick in the florality and given time a small trace of butterscotch oak shows. Given flavor profile and the strength of the acidity should age well. 91

Turley

Sonoma County, Zampatti Vineyard

Zinfandel

2014, \$38.00, 15.5%

The core presents an opaque blackness, the rims have good width featuring dark crimson to brick red shades, almost foreboding in appearance. The nose has steady lift but is in no way airy, spearmint, menthol, lavender and anise open it up as caramel glues it together, not majorly oaky and the cassis, blueberry fruit scents have punch. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a silky smoothness. Spicy and there it heady alcohol involved. But the Jolly Rancher level concentration in the raspberry, watermelon, blueberry to cherry fruit salves most wounds. Not very citrusy, leans on the balsam wood, pine, mint and

Indian mukhwas do the bulk of the work. Its wiry frame restrains the enthusiasm of the sweetness without stamping it out. Lively personality. 91

Turley

Amador County, Judge Bell Vineyard

Zinfandel

2014, \$32.00, 15.5%

Bright and shiny with as much ruby red as violet in the core, the luster extends through the scarlet red rims, spotless and mostly transparent. The nose has good bounciness and verve, lively raspberry, cranberry to red cherry scents, closer to floral than earthy, the undercurrent of menthol never fully kicks in, the oak is mainly butterscotch, nothing creamy. In the mouth it's about medium-bodied with clean lines and a swift pace across the palate. Hard candy quality sweetness in the strawberry, raspberry to cranberry fruit, not that much countervailing sourness although there is a very subtle grassy bite. Manages the alcohol well. Orange citrus, mint, menthol and more of that low grade butterscotch, a model of consistency. Satisfies the sweet tooth but no monolith. 90

Turley

Regional Blend, Old Vines

Zinfandel

2014, \$25.00, 15.5%

Squeaky clean, evident even in the semi-opaque blackish purple core, wide scarlet red rims, more brooding than driven by saturated glow. There's a mountain ruggedness to the nose with earth, stones and pine needle notes as influential as the raspberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit scents, at times smoky and close to gamey, not showing major oak traces, perhaps sleeker and more compact than expected. Medium-bodied, tangy with a jolt of acidity that teases out orange to grapefruit citrus. Added menthol and eucalyptus here, ginger spice and clove but, again, the

oak is restrained and there's no overt creaminess or butterscotch like flavors. Consistent punch in the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, darker complexion than in the nose. The savoriness allows for sweeter punctuation at the end. 90

Harrington Wines
San Benito County, La Cienega Valley, Siletto
Vineyard
Grenache
2015, \$30.00, 13.8%

Shiny with a light watermelon red hue, too light to seem washed out at the rims, kind of pretty even if it looks like a liquefied Jolly Rancher. There's an airiness to the nose which adds freshness and relieves some of the sugariness in the strawberry, raspberry fruit scents, starts developing a floral breeze then goes quiet, outside of some citrus zest there's hardly anything past the fruit. In the mouth it's light-bodied with undeniably sugary sweet strawberry, peach to raspberry fruit and here the floral dew persists fully. Lemonade and ginger to cinnamon spice notes flesh things out further. Heck, even the grassiness seems candied and sweet. No real discernible acidity or tannin, all signs point to enjoy this as a youthfully exuberant puppy. 89

Navarro
Mendocino County
Cabernet Sauvignon
2012, \$32.00, 14.2%

The core is full black, no meaningful purple presence, the rims a crimson to blood red stain, foreboding. Pleasingly rich nose of wet cedar, balsam wood, leather and plum, currant fruit, just well perfumed to the point where it makes little sense to parse out the bits and pieces. Medium-bodied, has fluidity and slims down as it moves through the mouth, feels more like an acidic wine than a tannic one. That said, one way or the other it is dry at the end. But before that you get a pine laden breeze, floral swipes and that cedar. The oak treatment haunts the side wings, caresses of butterscotch and vanilla now and then. Sappy red cherry, currant to boysenberry fruit cling and bite. Perhaps a miniscule trace of greenness through the finish but that may be the price to pay for having refrained from makeup. 89

Sandlands
Contra Costa County
Carignane
2014, \$28.00, 12.8%

Reddish purple plum color with brighter magenta rims, close to saturated, unclouded. Some reductive funk to the nose but mostly it's straight up mute offering dollops of muddy earth, straw, and an allusion to

leather, the cherry, blackberry scents heavy and succinct. Full-bodied with nice fluidity, does not lose a sense of movement due to its density. Here there's much more juiciness found in the blueberry, blackberry fruit, lasting well into the finish. Light dose of baking spices with grapefruit tones lend a sense of diversity. Decent tannic backbone without too much drying sensation. Gains roundness with air time and on the palate not that affected by funkiness. Ends with some treble notes. Good wine, doesn't look like a candidate to improve that much with aging. 88

Harrington Wines
San Benito County, La Cienega Valley, Siletto
Vineyard
Trousseau
2015, \$30.00, 13.6%

Bright ruby red to magenta hues, noticeable glow along the rims while staying clean and transparent. Fleeshy nose of blackberry, raspberry fruit, horsehide and muddy earth, has a light briny quality, too heavy and musky to achieve any lift. Medium-bodied, fills the mouth nicely cheek to cheek without getting sluggish, tannic but not to the detriment of flow in the strawberry, raspberry fruit. Has a bright herbaceous burst in the mid-palate. Tangy orange to grapefruit citrus. At times shows a curious wooly quality. Full finish with a punishing turbulence to it. No light and zingy style of Trousseau. 88

Harrington Wines
Tuolumne County, Gianelli Vineyard
Aglianico
2014, \$30.00, 14.1%

Sunset to crimson red with some purple at the core, fiery, the rims edging into burnt orange hues. There's a dustiness to the nose, like powdered stone and parched earth, almost volcanic, dried meadow grasses as well, were it not for the extremely concentrated, hard candy like raspberry to blackberry fruit scents you'd think it was a fossil, gets increasingly leathery as it opens. Medium-bodied, extremely gritty mouth feel, like chewing on dirt. More herbaceous bite here as well as a "volcanic ash" sort of feel in the stony, earthy area. Syrupy cherry to raspberry, blueberry fruit, the sweetness feels disconnected from the rest. Clearly this has a tannic punch and likely needs time to unclench. Ends with savory garden herb, leather, similarly to the nose then violets. Honest take on the grape. 88

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Dusi Vineyard
Zinfandel

2014, \$43.00, 16.0%

Dark reddish-purple core, the liquid is entirely spotless, the rims devoid of saturation and a semi-washed out brick red hue. Feels heavy in the nostrils with potent plum to prune, black currant fruit scents, cinnamon and ginger root spice, anise and spiced oranges, shows some alcoholic heat which may negatively impact the staying power of the aromas. Full-bodied, here too the alcohol destabilizes things, especially on entry where the fruit recoils and takes time to sink in. If your palate adjusts you get ample cinnamon, licorice, garrigues and milk chocolate notes, there's an underlying herbal quality as well. The citrus moves between orange and lemon, adding sourness. Eventually the fruit coalesces into plum, prune, black raisin and cherry, sappy sweet yet again lacking in length. For its power you just expect more consistency from attack to a lingering finish. 87

Sandlands

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast

Trousseau

2014, \$28.00, 13.4%

Clean, very transparent cranberry red core, faded rims where there's a sign of incipient orange hues. Flatulence and damp straw and earth, tar hit you first in the nose, indistinct citrus, the maraschino cherry to strawberry fruit scents subdued, not a lot of diversity to be found here. Medium-bodied, more plush than dense, decent enough structure and you get better resonance in the cherry, red berry fruit than in the nose. Still has some of that mud, loamy earth going on but much cleaner, there's a certain campfire smokiness going on though. The white citrus peaks in the mid-palate, seems to want to develop florality to flesh out the finish. Overall, not a great sense of progression through the mouth. Extended air time does not change one's impression. 87

Navarro

Mendocino County

Navarrouge

Blend

2014, \$16.00, 14.3%

Not quite gauzy but there's some sort of warm glow which makes it less than crystal clear, ruby-purple core with barely any change in hue at the rims, noticeably dark. Zesty, spicy nose of white grapefruit, clove, ginger and a light herbaceousness, moment of cocoa before yielding fully to the tart black raspberry, cherry scents. Medium-bodied, has a dusty to gritty texture, you will be trying to moisten your cheeks with your tongue from the very start. Not green but still has that

grassy streak to go with a more potent earth, stone element. The cherry, strawberry to blackberry fruit perfectly ripe yet clenches before the finish line. Vague toast or cocoa but not showing any real oak presence, would not be surprised were there none. The grapefruit or other citrus steps back here. Decent little package if rough around the edges. 43% Zinfandel, 23% Pinot Noir, remainder unspecified percentages of Syrah, Grenache, Carignane. (Composite Cork) 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Navarro

Mendocino County, Anderson Valley

Edelzwicker

Blend

2015, \$16.00, 13.1%

Simple gold color, pools into the glass yet not without some surface shine, more dense than clear and transparent. There's nice smokiness amidst the caramelized brown sugar, candied orange peel and lilac perfume in the nose, has a sort of innocent freshness to it more than overt ripeness in the apricot, peach, green melon fruit scents, demure dissolve without lingering musk. Medium-bodied, here a finely spun sugariness gives it a sweet profile from the first sip. More floral with lemonade and molasses notes. The melon, apricot, pear to apple fruit sweetened further by shades of litchee. The acidity is not bad but not really a match for the primary material's force. It is a very attractive wine but you need to be able to accept residual sugar throughout. 42% Riesling, 41% Pinot Gris, 12% Gewürztraminer, 5% Muscat Blanc. (Composite Cork) 89

Black Sheep Finds

Santa Maria Valley, Holus Bolus

Roussanne

2015, \$33.00, 13.5%

Solid depth to the basic golden color, with this remains transparent, the rims adequately hold the hue, don't appear washed out. The nose comprised of lemondrops, some lime, oak toast and vanilla, roses, powdered sugar, nectarine, pineapple, melon to papaya fruit scents, has richness without heaviness, light grapefruit pith, credible push to puncture. Full-bodied, round and fleshy, vanilla and whipped cream flavors fill the attack. The acidity shows good cut and brawn. Roses, orange blossoms, jasmine open into melon, apricot, peach fruit, this shortened by a drying finish. Manages to be savory at times as well as ripe and sweet. The oak comes off as more obtrusive cold than warm. Not bad, a pleasurable wine. 89

Navarro
Mendocino County, Table Wine
Chardonnay
2015, \$16.00, 13.9%

Strong green tint to the yellow straw base, clear if dull, the rims hueless on the main. Crisp and penetrating nose of lime, buttered dark toast, mint and peach pits, not much flesh on the bones but stays refreshing. Medium-bodied, here it's creamier with vanilla and heavy cream accents to supplement the toastier notes. More by way of apple to pear fruit than white pit fruits, perhaps some underripeness. Retains the sour lime to blood orange citrus while moderately displaying more florality. Sheds body through the finish. Ultimately it's serviceable and likely food friendly enough yet not the sort of viscerally pleasing Chardonnay you want to sip while watching the sun go down. (Composite Cork) 87

FRANCE RED

Lapalu, Jean-Claude
Beaujolais, Brouilly, Cuvée des Fous
Gamay Noir
2015, \$35.99, 13.5%

Saturated ruby-violet color, maintains clarity in spite of its darkness, the rims present a magenta glow, quite pretty. The nose is marred by some notes of flatulence, however, there's a gusher of crushed blackberry, blueberry, raspberry fruit scents as well, floral dew, cedar and incense present too, can present a more "countrified" side but on the whole it's youthful fruit. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with round contours, even if you have to credit the tannin for creating a drying sucking sensation across your inner cheeks. Possesses the desired animal fur, gamey qualities the cru is best known for. The fruit more "red" here — cherry, raspberry to strawberry. Keeps its shoulders squared through the finish, for all its fruity sweetness can play the tough guy role too. 90

Burgaud, Domaine Jean-Marc
Beaujolais, Morgon, Côte du Py
Gamay Noir
2015, \$17.98
14.0%

Very dark core, the purple close to black, the rims a saturated crimson red, noticeably rich in hue. Light floral perfume laid over dark fruited plum, blackberry scents, the nose overall is heavy, a few notes of sweet baking spices and incense but on the main it is primarily fruit. Full-bodied, shows a fine tannic skeleton which ably restrains the excesses of the black cherry, blackberry fruit while leaving the core intact. Here the appearance of white grapefruit and minerality give it needed tartness while the spices support the sweeter fruit. Still in plump stage but shows sleeker bones than

many cru Beaujolais of the vintage and the tannin should help it age. Although mighty tasty as it is now. 90

Chatagnier, Aurélien
Rhône, Indication Géographique Protégée des
Collines Rhodaniennes
Syrah
2015, \$19.99, 13.5%

Blackish purple core, more dark than glowing, fresh brick red rims, no saturation whatsoever, clean with no sign of filminess. There's a rich plumminess to the nose while at the same time a sizable amount of meadow grasses, earthen stone and cured beef which has it veer to a more "rugged" profile, a late appearance of floral mist does little to change things. Medium-bodied with good volume cheek-to-cheek, the tannin fierce enough that it doesn't quite soak into the palate. The plum, cherry, black currant fruit can be as sour as sweet and manages to stretch out nicely in spite of those drying tannins. Here orange spice and violets make a bigger showing and the earthiness steps back. The gamey notes close to absent here. For the price comes off as young and in need of at least 2-3 years bottle aging. 90

Grand'Cour (Jean-Louis Dutraive), Domaine de La
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Lieu-dit Champagne, Cuvée
Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir
2015, \$35.99, 14.5%

Mild filminess to the cranberry red to purple core, this dulls the reddish rims some, sits fairly lifelessly in the glass. Black licorice and grapefruit swirl around a core of raspberry, strawberry fruit in the nose, stony, comes off as streamlined yet in a way that does not connote lack, moderate lift and length. Medium-bodied, presents more tannic grip than acidic bite, spreads evenly across the palate with a steadiness which can make it feel absent. That said, the soft sweetness of the strawberry, rhubarb, cherry to persimmon fruit makes it attractive from the first sip. The licorice to mint element flits in and out, not especially citrusy but more floral than nose suggests. Relaxed old vine character, if you want verve and nervousity this may not be for you. 89

Alexandrins, Domaine Les
Rhône, Collines Rhodaniennes, Intuition
Gamay Noir
2014, \$19.99, 13.0%

While clear there's a certain flatness to the surface, dulls the reddish purple core through to the brick red rims, coloration looks slightly advanced for its age. The nose highlights leather, animal sweat, matted straw, and earth, the tartness of the red berry to cherry fruit

scents shines through to clean away any lingering funkiness. Medium-bodied and benefits from strong acidity to prevent feeling heavier. Conversely, feels tannic enough to clump up the finish. Amidst the textural shifts there's dark cherry, blackberry fruit with a hint of blueberry. Minerally earth gives sparkle but that leather and animal fur aspect can dominate. Adds orange to grapefruit citrus to assist in lift as well as a weaker floral component. A lot going on at a fair price. (Composite Cork) 89

Nodin, Rémy
Rhône, Cornas, Les Eygats
Syrah

2014, \$34.99, 12.0%

Deep and glowing purple core with heavily saturated magenta rims, while devoid of filminess it attains opacity due to the darker hues. Thick plum, black currant, cherry fruit scents create fullness in the nose, olive paste, saline, minerals, quite clean and without any animality, great purity but perhaps leaves you wishing it were a bit more reckless. Medium-bodied, smooth and bright, no lack of white grapefruit, herbs and violets. Equally stuffed here with plum, cherry, dark berry fruit, primary and fat. While floral, again no trace of a game or animal element. Tasty today but nothing here provides a clue about its aged flavor profile. 88

Grand'Cour (Jean-Louis Dutraive), Domaine de La Beaujolais, Fleurie, Le Clos, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes Gamay Noir

2015, \$31.99, 14.5%

As much scarlet red to it as violet, particularly the rims which take on a burnt aspect, pleasing clarity as well as surface shine. There's a thick, musky character to the nose which gives the florality a dewy feel, viscous cherry, strawberry to cranberry fruit scents, some mixed white citrus and stone but remains primarily fruit at this youthful stage. Full-bodied, given its ample flesh the acidity and to a lesser extent tannin able to firm it up some. Here the grapefruit citrus displays greater tang and is a major element. Liqueur like sweetness to the cherry, raspberry fruit, albeit does not show the length you'd expect given the concentration level. Again, just a mild undercurrent of stone and dried earth with tar and autumn leaves thrown in for good measure. Runs a bit hot at the end. 88

Balagny, Julie
Beaujolais
Gamay Noir

2015, \$25.99, 14.0%

More garnet red than purple, stays consistent core to rims, good clarity and pools well into the glass given its relative lightness of hue. There's a light reductive stink

to the nose as well as general high-toned aggressiveness which detracts from the generally attractive raspberry, cranberry, cherry fruit scents, modicum of wildflowers and white citrus zest, overall it's too heavy to develop an airy breeziness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, spicy with acidity that can seem volatile at times. Ginger, nutmeg with orange peel and rose petal nuances, even the earthiness only fares so-so in diminishing the turbulence. Fully ripened blackberry, cherry fruit, here darker and sappier. It's not that it is unclean but you have to like that certain unstable, animal edge to Gamay for this to hit your sweet spot. 88

Ferrandière, Domaine de La
Languedoc/Roussillon, Pays d'Oc Indication
Géographique Protégée

Malbec

2015, \$7.99, 13.5%

Fully opaque black core, seems to skip over purple right to heavyset crimson rims. Well-packed nose of plum, black cherry fruit, cocoa powder to coffee bean and a slight peanut shell note, if given time to breathe there is a floral undercurrent as well. Full-bodied with a sappy texture, clings to your mouth pores. Some tannic pop but the layers of cassis and plum fruit too sweet to be stopped. Here the density restrains the florality but instead you get a touch of white grapefruit. Loses the cocoa and stays pure from start to finish. Not in any way complex but satisfying for its simplicity. Likely to show best with red meat if perfectly fine on its own. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 88

Sanvers et Cotton (Pierre Cotton), Domaine
Beaujolais, Brouilly
Gamay Noir

2015, \$32.99, 13.5%

Deep ruby-violet color full through to saturated rims, good clarity through the darkness. Damp earth, kindling wood and wet horsehide give the nose a funky, old school character, sour cranberry, rhubarb fruit scents brighten it somewhat, more muscle than finesse. Full-bodied, acidic through the mouth entry and arguably more tannic at the finish. Wood smoke, tar, leather and sour orange to grapefruit citrus give it big pucker. A little more give here in the fruit, cherry and strawberry alongside the cranberry. Maintains its weight and momentum fully through the finish. Its "sauvage" nature is at once its charm and potential turnoff for some. If the fruit can outlast the animality it might find balance. 88

Cros, Domaine du
Southwest France, Marcillac, Lo Sang del País
Fer Servadou
2015, \$15.99, 12.5%
Ruby red heightens the brightness of the violet core, not quite opaque, the rims purer ruby with above average saturation. Light animal fur to wet leather element to the nose, damp earth too yet no funkiness and not close to offputting, while you sense there's a big bundle of black cherry, plum fruit in there it remains bound up and not giving much. Medium-bodied with good forward momentum for its weight, nothing lazy here. While steadily tannic it's not overbearing and the acidity freshens it up. Whisper of citric tang, quite stony, likewise the leather speaks in hushed tones. Solid cherry, dark berry fruit here too. Not sure a decant would help, more likely needs 8-12 months bottle time to come out of its shell, if not more. (Synthetic Cork) 88

Gasnier, Domaine Fabrice
Loire, Chinon, Les Graves
Cabernet Franc
2015, \$14.99, 12.7%
Dark core, more black than purple but still noticeably clean and transparent throughout the burnt sunset red rims. Dusty, minerally nose with just a hint of green pepper, tobacco ash and leather, the cherry to red currant fruit scents are muted and as a result the whole enchilada does not stay anchored in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, dry with sandpapery tannin, tingle across the palate. However, here the cherry, dark berry fruit has some roundness and length and able to help fill the finish. Beyond that you get the same tarry, stony earth, tobacco ash and cedar, even fewer bell pepper notes here. Little twist of sour white citrus at the end. Delivers a credible entry level drinking experience, something rarer these days. 88

Complices de Loire (FX Barc)
Loire, Chinon, La Petite Timonerie
Cabernet Franc
2014, \$15.99, 12.5%
Blackish red core with a deep crimson cast further out, very well hued but darker and without bright glow. Fruity nose with ripe plum, cherry scents that verge on dried fruit character and concentration, more merde and animal sweat than bell pepper, the floral side is too retiring to make a lasting impact, the funk does not blow off with extended air time. Full-bodied with good volume in the mouth, the sweetness in that plum, currant, cherry fruit gives it a sluggish yawn as it tries to trudge across the palate. Tannin is proportionate to the whole and no weakling, acidity freshens the finish. Here you get more white citrus tones and a more mild uptick in the bell pepper. Luckily, the merde is much

less pronounced. Long, puckering finish. (Composite Cork) 88

Saillard, Laurent
Loire, Vin de France, Scarlette
Blend
2015, \$22.99, 12.5%
Bright cranberry red to violet in hue, given its lightness shows saturated rims, easily transparent. No lack of funk and band-aid in the nose when first opened and requires substantial to blow off in favor of red cherry, berry fruit, mixed white citrus, wet leaves and twigs, has a saline edge as well, even at its best comes off as rustic. Full-bodied, adheres to the palate and only begrudgingly moves. Feels more tannic than acidic, however, here the grapefruit citrus and pepperiness brings needed tang. The fruit leans more towards cranberry and sour cherry. Retains that twiggy, leafy character with muddy earth thrown in. Could benefit from a little less authenticity. Unspecified percentages of Pineau d'Aunis, Gamay Noir. 87

Filliatreau, Domaine Paul et Frédéric
Loire, Saumur-Champigny
Cabernet Franc
2015, \$14.99, 12.5%
Blood red to purple core, good clarity, youthful yet dark brick red rims. Paste like quality to the blackberry, black cherry scents, part of why the nose has a drying texture, tobacco ash and a hint of bell pepper, stony earth, on the whole it's clean and on the succinct side. Medium-bodied, perhaps feels lighter as the finish is hollow. Perfectly acceptable cherry, dark berry to Italian plum fruit without being fruity per se. Tannic with a dusty, at times clumpy, mouth feel. Good earthiness and stoniness, here too marked by a curious lack of bell pepper. A little bit of sour white citrus edginess. While it comes off as simple it's not a bad wine and serviceable enough. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 87

FRANCE WHITE

Belluard, Dominique
Savoie, Vin de Savoie, Les Alpes
Gringet
2015, \$32.99, 12.0%
Bright golden color with a darkening amber influence, pools into the glass to give it solidity, this while remaining sleek on the surface. Honey, lemon drops, orange blossoms, lilacs and mint swirl about the nose, undercurrent of chalkiness, pear, melon to apricot fruit scents, relaxed but no less focused for it. Medium-bodied, has this dry, clingy feel which evokes an "old vine" character even as the acidity steadily sucks the moisture out of your mouth. As a result there's a

momentary spreading of sweeter honey, cellar aged apple to pear fruit before grapefruit, sour orange and stone, chalk take over. Can still be minty or floral but the acidity makes sure the wattage remains high. Ends more with apricot, peach, touches of pineapple. Firms up with air time, savory, very interesting wine that holds your attention. 91

Habrard, Domaine Laurent
Rhône, Crozes Hermitage
Blend

2015, \$26.99, 13.0%

A touch dull and block like, full gold color, can easily see it turning amber with some bottle age. Nose bursts with honey, mint, orange peel and a floral dew, the fruit comes off sharper, notes of persimmon, pomegranate, kumquat and melon, very good staying power overall. Full-bodied, while on the sweet and ripe side the acidity willing to do the dirty work ensure things stay compact and well paced. Again with the honey, beeswax accents, here the citrus a broader mix of orange, tangerine to lemon. The fruit is softer, apple, pear, melon and apricot, could take on a more concentrated, dried fruit nature over time. Starts floral but ends nuttier with cinnamon tones. A white wine for baked ham and grilled meats. 90% Marsanne, 10% Roussanne. 90

Filliatreau (Lena Filliatreau), Domaine Paul et Frédrick
Loire, Saumur, Linnéa
Chenin Blanc

2015, \$14.99, 12.5%

While the golden hue is dull and at times seems closer to brown than a pure yellow, it is able to create a warm glow inside the glass, fully transparent rims. Nice smokiness to the nose, stone dust and mineral flecks, this not to diminish the more honeyed side of things, orange blossom, really needs to warm to release any meaningful apricot, apple, pear fruit scents. Full-bodied, muscular with a dry and tacky mouth feel. The acidity flattens things on the palate yet is also able to imbue a sense of steady forward progression. Very citrusy here with grapefruit, lemon to sour orange notes. The stoniness remains, less smoky. The fruit takes on a sour tropical character, pineapple, nectarine, guava to apricot. Ends on a floral note to pretty it up. Good value here, little fat on its bones. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 90

Saumon, Domaine Frantz
Loire, Montlouis sur Loire, Minéral+
Chenin Blanc

2015, \$27.99, 12.5%

Noticeably dark golden color edges up against amber, mild translucent distortion, full rims. Lemony nose with distinct dough, honey and mint notes, moments of

beeswax, plenty of heft and push in the apple, pear to peach fruit scents, overall there's a certain flatness which can make it seem older than it is. Full-bodied, here the acidity is broad with a strong grip and produces most of the wine's presence. Not drying per se but plenty of pucker. The minerality on display, more metal and clay than stony. That dough, pie crust element sneaks in and out, whispers of coconut flakes. Taut green apple, pear, persimmon fruit flavors. Orange marmalade and sour lemons dominate the finish. Has a great deal of energy which should carry it for some years to come. 90

Pépière, La
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Clos des Briords, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes
Melon de Bourgogne

2015, \$18.99, 12.0%

Translucent golden coloration, the layering sucks your gaze beneath any surface shine, consistent core to rims, just dense. The nose offers cellar aged apple, pear, peach scents of excellent staying power, honey, cinnamon, when colder this eclipses the finely powdered minerality and chalk notes, has a noticeable floral component, round and quite easy to access. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and there's a bluntness to the acidity which solidifies its presence and anchors it on the tongue. The tradeoff is it only reluctantly dances, more so resonates. Above average apple, pear, peach fruit with uncommon sweetness. Even the mixed white citrus seems sweet. The stone dust and chalk gain a place at the table, missing is minerally bite. If it loses the baby fat could end up with the best of both worlds. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 89

Berlioz, Domaine Gilles
Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin, Le Jaja
Jacquère

2015, \$24.99, 11.0%

Darker golden color that you could easily see gaining an amber tint, has a layered translucency to it, fully hued at the rims. Lemon honey and orange marmalade fuel the nose, wet limestone and mint, generally on the "pretty" side of things with some snap in the apple, pear, peach fruit scents although it flattens out as it sits in the nostrils. Full-bodied, sturdily set in the mouth with a broad acidic skeleton as well as above average traction and grip. Here there's more tropical flair via pineapple and papaya to go with the peach, apricot base. Mint, anise and a certain waxy touch come next. The orange, tangerine citrus most prominent through the finish. Muscular ending helps extend presence. Could stand to be a bit more gracious. 88

Olivier, Domaine de l'
Languedoc/Roussillon, Pays d'Oc
Chardonnay
2015, \$6.99, 12.5%

The yellow straw is deep enough to hold light and gain depth, average without noticeable shine nor dullness, mild glow. Vanilla to whipped cream, bubblegum cushion the beginning of the unfolding of the nose, smoky lemon notes, touch of mint, apple, cherry, apricot scents, overall, and for the price, it has impressive spine and erect posture so all the scents get a fair shake. Medium-bodied, dry and desiccating to the point where the flesh evaporates as it moves forward. But also has extract which helps anchor it at times. Broad array of lemon, white grapefruit citrus, bright and powerful. There is a bitterness to the herbaceous component, but a floral breeze and snap to the peach pit, cherry, pear fruit brings into near equilibrium. Punches above its weight. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

Alexandrins, Domaine Les
Rhône, Collines Rhodaniennes, Les Poupées
Viognier
2014, \$19.99, 13.0%

Deep golden color, enough to look a more matured wine, more flat and dull than shiny. Some toastiness to the nose, yet it allows the orange marmalade, honey and violets to come out, the fruit mainly peach pit and pear to apple, tactfully demure, overall more focus than richness. In the mouth it is medium-bodied and maintains its weight full to the finish. Here the toast is more dominant, even as the sourness of the orange, tangerine citrus shines as well. Leans more towards apple with some pineapple, however, little fruit lasts into the finish. Some ginger or clove notes. Greater element of freshness at the end, may be lack of flavor masquerading as cleanliness. Not enough flesh to keep you interested. 86

FRANCE SPARKLING

Champagne Grongnet
Champagne, Blanc de Blancs Brut
Chardonnay
NV, \$37.99, 12.0%

Produces a huge, airy froth that easily crests an inch high with a careful pour, bone white, violent amount of stormy bubbles inside the glass refuel the head. The liquid is a pale straw yellow but bright and shiny. The breadiness in the nose is clean and not overly honeyed, sweet lemon drop and peach, yellow apple fruit scents, interesting momentary briny, pickled note, more streamlined than rich. Medium-bodied, even more compact here thanks to the energetic acidity which brings focus and dryness. More minerally and

chalky with any breadiness stepping back a few paces. Green apple and apricot predominant, closer to nectarine than peach. Maybe a bit too sour on the finish, yet enjoyable for its linear focus without austerity. (Disgorged December 2015) (Composite Cork) 89

ITALY RED

Dirupi
Lombardy, Valtellina Superiore
Nebbiolo
2013, \$34.99, 13.5%

Transparent brick red with an orange tinge, the duller hues sap some surface shine but clean throughout. Twigs, dried leaves and earth predominate in the nose, behind that the usual candied cherry, red berry fruit, some sandalwood and pressed rose petal notes, on the whole quiet and demure and the twiggy makes it feel like an older wine. Light-bodied, has a credible skeleton but no unusual power in the acidity or tannin. Cleaner here but maybe less interesting as a result, steadily lowkey red cherry to raspberry fruit supplemented by a sweet and sour white grapefruit burst. More oomph in the earth and stone, dry but no real grassy or twiggy element. Pleasing enough and does put on some weight with air time. Would benefit from food but not absolutely required. 88

Casaccia, La
Piedmont, Monferrato
Freisa
2015, \$14.99, 13.0%

Burnt sunset red to orange hues, lively throughout with equally rich rims, remains transparent and clean. Straw, muddy earth, twigs, and licorice given the nose a penetrating quality, overall though it's light a medicinal edge which can overshadow the maraschino cherry to strawberry fruit scents. Light to medium-bodied, the formidable structure with both acidity and tannin charging forward tends to give it added presence. White grapefruit brings more energy and there's arguably more floral notes here. The cherry, red berry fruit sour from start to finish, shows more depth after the bottle is open for some time. Still, finishes with that twiggy, earthy element in ascendance. Requires a bit more flesh on the bones. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 87

Terra di Briganti
Campania, Benevento
Aglianico
2015, \$18.99, 13.0%

Reddish purple core, while dark still fairly easy to see through it, barely noticeable shift from that to saturated scarlet red rims. The nose does not lack for barnyard

funk, merde and peanut shells, does get in the way of enjoying any of the plum, dark currant fruit scents, other than that lightly grassy and stony, not much else. Full-bodied, tannic with a rough sandpapery texture which gums up the works and grinds it to a halt in the mid-palate. Appears to have sufficient dark fruits yet, here too, they are not forthcoming. Less funk, probably because of the tannin blanketing the tongue. If your palate cannot normalize to it you might get some violets or white grapefruit pith. Not easy to warm up to it. (Composite Cork) 86

GERMANY RED

Knauss, Weingut Andi
Württemberg, Without All Trocken
Trollinger

2015, \$22.99, 10.5%

Quite clear, slightly fuzzy ruby red color, full to the rims with what it has, leaves you feeling like after you stared at the sun for a few seconds. Fart and wet animal hide are first to show up in the nose, taut strawberry to raspberry fruit scents, more leather and some brown dirt, however, on the whole it sticks to a few basics. Light-bodied, the tannin can at times make it feel a touch heavier. Leather, tree bark, twigs predominate, albeit here it's cleaner than in the nose. Moments of white grapefruit zest. Again, hard nosed strawberry, red cherry fruit. In a nonchalant way, it could care less about your enjoyment. Entirely unflawed yet hard to find the will to finish a full glass. (Screwcap) 86

GERMANY WHITE

Christoffel Erben, Weingut Joh. Jos.
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Ürziger, Würzgarten, Kabinett AP #5

Riesling

2015, \$28.99, 8.0%

Pale green-gold hue yet with a warm glow which helps to fill the glass, leaves a slight fizz in the glass after the pour, solid appearance. The nose is mainly lilacs, whipped cream and orange sherbet, soft and its amplexness relieved by an airy lift, wet slate and smoke linger most as it dissolves. Full-bodied and kind of heavy, the acidity buried under layers of honey and fruit. Oddly then that it comes across as green apple dominated, even warmer apricot and pear vie for second place. Lilacs and roses give it a big floral musk, the tangerine to pink grapefruit citrus more sweet than sour. Here it's harder to get at the stone, slate notes. Has a steamroller relentlessness which becomes infectiously fun as you continue to sip. (Screwcap) 90

Lieser, Weingut Schloss
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Brauneberger, Juffer, Kabinett AP #7

Riesling

2015, \$24.99, 8.0%

Lighter yellow gold color, slight distortion of vision, full enough rims and average surface shine, not really much of note. A little matchstick funk to the nose when first opened, softened by whipped cream to vanilla fudge accents, the cherry, red apple to pear fruit scents in turn round and plump, minor diesel to wet stone notes as it warms and opens some. Full-bodied, while the acidity has brawn at this stage it is outpunched by the apricot, peach, cherry to white grape fruit flavors. Not much citrus, sweeter tangelo to lime. The vanillin aspect lower without vanishing, conversely the rubber, diesel element grows in stature, particularly through the finish. Minty too. Perhaps too sweet now but the acidity is lovely and it should all integrate well with medium-term aging. 89

Beurer, Weingut Jochen
Württemberg, Weiss Trocken

Blend

2015, \$18.99, 12.0%

Nicely full gold color with a hint of orange rust at the rims, the pour leaves some bubbles clinging to the glass long after, more layered than truly glassy. Playfully crisp nose which avoids potential austerity, smoke, dried honey, tangerine pith, violets and then peach pits, pears and apples steadily unfold, while there's a tautness to it, it likewise lifts without heaviness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with sufficient acidity to impel it forward and keep the sweetness in check. Slight fizziness as expected, here more stone, stream water, and white grapefruit to lemon citrus nuances. Quick nod to pineapple before settling into green apple, apricot, pear fruit. Some snap pea at the end. Focused without losing enjoyability, can stand up to heavier dishes. Unspecified percentages of Müller-Thurgau, Kerner, Weissburgunder. (Screwcap) 89

Richter, Weingut Max Ferd.

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Veldenzer, Elisenberg, Kabinett AP #39

Riesling

2015, \$17.99, 8.5%

Has a deep shine to it more than surface reflectivity, some green glint around the edges to break up the basic gold, everything in its place. Honey to orange marmalade in the nose, vanilla fudge, any smokiness gets cloaked by the peach, pear, apple scents, manages to stay fresh in spite of above average heaviness in the nostrils. In the mouth it's full-bodied, more muscular than plump but not necessarily "ripped"

either. The acidity shows follow-through while more blunt than sharp. Here there's more stone and stream water accents, falls short of minerality but, again, there is a lingering smokiness. Honey insufficient to match the tartness of the grapefruit, tangerine citrus. Nectarine and some pineapple join the peach base. Does a good job of staying active and shifting so you can't fully pin it down. 89

Falkenstein, Hofgut

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Niedermenniger, Herrenberg,

Spätlese AP #2

Weissburgunder

2015, \$21.99, 12.0%

Pale straw gold hue with a little green tint at certain angles, not particularly shiny and washes out along the rims. Lilacs and mixed white citrus drift through the nose, clean and lean but never mean, mildly underripe peach to apple fruit scents, stream water and wet stone, ends succinctly. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a good deal of firmness from the acidity, sour to the point of cutting. Green apple, pear with some peach, much more snap than juiciness. As a result the florality gets pushed around and diminished. Lemony finish, again accompanied by wet stone and lesser mineral smokiness. While it has some hard edges, it is a high energy wine without excess that indubitably would shine with the correct food. Just not much of an easy sipping wine. 88

Rings, Weingut

Pfalz, Kalkmergel QbA Trocken AP #9

Riesling

2015, \$16.99, 11.5%

Pours some fizz which swirls inside the liquid before accruing around the glass edges on the surface, bright gold of above average depth, especially at the rims. The nose is a little hard and unyielding, pear, green apple and apricot pit scents, limestone, rose water, dense enough that the clarity seems less important. Medium-bodied with a filling broadness to its texture, the acidity blankets the tongue as much as enlivens it. Lightly smoky with good stoniness and a sour bite that conjures up pineapple and papaya next to the apple, peach flavors. In turn tangy white citrus joins the fray. As in the nose the florality last to show up and has little room left to it as a result. Finishes bitterly and without much flavor. (Screwcap) 87

SWITZERLAND WHITE

Chappaz, Marie-Thérèse

Valais, La Liaudisaz

Fendant

2014, \$32.99, 12.0%

Fairly deep golden color with an orange rust tint, easily distorts vision into the glass and holds hue fully into the rims, solid visuals. Mint, orange peel, violets and wet stone hit you first in the nose, there's a muscular leanness to it, the apricot, apple, pear scents as much skin and pit as juicy flesh, develops a light smokiness as it warms. Full-bodied, equally wiry and taut here too, the acidity feels blunt yet not lacking in power for it. Mineral water, slate and clay notes seem to blanket and numb the tongue. Nuttier here too, bitter oranges and pressed flowers adorn it but this is not a wine desirous of adornment. Minimal apricot, peach, pear fruit. Leaves you suspecting it is what it is supposed to be but that may not be what you want. 87

GREECE WHITE

Spiropoulos, Domaine

Peloponnese, Mantinia

Moschofilero

2015, \$11.99, 12.0%

Has a pinkish orange cast to it, washed out at the rims, the pour leaves behind a vast amount of fizz clinging to the glass sides, enough to compromise full transparency. Stony nose with a certain salinity to it, lemon and pressed flowers, even the honey comes off as dry, firm apple, peach fruit scents, allowing it to warm does not add any more breadth. Full-bodied, while it's clean the weight tends to give it an immobile feel. Stony and close to earthy, seems intentionally flat. Average acidity at best, some sparkle found in the lemon to orange citrus. Taut apple, pear to apricot pit fruit, ends on a bitter note. Minor floral breeze at the finish attempts to pretty it up. Nothing here jumps out at you. (Composite Cork) 87

SPAIN RED

Lar de Ricobao

Ribeira Sacra, Selección do Val

Blend

2014, \$10.99, 13.0%

Red-purple core that turns to broad scarlet hues around the rims, the clarity may be easy to miss given the general darkness of the wine. Leather, rawhide, roadside dirt and a light touch of dried merde spread out first in the nose, dried meadow grasses, sour cherry to cranberry fruit scents, rugged yet also possessed of a more airy dissolve. Medium-bodied, energetically sour and dry, the acidity courses throughout. More lasting power here in the cherry, Italian plum, blackberry fruit, dancing to the final sip. The earth, leather, meadow brush trip persists as it should. Shades of white grapefruit and caraway or anise. Its "off center" flavor profile makes it a credible change of pace wine and certainly the high energy

level helps. Mainly Mencía, remainder Garnacha, Brencellao, Merenzao, Mouratón, Tempranillo. 88

Espelt

Empordà, Old Vines

Garnacha

2015, \$11.99, 14.0%

Heavy duty saturation and black light look to the violet core and red magenta rims, while the liquid is perfectly clear it's darkly opaque from a distance. The nose is all jellied raspberries and cherries, closer to strawberries than darker fruits, mildly floral, does not show much of its new French oak treatment, stone and poor earth, puts all its bets on the fruit. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, smooth and without alcoholic burn. Fairly monochrome but it is a familiar refrain and you can hum it without thinking too much. Less floral here and more citrusy, some sting during the finish where it turns dry and the cherry, red berry fruit does a slow fade. Not overwrought, just fruity. 88

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

DeMorgenzon

Stellenbosch, Maestro

Blend

2014, \$21.99, 14.0%

Layered golden color that sticks to basic gold as it hints at more amber hues, translucent with no cloudiness, some intensity loss at the rims. The nose immediately shows a crisply powerful toast, then a dewy florality, lime zest and apricot, peach, red apple fruit scents, hinted of whipped cream as well, manages to feel breezy and heavy at once. In the mouth it's more medium-bodied, has enough acidity to create forward progress and bring out tang in the lime, tangerine citrus. The violets to lilacs a touch more muted here, plays up a generalized sweetness instead. Same basic pear, apricot, apple to red cherry fruit, lasts well into the finish. At the end you get a few notes of rubber and stone, aids in balancing out any residual toastiness. Maybe loses personality via the broad based mix of grapes but a pleasant enough drop. 26% Roussanne, 25% Chardonnay, 19% Grenache Blanc, 17% Chenin Blanc, 13% Viognier. 88