

The Hanes Wine Review, October 2012 Edition

Hanes seems to be drinking at an “87 points” level these days. Wines which are perfectly acceptable but not all that thrilling nor unique. Tasting many such wines “out of necessity” and more or less expecting the outcome. Which is better than many alternatives! Going into the crazy holiday wine retail season so not sure how much time Hanes will have to consume the offerings of Bacchus, no drinking on the job allowed, weird. Also looking forward to reuniting with his beloved wine collection, which is now hundreds of miles away. Sigh. 2013 shall be here soon enough, time is like that...

This month’s big winners... Got a fix for the Loire Cabernet Franc jones with a bottle of 2010 Breton “Franc de Pied” Bourgueil, pleasingly fresh and lively, can’t say I’d want to age any. \$30 is arguably fair, if one is arguably wealthy. Hanes also treated himself to the extravagance of a Poulsard from the Jura, the 2011 bottling from Tissot. Honest, transparent and full of yummy red fruits for like \$25, thumbs up. Vietti’s 2008 Barolo labeled “Castiglione” delivers if you want easy to access Barolo right out of the gate. Fruity and floral and fairly priced at \$40, does not impress as one to lay down to age. After Cazin, Domaine des Huards is probably next on Hanes’s list for Cour-Cheverny producers. Their 2010 bottling, from the wonderful Romorantin grape, delivers the desired vibrancy of flavors and heft and still clocks in under \$20.

The best \$15 and under picks... “Mud House” is not the most inspiring name but have to say, they deliver very good New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc at a very low price and they deserve a shout out for rising above the noisy pack of Kiwi SB. And for like \$11. Can’t really argue over relative simplicity when you get a Saumur-Champigny Cabernet Franc for \$9 sooooo the 2010 from the Domaine de la Cave du Rocher gets a nod of approval. Bell pepper, check. Same basic message for the 2010 Château La Garrousse basic Bordeaux rouge, tastes like Bordeaux, isn’t green and has decent fruit, all for around \$7. Wouldn’t drink it every day but a serviceable bottle to have in reserve for when you need an extra glass at 3:30 AM. Two nice wines from Greece, one red and one white. Never before had anything from Thymiopoulos Vineyards from Naoussa but their “Young Vines” from the Xinomavro grape is a great simple quaffer for like \$12, the kind of wine lots of people would like but few would buy just by seeing it on the shelf. Have had the Moschofilero from Spiropoulos before and it performed excellently again, taut with citrus and snap to the fruit, again the kind of wine one enjoys turning others onto, about \$12 or so. Another humble “chug along year after year” wine is the Tannat and Merlot blend from Uruguay labeled as “Don Próspero.” For \$10 you get a decent amount of things going on, stays familiar and different at once. It’s pleasing to find a good Uruguayan wine, this country needs to get it in gear and gain more market share. One wine that *does* remain consistent is Leitz’s “Dragonstone” Riesling from the Rheingau. The price remains fair under \$15 and it never goes for the easy route of petal to the metal fruitiness taken by many other similar QbA wines. A tip of the cap to Josef and gang for giving us a nice bottle year after year.

And the disappointments... Decided to drop some coin on a bottle of Châteauneuf-du-Pape since this has not been done in some time. Decided on the 2010 “Les Hautes Brusquières” bottling from Domaine de la Charbonnière. While not bad, not thrilling and wanted a little more of everything for \$46 or so. May try another CdP from 2010 and if the experience isn’t better, pass going forward. Been some time since trying a wine from Laetitia, one of those wineries famous in the past when you could only find them on high end restaurant lists. Albeit an entry level bottling, the 2010 “Estate” Pinot Noir should be much more suave than what is found in the bottle for \$18 to \$22 or so. Hanes has only sampled Texier wines from the village of Brézème in the Rhône so was geeked to try a 2010 Syrah from some dude named Charles Helfenbein. Left Hanes underwhelmed, dry, needed more body and greater length. Such is life, these days you can say at least it was only \$20. Tried *again* to give the Villa Sparina Gavi di Gavi a chance and *again* came up with a decent but “ehh” bottle of wine, this the 2011 bottling. Must not be lured in by pretty bottle. Tried a producer never sampled before, the 2011 Hubert Brochard Sancerre. As other 2011 wines from Sancerre, not what Hanes wants, can’t blame Hubie, maybe it’s just the vintage. In any event, smack Hanes if he buys anymore 2011 Loire Sauvignon Blanc wines. Hanes continues to not feel it for Spanish Albariño, this time with the 2011 Laxas bottling. Did these wines used to be better or has Hanes’s heart simply hardened?

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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/oldervintages2012.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 October!

CALIFORNIA RED

Laetitia
Arroyo Grande Valley, Estate
Pinot Noir
2010, \$17.99, 14.1%
The purple core dark enough to make clarity a non-issue, well-saturated ruby to red magenta rims, decent shine, arguably darker and less lively than many a Pinot. The nose is intensely perfumed with fresh flowers, straw to hay, sour orange zest and fleshy black cherry, rhubarb, raspberry fruit scents, coated with honey, maple syrup, nothing here suggests a sense of place of origin. Full-bodied, soft and expansive, complete palate coverage. Close to no tannin nor acidity, density keeps it upright. There is a pickled to briny quality in there, however, the steamrolling sweetness of the plum, boysenberry, rhubarb, strawberry, cranberry, cherry impossible to avoid, runs the full spectrum of red to dark fruits. Cinnamon spice, candied lemon drops, ginger and cola add to its dulcet nature. From time to time you do get that jalapeño to pickled thing again. So much extracted fruit you better be prepared and love it, any desire for finesse will end in disappointment. Deftly pulled off in that it still seems kinda "classy." 87

Lucky Star
Regional Blend, California
Pinot Noir
2010, \$9.99, 13.5%
Ruby red to cranberry with a certain rust cast, clear and possessed of good hue but in no way saturated nor out to overimpress. There's some stewed tomato and iodine notes in the nose which are offputting, once dealt with there's abundant ginger, cinnamon spice, roasted cherry, plum, blackberry fruit, toasty oak, no herbaceousness but it seems manipulated to get to that point. Close to full-bodied, the overripe, stewed nature persists with a pickled aspect too. The baking spices help right the ship, along with sweet orange citrus. The fruit more sweet than fresh, mainly raspberry, blackberry, black cherry. Fullness lasts completely through the finish, no tannin nor acidity to interfere with overall fruitiness. Not especially interesting, leans hard on the fruit and one assumes the oak (chips). 90% Pinot Noir, 10% Zinfandel. Grapes sourced from North Coast, Central Coast. (Composite Cork) 85

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Lucky Star
Regional Blend, California
Chardonnay
2010, \$9.99, 13.5%
Good shine to the strong golden hue, bends your vision enough to compensate around the rims for the loss of color. Big punch of a nose, vinous and grapey

with honey and tart lemon to orange notes, some citrus blossom in there too among the general flowers, nice apple and pear, less white pit fruit, more succinct than short. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, has mildly drying acidity and a semi-powdery mouth texture. The honey to beeswax element comes through clearly, zingy tangerine, mandarin orange citrus creates a tighter weave. Here the apricot better accompanies the green apple, pineapple, pear fruit. Softens a touch as it opens but never gets quite creamy. If you like a certain sourness to your Chardonnay it's competitive at the price. 95% Chardonnay, 5% Muscat. Grapes sourced from North Coast, Central Coast. (Composite Cork) 87

WASHINGTON RED

14 Hands Winery

Columbia Valley

Merlot

2010, \$14.99, 13.5%

Red ruby to purple colored core, stays right in the normal range, more of a brick to rust red at the rims, spotless with a just into opacity core. The nose is curiously mute with a slight mentholated touch, chocolate and hard butterscotch candy and, of course, cherry, blackberry fruit. Medium-bodied, here the sugariness of the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit shines forth, well ripened with caramel, toffee, chocolate toppings. No acidity or tannin present nor accounted for. Plum, currant, blackberry fruit, dark in complexion but still sweet as all get out. Some orange juice poured into the mix. No guile, nothing to confuse you, delivers exactly what it promises, which is sweet fruit 24/7.

78% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Syrah, 1% Grenache, 1% Cabernet Franc. (Composite Cork) 86

Columbia Crest

Columbia Valley, Horse Heaven Hills, H3 Les Chevaux Blend

2010, \$15.99, 14.5%

Dark enough that you might suspect some gauziness, otherwise clean with a basic purple core and more scarlet to ruby-magenta rims, about average surface shine. Smells like a German chocolate cake at first, only so before the plum, cherry fruit swooshes in, outside of the caramel, mocha, butterscotch, coffee ice cream oak nothing really added to the fruit, dumbed down for maximal friendliness. Full-bodied, man does this really feel massaged and manipulated, almost like molded plastic. The soupy plum/prune, cherry, blackberry fruit never deviates a millimeter from the script, slathered in oaky butterscotch, caramel, toffee like it was sunscreen on the beaches of Saint-Tropez. Mint, licorice, menthol, coconut oil, the beat goes on. No structure yet somehow it never slouches, the byproduct of being reanimated? A goopy mess, sure to

sell thousands of cases. 80% Merlot, 13% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Syrah. 85

FRANCE RED

Breton, Catherine et Pierre

Loire, Bourgueil, Franc de Pied

Cabernet Franc

2010, \$29.99, 12.0%

Solid scarlet to rust red hued core with a vague purplish cast, shiny and mostly transparent, coloration consistent through the rims, maybe lighter ruby red. There's a spring meadow freshness to the nose, flowers, pine, new leaf growth and earth, the bell pepper element is crunchy and brisk, saltlick and wet stone contribute to lift, the red cherry, red currant scents mild with more zip than juiciness, overall pretty in an innocent, unvarnished way. Light-bodied, gains presence via the firm web of tannin and acidity which keeps everything in its place. As strong as these may be, there is decent flow and a good deal of mouth perfume. The bell pepper stays fresh and penetrating, lots of supplementary minerals, stone and grassiness. Hard candy sweetness found in the cherry, raspberry, almost strawberry fruit, albeit the wrapper just got taken off. Just clean and lively, youthfully buoyant, this seems as good a time as any to enjoy it. 90

Tissot, Domaine André et Mireille (Bénédicte & Stéphane)

Jura, Arbois, Vieilles Vignes

Poulsard

2011, \$24.99, 12.0%

Has a watermelon pink hue, vague cloudiness creates a translucent effect, color holds through the rims where a bit of orange comes through, surface shine is pretty good. There's a muddy barnyard earth quality to the nose, never dirty and only with a small portion of merde, behind that is bountiful strawberry, rhubarb, red cherry fruit, adds in some juicy lemon pulp, and behind that is a good deal of stoniness and notes akin to limestone, good fullness and musk. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a round and expansive nature which creates maximal palate coverage. Both the acidity and tannin are strong without trying to take the spotlight. Orange and lemon citrus lend pep to the semi-dense strawberry, raspberry, cranberry fruit, active but not hyper. The wet stone, clay and mud ground it on the tongue. Sort of folds in on itself near the finish line, not short, more like it just stops talking. Comes across as a wine of minimal pretense. 90

Rocher, Domaine de La Cave du
Loire, Saumur-Champigny
Cabernet Franc
2010, \$8.99, 13.5%

Garnet red to purple in color, dark yet transparent and ultra-clean, sleek surface, sexy looking. While the nose admirably presents bell pepper, lead pencil shavings and tobacco ash, these are easily pushed aside in favor of the red cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit, the floral perfume and orange juice favors the latter too, primary and juicy, any meaningful stoniness absent. Medium-bodied, for its weight the acidity and tannin set it squarely in the mouth and without it seeming too dry or puckering. Likely it's the sweetness of the cherry, red currant, cranberry fruit which eases things into and through the mid-palate. The bell pepper lower whereas the stony earth gains traction. Even develops a sappy sort of texture. Lemon, orange zest, tea leaf, wet straw blend. Not a bright, zingy Loire Cabernet Franc, however, it's genuine and at a basement bargain price. 88

Garrouse, Château La
Bordeaux, Bordeaux
Blend
2010, \$6.99, 13.0%

Crimson red to purple core, evinces very good clarity in tandem with brightness of hue, the rims mainly brick red, little ruby or lighter shades. The nose has an attractive dusty, minerally quality which settles in before the cherry, raspberry, red currant fruit, more flowers than cedar, more fresh than serious, it has good lift and sufficient earth, grass to establish itself as a wine from a place. Medium-bodied, expands quickly in the mouth pushing against your cheeks while at the same time has a drying tannic skeleton which sucks it back in. Citric tang enlivens, stones and grass, not so much earth or leather. Not displaying a real oak presence. The red cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit taut but stays fully through the finish. Moments of green olive pits. Give it credit for being a lively little cuss, don't bet against it in a street fight. Unspecified percentages of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, etc. 88

Charbonnière, Domaine de la
Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Les Hautes
Brusquières Cuvée Spéciale
Blend
2010, \$45.99, 14.0%

Even if transparent it has a dark purple core along with vibrantly saturated red-violet rims, resplendent surface, certainly looks impressive on the basis of coloration alone. Some alcohol on the nose, rum raisin ice cream, plum, cherry to raspberry fruit, at times stewed, ginger root, under the ripeness there's some wool, animal fur, menthol, anise, would expect fuller

thrust and follow-through given how it starts. Medium-bodied, plush and juicy yet not soft, more tannin than expected, the raspberry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit more sugary sweet than flavorful, leans heavily on an initial splash. Dishes out licorice, mint, garrigues, orange peel, animal fur and then a bit of tomato skin. In the end it's quite nice, however, leaves you entirely unsure of where the hell it's going 8-10 years from now. 59% Grenache, 39% Syrah, 2% Counoise. 88

Terrebrune, Domaine de
Provence, Bandol
Blend
2007, \$29.99, 14.0%

The dark purple has some blackness in the core, fresh blood red rims, more crimson than any ruby or magenta, no filminess to it. Big, close to overstuffed nose of cherry, currant, plum fruit scents, cinnamon and nutmeg spice, leaden floral musk, has that wet wool character, extremely primary and fruit-driven, clings like glue to your nostrils. Full-bodied, moves like it's turning in quicksand, slowly and with considerable effort. Almost grapey in its fruitiness, plum, cassis, blackberry, black cherry with a touch of apple in a nod to the decent shock of acidity it has. Tannins dull, however, are there under all that fruit. Chocolate, garrigues, orange peel, cinnamon and a hint of clove. No questioning the fruit, of course, but will it have the structure to produce something noticeably different many years from now? 85% Mourvèdre, 10% Grenache, 5% Cinsault. 88

Helfenbein, Charles
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Brézème
Syrah
2010, \$19.99, 13.5%

Dark purple core, no filminess, spotless throughout, the rims just past ruby into scarlet and crimson red territory, reflective surface. The nose is a mixture of many elements, peanut and chocolate blend, dried potpourri, pressed hay and stone bits, the plum to black cherry scents start off well but begin to close down with air time, some sweetly grilled meats, salt and brine, flirts with rusticity but does not follow through. Medium-bodied, dry without being noticeably tannic or acidic, gets quite twiggy with bark and leaf notes as it reaches the mid-palate. The cherry, plum, blackberry fruit starts off with a bang, sweet and juicy but it's all but gone by the finish. Hint of green olive pit but no meatiness. Either there's not really that much meat on its bones or it has already begun to shut down, hard to sense which one (if either). 87

FRANCE WHITE

Huards, Domaine des
Loire, Cour-Cheverny
Romorantin

2010, \$15.99, 12.0%

Fat golden color, transparent even as it pools deeply into the glass, lasts fully through the rims, the richly warm glow of the color makes it neither particularly shiny nor dull. Hits you in the nose like a sledgehammer, loaded with salinity and minerality along with super zesty grapefruit, lemon citrus, kumquat, pineapple, nectarine, passion fruit scents, some green tea and mint thrown in there too, splash of honey pleasing but doesn't soften things, its density yet allows for expressivity. Full-bodied, same basic story as its muscularity prevents it from coming across as an easy sipper even as it flows well enough. High octane citrus, white grapefruit, lemon, lime, blood orange all in there. Dusty minerality and stoniness, dried and crushed flowers pair with moisture sucking acidity to create a desert in your mouth. Frontloaded pineapple, guava, nectarine, kiwi, peach fruit, succumbs to the structure by the finish. Excellent vibrancy. 89

Brochard, Hubert
Loire, Sancerre
Sauvignon Blanc

2011, \$15.99, 13.0%

Simple yellow straw color, nothing really to write about, slight distorting effect below the surface, one of those many who are not especially lustrous nor dull, just humbly fills the glass. The nose suggests a good deal of mineral dust and stone, mint contrasted against chili pepper, fresh if short-lived apricot, peach, apple scents, tends to broaden out rather than penetrate. Close to full-bodied, especially in how it soaks instead of flit about. Nice saline quality, pineapple and grapefruit settle in first, acidity could use more pep. After that there is a touch of jalapeño. The peach, apricot, nectarine fruit a minor factor, one might argue it's more floral. If there's any big flaw it is its overall softness, curiously it tightens up its game as it warms. Agreeable in its own way but not necessarily a "classic" rendition. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc Select 500) 86

ITALY RED

Felsina, Fattoria di
Tuscany, Chianti Classico, Berardenga
Sangiovese

2009, \$17.99, 13.0%

Clean garnet red, not a great deal of depth to the purple hues, you can easily imagine an orange tint

developing over time, sleek surface sheen there. Flowers abound in the nose, especially rose petals, leather, cedar and touch of rosemary, the cherry and raspberry scents not concentrated as in heavy but do have a semi-hard candy feel, pine accents extend nostril presence. Medium-bodied, has strong acidity and tannin, as such does not feel hard per se. White grapefruit, cedar and stony earth set the tone for a five o'clock shadow ruggedness. No lack of ripeness in the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, however, chained up some in the structure. Anise, pine, rose create perfume while that parched earth and stone contribute to the deadening character. Strikes you as a wine that should soften in 2-3 years and then have it's best drinking window for 1-2 years thereafter. But right now needs food to show best. 89

Vietti, Cantina
Piedmont, Barolo, Castiglione
Nebbiolo

2008, \$39.99, 14.5%

Quite clear, plenty of brick red to rust matching what purple may be in the core, coloration natural enough, suggests normal youthfulness. The nose is full and nicely layered with anise, pressed flowers, cedar, balsam wood, and a palpable cocoa/caramel element, the cherry, blackberry scents have some plum if not prune in them, round but not soft, still nothing too rugged. Medium-bodied, the tannin dries in clumps, appears massaged to achieve approachability, not an enamel stripping young Barolo. Rose, orange peel, incense, cocoa, mocha, there's a sweet liqueur aspect to the raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit. The floral perfume lifts but not in a pretty style, wants to be fat. Does have a drier and tacky finish. Decent now, better in 1-2 years, after that likely not much improvement. 89

Colosi, Cantine
Sicilia
Nero d'Avola

2010, \$10.99, 14.0%

While clear and unblemished, the purple core does reach opacity, further towards the rims more scarlet than ruby, deeply hued throughout and with a pleasing surface luster. The nose is well-stuffed and overflowing with plum to prune, blackberry, fig fruit, cinnamon and other baking spices, maple syrup, everything about it smells like a dessert bakery, only a mild mentholated lift provides cleansing counterbalance. Full-bodied, leverages its density to take the structural place of the missing tannin or acidity so it's not soft or sluggish per se, just lacks a purposeful stride. Orange peel, menthol, anise seed and something close to glazed ham set the stage, spotlight then assumed by all that prune, plum, raisin,

date fruit, overripe is one way of putting it. Flirts with some astringency through the finish, otherwise a simple blow to your pleasure nodes. (L.334 11)
(Composite Cork) 87

ITALY WHITE

Lageder, Alois

Alto Adige/Südtirol, Vigneti delle Dolomiti

Pinot Grigio

2011, \$11.99, 12.5%

Slight distorting quality to the yellow, brown straw color, achieves an admirable solidity given the lightness of hue, credible presence in the glass. The nose is lemony with a tangerine accent, pleasingly floral with a minty touch too, the peach, pear fruit supplemented by a vanillin creaminess, the latter stifles most of the minerality. Close to full-bodied, the acidity sort of cements it and dries it into the tongue rather than lend sparkle. Same pronounced flowers, orange blossom and spice, countered in part by a semi-fizzy element which helps it stay clean. The apple, peach, pear fruit lacks grip and fades in and out. At the same time, the free spaces not filled by stones or minerals, albeit these not entirely absent. It even at times tries to get smoky but peters out. Perhaps trying to do too much, better to pick a more decisive path and stick to it. (Screwcap: Stelvin Lux+) 87

ColleStefano, Vitivinicola

Marche, Verdicchio di Matelica

Verdicchio

2011, \$12.99, 13.0%

Deep golden hue that at times seems to push amber, lacks shine but hue pushes through well to the rims, soft translucency. Curious burst of peanut shells first in the nose before settling into honey, candied orange peel, rose petals, ripe apricot and peach fruit as well as a soft patina of streamwater and pebbles, overall sugary and on the plump side. Full-bodied, the acidity starts out okay but eventually succumbs to the fatness of the primary material, well-layered apple, pear, apricot to melon fruit. The orange and lemon citrus has a soft drink consistency. Honey, ginger, croissant flakes all play a role. Thankfully near the finish there's a push from the minerality to clean up house a bit. Good length, if you like thicker, juicier versions of the grape this one should be on your short list, real crowd pleaser. 87

Sparina, Villa

Piedmont, Gavi di Gavi

Cortese

2011, \$11.99, 12.5%

Mild layering effect visually, pools into the glass with a tannish yellow straw, holds decently through the rims, decent enough shine across the surface. Vague saline quality to the nose, mix of white citrus zest, pinch of flowers, makes its case mainly on the power of pear, apple, melon fruit scents, develops some honey accents as it warms. Full-bodied, texturally it's dry and coats the palate fully, acidity picks them up and puts them down at a steady gait. That citrus gives it an initial pucker, this broken up some by sweeter green melon, pear, apricot fruit and less vocal baking spices. Retronasally you get mint, flowers and that honey. Curious in that it seems more complex when you focus and analyze it but when you just sit back and take a sip, it really doesn't make a distinct impression. 87

San Pietro (Viticoltori Alto Adige)

Alto Adige/Südtirol

Pinot Grigio

2011, \$8.99, 13.5%

Deeply pooled gold straw color, easily distorts your vision, somehow though drops off at the rims, relative flatness doesn't hurt its visual impact. There's a pinch of minerals and saline to the nose but there's more by way of flowers and ripened peach, pear, yellow apple fruit scents, little bit of cinnamon and lemon peel as well, okay length. In the mouth it's round and close to soft, however, the acidity possesses sufficient push to give it the needed momentum and cleanliness. Sweet lemon, orange to light grapefruit citrus, as if sprinkled with powdered sugar. Sort of minty with that aforementioned floral edge. Decent contour to the peach, apricot, pear, apple fruit, good mix of tart and sweet. In the end it's flat as in nothing interesting to say, you wouldn't want to sit next to it at a dinner party. (Screwcap) 87

ITALY SPARKLING

Colture, Le

Veneto, Conegliano Valdobbiadene Prosecco

Superiore, Fagher Brut Spumante

Prosecco

NV, \$11.99, 11.5%

Pours a huge head which sizzles off at breakneck speed, the inside of the liquid almost wall-to-wall bubbles, tiny and rapid moving, very clean and transparent yellow to white straw color, quite pretty, amazing staying power to the pétillance. Fresh and open nose of stones, mineral water, lemon peels and lowkey peach, apricot skin led fruit, a whiff of whipped cream does not soften much, not that it comes across as unyielding. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and the carbonation is not all that foamy, even has a somewhat taut feel. This even as a but creamier overall than the nose might otherwise suggest. The

lemon citrus has a bitterness to it, white grapefruit complement. Quinine, minerals and pebbles imbue it with a scrubbing character. Less fruit here than in the nose, echoes of green apple, peach, apricot, nectarine. Dry, honest and avoids hollow bitterness. (Composite Cork) 86

GERMANY WHITE

Leitz, Weingut Josef
Rheingau, Rudesheimer, Drachenstein, Dragonstone
QbA AP #16

Riesling
2011, \$13.99, 10.5%

The yellow hay color transparent with a shimmering wiggle, light fizz clings to the glass sides, given some hue loss at the rims still appears as if a solid block frozen in the glass, visually appealing. The nose displays very nice balance even as the first things to appear are powdered sugar, lemon and lime soft drink notes, mint and maple syrup, the green apple, apricot, pear fruit clean and focused, seems at times as if it could go for tropicality should it wish so, not stony nor minerally per se yet there's a freshness which usually bespeaks of wet stone and streamwater. Medium-bodied, it is soft while never flabby, just kind of yields like a warm hug. The sweetness of the lime, pink grapefruit, tangerine citrus the big star of the show, an almost youthful innocence to the pear, apricot, cherry, nectarine fruit, a slice or two of pineapple in the mix. The acidity is so-so, nothing that could take charge in an emergency. Brown sugar, mint, lilacs and fresh cream keep the party going. As in the nose, minimal terroir-driven elements. What distinguishes it from more syrupy brethren is its manners and fastidiousness through the finish, mom and dad would never come home and know a party happened. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 88

AUSTRIA WHITE

Loimer, Weingut Fred
Niederösterreich, Lois
Grüner Veltliner
2011, \$12.99, 12.5%

Presents a dark golden hue, well-layered into the glass, not quite clear, not quite translucent, only a slight diminishment near the rims, fairly standard looking. The nose comes on spicy and stony at first then settles into plumper apple, pear, apricot scents, honey, beeswax and mixed sweeter citrus, stays user friendly without any grassy or real peppery notes. Medium-bodied, bottom heavy even with decent acidity present, just pushes down into the palate, not much perfume. That noted, comes up with a credible amount of grapefruit, orange citrus, flowers and white

pepper spice. No lack of apricot, peach, pear, yellow apple fruit with a slice of pineapple on top. At moments there's a softening marshmallow or whipped cream element. Innocent fun, drinkable if not exactly screaming typicality. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 87

GREECE RED

Thymiopoulos Vineyards
Naoussa, Young Vines
Xinomavro
2010, \$11.99, 13.5%

Transparent cough syrup red, some crimson in there, light touch of purple in the core, has a pleasing shiny quality. The nose has a jammy to liqueur quality feel, raspberry, red cherry to strawberry scents, nothing sweet after that, really nothing after that, quiet whisper of menthol, chocolate and lemon juice, all but entirely primary but a little stoniness and sweet pickles. Medium-bodied, lacks the weight to squat too firmly, moves at a slow jog forward, here there's a tannic weave which heightens the twigs, leaves and stony brown earth. Easygoing lemon to orange citrus, smattering of baking spices, the raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit avoids both highs and lows. Sort of velvety feel now and then, acidity works towards preventing excessive softness. It's curiously challenging in that it is never as basic as you think but you still can't figure out what in there is not simple. Either way, fun to throw back. 88

GREECE WHITE

Spiropoulos, Domaine
Peloponnese, Mantinia
Moschofilero
2011, \$11.99, 11.5%

Clear yellow-brown straw color, solid in spite of clarity as well as relative transparency, good surface luster even as the hue diminishes nearer the rims. The nose features youthfully bright orange to lemon zest, mint, mineral dust with an attractive array of peach, kiwi, apple, pear and mango fruit scents, vague sauna sort of smokiness, very pure and lively without getting anywhere near austere. Medium-bodied, wiry with lots of kick in the acidity, pulses through the mouth. Mint, licorice, sweet herbs meld effortlessly with that same orange, lemon citrus, the latter with a good mix of sour and sweet aspects, unusual focus and push to the mouth perfume. The pear, apple, green melon, apricot fruit ripe with minimal juiciness. On the finish develops a quiet vanilla tinged creaminess. Very interesting, engages your brain without forcing it into action. 89

SPAIN WHITE

Pazo do Mar, Adegas
Ribeiro
Blend

2011, \$8.99, 12.0%

Presents a rich golden brown hue in the glass with a hint of fizz, on the dull side with average clarity. Firm nose feel without any hardness or cut, easily releases the flowers, fine spun powdered sugar as well as peach, melon, apple scents, manages to come up with some wet slate and chalk notes too, a few times you get a saline note. Full-bodied, rests squarely on the tongue with deceptively effective acidity, dries while never stinging. Plenty of romping room for the cinnamon spice, vanilla bean, floral water and orange marmalade, consistently sweet apricot, pear, yellow apple, green melon fruit. As the honeyed aspect tries to elevate it gets stymied by the stone, spring water element. Again, erect posture as it ends. Very nice, should prove friendly for many foods, subtle complexity. 50% Treixadura, 40% Torrontés, 10% Godello. (Composite Cork: Diam) 88

Laxas, Bodegas AS
Rías Baixas
Albariño

2011, \$11.99, 12.5%

Very basic straw gold color, decent intensity with a visually layered effect, dull and lusterless, does keep it full through the rims. The nose has a clunky, block-like feel yet possesses a decent amount of minerality, salinity and white citrus to attempt verve, pear, red apple, peach skin fruit scents, there might be flowers and mint from time to time, doesn't soak in effectively. Full-bodied, while creamier here with a vanilla to whipped cream nuance it still suffers from a certain hardness, not necessarily from acidic power. The apple, pear, peach, nectarine fruit makes a credible showing, keeps chugging to reach the finish line. Creates an impression of smokiness without altogether going after expression of terroir. Spicy ending with an elevating sourness which actually helps create complexity and a sense of movement. Acceptable. (Synthetic Cork: ExcellentCork) 87

SPAIN ROSE

Muga, Bodegas
Rioja, Rosado
Blend

2011, \$9.99, 13.0%

Shiny, metallic salmon pink color with an orange tinge, clear with a good bit of hue loss around the rims, highly reflective and really catches light well. The nose is doused in lemon, orange citrus, strawberry,

raspberry, rhubarb fruit and a spoonful of vanilla cream, beyond that there's some ground stone, tea leaf, camphor, remains primary and does not work too hard to win you over. Close to full-bodied, fleshy, you can't say it lacks acidity but it's more of a good natured fattie than refreshing thirst quencher. The vanilla to whipped cream persists and supports the strawberry, red cherry, watermelon, green apple fruit, which kind of needs a boost. Lemony as in lemonade, sweet with a certain tang. Likewise, a saline aspect creates savory appeal. Hard to tell if there is really a meaningful floral dimension or if it's aftereffects of other stuff. Quality, maybe not the best vintage, still gimme more. 60% Garnacha, 30% Viura, 10% Tempranillo. 88

NEW ZEALAND WHITE

Mud House
Marlborough
Sauvignon Blanc

2011, \$10.99, 13.0%

Simple golden straw color, on the flat side, transparent with minor layering, stays consistent through the rims. The nose has all the grassy, leafy herbaceousness you'd expect but it's the pink grapefruit, tangerine citrus which dominates, this bringing along jalapeño notes, while not especially rich the pineapple, papaya, nectarine, green apple fruit scents get after you, every time it stings you, you forgive it. Medium-bodied, sets itself strongly in the mouth, the acidity has cut but prefers to give your tongue a firm bear hug. Super lively pink grapefruit, lime, tangerine citrus, expert mix of sweet and sour. The jalapeño, chili pepper outsized without detracting from sugary goodness. The herbaceousness there but lower here, blends into a smidgeon of stone and spring water. While it gets drier through the finish remains fluid and flexible. Delivers a lot for the price. (Screwcap) 89

ARGENTINA RED

Esperanza, Bodegas y Viñedos La
Mendoza, Valle de Uco Tunuyán, Finca El Origen
Reserva
Malbec

2011, \$9.99, 14.5%

Very bright red-magenta in hue, touch more violet in the core, the rims begin to take on a pink tint, overall quite clear and spotless. The nose has an herbal to leafy component, however, it's mainly a mix of berry fruit with a dash of cherry, suggestion of candied oranges and sweet spice, just primary even without much, if any, oak presence. Medium-bodied, slight grittiness to the texture but without tannic oomph. Here there's more plum, black cherry and even prune in the

fruit mix, alongside the blackberry, blueberry base. Again the oak seems neutral, no toast just a pinch of spice and cocoa. The orange citrus fresher and some tea leaf in there too. Fairly smooth and decently extended finish, no great pros nor cons going on, a simple fruit-driven quaffer. (Composite Cork) 87

URUGUAY RED

Pizzorno Winery

Canelones, Don Próspero Tannat Merlot

Blend

2010, \$9.99, 13.0%

Rust red and scarlet as present in the core as purple, clean and transparent but not light of hue, the rims bright red, more pretty than brooding. There's a mild funky animality to the nose, this stabilizes into caked mud, earth and dried grass before finally blossoming into hard candy cherry and raspberry scents, not that much else going on. Medium-bodied, dry and decently tannic without losing accessibility, here things flip-flop and the cherry, red currant, raspberry fruit comes first then the leather, animal fur, wool and brown dirt take hold. Mixes in tart white grapefruit, fallen leaves and credible minerality. The sweetness of the fruit outlasts the wilder elements. Not altogether complex, however, taken at face value and on its own terms there's not much reason to not like it for the price. 60% Tannat, 40% Merlot. (Synthetic Cork) 88