

The Hanes Wine Review, September 2018 Edition

As noted previously, Hanes is buying more at online wine auction. This usually results in purchasing older wines. Now, allowing for the fact that Hanes has little to go on in terms of knowing the provenance and history of how these wines have been stored, two things are becoming clearer. First, generally speaking, Hanes prefers young wines. Second, the band of wines Hanes enjoys aged is fairly narrow.

So, it's been instructive to buy a bunch of older wines expecting to enjoy them but, err, not. What's also been instructive is realizing that Hanes's memories of "great" vintages is driven primarily but those lauded as Hanes was first getting into wine. Hence, he still thinks any top end Australian wine from 1998 should be awesome. (Not, most are toast.) Or that Cali Cabs from the 90's should still be peaking (Some are, most not.) Hanes realizes now that for the majority of wines at auction he has to set his sights on more recent vintages. Oddly, though, Hanes has memorized few "vintage characterizations" from say the past 10+ years. What was the best recent vintages for Châteauneuf-du-Pape or Austrian Riesling? Really, no clue. Always have to check vintage charts to make sure Hanes is not buying a Chinon from a crappy washout vintage. Which, given limited resources, suggests Hanes should stick mainly to buying current releases. The allure of online auctions, though, remains. Finding that wine that is half the price it ought to be is ever so tempting. Of course, as Hanes has learned, a lot of the time there's a good reason it's being offered at half price.

This month's big winners... Lot of high quality Zinfandel this time around, led by Bedrock's 2016 Carlisle Vineyard and Turley's 2015 Ueberroth Vineyard and 2015 Judge Bell Vineyard. It's not popular these days but Hanes likes fruit-driven Zinfandel wines. Alas, same old saw applies, wish the prices for the best were not hovering around \$40 if not more. An unique Champagne due to the oak aging, the non-vintage "Absolu" bottling from Minière was quite compelling and interesting. Whether or not one wants to spend like \$59 on it is up to you but glad to have tried it. Hanes does not buy much Oregon wine. But these days when he does, it tends to be Gamay Noir. The 2016 Vincent Gamay from the Bjornson Vineyard was quite nice, full of fruit but not simple and a relatively fair price of \$27. Been awhile since Hanes bought a new Eric Texier wine. The 2016 regular Brézème bottling is a quality buy for around \$24, good rustic Syrah with some ageability to it. Once & Future continues to make a positive impression out of the gate, this not surprising with the pedigree of the owner/winemaker. Both the 2016 Oakley Road Vineyard Mourvèdre and 2016 Sangiacomo Vineyard Merlot were delectable but the Merlot at \$55 is kind of crazy. Hanes may have to think long and hard about staying on this mailing list, fiscal sanity has to prevail somewhere. The 2015 Chamiot Mondeuse is a worthy successor to the 2014, albeit more structured and in need of some short term cellaring. \$24 is a credible price for what you get.

The best \$20 and under picks... Took a chance on an unknown producer's Picpoul de Pinet but the 2017 made by Domaine Julie Benau was satisfactory for around \$16. Picpoul de Pinet is just one of those wines Hanes buys only when nothing else is jumping out at him. Purchased basically so visiting relatives would have something sweet to drink, the 2016 Bollig-Lehnert Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Spätlese reminded Hanes that this producer can be a great value in the same vein as Merkelbach. For \$17 liked it enough to buy one for the cellar too. Gobelsburg's 2017 Cistercien Rosé was satisfying, good edge and shape and remains good value at about \$17. For under \$20 not much else really stood out this time as noteworthy.

And the disappointments... Bordeaux has become a non-factor for Hanes. Which can be a shame. Hanging with some pals who like Bordeaux picked up a bottle of the 2015 Château Lilian Ladouys from Saint-Estèphe. Which can be a shame. This was \$20 and the producer has a record of now and then overdelivering. This was "okay" but didn't convince Hanes to sample more Bordeaux. For a few vintages Hanes has not been sure what to make of the Turley "Old Vines" bottling. Big kudos for keeping the price at \$25 but even at that price the QPR seems to be trailing off. It lacks the bombast and exuberance Hanes desires and the 2015 vintage even at 15.5% alcohol seems too thin. Hanes feels the same way about Bedrock's "Old Vine" Zinfandel, the 2016 being satisfactory and just. It's the "new old" style of entry level Zinfandel perhaps, reining in the fruit. As with Foillard Corcelette last edition, Hanes was "ehh" on the 2016 Daniel Boulard Morgon "Corcelette" bottling. Maybe need to stick with Côte du Py instead. Staying in Beaujolais you know it's not a good sign when you buy a bottle, taste it and write it up, and then weeks later wonder whether or not you should buy a bottle because you never tasted it. Not much of an impression. And so it went with the 2016 Domaine Thillardon Chénas "Les Carrières" – \$27 later

not much to say for it but need to remember to not buy, try to drink others' bottles. And even further, first stab at a wine from Château de Grand Pré of Morgon. The 2016 Morgon was lousy but at least only \$23. Hanes is getting tired of Lapierre's basic Beaujolais bottling called "Raisins Gaulois." At ~\$16 the 2017 stinks and so did the 2016. Used to be a steal, not sure what's up. But given the high percentage of Beaujolais Hanes drinks there's bound to be clunkers.

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

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on the *older (or non-imported) wines* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/oldervintages2018.html>

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

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

Winery/Producer Name

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

Grape Type

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

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

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Bedrock Wine Co.

Russian River Valley, Carlisle Vineyard

Zinfandel

2016, \$39.00, 14.9%

Dark purple core lightens steadily into scarlet and then reddish magenta with a hint of pink, the saturation does not impair the clarity. The nose features pleasing brambly fruit, blackberry, boysenberry, blueberry, quite ripe yet holding onto a sour dimension, menthol, eucalyptus give it lift whereas there's a meatiness and damp earthiness to it for grounding, lemon to mandarin orange citrus accents, on the whole too young to expect the constitutive parts to shine independently. Full-bodied, nice framing acidity creates a pucker through the attack and allows for a redder fruit profile, raspberry and cranberry alongside the blueberry, blackberry. Touch of vanilla and whipped cream but minimal oak presence. The citrus more indistinct and it's influenced more by earth than menthol. Clove and

cardamom nuances enliven the finish. That acidity keeps it fresh enough to ratchet up the gulpability. 92

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Ueberroth Vineyard

Zinfandel

2015, \$48.00, 15.9%

Looks thick and viscous, impenetrably dark purple core, the rims mostly a saturated red magenta but at certain angles you do get a more pinkish ruby cast. Highly mentholated nose, close to medicinal, the alcohol lightly rocks the boat, milk chocolate and candied ginger, bubbles over with syrupy blueberry, boysenberry, black raspberry fruit scents, achieving ripeness was clearly not an issue. Medium-bodied, compact and has more tannic punch than expected. Sweet grill smoke and meat fat, molasses and caramelized honey nuances. A touch floral and minty, pulped oranges and lemons too. This context shapes the contours of the sugary blueberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, sweet upfront but then sugars get shaved off by the finish. Compelling now but likely best in 3-4 years with added integration. 92

Turley
Amador County, Judge Bell Vineyard
Zinfandel
2015, \$32.00, 15.8%
Dull, cloudy purple core, fully opaque, wide and hazy brick red rims. Explosive nose of eucalyptus, black licorice, pine breeze and grill fat, supporting lemon zest and olive pit, shows admirable erectness in the nostrils which stiffens the blueberry, raspberry to darker cherry, plum fruit scents. While full-bodied it does possess as much firmness and girth and has ample tannin to keep it from teetering over. Blood orange, pine needles, menthol to witch hazel notes, here there's a distinct elevation in oaky caramel, butterscotch accents. Overall, possesses a good deal of savoriness which teases out tartness in the strawberry, blueberry, boysenberry fruit. Extremely lively and keeps the waves of flavors coming. 92

Turley
Sonoma Valley, Fredericks Vineyard
Zinfandel
2015, \$42.00, 15.9%
Although unblemished there's a dull flatness to the black purple core, fairly wide ruby to blood red rims, close to no vivid saturation. The alcohol tickles the nostrils, almost makes you sneeze, jellied plum, cassis, black cherry scents, black licorice, violets and hard candy caramel, oak not a major factor, while the scents give an impression of a primary state it has erect posture throughout. In the mouth it's full-bodied with a wiry frame and more perceptible acidic spine than expected. The oak shows more of a roasted Cuban coffee to burnt butterscotch profile, in turn the fruit firms up with accents of green apple and pear enlivening the apricot, blackberry, black cherry base, good range. Eucalyptus, pressed rose petals, and sage to coriander add nuance. If you can deal with the alcohol there's a lot going on here and reason for some optimism for aging 2-4 years. 91

Bedrock Wine Co.
Russian River Valley, Dolinsek Ranch, Dolinsek Ranch
Heritage
Blend
2016, \$39.00, 14.8%
Completely opaque core, more black than purple, glowing sunset red rims, just looks heavy and dense. While the nose does show some earthiness and stony qualities, very little gets in the way of the blueberry, boysenberry, blackberry fruit scents, juicy and brushed with nutmeg, cinnamon spice, orange zest, cocoa powder, ends with a pleasing eucalyptus led lift. In the mouth it's full-bodied, wet and gushy, spills all across the palate. Floral with a citrus blossom patina, perfumed enough to distract from the clumpy and

somewhat drying tannin. Mint, menthol break up most of the blockishness in the cherry, dark berry fruit. Perfectly fine to drink now but one suspects that a few years of slimming down and tannin loss will produce a sleeker, more integrated package. Predominantly Zinfandel, remainder Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Barbera, Syrah, Black Muscat, Palomino, etc. 90

Halcón
Mendocino County, Yorkville Highlands, Theopolis
Vineyards, Tierra
Petite Sirah
2016, \$29.99, 14.1%
Pitch black core, stops just short of glowing, sinister feel to the brick red to crimson rims, sleek and shiny surface. Density rules the nose and it takes time to parse out the plum, cassis fruit, floral paste, orange reduction and lightly mentholated light, no shortage of buttery oak, overall what is discerned lasts well. Full-bodied, gets you working to swallow right off. By far the first thing you notice is the bright white grapefruit bite, sour and energetic. Then turns towards earthy, tarry notes with accents of underbrush. For the grape the acidity seems much more prevalent than tannin. Again, it's plum, black currant and cherry fruit and you can easily imagine prune in its future. More floral as it warms and that butter to butterscotch oak not as obvious here. Really grows on you. (Composite Cork) 90

Once & Future
Contra Costa County, Oakley Road Vineyard
Mourvèdre
2016, \$35.00, 14.5%
Plum purple, thorough mix of purple and ruby, with a bright more magenta aura at the rims, moderate clarity. Ripe nose of blueberry, cranberry, raspberry fruit, touch of leafiness and twigs, then potpourri and a thin coating of cocoa powder, nothing really "wooly" about it and comes across more as a juicy red wine per se. In the mouth it's full-bodied, spicier and with a noticeable uptick in sour mixed white citrus as well as sweet tea leaf. The dusty tannin makes an immediate impression, albeit it would have to be much more muscular to staunch the flow of the red cherry, raspberry, blueberry fruit. As it warms and opens becomes more floral. Nothing profound but utterly joyful to drink. 90

Once & Future
Sonoma County, Carneros, Sangiacomo Vineyard
Merlot
2016, \$55.00, 14.0%
Inky purple core, opaque and lively both, the rims thin yet vibrantly brooding crimson in hue. An initial waft of menthol and eucalyptus gets the nose to crest high

then it sweeps downward into firmly packed stony earth, dried orange peel, cowhide, garden herbs and witch hazel, has an extremely savory profile, enough so that what cherry, mixed dark berry fruit scents are there barely register. Full-bodied, nimble on its feet but you feel the heft shift with each movement. Sourly layered currant, cherry, boysenberry fruit nip at the tongue. Some cedar, sandalwood, general incense notes, the oak intelligently managed. The citrus here has more of a grapefruit bite. You sense the awakening of a floral dimension. Really warrants a lengthy decant today but even with that probably infanticide and deserves 15+ years of aging. 90

Bedrock Wine Co.

Central Valley, Mokelumne River, Schmiedt Road
Zinfandel

2016, \$31.00, 14.5%

Ruby and violet blend for a spotless core, easy to see through, the rims purer ruby with a pinkish cast. Stony and close to minerally nose, pepper spice and a curiously hard edged florality, the cranberry, rhubarb, strawberry scents light while clearly contoured, no unintended motion. Medium-bodied, admirable framing tannin and about as much acidity as you might be able to get out of the grape. Sandstone, loam and dry back road dirt set the table for tart red berry, blueberry, cherry fruit, no change in profile from the nose. Eucalyptus and wildflowers but minimal airy lift. Puts on a little more weight with air. Compact, consistent package, only issue is some astringency through the finish. (60% Katushas' Vineyard, 40% Kirschenmann Vineyard) 89

Nalle

Russian River Valley, Hopkins Ranch
Pinot Noir

2016, \$48.00, 13.6%

Rich violet core, saturated red magenta rims, good overall clarity with a decided youthful appearance. Equally young nose of cola bean, ground coffee, caramel and lemon sorbet, while has a roasty side to it the hard candy sweetness of the raspberry, strawberry, blueberry fruit steamrolls most in its way, no trace of herbaceousness or any real earthiness. Full-bodied, right now the acidity is buried in layers of toffee, caramel and close to jammy raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit. But it is there and if a lot of baby fat gets shed then there will be plenty of fruit left for the longer haul. Cola, black licorice and lemon peel closely resemble the nose, here though you get a modicum of earth. Tannin seems slight and unlikely to shape its future. Plenty of visceral pleasure today as long as the oak is acceptable. 89

Turley

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Cedarman
Zinfandel

2015, \$32.00, 15.6%

Gauzy purple core, wide red plum to magenta rims, not overly saturated. The nose features crushed blackberry, boysenberry fruit with a hint of green apple with a caramel, honey coating, foundation of dewy menthol, pressed flowers, nothing unique but hits all the ritual pleasure buttons. Medium-bodied, really soaks into the palate, acts like a wet sponge albeit it does dry out nicely at the finish. Orange marmalade, menthol, sage, basil, cinnamon, generally sweet but not necessarily sugary. The blueberry, raspberry, strawberry fruit has a good sour lift, this brightness lends it a refreshing quality. Not much change or development ahead but today it's a good medium weight Zinfandel for the dinner table. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma Valley, Bedrock Vineyard, Bedrock Heritage
Blend

2016, \$39.00, 14.6%

The purple core looks more fuzzy than impassively opaque, strong hue saturation in the crimson to brick red rims, overall does have a certain menacing look to it. The nose is packed unto immobility, when first opened there's a huge waft of buttered popcorn and toast, blows off in favor of wildflowers, spearmint, camphor, and leather, Italian plum, red cherry to cranberry fruit scents never quite shift into gear. Full-bodied, while you feel the tannic foundation the overall feel is soft and yielding, cotton balls of potpourri, ground ginger and cumin, momentary glances of indistinct citrus. In the final analysis quite primary and it's very difficult to get past the blackberry, cherry, blueberry fruit, albeit it's not especially sugary. Totally unsure what differences aging would bring to the fore. Approximately 50% Zinfandel, 20% Carignane, 4% Mataro, remainder unspecified percentages of Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Grand Noir de la Calmette, Tempranillo, Trousseau, Mission, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. 88

Harrington Wines

Regional Blend, Central Coast, Basket Pressed
Pinot Noir

2016, \$25.00, 13.4%

Scarlet to ruby red in color, only slightly darker at the core, clean but lacks real sparkle. Smoky, minerally nose with an earthiness reminiscent of summer heat baking damp black earth, touch of molasses as well as orange peel, squarish cherry, blackberry fruit scents which don't deflect approach but stay quiet. Medium-bodied, more white grapefruit to lemon citrus here and has the acidity to highlight this. Rugged profile which

plays up the muddy earth, stone components which start to suggest both volcanic rock and leather. In turn this firms up the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit and makes it seem less juicy than the ripeness at which it was picked. Not oaky but has that burnt campfire wood edge. Probably needs to be revisited and reassessed in 2-3 years. At that point might be judged to go further. Grapes sourced from Siletto Vineyard (San Benito County). 88

Harrington Wines

El Dorado County, Sumu Kaw, Subrosa Blend

2016, \$25.00, 13.2%

Dark garnet infused purple core, brighter cranberry red rims, good clarity and stops short of saturated glow. The nose takes some time to open and get going, then offers sour red berry to cherry fruit scents, meadow scrub and wildflowers, lemon zest, and notes of freshly tanned leather, leaves you the impression of an awkwardly young wine. Full-bodied, has adequate acidity with a very sturdy tannic structure that immediately imbues the wine with a muscular feel. So, while it has a base of strawberry, raspberry fruit it ends up with more of a darker fruit profile. Once in awhile you get a touch of cocoa powder and generalized toastiness. Likewise a sour white citrus component wafts in and out. As with the previous vintage, this comes off as a wine that needs a few years time to know what you have. 50% Syrah, 50% Mourvèdre. 88

Harrington Wines

El Dorado County, Sumu Kaw Alvarelhao

2016, \$25.00, 13.2%

Opaque blackish purple core with clear plum flesh red rims, something subtle about it makes it look like an older wine. Vague prune, fig edge to the nose, full without heaviness, violets and orange zest before stone and parched earth, interesting study in contrasts among the constitutive elements. Medium-bodied, the acidity puts a nice shock into it and prevents it from getting too chubby. Much bigger sour grapefruit to lemon citrus presence. Tar, tea leaf and earth set the stage for more restrained sour plum, cherry fruit. For its density finishes a bit short. There's something about it that feels old school "far east." Spices, tea, vaguely dried fruit, like a wine they'd serve on the Orient Express. 88

Turley

Regional Blend, Old Vines Zinfandel

2015, \$25.00, 15.5%

Crimson and brick red blended into a purple base, only slightly darker at the core, no sign of any blemishes

but there's something about which looks washed out. Minty nose with sweet lime and lemon zest, nice florality as well, the alcohol does send a shiver through the nostrils, does not smell excessively fruity, mainly lowkey blueberry, blackberry to red cherry scents, light accent of grill smoke appears if left open for awhile. Medium-bodied with good fluidity, the eucalyptus, menthol and lemon citrus here too make the initial appearance. The hard candy concentration makes the raspberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit sweet but not necessarily juicy. Not that smoky here, the oak shows restraint, some toast and caramel around the edges. The finish is on the weak side. Lacks an extra gear but fine for basic quaffing. 88

Husch

Anderson Valley

Pinot Noir

2016, \$22.99, 13.7%

Finger of deep tan, even surface, average retention, the lacing forms dispersed splotches without much stickiness. Coppery orange liquid with a very light haze, lots of active bubbles throughout the glass. Malty nose of cocoa powder, Ovaltine then white pepper, mown grass and tar resin, touch of orange citrus but minimal pineapple, peach, papaya fruit scents, the funkiness clouds over these. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with good firmness. Like the nose the first impression is of malts, chocolate, caramel leading into pie dough and croissant notes. Slight elevation in the apricot, peach, pineapple fruit, however, never gets all that juicy, dry in general texture. Mild grapefruit, orange accents stretch out from start to finish. No dank bite but there is that drying tingle. There's no tragic flaw here but it comes across as bland and lacking in decisive personality. (Composite Cork: D5) 88

Bedrock Wine Co.

Regional Blend, California, Old Vine

Zinfandel

2016, \$19.00, 14.4%

Small, flat blackish purple core with commensurately wide brick red rims, no blemishes or sediment to be found. More focus than richness to the nose, at times seems to close in on itself, earth, eucalyptus, and black bramble fruit and honestly not a hell of a lot more, leaves you scratching your head. Medium-bodied and closer to light, shows ample acidity and tannin, especially for its weight, and does manage to avoid any sense of underripeness. Mostly red fruit, raspberry, red cherry, strawberry with a touch of blueberry as well as green apple. Oddly, feels hotter on the palate than in the nose. No great amount of white citrus but it's there, the foundational earthiness persists throughout. Even the oak derived caramel and

butterscotch accents seems bound up. Not unenjoyable per se, however, there's no "ahh" moment. Approximately 88% Zinfandel, remainder unspecified percentages of Petite Sirah, Carignan, Alicante Bouschet, etc. Sourced from Bedrock Vineyard, Teldeschi Ranch, Sodini Ranch, Nervo Ranch, Katushas, Evangelho, Esola, Casa Santinamaria, Story Vineyards. 87

Conundrum Wines
Regional Blend, California
Blend
2015, \$19.99, 15.1%

Impenetrably black purple core, barely moves into extremely dark crimson ruby for thin rims. Menthol, butterscotch, molten caramel and floral dew in the nose followed on by superripe plum/prune and cherry compote fruit scents, big, blowsy and alcoholic. Full-bodied, some dusty tannin gives it a clumpy texture and no amount of caramel, butterscotch, milk chocolate can really smooth it out. On the whole though its density can't help but smooth things out. The manufactured feeling extends into the blackberry, blueberry, plum fruit. Packed with flavor, practically to a fault. Very mainstream. 1 liter bottle. (Screwcap) 86

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Bedrock Wine Co.
Sonoma County, Cuvée Karatas
Blend
2016, \$38.00, 14.1%

Deep gold and a bit flat but dark enough to fill the glass and then some. Vanillin influence to the nose with lemon sorbet, mint, rose water and sweet garden herbs, tropical papaya, pineapple, mango fruit scents give it a voluptuous nostril presence. Full-bodied and solidly layered, the acidity is quite nice to have even carved out a presence. Whipped cream and coconut here too lead with sweet orange to lemon citrus. Minty, lilacs and roses, but the spotlight stealer is all that mango, papaya, guava to pineapple fruit, just keeps on rolling forward. Cinnamon, nutmeg spice bubbles up through the finish which there is a good bit of pucker and a vague pétillant feel. Should integrate and age well. Mainly Sémillon (Monte Rosso Vineyard), remainder Sauvignon Musque (Ubaldi Vineyard). 91

Bedrock Wine Co.
Sonoma Valley, Compagni Portis Vineyard
Blend
2016, \$26.00, 14.2%

A touch dull, basic green-white to yellow straw hued, holds light well inside the glass, more warm than shiny. The nose opens with wet flower petals and mint before quickly veering into minerally smokiness and

rubber cement notes, gains some breadth via lemon curd, cantaloupe, pear, apricot to red apple fruit scents, taken as a whole more stiff than expansive. Full-bodied, not necessarily acidic but taut, not a lot of suppleness and give. That said, copious amounts of cinnamon to ginger spice, candied orange peel, lilacs and an echo of litchee nut. More bite to the fruit here, papaya, pineapple shading to honeydew, strawberry, kumquat. Performs ten times better as it closes in on room temperature. Suspect that a couple years of bottle age would harmonize it further. Unspecified percentages of Gewürztraminer, Trousseau Gris, Riesling, Roter Veltliner, Chardonnay, other. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.
Mendocino County, Cole Ranch, Erster Zweieiger
Zwilling
Riesling
2016, \$24.00, 13.0%

Lively green to white straw coloration, completely transparent and clean, bright enough to compensate for any lack of hue so as to catch your eye. Light touch of whipped cream and mint to the nose, releases into juicy lemon zest, wet chalk with hints of diesel fuel and pickle brine, not lacking for apricot, pear, red apple fruit scents, however, there is a certain reticence present. Medium-bodied, sets itself squarely and not shy about showing its structure. In the "trocken" style and dry and dense. Minty here as well with rose petals and mixed white citrus. Crisp apple, pear, to nectarine, pomegranate fruit flavors. Finishes short. Perhaps needs a few years to loosen up and be willing to dance more fluidly. 88

Bedrock Wine Co.
Sonoma County, Moon Mountain District, Chuy
Chardonnay
2016, \$35.00, 14.5%

Not dull per se but has a filmy glow to it, worn gold in hue with good thrust into the rims. Seems oakier when first opened with whipped cream, vanilla fudge and hard butterscotch candy accents, over time counterbalanced by lime juice, wet chalk and cantaloupe, peach, nectarine to pineapple fruit scents, lots of weight in the nostrils without feeling bogged down or sluggish. Medium-bodied, the oak has a leaner, crisper demeanor here which speeds up the pacing if doesn't quite translate into a less sweet wine. Confectionary lime and lemon citrus, powdered sugar and toast before any caramel appears. Strawberry notes appear among the red apple, peach, apricot to melon fruit flavors. Nothing special about the perceptible acidity. Well made but lacks the vibrant energy which would carry it over the long haul. 88

Sandlands

Regional Blend, California

Chenin Blanc

2016, \$24.00, 12.7%

Semi-washed out yellow gold color, a black light sort of glow enhances glass presence, blockish look. The nose at first is all violets and lilacs with some orange zest before the thicker butterscotch and heavy cream notes catch up, a dollop of brininess peps up the simply put apricot, peach, melon fruit scents, too plump as of yet to display any smokiness or stoniness. Full-bodied, hard to find much acidity thus it feels even rounder and chubbier. Despite this the length isn't great, you'd expect the momentum of the body to push it decisively through the finish line. More vanilla, white chocolate and caramel, really not sure where this comes from. Lemon and lime sorbet, juicy pineapple, melon, mango to apricot fruit, more sweetness than tartness. Here you do get a hint of sauna stone smoke at the end. Can see this becoming dry with minimal fruit over time. 50% Kirschenmann Vineyard (Mokelumne River), 50% Buddha's Dharma Vineyard (Mendocino). 88

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Arnot-Roberts

Regional Blend, California, Rosé

Touriga Nacional

2017, \$23.00, 11.5%

Bright metallic sheen to the pink-orange salmon hue, while the coloration is on the pale side it extends into the rims well, slight trace of fizz lingers on the glass. Round yet firm nose of red cherry, strawberry fruit which plays with the boundaries of ripeness, likewise the lemon pulp comes off as sweet, a few notes of orange pekoe teas, the thin coating of chalky dust does little to dose the party mood, becomes noticeably more floral as it warms. Full-bodied, the acidity moves across the palate like a steamroller and here ensures that any sweetness will be kept in check. Violets, orange blossom and a hint of whipped cream pretty it up. Attractive tang to the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit, overall leaves a more savory impression through the finish. More unbridled verve than precision, might gain more clarity with a year or so further in bottle. 90

OREGON RED

Vincent Wine Company

Willamette Valley, Eola-Amity Hills, Bjornson Vineyard

Gamay Noir

2016, \$27.00, 12.5%

The impenetrable darkness of the purple core immediately makes an impression, as does the

saturated cranberry red rims, certainly does not lack for color. Strong minerally earth component to the nose with a dense layer of blueberry, blackberry compote, mixed white citrus nibbles at the margins, likewise with air time it shows some florality yet overall it's a massive, block-like presence in the nostrils now. Full-bodied, has a great contrast of sweet and savory right from the start and the acidity is very nice and pushes a fast pace. Sour cherry, blueberry, blackberry to cranberry fruit verging at times on apple. More citrus, less minerally, accents of leather, sous bois but no funk. Extremely long finish. Merits revisiting in 2-3 years when it slims down some. 90

FRANCE RED

Bouland, Daniel

Beaujolais, Côte de Brouilly, Cuvée Mélanie

Gamay Noir

2016, \$26.99, 13.0%

Trim, clear ruby-violet color, consistent core to rims, plenty of youthful vigor without the saturation. The ash and sand in the nose steamrolled by black and blue berry fruit scents and grapefruit pith, moderates as dried meadow grasses, sandalwood incense and coal tar come into play, provides a glimpse into a tertiary driven future. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with firm tannin and acidity which tends to squeeze the palate, no doubt that it has the structure to age. Cranberry, blueberry to strawberry fruit continue its erect bearing. The incense, potpourri thing continues and verges on cedar. Oddly, the grapefruit, blood orange citrus gets lost in the shuffle. A real mouthful now, give it time for the structure to soften. 90

Texier, Eric

Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Brézème

Syrah

2016, \$23.99, 12.5%

Clean violet core yields easily to scarlet, blood red hues, unforced and seamless appearance. The nose is borderline feral with animal fur, merde, cowhide and dried blood notes, followed on oddly by sweet milk chocolate and mocha scents, then roasted cherry to strawberry fruit and mixed white citrus, youthfully energetic penetration. Medium-bodied with refreshing acidity which trims the body down further, very fluid and fast paced. Big jolt of electric white grapefruit to lemon citrus. Stony earth with leather and less of a savage profile than found in the nose. Even with all that acidity there's a sappiness to the persistently juicy cherry, raspberry, red currant fruit. A bit leafy through the finish. Needs food now, no brainer for at least medium term storage. 90

Chamiot, Romain
Savoie, Vin de Savoie
Mondeuse

2015, \$23.99, 12.0%

Flat purple core, plum red rims in turn a bit washed out. Initially there's some flatulence and wet animal fur to the nose, blockish in feel, slowly turns peppery with a forest breeze blowing through, tightens up as the grapefruit and sour cherry, red currant to cranberry fruit scents settle in. Medium-bodied, good tannic skeleton but the acidity really revs up things and provides the jolt. Leafy herbaceousness and a much larger in scale white grapefruit presence here. This allows stony earth and dried tar to weave in while that pepperiness builds in the background. The sour dark fruit adequate to the task without clamoring for attention, does finish a tad short, likely due to the structure. Lip smackingly savory and fresh. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 90

Lapalu, Jean-Claude
Beaujolais, Beaujolais-Villages, Le Rang du Merle
Gamay Noir

2016, \$41.99, 14.5%

The dark plum skin purple hue extends far into the rims, dull brick red at the outer edges, has a dull to filmy appearance. Showy and ripe blueberry, boysenberry, strawberry fruit adorn the nose, floral musk with supporting ginger and nutmeg spice, hint of cocoa, big and boisterous, leans heavily on those layers of fruit. Full-bodied, replete with a good level of tannin and acidity thus able to battle the slabs of raspberry, blueberry, strawberry compote. Similar profile to the nose with lemon peel, cinnamon led baking spices, some cocoa to mocha. Slowly develops a stony, earthier finish, however, so young right now that getting past the fruit is difficult. Can see it bringing out more leather or earth over time. 89

Lapalu, Jean-Claude
Beaujolais, Brouilly, La Croix des Rameaux
Gamay Noir

2016, \$39.99, 13.0%

Dark core of purple to garnet, the brick red rims come off as a bit flat, clear overall, never reaches opacity. The nose if offputting at first with band-aid and poop scents, eventually comes around to beef jerky, saline and pressed grasses but still sauvage, the ripeness of the cherry, red currant, blackberry fruit is layered and dense, loses expressivity as a result. Full-bodied with a fat muscularity, like a nose tackle, just plugs the middle. Much more floral in the mouth with extended white grapefruit presence too. Leather, mute poor brown dirt, and kindling smoke, loses all that funk. As in the nose, the fruit has a darker complexion of black cherry, boysenberry, blueberry. Some lavender and

licorice at the end. Even given its youth does not seem open and engaging. Check back in ten. 89

Chermette (Vissoux), Pierre-Marie
Beaujolais, Moulin-à-Vent, Les Trois Roches
Gamay Noir

2016, \$25.99, 13.0%

Cranberry red to purple in hue, the cleanliness and shine distracts from the darkness of the core, richly colored rims as well. Sour boysenberry, blackberry fueled nose with an almost mentholated lift, violets, mandarin oranges, finishes on a stony note, not lacking for flesh but there's no wasted motion. Full-bodied with a strong yet velvety grip, tannin has power to spare and more noticeable than any acidity, thus loses some refreshing potential. Pressed flowers, mukhwah and orange peel, no real inner mouth perfume so grinds to a halt prematurely. Softer cocoa powder accents tease out a touch more sweetness in the cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit. Certainly has the structure to age but not the sort of charm which heightens a sense of anticipation. 89

Fauterie, Domaine de
Rhône, Saint-Joseph
Syrah

2015, \$32.99, 12.5%

Opaque black core, somewhat broad crimson red rims with a mild browning at the outermost edges, good plus level of surface shine. Fair amount of flatulence and merde in the nose, tenacious and not eager to vacate, moving beyond this are crushed stone, ferrous minerality, violets and dried beef jerky, any citrus element relegated to the sidelines, the blackberry, black cherry scents come off as taut and sour, overall more orchestral warm-up noise than concerted action. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the attack is soft and round but as the liquid gets through the mid-palate the tannin clamps down and the acidity is not far behind. Retains that jagged mineral bite and sinewy game even as the white grapefruit citrus takes a bold step forward. More concentration to the blackberry, blueberry to currant fruit, more punctuated bursts than consistent presence. Would have benefitted from a lengthy decant today, if the fruit doesn't dry out should be drinking well in 7-8 years. 88

Nodin, Rémy
Rhône, Crozes Hermitage, Le Mazel
Syrah

2015, \$22.99, 13.0%

Full-on darkest possible purple core, thin blood red to brick red rims, clean insofar as you can tell. Rich nose of plum, cassis, violets, and floral dew, sweetens further via milk chocolate, caramel and ginger root nuances, so primary that it's impossible to tease out a

broader range of aromas. Medium-bodied, soft and round, produces ample violets and roses to pretty up the plum, cherry fruit which even this early hints at denser prune. The tannin is moderate. Touch of leather, campfire ash but here too it's noticeably primary and fruity today. Sour lemon and tea leaf able to tighten it up a touch at the end. But still no denying this is a chubby kid. 88

Foulards Rouge, Les
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de France, Le Fond de l'air
est Rouge
Cinsault

2017, \$20.99, 11.5%

Glowing violet to pink watermelon color, cloudy with a slight fizz on the pour which dissolves quickly, looks otherworldly. There's something about the texture in the nose which comes off like a wet cotton ball, some mineral and grassy snap before releasing a pleasing plump array of strawberry, rhubarb and blueberry scents, light kiss of lemon peel at the end. Almost light but more so medium-bodied due to the sticky mouth feel. No tannin to speak of, acidity gives it a pulse. Here the herbaceousness and sandiness sprints to the head of the pack, and heightens the sourness of the lemon, white grapefruit citrus. That strawberry, mixed red berry fruit starts off well but turns muted by the finish. Pretty much textbook natural wine. 88

Bouland, Daniel
Beaujolais, Morgon, Corcelette, Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir

2016, \$27.99, 13.0%

Scarlet red mixes fully with the purple base to lighten the overall hue, more fresh blood red at the rims, nice clarity as well as reflectivity. Dusty, stony, sandy nose with dried meadow grasses, leather and a touch of brine, gets higher toned as the white grapefruit pith and cranberry, red cherry fruit are released, still overall not all that expressive and one might hazard the guess that it's shutting down. Light to medium-bodied, the rugged tannic skeleton might make it feel weightier than otherwise. Fully ripened blueberry, raspberry, cranberry fruit, freshened up by sourness. Less citrusy here, more influenced by the sandstone dustiness, little evokes a sense of dampness. Tight weave to it, nary a hair out of place, perhaps come off a bit soulless as a result. 88

Thillardon, Domaine
Beaujolais, Chénas, Les Carrières
Gamay Noir

2016, \$26.99, 12.0%

Pours a cloudy but nevertheless brightly glowing ruby red color, starts to shade towards salmon pink at the rims, no sediment just gauziness. Nose somewhat

sandy to inert brown dirt, no real funkiness, dried orange peels, blueberry, boysenberry, mixed cherry fruit comes at you steadily before dissolving in a final lift. Medium-bodied and leaning towards full, there's a slight fizz, tickle to it which provides some relief. Wiry tannin more like a fish net than fist of iron, tends to restrain any underlying exuberance. Floral paste and concentrated orange to grapefruit citrus add flavor but not flow. Full ripeness in the sour raspberry, blueberry, cherry fruit, again flavor without any sugary qualities. Some brine and black tea leaf through the finish, no lack of pucker to it. 88

Dutraive, Famille
Beaujolais, Saint-Amour, Clos du Chapitre
Gamay Noir

2017, \$40.99, 14.5%

Gauzy cranberry to magenta red, not much more violet at the core, fully hued rims with zero drop off. Outdoorsy nose of garrigues, meadow grasses and scrub, damp mud and then some merde, all this pushes back the raspberry, strawberry fruit which is quite ripe and as the wine settles into itself more should come to the fore. Medium-bodied with a velvety layering on the palate, the acidic sting holds off until just when you swallow. Here too there's this matchstick to merde element and at times it feels fizzy. Grapefruit pith, pressed flowers and a spicy bite lead the way to the blackberry, raspberry fruit, the latter basic and straightforward. Runs kind of hot at the end, seems disjointed today but you have to trust in the hand of the producer, even in a difficult vintage. 88

Ladouys, Château Lilian
Bordeaux, Saint-Estèphe
Blend

2015, \$19.99, 13.5%

Vibrant purple core, likewise bright magenta rims, very youthful and saturated. Big fruity nose of blackberry, raspberry, cherry fruit, sandalwood incense and spice, develops more loamy earth, damp leather and slightly autumnal leafiness as well, should develop further. Medium-bodied, has a dusty tannic bite even though on the whole it's round and softish. Displays an orange citrus kick, cedar, potpourri, tree bark, pulverized stone, turns more rugged as it opens. The cherry, red currant, blackberry fruit is juicy through the attack yet dries up some by the finish. Good now, needs time though. 62% Merlot, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Verdot, 2% Cabernet Franc. 88

Grand Pré, Château de
Beaujolais, Morgon
Gamay Noir
2016, \$22.99, 13.0%

Filmy cherry red color, glows right into the rims, has a warm hum to it. The funk in the nose blows off quickly enough, still loamy earth and wet wool present a curious cornerstone, cranberry, blackberry fruit scents more dense than lifting, quiet mixed white citrus tones, in the final analysis not that much going on, youthfully plump. Medium-bodied, the acidity slims it down right out of the gate and then has sufficient tannin to clamp things down short of the finish. Tart cherry, strawberry to blueberry fruit average and not particularly juicy yet rolls forward well. Here the funk lasts well through to the end. Lemony with more stones and dried grassy matter than earth. Interesting in how it lacks brightness and verve with all the underlying structure which should bolster this. 87

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Vin de France, Raisins Gaulois
Gamay Noir
2017, \$15.99, 12.5%

Purple to cherry red, equally dark and clear, the hue runs fully into the rims. No nonsense nose of mixed berry fruit, pulverized stone and dusty earth, hint of bubblegum, too firm to lift or develop an airy perfume. Light to medium-bodied, quite tannic and arch, from the first sip does not come across as a friendly wine. That bubblegum touch remains but can't sweeten the tart raspberry, cranberry to red cherry fruit. Develops a lemony side here and an underlying grassiness pulls even with the stone and dirt. Given some time does come up with a credible patina of florality. Still, in the end, there's minimal give and flow and it swiftly becomes a chore to drink. (Screwcap) 86

FRANCE WHITE

Naudin, Claire
Burgundy, Vin de France, Le Clou 34
Aligoté
2016, \$37.99, 11.5%

Clean yellow straw color, consistent throughout if on the flat side. Nose of streamwater, violets, mandarin orange, nuts, mint and wet slate, the red apple, pear, peach skin scents thoroughly unblemished and refined, nothing out of place, this without seeming imperious. Light to medium-bodied, the acidity broad and insistent, has the energy to grab a fallen soldier and carry him miles to safety. Transparent lemon/lime inflected mineral water. Verve rather than rambunctiousness in the pineapple, nectarine, green apple, pear, kumquat fruit. Sour pucker at the end contributes to the lift. Good, long finish, very floral. 90

Benau, Domaine Julie
Languedoc/Roussillon, Picpoul de Pinet
Picpoul
2017, \$15.99, 13.5%

Solid richness to the golden hue, kind of dulls it out but does help it fill the glass completely, stays consistent into the rims. Lemon custard, honey and rose petals adorn the nose, mint and anise before warming some brings out the pear, apricot, yellow apple fruit scents, pungent in a simple, guileless manner. Full-bodied, its thickness would earn demerits yet has sufficient acidity to give it a nudge forward as needed. Nutty, floral and at times smoky, the bitter turn at the end a bucket of cold water on the party. Otherwise, honey, molasses, whipped cream, lemonade, lilacs and wet slate. As in the nose, for as sweet as it comes off the apricot, kumquat, pineapple fruit not sugary and does not lack for bite. Has the heft to pair with thicker sauces and bigger dishes in general. 88

Picard & Fils, Domaine Jean-Paul
Loire, Sancerre, Le Chemin de Marloup
Sauvignon Blanc
2017, \$20.99, 12.5%

Pale glow to the white to yellow straw hue, consistently flat from core to rims, visually innocuous. The nose starts off with pickle brine and mineral dust before veering off into bubblegum and white grape, banana, apricot scents, rose petals, minimal citrus presence, soft enough profile that it wouldn't immediately strike you as Sancerre. Medium-bodied, raucous acidity and herbaceousness creates an impression of underripeness, in clear contrast to the nose. As it warms the strawberry, apple, peach fruit gains strength. It has the chalky, mineral aspect you'd want yet oddly can't shake that weird bubblegum note. In the final analysis you feel pulled in too many different directions by it. 87

FRANCE ROSE

Baudry, Domaine Bernard
Loire, Chinon, Rosé
Cabernet Franc
2017, \$21.99, 12.5%

Nice salmon pink to orange coloration, has a metallic sheen but not all that shiny per se and easily transparent. Noticeably ripe nose, drips with cherry, raspberry to even strawberry fruit, the mixed white citrus on the soft side, does show the expected mineral and stone dust component and also offers a curiously compelling note of Genoa salami. Full-bodied and broad, complete palate coverage with a strong grip. The acidity and tannin both appropriate for a rosé and the producer rep. The lemon citrus sweet, nary a hint of white grapefruit. Again, full ripeness in the

cherry, raspberry to blackberry fruit. Stony but not minerally, no edge nor bite. A touch of flower water and cocoa at the end. Its chubby nature makes it a pleasure to drink but this is not a “classic” rendition of the bottling. Slim it down with an ice cold chill. (Composite Cork) 89

Lauverjat, Karine
Loire, Sancerre, Rosé
Pinot Noir
2017, \$16.99, 13.0%

Metallic salmon pink hue, light and transparent while consistent core to rim, nice sheen to it. Patina of minerality and pulverized stone, strawberry, green apple to Bing cherry fruit, lemon zest, stream water, excellent penetration yet dissolves on the more rapid side with a broadening vanilla extract note. Full-bodied, plenty of volume and layers itself before the acidity can get assertive and start to slice things into separate layers. Chalky, minerally with a pleasing dusty patina across the tongue. Sour sting of strawberry, raspberry, star fruit to kiwi. The acidity is excellent and arguably so powerful that it interrupts the flow as well as the ripeness of the fruit. The sour lemon citrus expands and expands through the finish. The extent to which it is erect and capable of penetrating right to the core is to its credit, albeit it may turn off a certain segment of the rosé crowd. (Composite Cork) 89

FRANCE SPARKLING

Minière F&R
Champagne, Absolu Blanc de Blancs Brut
Chardonnay
NV, \$58.99, 12.0%

Bright yellow color with a big maelstrom of bubbles, highly active throughout the glass, not much mousse in spite of this. Very lemony nose, minor accents of lime, the oak aging comes across like sour cedar, has an underpinning of chalk and mineral dust, saline, and whiff of brine, the pineapple, pear, peach scents linear with a curious lack of lift. Medium-bodied, dry and acidic, crackles across the palate. Super sour and here that oak aging really comes through with creamy vanilla, cedar and spice notes. Outsized lemon bite, quite chalky as well with a mineral water, quinine pucker. Semi-tropical profile in the fruit, pineapple, papaya, green apple to nectarine. Stains the palate and lingers in the mouth for an extremely long time. Anyone’s guess how this would age. (82% 2010, 18% 2009) 92

Moncuit, Pierre
Champagne, Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Brut
Chardonnay
NV, \$47.99, 12.0%

Sparkly white straw hue, not a great deal of mousse, flat surface with virtually no bubbles visible below. The nose is thick and almost viscous, offering pear, green melon, red apple to apricot fruit scents, brioche, a dappling of honey and seemingly out of nowhere a floral dew. Light-bodied, sweet and honeyed, possesses a lemon/lime reduction. Surprisingly active fizziness, tight and lasts through to the very finish. Lilacs, violets, mineral dust and chalk all play roles, overall does a good job of treading a middle ground between visceral pleasure and expressing a sense of terroir. The apricot, peach, pear to apple fruit proportionate to the whole. Everything is perfectly arrayed, however, some may find it too much on the sweet side. (Disgorged 7/2017) 90

ITALY RED

Grasso, Elio
Piedmont, Langhe, Gavarini
Nebbiolo
2017, \$21.99, 14.5%

Moderately purple at the core, overall more of a cranberry to watermelon red, bright and crystal clear. The nose is airy but direct and stays on point, red cherry to strawberry fruit, meadow grasses, brown dirt and a light mixed white citrus mist, appealing for its simplicity. Light-bodied and tannic, almost too light to not get strangled by said tannin. However, it’s also quite fluid and skips across the palate so it doesn’t get chained down. More strawberry, raspberry fruit, hard candy sweetness, more floral here with a refreshing lemony tartness. A modicum of tar and earth. Would likely be served best by 1-2 more years of bottle aging. A definite food wine and should prove versatile for the price. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc Select Green 100) 88

Baudana (Vajra), Luigi
Piedmont, Barolo, Barolo del Comune di Serralunga d’Alba
Nebbiolo
2013, \$55.99, 14.0%

Vivid ruby to red magenta color, really jumps out of the glass with a lot of youthful visual appeal. The nose starts off with poop, merde notes, quite rugged and earthy, not unyielding but not a lot of “give” either, a sort of mentholated lift releases more blackberry, raspberry fruit scents, unsure if it wants to be grounded and serious or be friendly. Medium-bodied, very tannic and practically shoves you away, yet at the same time it’s not the kind of tannin which with air still

prevents enjoyment. Herbaceous and leathery, doused campfire logs, more turbulent than settled on the palate. Super sour mixed white citrus component. Great thrust but sort of aimlessly powerful at this juncture, needs to get lost in the cellar for many years. 88

GERMANY WHITE

Bollig-Lehnert, Weingut
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Piesporter, Goldtröpfchen,
Spätlese AP #4
Riesling
2016, \$16.99, 8.0%
Nice pale glow to the white straw that takes on a worn gold aspect at some times, not especially weak rims. Wonderful smokiness on the nose, like a pungent sauna, close to tarry at times, just keeps spreading outwards, lemon peel, and then segues to powdered sugar, rose petals and apricot, peach, red apple fruit scents, keeps going on and on for some time. Medium-bodied, surprisingly firm with a broad acidic backbone, there's no slouching going on here. Stony and smoky but not as palpable as in the nose and the honey, molasses comes on strong to fill any open gaps. Tangerine, lime citrus brightens things well. Cherry, strawberry, peach, apple fruit deep and integrates with the savory side of the wine. Mineral to stream water finish without diminishing the fruit. The structure should take it way down the road, much longer than its humble price might suggest. (Screwcap) 89

Selbach, Weinkellerei
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Saar, Spätlese AP #11
Riesling
2017, \$12.99, 9.0%
Green glint to the alternating white or yellow straw hue, sufficient glow to not seem dilute in the glass, dull transparency. Suggestion of bubblegum weaves through the nose which is grounded in sweet lemon/lime citrus juice, dewy rose petals, juicy peach, apricot, pineapple and cherry fruit scents and a quiet undercurrent of sauna smoke, gets more honeyed if allowed to warm. Full-bodied, were it not for the borderline savage acidity it would come across as a bowl of fruit cocktail. Concentrated mango, pineapple, papaya, nectarine, peach to cherry fruit buttressed by pink grapefruit and lime citrus. The chalkiness tends to get caught up in the mix. Barest hint of warm rubber. These days hard to expect more character out of a wine at this price. 88

Eifel, Heinz
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Auslese AP #63
Riesling
2016, \$13.99, 7.5%
There's a steady glow to the white to green straw coloration, otherwise dull and lacking in shine. Soft smoke and chalkiness to the nose, not angular and certainly not in the way of the peach, apricot, pear, cherry fruit scents, throws some orange marmalade in there too. Full-bodied, the acidity is actually decent but the texture is so sticky and gobby that it has no chance. The point here is waves of tangerine, pink grapefruit and lime citrus closely followed on by fruit cocktail quality peach, apricot, melon, pear fruit. It does have its smoky, stony side and the aforementioned fruit is not sloppy or shapeless. It's just a well made, inexpensive wine for people who buy Riesling because it's sweet. (Screwcap) 87

GERMANY ROSE

Schlosskellerei Gobelsburg
Kamptal, Cistercién Rosé
Blend
2017, \$16.99, 12.0%
Pale pink hue, closer to orange than red, consistent appearance core to rims. Light dose of fine spun powdered sugar to the nose, floral with an element of mukhwass, inert stone, no grassiness nor real citrus presence, maraschino cherry and cut strawberries, holds its shape well in the nostrils. Medium-bodied plus, if colder the acidity gives it added weightiness on the palate. Here the tangerine, lemon citrus elevates, albeit in a sweeter fashion. Strawberry, rhubarb, apple fruit both sweet and tart. Stream water freshness lifts the finish and gets you moving towards the next sip. Never loses its edge but never feels arch or unwilling to engage. Unspecified percentages of Zweigelt, Sankt Laurent, Pinot Noir. (Screwcap) 89

Seehof, Weingut
Rheinhessen, Rosé Trocken AP #6
Spätburgunder
2017, \$14.99, 12.0%
Glowing metallic salmon pink color that gets closer to zinc at the rims, not that shiny and impresses more by the hue than visual sturdiness in the glass. Easygoing and approachable nose of plump strawberry, watermelon, red cherry fruit with a lemony touch close to soft drink confection, light suggestion of grassiness and asparagus, echo of chalky stone, the fruity softness its foremost attribute. In the mouth it's close to full-bodied and while there's no lack of acidity this is more about gushing across the palate with a heaping portion of lemon curd as well as strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit. Something like cocoa wafts in and out,

underneath the plump fruit is some wet chalk and limestone type notes. Overall, it's a simple but satisfyingly forward rosé that just wants you to like it without undue thought or analysis. (Screwcap) 88

SPAIN RED

López de Heredia, Bodegas R.

Rioja, Viña Cubillo Crianza

Blend

2009

\$21.99, 13.5%

Good clarity throughout, the purple has pretty much evacuated the core, leaves an open door for all of the rust red, metallic orange and yellow hues. Leather, muddy earth play off the black licorice, grapefruit and bracing minerality, at first there's coconut custard and caramel accents but these quickly fade, despite the substantial ripeness of the cherry, red berry fruit scents they do get lost in the shuffle. Light-bodied, the acidity over-assertive right from the start, huge pucker to it. Vanilla wafer and cedar get out in front of the extremely tart orange to grapefruit citrus. Tea leaf, tar, graphite, and shoe leather add dimension, The cherry, Italian plum to raspberry fruit high-toned but last better than the nose suggests. Probably want to give it a head start via a 1-2 hour decant. 65% Tempranillo, 25% Garnacha, 5% Graciano, 5% Mazuelo. 88

PORTUGAL RED

Aliança, Caves

Dão, Quinta da Garrida Reserva

Blend

2001

\$14.99, 13.5%

Looks a bit older than it is, purple core with ruby to scarlet tinted rims then have started to brown, very clear throughout. Borderline overripe nose of plum, prune, cherry, blackberry to date fruit, lavender, menthol and anise with a medicinal edge, the floral dimension starts out well but doesn't last, can be quite pretty if you can quietly focus on it. Medium-bodied, for what is there bottom heavy and hovers over the tongue. Credible tannin and then acidity, in no way shapeless or amorphous, does show some astringency at the end. Orange peel, menthol, witch hazel, tries to lift but the gluey quality of the plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit too much. Nagging sense of underripeness haunts it but on the whole smooth and easy to drink and not just fruit. 70% Touriga Nacional, 30% Tinta Roriz. 87

PORTUGAL WHITE

Ameal, Quinto do

Vinho Verde

Loureiro

2016, \$12.99, 11.5%

Golden hay color, more brownish cast than green, dull and for the most part visually lifeless in the glass. Initial touch of honey and vanilla in the nose yields to mint, lemon zest and pressed flowers, can be stony but not consistently, the peach, apricot, pineapple to green apple scents scrub your nostrils raw. Medium-bodied, in particular due to the brawny acidity, both cuts and bruises the palate. Tangy lemon to grapefruit citrus and seems to alternate between stoniness and grassiness. The pineapple, papaya, apple, apricot fruit is so sour that the pucker shortens the finish. All this noted, it's not meant to impress via fruitiness but via raw, crackling energy. The aforementioned note of honey does linger nicely through the finish. 88

CHILE RED

Luyt, Agrícola Louis-Antoine

Maule Valley, Pipeño Coronel de Maule

Pais

2017, \$19.99, 14.0%

Light gauziness to the ruby pink watermelon color, fully hued right to the rims, brings a certain visual warmth. Musky floral perfume, honey, tinge of grassiness and lemon peel, however, the main component is strawberry, rhubarb, raspberry fruit albeit sufficiently openly knit to not seem "fruity" per se. Medium-bodied and close to full, not afraid to take up space and make itself at home. Just as floral here with a mix of sweet lemon to white grapefruit soft drink element. Not grassy here, more like hay, muddy earth and clay, feels neutral. This leaves plenty of room for the strawberry, raspberry to persimmon and kiwi fruit to get all juicy. That said, there is some tannin which shows nicely through the finish. Good to chug but not all that simple. 1 liter bottle. (Composite Cork) 88

Luyt, Agrícola Louis-Antoine

Itata Valley, Pipeño Portezuelo

Pais

2017, \$17.99, 12.3%

Purple bruise hued core, moves just into opacity, wide and washed out ruby rims, nothing unusual here. High-toned nose of rhubarb, boysenberry and green apple fruit, offers leather, shoe polish, potpourri and nutmeg as well, there's no real funk to it and it remains sufficiently off-center to keep you coming back to it. Full-bodied and juicy through the attack and then appears tannic enough to dry out moving forward, like wringing out a wet towel. Here the leather verges on

animal fur and gets close to foxy. Leaves the mouth with a sandy texture, neither really rough nor smooth. White grapefruit perks up the otherwise sluggish plum, black cherry fruit. In no way green, if anything shows an inclination towards turning floral. Basic quaffing wine. 1 liter bottle. (Composite Cork) 87