

## *The Hanes Wine Review, November 2005 Edition*

Well, the holiday season is almost upon us. Ain't that grand? In expectation of the drudgery of fulfilling many customers' orders, Hanes thought he would briefly discourse on the phenomenon of giving wine as a gift.

This breaks down into two basic areas. First, there's gifts one gives to a friend, family member or other loved one. Second, there are corporate or business-related gifts. With the first, it's a gesture of the heart, an expression of caring intended to reward or provide the means for celebrating special moments. With the second, it's a gesture of thanks for providing major business for one's own business, for keeping one out of jail, or to suck up in hopes of getting a promotion of some major coin down the road. At first glance one would think it's the former which would be easier for the salesperson and more personally rewarding for a job well done. Well, nertz to that, most of the customers in the former camp are a pain in the ass. Here's why.

Wine's a peculiar thing, as we all know. There's a zillion types of grapes, grown all over the blessed earth. Some are red, some white. Some full-bodied, some light-bodied. Some acidic, some fruity. And so on. The upshot being there's waaaaay too much choice, *especially* when one is trying to give a gift which is meaningful and hopefully well chosen. So the poor schlub working in the wine store is screwed from the start. It's like this. Customer walks in. Wants to get a gift. A good salesperson asks many of these sort of questions: Red or white? Full or light? Young or aged? Do you know any grapes or regions the recipient likes or (more importantly) hates? Naturally, 9 out of 10 customers don't have the answer to any of these questions. So, you're flying in the dark.

Then there's the *really* important part — how much is the customer willing to spend? Either (a) they never have figured this out before or more likely (b) they think they'll be able to get Lafite for like \$15. But unless this can be figured out quickly, the salesperson is looking at a 15+ minute encounter during the heaviest season of the year when the store is packed with other customers who also need help. Sweet.

OK, Hyperbolic Hanes is on the job here, sure. But, still. Let's say we're able to get it out that the customer wants to buy a bottle in the \$30 - \$40 range. Cool, that's a start. Then you can narrow it down some by getting past the red versus white wine question. Making some progress here. You try to size up the customer. After all, they're friends so hopefully if you can figure out what type of wine buyer the customer is, maybe this will help pick out the right gift bottle for the friend. God help you if the gift recipient is supposed to actually know something about wine because this just cost you an extra ten minutes with this one customer (when you should be in the back room downing scotch to get through the day). It comes out — the recipient likes Bordeaux and hates Italian wines. More progress. Does this person have a cellar? Err, no. So, should you recommend a nice wine for \$40 which is only ten years too young to drink? Or a lesser wine that isn't as "fab" of a gift but at least won't rip enamel off teeth? There's an existential crisis going on here.

If you pose this question to the customer you might as well be running down a deer at midnight. You get the same frozen look. That's what YOU are there for, asshole sales clerk. Just make the choice perfect and stop asking me questions. So, you as clerk smile and nod attentively and end up picking a wine that you have no clue about in terms of its suitability. The temptation is always to go with a "safe" call. Either a well-known brand name or something like a Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon or Chardonnay, something that may not thrill be at least won't piss off the gift recipient. Even if you could pick out an hundred more interesting wines in a second. Then you have to really focus, put on your "game face" and look the customer in the eye and authoritatively state that after much soul searching and wringing of hands you have found the *perfect* choice. There can be no hesitation. In fact, it's best to announce this factual resolution and just start walking to the register to get the bottle paid for and gift wrapped. If you can't bluff and bully get out of retail, sonny.

Look, the facts is that unless you really know wine, don't need help picking anything out, and, better, know the recipient's taste in wine, wine is a crappy gift to give. Better to stick with socks or a CD or a gift certificate to Bed, Bath and Beyond or something. Hanes knows that everyone likes wine. It's just that everyone likes *different* wines and that's a problem.

Unless the customer decides to go the hyper-lame route. Yes, it's the ultimate Lowest Common Denominator wine gift. It can only be... a bottle of Veuve Clicquot Champagne! Yeehaw!

HELLO, A \$10 BOTTLE OF PROSECCO THAT'S BEEN SITTING IN THE WINDOW FOR SIX MONTHS TASTES BETTER THAN VEUVE CLICQUOT!

Ahem. Which is a good segue to corporate purchases. These can actually be fun for a whole host of reasons. First, you do get to foist cases and cases of Veuve Clicquot onto people you probably wouldn't like anyway. Bonus! If not, here's the opportunity you've been waiting all year for, to dump expensive, poorly chosen purchases by the store wine buyer. Remember back in June when that 10 case drop of \$100 Cabs from the subpar vintage arrived and you wondered how in hell you were going to move a single bottle? Or why any retail store wine buyer would load up on 1998 Brunellos when everyone wanted the 1997s and 1999s? Here's your answer. The buyer is waiting for a call from some secretary at Mega Investment Bank whose boss, Big Swinging Dick, wants to send special bottles of wine to his pals and clients as holiday gifts. (Rather than host another big holiday party at Scores like last year. Gotta be different, you know!)

The secretary is clueless and overworked. This person just wants to dump it all in your lap and no one cares how much it costs. It's all going to be expensed anyway. Here's the price range, the names and addresses and I'll messenger over the cards that go with the bottles. Just make it happen before December 25th.

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Expensive, off-vintage close-outs from wholesalers are the manna from heaven when it comes to corporate holiday gifts. It's like shooting fish in a barrel. In this case, an under-fruited and over-oaked barrel. And the wine store increases their margin by a huge amount. As it goes, any retail wine establishment makes the lion's share of their annual revenues during November and December. And these kind of corporate gifts are a major reason why.

OK, Hanes, this is so depressing that when I read it I don't even want to ever drink a glass of wine again, never mind give wine as a gift. Can it possibly be this dismal? After all, I trust *my* retailer! He ain't no Slim Shady! No doubt, this may be the case but said retailer is still operating a for-profit entity and still has kids to put through college. And knowing which wines *you* like to buy through the year isn't going to help her/him choose a special gift bottle for someone s/he has never encountered. And this person has still bought clunkers throughout the year which need to be moved. It's like that anywhere and probably no different in many respects in anyone else's own industry. There's no reason why a retailer is going to be able to hit the bulls-eye for someone s/he's never met nor why s/he would use her/his highly allocated case of a rare, highly desired wine as corporate gifts — particularly when regular customers are begging for even one bottle.

So, really, unless you have some kind of strange fetish for silver Mylar and red ribbon it may be best to leave wine gifting well enough alone. But if you don't at least now you know where 1998 Opus One goes to die...

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**This month's big winners...** OK, Hanes can be generous, never doubt that. So, in this spirit let it be said that not *every* 2003 Châteauneuf-du-Pape sucks, the Vieux Télégraphe is OK. Thanks for listening. Hirsch from Kamptal, Austria has a winner in their 2004 "Zöbing" Riesling, all cut and angles and vectors. If Dolcetto is your bag, Giacosa's 2004 "Falletto" estate bottling is gonna be sure to please for around \$20 or so (the purchased grape Dolcetto bottling is in Hanes's on-deck circle). Alsace doesn't seem to be on Hanes's radar screen these days but the 2002 Kreydenweiss Riesling from the Andlau Vineyard was easy to chug. Unfortunately he only had one glass. Charles said it first and Hanes will give him props, the 2001 Bandol from Pradeaux is serious juice and needs many years in a dark, cold cellar. Hanes really liked their white wine so he was jazzed up to try Quenard's 2004 red from the Savoie and made from the Mondeuse grape. It's a good wine and all but someone's gotta make sure all these wine geeks stop eating heavily sugared cereal in the morning, they are awful excitable. Delightful, thy name is spelled 2004 German Kabinetten! From Schaefer to Weil to von Buhl Hanes enjoyed quite a few this month and looks forward to trying more. For \$18 one of the more affordable high quality Pouilly-Fumé wines Hanes has encountered in awhile is the 2004 Blanchet "Cuvée Silice." Very refreshing. Ugly label. Hofer's 2004 Grüner Veltliner "Vom Satz" is definitely worth the search even if this producer is new to the U.S. and may not be that easy to find.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** Dalicieux's 2004 Beaujolais-Villages "La Jacarde" is just such a nice, crisp, pretty bottle of wine that you want to call it nice, crisp and pretty. And all for a little over \$12. Not sure if this really counts as a recommendation but for the low, low price of \$8.49 you probably won't find a more potable Pinot Noir wine than Pepperwood Grove's 2004 "California" bottling. The 2001 Rodáno Chianti Classico is finely crafted and satisfies for \$15. From the négociant wing of the bidness, Selbach's basic "Fish Label" Kabinett Riesling is good value at \$13 or so. Err, maybe even better than Selbach-Oster's more expensive vineyard designate Kabinetten. If you want a juicy, just for fun fruit bomb then look no further than the 2003 Quinta de Cabriz red "Colheita Seleccionada" from Dão, Portugal. For \$7 it's hard to beat.

**And the disappointments...** A few more overly juicy, diffuse 2003 red Burgundies were consumed, not worth typing about them twice. Hanes loved their 2004 Gavi but Ulivi's 2003 Barbera "Mounbè" was no moonbeam. With all due respect for hard work and attention to the art of winemaking, when will New York State wineries just rip up all the Pinot Noir planted? Until this fateful day and in the short-term you might want to avoid Jamesport's 2003 "Sarah's Hill" from the North Fork and Wagner's 2003 "Reserve" from the Finger Lakes. Two humble Bordeaux Supérieur reds are worth passing on, the 2001 from Parenchère and the 2002 from Jonqueyres, should be better similar juice out there at the price. Right? Gulp. Well, the 2000 Bel Air from the Haut-Médoc is worse. Again, not bad wines per se but as the price of Chablis keeps rising one has to factor that in when recommending a wine or not. So it goes with the 2004 Chantemerle from the Fourchaume Vineyard and Fèvre's intro level "Champs Royaux" bottling. Will Hanes ever see a top notch \$15 Chablis again in his lifetime? On the other end of the Dolcetto spectrum, Hanes was once more unmoved by Boschis's "Pianezzo" bottling, this time with the 2004. But, to be fair, it is \$5 cheaper (25%) than the stellar Giacosa. Hanes desperately wants to have his mind changed but, of late, the wines he has tried from Austrian producer Jamek have been ho-hum. Their 2004 Grüner Veltliner "Stein Am Rain" Federspiel gets added to this sad list. A candidate for "worst wine of the autumn," Nugan Estate's winemaker has to ditch the crack pipe and stop foisting artificially tasting beasts like the 2004 "Wally's Hut" Shiraz on an unsuspecting populace.

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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.

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

**Tagline #16:** "I think I saw Hanes spit once back in 1967!"

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

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

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

### CALIFORNIA RED

Russian Hill  
Russian River Valley, Tara Vineyard  
Pinot Noir  
2002, \$39.99, 14.4%

The trim, light red ruby color comes with generous surface sparkle, only mild hue fade at the rims. Displays palpable lemon and cola scents in the nose with cherry cough drop and raspberry pie fruit notes, a fine earthy/grassy dimension, the mineral dust keeps the nostrils dry too. Medium-bodied, its smoky attack features minerals and a noticeable white grapefruit to orange citrus edge. Tea leaf, straw and tar accents give it even more breadth. Has minimal oak toast and what is there remains knit into the overall fabric. The spicy raspberry, red cherry, blueberry fruit stays compact and long. The acidity adds some turbulence but in a good way. Nice stuff. 89

Sebastiani  
Sonoma County  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2002, \$15.99, 13.5%

The dark purple core is clear yet attains some opacity, duller brick red to crimson around the rims. Huge vanilla cream and mintiness in the nose, butterscotch too, there's a mentholated feel in the red cherry, currant, blackberry scents, maybe, just maybe hints of orange citrus and garden herbs but that's it. Medium-bodied, while semi-artificial in feel it does remain fluidly smooth and without any rough patches nor alcoholic heat. Dark chocolate, tangerine citrus, mesquite smoke and then a big return of that vanilla cream, toffee like Heath bar candy. Not that tannic but not that sweet either, straightforward presentation of the cherry, currant, plum fruit. The finish is a little diffuse and short, if not outrageously so. No surprises here. 77.6% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, 4.3% Cabernet Franc, 4.6% Barbera, 1.5% Zinfandel. 87

Justin Vineyards & Winery  
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2003, \$23.99, 14.5%

Strong scarlet glow in the purple core, the luminescent burnt red rims brightened by a touch of ruby. Manages its alcohol decently in the nose, leans hard on its smoky, toasty blackberry, black cherry, red currant fruit for maximal impression, no slouch in the coconut and popcorn

department either, has more of a fresh gamey edge than more predictable leather or earth scents. Full-bodied, ripe and extracted, no time wasted in squeezing all that currant, red cherry, blackberry fruit onto your tongue. Really have to give the tannins credit for getting a word in edgewise against all the oak-inspired caramel, popcorn, buttered toast. The leather, tar, game and grapefruit citrus a stronger presence here, particularly past the mid-palate. Still, ends on a decided sweet note. 87

Avalon  
Napa Valley  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2003, \$11.99, 13.8%

Zero murk, medicinal red to purple core, dark without being opaque, heavy crimson-ruby rims, little light getting through anywhere. Mint, butterscotch, caramel bloom in the nose, sure, but not really an oak-fest, offers mixed white citrus, just a little sour edge in the currant, cherry, blackberry scents which gives it more life. Medium to full-bodied, OK it's four-square but, shit, it's supposed to be. Has mint, menthol, caramel, vanilla, same thing as in the nose, oaky but not O-A-K-Y. Offers some lemon, orange citrus, even without the aid of much acidity. Evenly paced, few meaningful highs or lows. Hits you with some mesquite smoke and leather however no getting around the cherry, blackberry fruit. The finish is succinct, doesn't keep mumbling, knows when it's said all it can say. 87

Row Eleven  
Santa Maria Valley, Viñas 3  
Pinot Noir  
2002, \$27.99, 14.3%

Ruby-violet in color with enough depth to obscure the clarity, the red rims possess a mild incandescence. Juicy nose of blackberry, black cherry, raspberry fruit, the candied feel countered by smokiness, toast and lemon peel shades, softened as well by a cocoa dusting. Full-bodied, even more lemony in the mouth and it is a good thing since there's an overripe quality to the cherry, blackberry fruit as well as a hint of tomato skin. Does produce a mint/menthol thing which lends it a little prettiness. The acidity and tannins a touch tough and bring out a bitter edge in the dark chocolate and mocha notes. Full finish, true, but full of just what remains the lingering question. 86

Pepperwood Grove  
Regional Blend, California  
Pinot Noir  
2004, \$8.49, 13.5%

Lighter violet core carries a strong ruby stripe, has pure red rims if loses some color concentration. The nose is

more smoky than out-and-out toasty, ginger spice covers up the majority of the herbaceousness, good deal of grapeyness in the cherry, plum scents, however not a long presence. Medium to full-bodied, in the mouth it is more jagged with a serrated blade feel in the acidity as well as much higher herbaceousness. Cinnamon and ginger spice, orange/lemon citrus, tree bark and leaves add bite in the center, gains a measure of turbulence. Bottom-heavy and semi-stewed quality in the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, the juice and sweetness is front-loaded which contributes to a blockish finish. All this aside, it's a Pinot for \$8.49 and as such ain't bad. Grapes sourced from 54% Santa Maria, 26% Sonoma County, 14% Mendocino, 6% Napa. 85

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Lolonis  
Mendocino County, Ladybug White Cuvée | Old Vines Blend  
NV, \$12.99, 13.0%

Sparkly, but there's a washed out quality to the yellow gold color, almost with a brownish cast, drops off a good bit at the rims. It's not herbaceous per se but there's something about the nose which suggests the outdoors, could be the florality, probably not the licorice nor the orange cream, not the apricot, peach, yellow apple scents either. Medium-bodied, has a decent degree of acidity to give form to the lemon, orange citrus, rosewater, anise seed, fennel accents but somehow still can't shake this creamy texture which in no way tastes oak-derived. Not round nor soft but there's a juicy approachability in the apricot, peach, pear, melon fruit. Really messes with you head because there's like zero wrong with it yet you can't develop any interest in it. Unspecified percentages of Colombard, Sémillon, Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay. 86

Foxglove  
Edna Valley  
Chardonnay  
2004, \$12.99, 14.2%

Presents a pale yellow-brown color, very sparkly and not entirely hueless at the rims. Highly floral nose of orange blossom, lilacs with lemon cream pie, apricot and peach fruit, hint of honey, nothing else offered but nothing else really needed either. Full-bodied, given that it's done in stainless steel with no oak contact the creaminess must come from somewhere, perhaps malolactic fermentation. Lilacs, violets, orange blossom create most of the attack with a bitter nut, clove follow-up. While bright, the apricot, peach, pear, red apple fruit only manages to push through to the mid-palate. The lack of oak makes the acidity more perceptible too, so while it's not all that strong it does become a factor. With the fruit's ripeness and without the oak it is funny to say but it seems unbalanced. 85

## NEW YORK RED

Rivendell  
Long Island, North Fork, Reserve  
Merlot  
2002, \$23.99, 12.5%

Deep ruby-purple in color, good saturation through to the red-magenta rims, while dark remains mostly clear. Rich grip in the nose of indulgent plum, blackberry, cherry scents, orange-infused dark chocolate, cinnamon stick, cigar ash, minerals, leather, real easy to keep sniffing. Full-bodied, round in its texture but not soft per se, has enough tannins and dry spice to cut a few grooves. Turns drier as

it progresses, producing cinnamon, orange zest, fresh cedar and tobacco, there's a fluffy feel in the earthiness. Curious green apple touch to the red cherry, red currant, blackberry fruit, brightens it nicely, subtle undercurrent of acidity helps a good deal here too. Holds its weight well through the finish, sweetened a tick by a milk chocolate layer. Satisfying in a non-intellectual manner. 88

Schneider  
Long Island, North Fork, Hermitage Clones  
Syrah  
2004, \$24.99, 13.1%

Bright ruby-violet core, nicely clear ruby to dark magenta rims, pinkish tinge too. Bracingly sour nose of cranberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit, big grassy component, bright lemon citrus too, the oak toast most prevalent during the final moments of dissolve. Medium-bodied, has a steely feel, impenetrable even if the flavors are clear and guileless. Lemon grapefruit citrus and white mineral powder but spring into its step. The acidity is keen-edged with sharp bite. The herbaceous flavors grow as it progresses. Penetrating power to the raspberry, blackberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit, makes up well for its lack of expressive juice. Creates enough tingle on the tongue during the finish to start getting sore. 87

Macari  
Long Island, North Fork  
Cabernet Franc  
2003, \$22.99, 12.6%

The washed out purple core really more based on red-crimson hues, while unblemished it's more reddish to brick in color at the rims, vivid throughout. The nose betrays a mild reduced quality with tomato, plum, currant, cherry and earth scents most obvious, fainter nutmeg and allspice, very little herbal notes more milk chocolate and a spritz of lemon/orange citrus, fairly indistinct yet a good nostril filler. Full-bodied, the attack is on the sour side with raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit and cola and orange/grapefruit accents, along with some herbaceous notes throws a curious assemblage at you. Dense acidity, the tannins more of a minor factor. Parcels out minerals, stones, straw and hits moments of olive pit then the candied aspect sweetens the fruit and makes the finish softer and more open. Seems to always be on the move. 87

Clos Thérèse, Le  
Long Island, North Fork, Comtesse Thérèse Traditional  
Merlot  
Merlot  
2002, \$19.99, 13.5%

Fat core of ruby-violet, solid hue density throughout with a still youthful ruby to garnet color at the rims. Velvety grip in the nose, mocha chips, sweet currant, black cherry, blackberry scents, dashes of cinnamon, caramel and mint further betray the toasty oak element, very little else offered. Full-bodied with concentrated currant, black cherry, blackberry fruit, extracted to get out whatever juice was possible. Unveils orange citrus tang, tobacco leaf, brown earth, stone and seawater notes, a good thing they hit the scene early because that oak toast, toffee and vanilla fully dominate the center. Sweet smoke and a touch of that mint come on too, ensuring it remains fully in the realm of recognizability. Not a slam dunk crowd pleaser but most people should find something to enjoy in it. 87

Channing Perrine  
Long Island, North Fork, Mudd Vineyard, Old Vine  
Merlot

2002, \$24.99, 12.5%

The black purple core is of mild opacity, turns to a soft red crimson around the rims. The nose begins with a blast of merde and sulfur-like notes, good roundness in the plum, cherry, currant scents complemented well by earthiness and a bit of minerals and leather before vanilla and a waft of menthol, not complex but has good depth in all the scents. Full-bodied, same thing as in the nose, credible opulence in the flavors but little difference among them. Spicy touch to the plum, currant, red cherry fruit, swipe of white grapefruit juice too. Leather, merde, barnyard hay and earth make for a concentrated center. The tannins rumble about yet they remain fluid and help things move along. Cedary tones swell during the finish. 87

Jamesport

Long Island, North Fork, Sarah's Hill  
Pinot Noir

2003, \$18.99, 13.0%

Very light, has a yellow-brown hue insinuated into the cough syrup red, dull and fades appreciably at the rims. Smoky, ginger and clove-driven nose, slight powdery feel in the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry scents, minor notes of orange zest and cocoa powder, very low levels of herbaceousness and not terribly oaky either. Light-bodied, dull acidity and tannins ever-present yet in a filmy kind of way. The lack of body brings out more vanilla flavors, partially covering up some of the orange and lemon peel as well as strawberry, raspberry flavors. Again, herbal tones are light, here this actually shortens its mouth presence. Some stone/pebble allusions appear past the mid-palate, helps to maintain cleanliness, its best attribute. Nothing wrong with it, it's just not there very long. 85

Wagner

Finger Lakes, Reserve  
Pinot Noir

2003, \$19.99, 12.6%

Noticeably pale pin-ruby color, achieves a high level of transparency, certainly dilute around the rims. Toasty, semi-burnt aspect to the nose, then creamier as the raspberry, blackberry scents evolve, digs up some caramel, clove and lemon peel and gets full enough to dissolve in a blunt manner. Light to medium-bodied, its tacky texture helps it develop grip and add some more weight. Serves measured portions of lemon, orange and almost grapefruit citrus, dry and short bursts of clove and cinnamon spice. The acidity is strong enough to tighten things up and bring out a minor swipe of alcoholic heat. Sour edge in the red cherry, raspberry flavors make the fruit more noticeable. Finishes on the weak side, increasingly herbaceous as well. 84

## NEW YORK WHITE

Wölffer

Long Island, The Hamptons, Reserve  
Chardonnay

2002, \$18.49, 12.5%

There's a mature wine glow in the dark golden color, block-like without much surface shine nor layers, stays nicely consistent to the rims (as a block would). Finely keen oak toast in the nose, very angular and cutting with just a touch of buttered popcorn, more lime juice, clove spice and then, err, more oak and then, err, apricot, peach, pear

fruit. Medium-bodied, zero change from nose to palate, more oak-driven popcorn, butter, toffee and sharp spice flavors plus that lime juice thing. Not sure you want to attribute its crispness to any acidity over the sharpness of the oak, but there is an angular character in the apricot, peach, apple fruit here. Develops a certain mintiness as it finishes, aids a fresh feel but basically it remains monochromatic throughout. 86

## FRANCE RED

Dalicious, Domaine

Beaujolais, Beaujolais-Villages, La Jacarde Vieilles Vignes  
Gamay Noir

2004, \$12.49, 12.5%

Light vermilion to beet purple in color, absolutely spotless, like a just cleaned pane of glass. The nose is all sparkling fresh strawberry, raspberry, cranberry fruit, squeezed lemon juice and tiny washed pebbles, no false attempts at complexity, just wants to get you salivating. In the mouth it delivers on its promise, medium-bodied and while it has the tannic and acidic structure to require you take it seriously there's still all that lovely strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit to suck on. Has the lemon citrus as well but the stoniness and minerality get ratcheted up a notch and there's added earthiness and allusion to gaminess. Shows a dry snap, crackle and pop on the finish that gets your mouth watering for more. Very well done wine. 91

Vieux Télégraphe, Domaine du

Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, La Crau  
Blend

2003, \$47.99, 14.5%

Very clear violet core, mostly garnet and developing stronger orange tinge nearer the fully hued rims. Intensely concentrated nose, very sweet prune to plum, black cherry, blackberry jam scents, cinnamon and ginger spice, orange zest, incipient touches of grilled meats, just-tanned leather and salt lick. Full-bodied, smooth entry with some tannic grit and a peppery note. Very lush, velvety feel to the raspberry, blackberry, blueberry fruit, soaks in without losing all firmness. Orange citrus, milk chocolate, garrigues, lavender, hay components fit in without skipping a beat. Tannins have had most greenness or steminess massaged out of them. Resists becoming too heavy or lazy, keeps managing to inch forward even if without any particular goal in mind. 65% Grenache, 15% Mourvèdre, 15% Syrah, 5% Cinsault. 90

Pradeaux, Château

Provence, Bandol  
Mourvèdre

2001, \$35.99, 15.0%

The purple core takes on a medicinal cast through the red to orange crimson tinge, holds tenaciously to its color depth throughout, no fliminess at all. Has that typical lead cannonball feel in the nose, wet wool, orange peels, lavender oil, moist forest floor growth/earth, the black currant, elderberry, cranberry fruit scents have a picked from the wild nature. Medium-bodied, again typically backward and all but impossible to judge in its youth. It's like the tannins leapt out of the glass and coated your tongue before your first sip. If you can chew on it without breaking your teeth you'll find lemon peel, garrigues-led floral notes in addition to dried wax, cedar and tobacco stems. White grapefruit accents adorn the stolid currant, cherry fruit. As it closes in on the finish there's more and

more kindling smoke touches. Buy it, store it, forget you own it. 90

Clos Rougeard  
Loire, Saumur-Champigny  
Cabernet Franc  
2001, \$34.99, 12.5%

Pure ruby core darkened by a violet tinge, more of a reddish magenta glow around the broad rims. Bell pepper, tobacco leaves, salt, leather, merde, lemon peel all appear in the nose, has a freshness that keeps its rusticity loosely knit, the toastiness is on a slow boil underneath the dark currant, blackberry scents, overall compact with good punching power. Medium-bodied, the acidity gives the screws a few good twists to ensure the structure is tight. More directness here in the minerality and stoniness, overshadows both the crisp toast and bell pepper/grass accents. Tobacco leaf, tar, leather and lemon to white grapefruit citrus make more than a credible appearance. A bit sappy at first opening, the cherry, blackberry, currant fruit wrapped tightly thereafter into a concentrated beam. The tannins and the aforementioned acidity make it squeeze your tongue roughly on the finish. 90

Clos du Tue-Bœuf, Le  
Loire, Cheverny, Rouillon  
Blend  
2004, \$14.99, 12.4%

Very light violet to magenta in color, mostly transparent with a slow fade in hue towards the rims. Very dusty and chalky texture in the nose, with cigar ash, volcanic rock, dried lemon peel, meadow weeds alongside sour raspberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit, with little weight keenly penetrates your nostrils. Light-bodied, very bright and springy, bounces through your mouth with minerals, match sticks, schist, tobacco smoke and ash, orange and lemon peel, while quite herbaceous not in an annoying nor obtrusive fashion. The smoky edge in the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit elongates and tightens it. The acidity shows both polish and determination, adds a great deal to its overall freshness. Solidly crafted ending, maintains a successively softer touch without wimping out. Unspecified percentages of Gamay Noir, Pinot Noir. 88

Taluau, Joël  
Loire, Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil, Cuvée du Domaine  
Cabernet Franc  
2002, \$11.99, 12.5%

Deeply hued ruby-violet color, for all its darkness holds onto its seamless clarity, suggests more of a pink to magenta cast around the rims. No-nonsense, fruity nose of raspberry, red cherry, shade of strawberry scents, swirls meadow grasses and lemon zest, stays high and flighty and sticks around well. Medium-bodied, presents an interesting texture which is at once fluffy and grainy. More of the expected bell pepper and herbaceous notes in the mouth, minerals and stoniness too, matched well by thrust in the lemon citrus. More quiet notes of tobacco and leather. The acidity and tannins never approach an arch level while remaining an integral part of the overall fabric. Even-keeled and durable juiciness in the raspberry, red cherry, blackberry fruit ensures a flavorful finish. 87

Séraphin Père & Fils, Domaine Christian  
Burgundy, Gevrey-Chambertin  
Pinot Noir  
2002, \$54.99, 13.0%

Immaculately pure ruby color, runs straight to the rims, fully even and composed. Minerally and floral components lift the nose, presents pretty orange and lemon zest, patina of sweet smoke, pinch of clove and has a hard candy aspect to the cherry, raspberry scents, really graceful with only a momentary glance towards earthiness. Medium-bodied, just as floral in the mouth with elevated lemon citrus as well as cinnamon, nutmeg, clove spice. There's a gentle undercurrent of vanilla and caramel but nothing here really over the top. The acidity is strong and really saps a lot of fun out of the raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit, loses its grip steadily as it progresses. Semi-hollow center implodes your enjoyment, tight finisher too. 87

Richaud, Domaine Marcel  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages Cairanne  
Blend  
2003, \$21.99, 14.0%

Very clear with a warm glow in the ruby-violet core, concentrated saturation in the red-magenta rims, little dropoff. Very ripe nose of raspberry, blackberry, blueberry fruit, brief dose of sweet baking spices, spiced oranges, murmur of meaty or earthy qualities but on the whole making few bones about highlighting that fruit. Medium-bodied with enough of that same red cherry, blackberry, raspberry, boysenberry fruit to swell generously during the attack, mixes in sweet tangerines, cinnamon and ginger spice too. Very soft tannins, if at moments appearing underripe, rolls by on the merits of the fruit alone. Stays broad and fat through the finish, adequate length. No faulting its flavor but you could wish for a touch more complexity. Easy to drink. Unspecified percentages of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre. 87

Quenard, Domaine Raymond  
Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin  
Mondeuse  
2004, \$23.99, 12.0%

The magenta to violet core is dark but its innate luminescent glow brightens it, especially around the rims where it takes on a pink-ruby coloration. Despite the sour lift in the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry scents the nose is heavy and pulls downwards, the mocha notes don't pair well with the lemon peel and mineral dust scents, overall comes off as of two minds. Medium-bodied but, again, sluggish and bottom-heavy enough to appear heavier in weight. Leans heavily on the fruit for effect, all raspberry, strawberry, cranberry, red cherry, green apple and peach pit. While there is indeed a stone and earth element to it this never really coalesces into a persistent presence, more grassiness and lemon peel to be had. Don't exhaust yourself looking for tannins with all that acidity staring you in the face. Its zippy mouth feel makes for an adequate finish however length isn't high on the list of priorities. Another one of those wines that those who like it will really like it while everyone else will just sip happily enough and wonder what the fuss is about. 87

Lafouge, Jean et Gilles  
Burgundy, Auxey-Duresses, Les Duresses  
Pinot Noir  
2003, \$25.99, 13.0%

Very light purple, more so pinkish magenta in color, consistent to the rims and clear throughout. Pronounced ripeness in the nose, pushes surmaturité with black cherry, blackberry, boysenberry scents, orange juice, mild spiciness, maybe some salted meats, as a whole too

plump for any additional nuance. Medium-bodied, with exposure to air the tannins grow quickly in stature and give it a hardness which contrasts with the more buoyant red cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit. Slaps you pinches of lemon citrus, spices, meadow grasses and something akin to cocoa powder. Four-square finish but at least the tannins are not excessively green and underripe. A serviceable quaff for shorter term consumption. 87

Cosse Maisonneuve, Domaine  
Southwest France, Cahors, Le Combal  
Malbec

2002, \$14.99, 13.0%

Completely black and opaque if with good surface shine, presents wire-thin magenta rims. Black smoke, leather toasted cocoa and ripe currant, cherry fruit make for a bountiful nose, mixes in sweet tea leaves and a bit of florality, not complex but lasts a good long while. Full-bodied and in spite of its weight has bright red fruit, mainly raspberry, strawberry, cherry flavors, this bolstered by herbaceous shades and some white grapefruit pith. Continues with garden herbs, iron, tea leaves and forest floor brush, the fruit prevents it from developing a meaningful rustic character. Satisfying without trying to show off. 87

Clos Roche Blanche  
Loire, Touraine, Pif

Blend

2004, \$11.99, 12.0%

While unblemished, mostly opaque and luminescent purple at the core, thin but radioactively glowing ruby to magenta rims. Saturating nose, stains every pore with currant, blackberry, black cherry scents, wet black earth, lemon oil, tingly herbal notes, overall pleasingly plush. Medium-bodied, more streamlined in the mouth and focused on minerals, stone, tobacco ash, dried blood and straw flavors. Clear second place finisher in the red cherry, blackberry, red currant fruit, dry and wiry. The tannins and acidity take its time wearing you out rather than jump on you all at once. Most of the juice wrung out of the orange and lemon peel accents, has more tar, cedar and tree bark by the finish. Gives you a good deal of energy as it ends without out staying its welcome. Leaves a tacky residue behind though. Roughly half Cot, half Cabernet Franc. 87

Clos des Fées, Domaine du  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Côtes du Roussillon, Les Sorcières  
Blend

2004, \$17.99, 17.99, Moderate cloudiness in the luminescent ruby-violet core, the rims stay fully saturated with a dark magenta coloration. The nose is a little dull, the raspberry, cranberry, red cherry scents neither tart nor sweet, cinnamon, orange peel, some earth and tufts of florality, for its weight lacks lasting presence. Medium-bodied, dry and tannic from the first sip. Garrigues, lavender, lemon to orange citrus, straw with lower degree of minerals, earth and dried merde. Blockish, hard to penetrate cranberry, elderberry, cherry, blackberry fruit, softened some by milk chocolate shades. Again, rolls forward well if without great clarity in the individual flavors. Tannins just build and build until your mouth is parched by the end. Hard to masticate but worth giving it the old college try. 45% Carignan, 45% Grenache, 10% Syrah. 87

Chave Selection, Jean-Louis  
Rhône, Saint-Joseph, Offerus  
Syrah

2003, \$29.99, 13.5%

Enough black and medicinal red in the purple core to achieve full opacity, more of a red to maroon cast along the rims, average luster. Thick black fruit in the nose, plum, cassis, black cherry, all with a prune touch, fruit pie dough and spice touches, some smokiness and orange juice, too dominated by the fruit to suggest much else. Full-bodied, more of the same as it is dominated by plum, cherry, blackberry flavors. Like ohh so many wines of the vintage, marred by greenish tannins, this under-ripe aspect throws it off-balance. Orange citrus, sweet smoke, clove, fresh cedar, Clunky, lacks the pretty qualities which bespeak this appellation the majority of the time. Herbal at turns, finish is full if ragged around the edges. If you didn't know better you'd like it. 87

Bouchard Père & Fils  
Burgundy, Mercurey  
Pinot Noir

2003, \$19.99, 13.0%

The red-violet color sparkles in the glass, deflects light left and right, more dark pink to magenta at the rims. Incredibly ripe nose of plum, black cherry, boysenberry fruit, loads of milk chocolate too, cinnamon, lemon juice, pushes turning to surmaturité thus sacrificing complexity. Medium-bodied, has the overripe feel still in the plum, currant, black cherry fruit but not the depth nor sweetness. Lesser degree of chocolate, cocoa too, but more floral with greater lemon citrus too. Exasperatingly, with all that ripeness the tannins are still green and sap the length out of the fruit. The dryness tends to bring out a straw, twig aspect towards the finish, lends it more "terroir" feel but not enough to compensate for the unevenness of the fruit. 87

Puzelat, Thierry  
Loire, Touraine, La Tesnière

Pineau d'Aunis

2004, \$17.99, 12.5%

Light cloud to the purple core, a ruby haze permeates throughout, turns a flat strawberry red around the rims, lifeless. Pressed flowers, lemon, green peas, grass and cigar ash impress most in the nose, followed by lavender, whiff of olive pit, crabbed cherry and blackberry fruit, rolls upwards in clouds through your nostrils. Light-bodied, tangy to the point where you briefly wince, the acidity squeezes your tongue while black pepper-led spiciness and minerality percolate above. Grassiness shades over the cherry, raspberry flavors, the fruit really not a major component in the mix. Plenty of lemon to orange citrus, at moments suggests touches of tomato skin or cocoa bean. Shifts around steadily as it progresses, moving at the pace of a lava lamp. 86

Dugat-Py, Domaine Bernard  
Burgundy, Gevrey-Chambertin, Vieilles Vignes  
Pinot Noir

2002, \$109.99, 13.0%

Full, dark plum purple core, the heavysset ruby rims betray minimal hue dropoff. Wet floral perfume fills the nose, clove and cinnamon spice, distinct grapey feel to the raspberry, blackberry scents, dusting of cocoa powder, for all its richness it's not particularly longlasting. Medium-bodied, round with a strong expansive push outwards. Tomato skin and herbaceous aspects do not mesh fully

with the chocolate flavoring, makes the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit take on a stewed demeanor. The tannins are on the finer side, little acidity too thus lacks the strong bones to carry the overall weight. Short finish, almost gets you thinking thankfully so. 86

Bart, Domaine  
Burgundy, Marsannay, Les Champs Salomon  
Pinot Noir  
2003, \$17.99, 13.0%

Vibrant red-purple to ruby in color, healthy fullness, extends completely to the rims. Powerful, sweet currant, black cherry, plum fruit saturates your nose completely, large portion of cinnamon and ginger too with dark chocolate, candied oranges, just about over the top. Medium-bodied and a little more restrained in the mouth, still shovels in the black cherry, blackberry, black raspberry fruit with nary an acidic punch in sight. This said, manages to dry out as it approaches the midpoint, tannins accrue and reveals more stone, lemon, straw and grass aspects. Spices mostly on the sweet side but not enough to keep the fabric from getting drier and unraveling. Hits the reset button on you with each sip rather than remain harmonious from sip-to-sip, hard to relax. 86

Parenchère, Château de  
Bordeaux, Bordeaux Supérieur  
Blend  
2001, \$13.99, 13.0%

Trim reddish purple core, heavyset crimson to brick red rims, zero hue loss. Very herbal, bell pepper dominated nose, tries to compensate via milk chocolate, spice and fairly juicy currant, black cherry scents to middling success, traces of graphite, tar and black earth also appear. Medium-bodied, the tannins are a bit broader in scope than one might like, obscure the cherry, blackberry fruit. Still herbaceous with that bell pepper but not "green," gains depth from tobacco ash, mineral and slate, more meadowy than grassy. Seizes up some past the mid-palate, the tannins having finally knocked the fruit out cold. Does what it should given its more humble pedigree. 45% Merlot, 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec. 85

Jonqueyres, Château  
Bordeaux, Bordeaux Supérieur  
Cuvée Dorothee  
Blend  
2002, \$9.99, 12.5%

Light violet to orange-red garnet in color, consistent from core to rims, still more ochre at the outer edges. Mineral, tobacco smoke, brown earth and chalk in the nose, swipe of lemon peel, tartly succinct cherry, raspberry scents. Light to medium-bodied, leads with florality, displays lemon citrus with a touch of white grapefruit, tar and earth, its compact and streamlined presentation extends to the red currant, red cherry fruit. More acidic than tannic, this helps brightness but not length. Begins to peter out as it passes through the mid-palate, a simple wine without glaring flaws but that's all the praise it gets. 85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet. 83

Bel Air, Château  
Bordeaux, Haut-Médoc  
Blend  
2000, \$11.99, 12.5%

Rust-colored purple core, on the clear side with crimson rims of average density. Leather, earth, merde, cigarette

ash, sour grass and forceful oak toast make up the nose, has but semi-attenuated cherry, blackberry fruit scents. Light-bodied, semi-dilute here too, the herbaceousness extremely dominant as well as olive pit, orange rind, straw, wet brown earth, even powerful enough to hold back the toast. Appears more acidic than tannic, adds to its shrill mouth presence. The currant, cherry, blackberry fruit takes on a sort of dried fruit nature even as it remains pale overall. Even more sour as it finishes. Unspecified percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, etc. 82

Sablonettes, Domaine des  
Loire, Anjou, Les Copines Aussi  
Gamay Noir  
2004, \$11.99, 12.0%

Luminescent pink-magenta to violet in color, holds its hue perfectly through the rims. Huge barnyard, Brett funk with dried peanut butter, wet matted grasses, merde, underneath all the nastiness appears to be sweet spices and ripe raspberry, strawberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, not quite as mean-spirited in the mouth, the tannins are filmy and agreeably deaden the palate. The Brett, earth and merde notes don't recede per se but they do back off some. Gun metal, flint, straw, mineral water and orange peel both structure and sour the finish. Truncated raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit not helping much either. Not a nice wine. 81

## FRANCE WHITE

Kreydenweiss, Domaine Marc  
Alsace, Andlau  
Riesling  
2002, \$21.99, 12.0%

Thick enough to achieve a solid translucency, minimal shine in the old yellow gold color, trace of green flecks. Lemon-honey and mint seamlessly pair with concentrated apricot, pear, peach scents, displays a mature feeling, dash of petrol, orange blossom, focuses on doing a few things well. Light to medium-bodied and about bone dry, emphasizes minerals, oil, lemon peel and mint flavorings. Does have apricot, peach, yellow apple, nectarine fruit but lean and semi-angular in presentation. Sharp acidity ensures all possible bumps have been smoothed out in advance. The florality is indistinct but there, vague spoonful of honey too. A smooth operator. 90

Blanchet, Francis  
Loire, Pouilly-Fumé, Cuvée Silice  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2004, \$17.99, 12.5%

Offers deep reflective pools of white to yellow straw, sparkles as it distorts the light. Real chalky, dusty nose of pulverized minerals, ground limestone, lemon and white grapefruit, licorice, mint, the ripeness in the peach, apricot, nectarine fruit really shines through, the florality gets blurred by stream stone notes. Medium-bodied, its steely and stony flavor profile imbues it with enough hardness to feel twice as big. More sweetness here in the citrus, takes on a tangerine to pink grapefruit flavor. The tang extends to the nectarine, yellow apple, pineapple, pear fruit, solid follow through even as the acidity slowly gnaws away at the juiciness. The florality presents itself mostly as lingering after-images. Stains your palate well. 90

Mikulski, François  
Burgundy, Meursault  
Chardonnay



2003, \$56.99, 13.0%

Minimal shine but good glow in the yellow gold color, holds what hue it has to the rims. Creamy nose of vanilla pudding, butterscotch, orange spice, honey, wildflowers and nicely rich yellow apple, peach, melon fruit, not at all complex but does fill up your nostrils with speed and dignity. Full-bodied, same thing in the mouth as it's quite floral with lime, orange citrus and a decidedly creamy texture which emphasizes the vanilla, caramel, sweet baking spices over most else. The acidity is shadowy but the wine stays round, not entirely shapeless per se. Accents of stone bring out a mild pit feel in the peach, apricot, pear, cherry fruit and combat any latently excessive juiciness. Extremely easy to drink. 88

Chantemerle (A&F Boudin), Domaine de Burgundy, Chablis, Fourchaume Chardonnay

2004, \$27.49, 12.5%

Pleasing depth to the brown-yellow straw color, very high level of reflectivity on the surface, bends enough light below to turn a shade duller. Open and accessible nose of lemon peel, flint and chalk, ripely forward peach, apricot, pear fruit, the more you sniff the more bottom-heavy and sweeter the scents become. Full-bodied, has acidity while not being acidic per se, dry attack which slowly blossoms into dry honey and semi-sweet orange and lemon citrus accents. While full, the peach, apple, apricot, melon fruit holds its shape well. Dense finish, plenty of weight left and then some. Not a finesse player but little mistaking it for anything but Chablis. 88

Lauverjat, Christian Loire, Sancerre, Moulin des Vrillères Sauvignon Blanc

2004, \$15.99, 12.5%

The brownish haze in the golden color gives it a matured look, has the shine yet still comes off as somewhat translucent. Mint, oil, orange blossom, rosewater, tea leaves come together in the nose, has ripe if lazy peach, pear, apricot scents, overall loses direction as it dissolves. Medium to full-bodied, blockish in feel during the mouth entry, the acidity is strong but the grapefruit, orange citrus remains a touch sweet and there's a mature vine concentration to a dried fruit feel in the yellow apple, pear, peach fruit flavors which has it settle down for a rest in the mid-palate. Licorice, dried violets and chamomile notes lend it a pretty dimension. Fat but not pudgy, not much here to disagree with. 87

Fèvre, Domaine William Burgundy, Chablis, Champs Royaux Chardonnay

2004, \$19.99, 12.5%

Trim with plenty of surface shine in the yellow gold color, fades to a state of near total transparency around the rims. Full in the nose, dishing out lemon, oiled stones, mint, streamwater, not creamy per se bug hugs your nostrils softly, the peach, pear, red apple scents straightforward and honest. Medium-bodied, semi-dusty at first with chalk and mineral powder accents before presenting its lemon and orange bite. Pleasingly sour grass notes brace and freshen your palate, the acidity finishes the job with a good squeeze in the center. Then there's relief via a softening into peach, apricot, apple fruit. The florality tends to come and go without rhyme nor reason. Possesses a literally mouth-watering appeal which keeps it true to its roots. 87

## FRANCE SPARKLING

Moncuit, Pierre Champagne, Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Brut Chardonnay 1996

\$57.99, 12.0%

Strong dazzle with moderate depth of hue as well, the tight bubble beads move at a steady pace. Displays a touch of freshly baked bread in the nose before being overpowered by minerality as well as dry lemon/orange citrus, the peach, apricot, red apple scents are streamlined yet rich, overall softens on the dissolve into sweeter baking spices. Full-bodied, again overwhelming minerality leads all else, the formidable lemon and orange citrus still a distant second. Add in the finely-honed acidity and it's as dry as the Sahara. Bare hint of toast but virtually no breadiness nor honey, baking spices. The apple, pear, peach fruit remains steady throughout but it's difficult to develop in this arid environment. Runs through your mouth like it was shot out of a cannon. 91

Duval-Leroy Champagne, Rosé de Saignée Brut Pinot Noir

NV, \$33.99, 12.0%

Extremely pale yellowish pink in color, fully transparent with diffuse, slow moving bubbles. Light breadiness in the nose but controlled mostly by minerals, chalk, tart red cherry and raspberry fruit and lemon peel, does a good job of rising up in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, while clean and focused there's a big mousse on the attack. Highly credible minerality, stoniness, with just a touch of toast that quickly pales before the lemon/lime citrus. Nice zip in the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry, the core of fruit flavors strong while remaining dry. The foam stays at a consistent level through to the finish, pleasingly keeps the body from getting too heavy. Crisp, lengthy denouement, carries itself with an erect bearing. 90

Larmandier-Bernier Champagne, Vertus 1er Cru Blanc de Blancs Brut Chardonnay

NV, \$38.99, 12.0%

Wonderfully strong golden color, full throughout with thick, active bubble beads, integrated appearance. Lightly bready nose, on the whole dry if with clearly ripe green apple, pear fruit scents, some lemon drop, seems willing to sacrifice some focus for depth and intensity of scents. Full-bodied, not that dry but the solid foam sweeps away any initial sweetness and paves the way for the acidity swoop in and shape up the white minerals, stone, lemon citrus, and pressed flowers. Made in a powerful, muscular style, this is one that wastes little time grabbing your tongue and taking control of your palate. The peach, apricot, yellow apple, kumquat flavors spread evenly from start to finish. Big, not always friendly, demands attention. Disgorged Juin 2005. 89

## FRANCE DESSERT

Chaput, Thierry Loire, Montlouis, Clos des Vollagrays, Moelleux Chenin Blanc

2002, \$22.99, 12.0%

Flat surface of old gold with some shine, empty rims, not much to look at. Dried yellow apples, pears, peaches in the nose, cinnamon, orange spritz, fresh baking dough, more

fat via the texture than depth of scents. Medium-bodied, about the same situation in the mouth — has a wonderfully aged feel yet in no way sweet enough to really convince as a moelleux level wine. Baking spices of allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg give it a pie feel with more doughy tones. Very fluid and smooth, floats along with surprisingly low acidity. Gathers sweet lemon to tangerine citrus, vague lemon-honey touch too, mild florality. While a really nice wine it's not truly what the label says it is. 88

Durban, Domaine de  
Rhône, Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise  
Muscat

2003, \$26.99, 15.0%

Semi-flat look in the highly translucent gold color, loses its hue around the rims. In the nose honeysuckle, orange blossom, tangerine zest, grilled nuts and extremely ripe apricot, peach, melon fruit get betrayed by alcoholic heat. Medium-bodied, on the whole fluid and polished yet, again, shows heat during the mouth entry before your tongue gets coated in golden honey, apricot, peach and nectarine paste and flower water. The acidity is low and the flavors thus tend to lounge in the mouth. The sweetness does not relent, keeping this approach through the orange and tangerine citrus, cocoa and licorice notes. Square finish, can't achieve lift off nor the prettiness the best of these wines usually display. 86

## ITALY RED

Falsetto di Bruno Giacosa, Azienda Agricola  
Piedmont, Dolcetto d'Alba, Falsetto di Serralunga d'Alba  
Dolcetto

2004, \$19.99, 13.5%

Strong glow to the violet core, total saturation in the magenta rims, rich darkness throughout. Sour cherry, blackberry infused nose, noticeable sulfur notes at first, clumps of earth and grass, slowly becomes more floral with orange citrus, tar notes. Medium-bodied, brisk acidity gives it angular cut during the mouth entry, heightened by minerality, lemon and orange peel, grass and stoniness. Effusive florality. The sour raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit exhibits crispness and swiftness of pace, lasts well through to the finish, the speed keeps the juiciness from soaking in fully. Excellent grip, firm ending with more leather and pressed flowers for a perfumey residue. Energetic crackle. 90

Cocito (Azienda Agricola La Spinetta)  
Piedmont, Barbaresco, Baluchin  
Nebbiolo

2000, \$69.99, 14.5%

Clear with a rust red to fire engine colored, core, more garnet to ochre around the solid rims. In the nose there's ample rose petals, lemon citrus, leather, warm earth, tries to restrain the red cherry, blackberry fruit but its exuberance is hard to ignore. Medium-bodied, soft and approachable yet in no way wimpy nor unstructured, the tannins make a good showing. Not excessively sweet yet the ripeness in the black cherry, currant, blackberry fruit almost absent-mindedly covers up the grass, chocolate, lemon citrus, earth, slate elements. Slowly coats and grips your entire palate, enjoyable texture. More peppery towards the finish, the fruit lasts yet it's the tannins which right now are winning the prolonged struggle. Grandpa would have liked it. 89

Cappellano, Teobaldo  
Piedmont, Barolo, Otin Fiorin  
Nebbiolo

1999, \$68.99, 14.0%

Light, super-clean and shiny medicinal red to crimson colored core, mild drop to an old rose petal red or orange at the rims. Tea leaf, dried tobacco, dried roses, tar and maraschino cherry make for a serene nose, not interested in pushing/expanding its perimeter much. Light to medium-bodied, has a dusty texture which is all the more curious as it appears much more acidic than tannic. More orange and lemon citrus than found in the nose, bit more florality as well. Offers more of those tea leaf, tar, earth, tobacco and licorice flavors, plays it strictly by the traditional book. Develops strong cedar, old wood tones with each additional sip. Less candied feel here, the sweetness is front-loaded in the raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit, dries out before the finish, heightening its slight bitterness as well as the acidity. Of a type. 89

Rodáno, Fattoria di  
Tuscany, Chianti Classico  
Sangiovese

2001, \$14.99, 13.0%

Bright orange-tinged red color, bare hint of violet, sturdy garnet rims hold its intensity well. In the nose tar, leather, earth and dried flowers complement the cherry, blackberry scents with aplomb, fresh and with no hint of overripeness. Medium-bodied, starts solidly, continues solidly and ends solidly, admirable consistency throughout. The acidity keeps it firm while also releasing enough to get the orange citrus, olive pit, tea leaf, tar and mineral earth out to play. Semi-tart brightness infuses the cherry, blackberry, black raspberry fruit, stays focused. When it finishes it's not for any lack, it simply happens because it was time to finish. Does it and does it well. 88

COS, Azienda Agricola  
Sicilia, Cerasuolo di Vittoria  
Blend

2003, \$23.99, 13.0%

The luminescent glow in the violet core extends to the wide red-magenta rims, noticeable richness throughout in the hue. Velvety grip in the raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit scents, has a bare initial touch of animal hide and barnyard accents then begins to exhibit lavender and clove notes, very penetrating at first and softens with air. Medium-bodied, the acidity here ensures it holds onto its animalistic side, leather, merde, earth and tobacco abound. The tannins lend minor grit but definitely minor. A measure of smokiness surrounds the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, deepens the natural "red fruit" brightness even as the lemon/orange tones pull in the other direction and accentuate this brightness. Great deal of development and change even in a single glass. Needs a serious decanting before consumption. 60% Nero d'Avola, 40% Frappato. 88

Conterno, Giacomo  
Piedmont, Barbera d'Alba, Cascina Francia - Serralunga  
d'Alba

Barbera  
2003, \$29.99, 14.0%

Tiny but fat purple core, not fully opaque, makes an appreciable shift to broad luminescent puce to magenta rims. The nose starts off a bit grapey but then veers back to more normal blackberry, black cherry scents, aided by graphite, hay, black earth and a mixture of coffee and milk

chocolate accents. Medium-bodied, stings with metallic iron and steel notes, earthy too with a few "green" shades. Strong dose of orange citrus, minimal oak on display, some peppery spice and that's it. Early positive showing of the currant, blackberry fruit a good thing since it then gets steamrolled by a massive wave of tannins, incredibly dry with a rough, sandpapery texture. Grinds on you like the "bad cop" when the "good cop" is out of the room. 88

Ulivi, Cascina degli  
Piedmont, Mounbè  
Barbera  
2003, \$18.99, 14.0%

Rich purple glow in the core, mostly opaque, thickly constructed luminescent ruby rims. Very ripe, borderline grapey, nose of plum, currant, black cherry scents, cinnamon and nutmeg, minor shades of earth and tar, decidedly fruit-driven. Full-bodied while dry enough to avoid any dried fruit notes, the tannins take the punch out of the cherry, blackberry fruit. More floral in the mouth with lemon and orange citrus as well as a caking of mocha powder. Those tannins along with the acidity give it an upright feel, provide very nice grip. Straw, hay, tea leaf, earth embellishments come out mostly during the center, provide solid mooring. Plenty of gristle left to chew on as it finishes. 87

Scacciadiavoli, Azienda Agricola  
Umbria, Montefalco, Rosso  
Blend  
2003, \$14.99, 13.0%

Quite dark red-violet core, all but imperceptible shift to saturated crimson rims, attractive clarity. Smoky nose with rawhide, molted leaves, dried earth, rich if sour cherry and blackberry scents, lemon peel, your nose always feels full even as the scents take angles away from you. Medium-bodied, hits your palate like a ton of bricks, gets you puckering and semi-clenching right away. Lemon and white grapefruit citrus, beef blood, leather, brown earth and straw give it rustic appeal, buffered some by cocoa powder to milk chocolate tones. The acidity buoys the tart cherry, raspberry, red currant fruit, just about grabs it by the scruff of its collective neck and tosses it across the finish line. Has no problem getting up in your face. 60% Sangiovese, 15% Merlot, 25% unspecified. 87

Bussola, Tommaso  
Veneto, Valpolicella Classico Superiore, TB  
Blend  
2001, \$37.99, 14.5%

99% opaque, rich purple hue fills the core with broad, fat, semi-grimy crimson rims. The nose is stuffed with raisins, dates and cinnamon, lighter elements of orange peel and some earthiness but still primary and undeveloped as of yet. Full-bodied, features a spicy attack of cinnamon, ginger and cedar with spiced oranges to boot. More weight here in regards to the earth, leather and grass, distinct gamey streak as well. The tannins show spunk and manage to drain some juice out of the plum, currant, black cherry fruit, moderately displaying a dried fruit character. Remains active and full through the finish, never as sweet as it worries you it might be. Unspecified percentages of Corvina, Molinara, Rondinella. 87

Altesino, Palazzo Altesi da  
Tuscany, Alte d'Altesi  
Blend  
2001, \$42.99, 13.5%

The crimson-purple core remains dark without any filminess, becomes much more orange to garnet nearer the rims. Mesquite smoke, toasty caramel, minerals and earth, brush of dried game, green apple notes come out with the cherry, blackberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, has enough of a semi-dry, tacky texture to prematurely grind to a halt, while not noticeably tannic does pull up before the mid-palate. Some orange citrus, wood smoke notes, not as oaky as in the nose, hints at turning floral but then doesn't. The gristle in the red cherry, plum, blackberry fruit makes your jaw have to work hard to extract any juice. Touch greener on the finish, overall resistant. 34% Sangiovese, 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 33% Merlot. 87

Bernardi, Monte  
Tuscany, Colli della Toscana Centrale Rosso, Sa'etta  
Sangiovese  
2003, \$29.99, 13.5%

More so violet in a crimson red core, displays crystalline maroon rims. Highly creamy and oaky nose with honey, toffee overtones, orange spice, chocolate, more of a merde-like fart than earthiness, abundant richness in the red currant, cherry, raspberry fruit, more sweet than lively. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and fairly smooth, any roughness rubbed out of the raspberry, strawberry fruit. Given its freshness it lacks liveliness, most likely attributable to the heaviness of the oak cream and relative lack of acidity. Offers some spring grassiness and lemon citrus but just some. Slows down a good deal near the finish, indecisive at the penultimate moment. Tastes like a red wine for sure. 86

Montesecondo, Azienda Agricola  
Tuscany, Chianti Classico  
Sangiovese  
2001, \$16.99, 13.5%

Terse red-violet color intermingles throughout with ruby and magenta shades, while it has surface shine it is best appreciated for its "stained glass" look below. Aggressive nose of earth, salt, barn hay, tanned horsehide, the crushed feel in the blackberry, black cherry scents verges on the dawning of dried fruit. Medium-bodied, so tannic that it clamps down on you before you even get to sip it, also results in an uneven presentation throughout. Touch of dark chocolate and orange peel soften it an iota. Remains on the herbaceous side, grass and hay notes, earth and leather, rustic is definitely one way of putting it. Big bite in the red cherry, raspberry fruit and little length. Hey, someone's gonna like it. 85

Boschis, Azienda Agricola Francesco  
Piedmont, Dolcetto di Dogliani, Pianezzo  
Dolcetto  
2004, \$14.99, 13.0%

Quite trim and spotless yet the core is fully black and opaque, the dense magenta rims dark and brooding. Very sour and penetrating nose, high degree of minerality to go with the leather, leafy, merde tones, oddly it's the caramel which comes later rather than first, whiff of florality as entry into the succinct cherry, blackberry scents. Medium-bodied, great deal of acidity apparent from the start, gives it a lean, if not mean, feel. Minerals, earth, tar, merde, lemon peel should all give it a traditional feel instead give it shortness and excessive bite. Tart orange citrus too, there's no safe harbor in this storm. Wispy cherry, blackberry fruit, turn away for a second and it's gone. Once it reaches the mid-palate it starts to hollow out and by the

end it's twigs, stems and acidity, little else. Hey, didn't have to pay for it. 84

Belvedere, Fattoria  
Tuscany, Chianti Colli Senesi  
Sangiovese  
2001, \$8.99, 12.5%

Noticeably clear, mostly crimson red at the core with a mild violet tint, no bricking at the rims but takes on a more garnet color. Funky barnyard nose of merde, old wood barrels, cedar, licorice, stewed plum and cherry fruit, old dried oranges, the earthiness subsides some as the dried fruit accents come out. Light-bodied, bitter mouth entry, sour lemon, dried herbs and straw, the acidity possesses some cut, however the dull tannins tend to cancel this out. The fruit less dried fruit in feel, more of a "red fruit," cherry to raspberry presentation. Still, rakes the tongue looking to raise a few bruises or welts, not a real easy drinker. 82

### ITALY WHITE

Tramin (Cantina Produttori Termeno), Kellerei Cantina  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Unterebner  
Pinot Grigio  
2004, \$33.99, 14.0%

Remarkably fuzzy appearance, while it possesses a deep golden hue it presents minimal shine, looking more like a pool of still water. Expansive and downy nose of butterscotch, cinnamon, flower perfume, orange spritz and then a bushel of peach, apricot, nectarine and pear fruit, pours itself into layers in your nostrils. Full-bodied and just as well-packed in the mouth, not shy about displaying those butterscotch, caramel, cinnamon, clove flavors, jumps right out at you. Grabs you attention as well through the florality and orange to tangerine citrus, not acidic but given all of the aforementioned aspects not sloppy or shapeless either. While a constant presence the apricot, pear, peach, red apple fruit isn't that showy and neither particularly juicy nor sweet. Not really what you expect yet even at the price will win some fans. 88

Jermann  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Vintage Tunina  
Blend  
2003, \$54.99, 13.5%

Touch of translucency in the yellow to copper color, more depth than shine but both there, lightens at the rims. Stone dust, crushed flowers, orange tea, basil and then green apple, peach, pear with a non-oaky creamy texture. Full-bodied, soaks into just about every available pore to soften and create a full unto immobile nature. Cinnamon, clove spice, more flowers, lemon and lime citrus, a suggestion of raw baking dough coalesce first, possesses adequate acidity to puncture the roundness of the general mouth feel. The peach, apricot, pear, mango, yellow apple fruit just dry enough to lose a full-on tropical character. Finishes like a down comforter was thrown on your tongue, sure it's light enough but why is it so hard to move? Unspecified percentages of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Ribolla Gialla, Malvasia, Picolit. 88

Dorigo, Girolamo  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Colli Orientali del Friuli  
Ribolla Gialla  
2004, \$15.99, 13.0%

Nicely reflective yellow straw color, fades to a hueless transparency at the rims. Well-stuffed and juicy nose of cotton candy, baking dough, cherry, peach, apricot fruit,

licorice, casts about a trace of chalk dust as it dissolves. Medium to full-bodied, plush attack featuring ripe peach, apricot, pear, red apple fruit, cinnamon, anise seed, honey glaze and a whisper of nuttiness. The acidity stands up nicely for itself, no slouch and brings out lemon and tangerine citrus notes. Given its weight stays fluid and right on course through the finish. The end is not empty but "long" is not the right word either. Very pretty, not showy, a solid effort has been made here. 87

### ITALY DESSERT

Bera e Figli, Vittorio  
Piedmont, Moscato d'Asti  
Moscato  
2004, \$16.99, 5.5%

Light golden color with a very soft fizz, neither particularly shiny nor dull. Sugary, fruity nose of apricot, peach and pear fruit without getting cloying, wet flower petals, direct and pleasing, no real guile involved. In the mouth it's very full and rich, if surprisingly dry, its softness actually diminishes the length of the quite ripe apricot, green melon, peach, nectarine fruit with a cinnamon dusting. Minimal fizz in the mouth which doesn't help it lift, that said it maintains its pacing with a jaunty demeanor. Maybe there's some acidity in there but how do you tell? Fresh, not too heavy, floral, shows best while still fully chilled. 88

### GERMANY WHITE

Schaefer, Weingut Willi  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Estate Kabinett AP #1  
Riesling  
2004, \$16.99, 9.0%

All but fully transparent white-green straw in color, a bit too dense in appearance to achieve greater luster, empty rims. Creamy at first, enveloping nose of peach, apricot, pear fruit of both ripeness and shape, smoky with a few freshly baked dough notes, violets and some saline aspects as well, impresses with its density. Full-bodied with a strong mouth entry, muscular shoulders of stone, slate, chalk, lemon peel and herbs crash into your mouth, the clear outlines in the peach, nectarine, pear, guava fruit gives it strong presence without excessive sweetness. The acidity chooses extended brawn rather than cut in order to dry your mouth out. The citrus grows into more pink grapefruit to lime past the center, sweeter and more of a factor. Ends with a swipe of florality but no doubt remains a bruiser. 91

Weil, Weingut Robert  
Rheingau, Kabinett AP #34  
Riesling  
2004, \$30.99, 8.0%

White gold with a soft brown tinge, loses its hue at the rims but so reflective throughout you hardly notice. So powdery in the nose you almost sneeze, mineral and stone dust, dried lemons, more floral than oily, lively strut in the peach, pear, cherry fruit scents, hangs like a cloud. Medium-bodied, a sweet tang enlivens the entry with tangerine, lime citrus, rosewater, lemon-honey and white stones. Way too dry to be tropical but it does possess nectarine, pineapple, papaya, peach fruit flavors. The acidity, however, doesn't push its advantage and things never get archly dry. The florality is a subtle presence from start to finish but cannot match the verve of the citrus for your attention. Never tightens up, although it could, free and easy. 90

Deinhard, Weingut Dr.  
Pfalz, Kabinett AP #11  
Scheurebe  
2004, \$16.99, 10.0%

Flat yellow straw in color, the reflective surface sucked into the solidity below and loses some shine. Semi-perfunctory nose of pineapple, green apple, nectarine, mango fruit, neither dry nor sweet, trades you more garden herbs and orange zest than minerals or stone. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and much more expressive, dry without obvious acidity and very upfront florality along with soft lemon to orange citrus. There's a wiry length in the peach, papaya, nectarine, pineapple fruit like a ranch's fence stretching off into the distance. Pleasing mineral water, stone accents with welcome hints of grassiness and tar. Remains engagingly refreshing through to the finish and just different enough to keep your interest piqued. 90

Buhl, Weingut Reichsrat von  
Pfalz, Armand Kabinett AP #12  
Riesling  
2004, \$19.99, 10.5%

Mostly transparent green-white straw in color, with its slight fizz almost takes on a mineral water appearance. While the nose remains clean does indeed present a both downy and creamy texture which evokes cotton candy and warm taffy, cherry, raspberry, peach fruit scents, sour lemonade, mint, a bit more oily than chalky or mineral, on the whole very accessible and friendly. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and starts off with enough of an acidic kick to get more serious. Features white grapefruit, lemon citrus alongside pineapple, pear, apple, peach fruit, wiry and apt to squirm about. Also more mineral with an unexpected, but pleasant, herbal bite. Stays dry throughout and by the time it remembers to finish you need another sip to get a hit of that initial sweetness. Offers a series of stark contrasts throughout. 89

Müller-Catoir, Weingut  
Pfalz, Haardter, Bürgergarten, Spätlese AP #17  
Riesling  
2004, \$34.99, 8.5%

Neat appearance with a warm luminescence in what yellow color it has, not all that reflective but looks pretty in the glass. Orange blossom, lilacs and sweet tangerine to lemon citrus grow exponentially in the nose, tropical character in the pineapple, nectarine, peach, melon, mango fruit scents without seeming unduly juicy, a light chalk or saline quality brings to back to earth, blowsy dissolve. Full-bodied, on the sweet side during the mouth entry, lemon-honey and tangerine/lime juice pour forth, mint, wet flower petals, goes easy on any stone, chalk elements. The acidity is acceptable, turns a shade or two drier as it finishes. The peach, apricot, melon, nectarine, pineapple fruit more straightforward here, voluptuous but not dramatically tropical. A big mouthful of bright happiness. 88

Leitz, Weingut Josef  
Rheingau, Rudesheimer, Bischofsberg, Spätlese Trocken AP #27  
Riesling  
2004, \$21.99, 12.0%

Solid white to yellow gold in color, consistent from the surface downwards with average dropoff around the rims. Lean, taut nose of chalk, mineral powder, dried lemons, crushed flowers and like little else, at best a skin/pit feel in the pear, apple, peach fruit scents. Medium-bodied and

exceedingly dry, pushes being desiccated. All emphasis placed on the stone, mineral, chalk, mineral water, lemon peel components with again a slight nod towards florality. Smoky with an earthy complexion, you could take a fistful of pebbles and cram them in your mouth with minimal difference. The forgotten man again is the enervated pear, apple, apricot fruit, you question if it was really ever there. If you're of the mindset that a wine cannot be too mineral, buy it by the case. 88

Hexamer, Weingut Helmut  
Nahe, Meddersheimer, Rheingrafenberg Birkenfelder Spätlese AP #11  
Riesling  
2004, \$25.99, 8.0%

Has both clarity and depth in the green-gold straw color, very integrated appearance as it slightly bends the light. Derives snap in the nose from the green apple, pear, peach fruit scents, youthfully lively with more lemon zest than honey and more of a saline/salt edge than chalkiness, seems to be more comfortable around the bottom of your nostrils. Full-bodied, while the weight is most impressive upfront, there's not lack of downwards pressure by the end either. More honey here but it the elevated sweetness in the lemon/lime citrus which truly gives it a sugary touch. The acidity is OK but has its blowsy moments too, leading to a semi-creamy texture. Average concentration in the peach, apricot, pear, red apple fruit, lots there but without real sassy verve. Nice wine, could be suffering right now from too much "baby fat." 88

Dönnhoff, Weingut Hermann  
Nahe, Estate QbA AP #30  
Riesling  
2004, \$18.99, 9.0%

White to yellow straw in color, not heavily hued and lacking in the luster department too. Nothing faint, but nothing pushy, about the nose, lemon/lime peel, cherry blossom, stream water, peach, melon, red apple scents, very light chalk dusting, takes on a creamier texture in your nostrils as it warms. Medium-bodied, more on the firm side than accessible, the acidity is blunt but prominent. Rubber tire, lemon oil, white stone and orange marmalade flavors wander about in no particular direction, finds some garden herbs along the way. More contour than juice in the pear, peach, yellow apple, nectarine fruit even with a fistful of flower petals it barely softens up. As a result, tight enough it can't help but stand up defensively for itself, not a wine to luxuriate in. 88

Selbach-Oster, Weingut  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Zeltinger, Sonnenuhr, Kabinett AP #16  
Riesling  
2004, \$20.99, 8.5%

Pale white straw of utmost clarity, nice shine makes up for a generally weak hue. Heavy nose but does remain fresh with orange blossom, honeysuckle, lemon zest, cherry, peach and apricot fruit scents, subtle undercurrent of crinkly minerality beneath, ends with a licorice allusion. Medium-bodied with a good measure of polish even as there's some grit in the acidity, raises a few bumps on the tongue. The apple, pear and peach flavors have that early autumn, just-picked feel. The sweet lemon and lime citrus supply a tangy touch. The florality is ground into the overall texture, not a distinct component. Light murmur of petrol offered as it passes the mid-palate, milkiness too. It's up to the task. 87

Selbach

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Kabinett AP #60

Riesling

2004, \$12.99, 9.5%

Pale green-flecked yellow straw color, nicely layered with some tiny fizz apparent, moderately hued rims. Good composure in the nose, not overwrought nor too sweet, soft lemon citrus as well as apple, pear scents, even with the leading notes of stone and streamwater it takes on a creamy feel. Medium-bodied, bright if a touch sweeter in the mouth, tangy lemon to tangerine citrus and crisper nectarine, peach, pear, red apple fruit which zip right into the mouth aided by direct, broadly striding acidity. Displays moments of something like licorice or mint, helps to maintain an adorably fresh side. Not a great deal of minerality but mainly during the finish when it counts most. Acidity still very much in charge at the end. 87

Selbach-Oster, Weingut

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Wehlener, Sonnenuhr, Kabinett AP #37

Riesling

2004, \$18.99, 8.5%

Simple white to yellow straw in color with nice surface sparkle, the hue drops off a good deal at the rims. In the nose you mostly get burning gas, lemon oil, tart apple and pear skin, pineapples, pressed flowers, fresh enough albeit not particularly minerally nor stony. In the mouth it's medium-bodied in terms of weight but the flavors strike you as a bit brusque, led mostly by tangerine/lime citrus, straw, pebble notes with a shadow of milkiness which lingers around the stage wings. Firm, clear contours in the red apple, pear, peach, nectarine fruit but the acidity pretty much staunches the flow of the juice. No doubt the finish is tangy and lively but it's mainly fireworks without a resonant bottom. 86

## AUSTRIA RED

Glatzer, Weingut Walter

Carnuntum, Reserve

Blaufränkisch

2004, \$20.99, 13.0%

Opaque black purple core, zero light penetration, really heavy brick red rims, about as dense as imaginable. Evinces oaky cream and caramel in the nose before begrudgingly allowing for more earth, tar, grapefruit scents, the currant, blackberry, black cherry also really packed in there. Full-bodied yet still comes off as slightly hollow, perhaps because the oak totally casts a shadow over the unfolding of all else, drips with cinnamon, caramel, vanilla, butterscotch and so on. There's an admirable attempt by the lemon citrus and florality to lighten the homogeneity but the level of success remains questionable. Not much tannins nor acidity, just smoothly extracted currant, blackberry, black cherry fruit, exactly as in the nose. The finish is a finish because the clock ran out not because of a natural progression or flow. Over the top. 86

## AUSTRIA WHITE

Nikolaihof

Wachau, Vom Stein, Federspiel

Riesling

2004, \$31.99, 11.5%

Nothing vivid in the yellow straw color, minor brown tinge but does possess above average sparkle. Penetrating

oiliness and smoke in the nose, bolstered by frying lemons/limes, the minerality too raises a film in your nostrils like fine sandpaper, fierce cut in the apricot, peach, pineapple fruit, leaves you naked and raw. In the mouth it has a medium-sized body and equal degree of focus, runs through the palate on a well-defined mission. Slightly softer feel here in the pineapple, nectarine, red apple, apricot fruit but just slightly. Sinewy acidity has it percolating throughout, tightens the naturally sweet pink grapefruit to lime citrus. White stone, meadow grassiness, touch of dried earth, its intensity doesn't skip a beat and leaves your tongue a little beaten up. Energetic and bound to stay that way. 91

Hofer, H. und M. Weingut

Weinviertel, Vom Satz

Grüner Veltliner

2004, \$20.99, 13.0%

Attractive reflectivity on the surface, has a white straw to golden hay color, achieves a gauzy form of translucency below. The nose is very open and friendly with a smiling sort of floral breeziness, fresh outdoor air, light chalk dusting, lemon essence, easygoing apricot, melon, pear fruit scents, who needs complexity when it's this enjoyable to sniff? Medium-bodied, immaculately fresh in the mouth too, tart lemon/lime citrus dances alongside rose and violets, white pebbles and chalk, the acidity is stable but knowingly doesn't dry things out too much. There's this intriguing herbal edge which flits in and out and keeps you on your toes. Its delicate touch extends to the apricot, peach, melon, raspberry fruit, dewy but not that sweet. Softest of dissolves on the finish, each strand of hair in place. 91

Schloss Gobelsburg, Weingut

Kamptal, Ried Lamm

Grüner Veltliner

2004, \$42.99, 13.5%

Extremely sparkly white to yellow gold color, brightness brings with it a certain evenness, to the detriment of depth. The nose is filled with powdered violets, white pepper, grass, salt, after its initial cut becomes creamier, peach, apricot fruit, more serene than up and in your face. Medium-bodied, both sweet and savory at first, mouth-watering acidity plus salt, minerals, cut grass, allusion of mint, the florality really starts to bloom during the mid-palate. The white pepper aspect is like a firecracker going off, a big boom and then gone. Good bottom in the apricot, peach, pear fruit but no interest in being fruity per se. Stays on point, no digressive questions accepted. You can take it or leave it at first but after awhile it's hard not to like it. That said, could have more of an intense Grüner character. 89

Hirsch, Weingut

Kamptal, Zöbing

Riesling

2004, \$20.99, 12.0%

Uniform, unblemished golden color with a pleasing surface sparkle as well as moderate depth. Violets, lemon and pink grapefruit juice, zesty pineapple, nectarine, apricot scents swell in the nose, throws in a mild if stable undercurrent of crushed stones. Medium to full-bodied, hyper-aggressive tangerine, blood orange citrus tones, alongside that pineapple, papaya, nectarine, peach, apricot fruit it slices and dices like a Cuisinart run amok. The acidity has explosiveness and pierces the palate with relative ease. As it warms and unwinds more florality shows in the center.

Takes a bit longer for the mineral powder to accrue into a meaningful presence. Same thing for any straw accents too. Offers a good deal for the price, particularly if you like angular wines. 89

Hillinger, Weingut Leo

Burgenland, Small Hill

Blend

2004, \$15.99, 11.5%

Mostly white hay in color, vague yellow infusion, highly transparent, to the point of losing some shine. Spicy, white pepper-driven nose along with keen lime notes, green peas, green grass, mineral shavings, dried petrol, the peach, pear, red apple fruit remains focused and more or less in the background. Medium-bodied, even more focused in the mouth with razor sharp acidity to frame the grapefruit, lemon, lime citrus, white pepper, licorice, garden herb elements, has a kind of dandelion, wildflower appeal as well. The stone, mineral water parts help to keep it clean but do not show through fully due to the spiciness. The apricot, peach, pear, red apple and glimmer of cherry fruit holds its purity nicely. Refreshing and not too light. 80% Riesling, 15% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Muskateller. 89

Hiedler, Weingut

Kamptal, Thal

Grüner Veltliner

2004, \$20.99, 13.0%

Mostly transparent yellow hay color, offers some layers in appearance, more dilute at the rims. Engaging white pepper, peas, cut grass, oil in the nose, very active and gets your nostrils all scrunched up, searing quality in the pineapple, nectarine, papaya, apricot scents, appealing semi-viscous texture too. Light to medium-bodied, immediately swells into a full inner mouth perfume of flowers, white pepper and grass, adds a good deal to its overall freshness. The acidity grinds along at a steady enough pace, few highs or lows. Bright initial explosion in the mouth of pineapple, nectarine, peach fruit then begins a languid dissolve of the fruit. Open finish of mineral water and lemon peel, spreads out widely so as to end even more gently. Transparency remains its foremost signature. 89

Alzinger, Weingut Leo

Wachau, Loibner, Mühlpoint, Federspiel

Grüner Veltliner

2004, \$25.99, 12.0%

Immaculate, bright if pale yellow gold in color with a mild fizz throughout, fades a notch at the rims. Real chalky nose of ground mineral powder, pulverized stone, white grapefruit rind, mixes in flower petals for added dimension, peach and apricot pit, pear skin notes. Light-bodied with ethereal, yet drying, acidity, floats gently through your mouth as if it were barely there. Saline, limestone, white minerals interact with a more robust florality, still so focused on transparency it leaves you unsure if it remembers how to display its peach, pear, yellow apple fruit. Hint of bitter nuts or herbs make an impression past the mid-palate, slight peppery quality too. A traditionalist wine for traditionalist palates, not altogether intended for visceral enjoyment. 89

Nikolaihof

Wachau, Hefeabzug

Grüner Veltliner

2004, \$18.99, 11.5%

The good sparkle in the yellow-brown hay color masks the lighter hue, fully transparent rims. Chalky, stony nose with dried grasses and herbs, the lemon to orange citrus is on the subdued side, more white pepper offered than peach or pear fruit scents. Light to medium-bodied with just a touch of creaminess to the texture, more oiliness and smokiness displayed for both texture and flavor. Keener lemon citrus outpaces the minerality at first but it is the latter which wins the race. Hits you with a smattering of herbaceousness, more less swallowed into the whole mixing bowl. The angular feel in the apricot, pear, apple fruit recalls skin/pit aspects as much as juice. Holds onto its clarity well through a prolonged finish, takes awhile to release your tongue. 88

Jamek, Weingut Josef

Wachau, Stein Am Rain Federspiel

Grüner Veltliner

2004, \$22.99, 12.0%

Plain yellow straw color cut from whole cloth, consistent core to rim with glassy translucency. Big initial jolt of green peas, white pepper and salt in the nose, dusty kind of florality, not very citrusy and there's a deadened feel in the pear, peach, pineapple fruit scents. Medium-bodied, while it has lots of sheer mouth weight and density the flavors here too lack depth and tend to push the stone, pebble, earth aspects to the fore and leave it at that. Herbaceous, yes, white pepper, sure, floral, OK why not. Flat-footed acidity not helping things. Once more, paucity of pear, apple, peach fruit gives it a sort of naked feel. If it had more cut or nervosity you'd give it credit with the "transparent" accolade but it's too dull. Doesn't get it going. 86

## GREECE WHITE

Lafazanis

Peloponnese

Roditis

2004, \$9.99, 12.0%

Pure yellow gold in color with fine brilliance and clarity, gleams even through to the transparent rims. Creamy nose of lilacs, white chocolate, powdered orange essence, while thick it sticks mainly to the top of your nostrils, the fluffy feel in the peach, apricot scents make them somewhat diffuse. In the mouth it's light to medium-bodied with continued emphasis on lilac, violet florality and orange to lemon peel, soft as a pillow and more fragrant than flavorful. Has some acidic verve but all this does is heighten a bitter note on the finish. Soft touch to the peach, apricot, pear, melon fruit, floats apart almost immediately. Gossamer and really only for those who demand wines which make no demands. 85% Roditis, 15% Moschoudi. 86

## SPAIN RED

Albet i Noya

Penedès, Lignum

Blend

2002, \$11.99, 13.0%

While clean, more translucent than opaque in the violet core, the purple lasts until then reddish with a touch of ochre at the rims. Herbal nose, throws the currant, cherry, blackberry fruit a bit off, leather, tar, straw, the sour grip never quite resolves enough to release and flow. Medium-bodied, the tannins clamp down on the tongue and add a more serious feel to the proceedings.

Generates clove, cinnamon spice, orange peel and a dry earthiness with moments of leather and a slight outdoorsy funk. While possessed of decent concentration in the currant, cherry, blackberry fruit, in no way fruity, simply lasts as long as it needs to for a solid finish. Interesting for how it grows on you over time but it never quite clicks. Hard to gauge fully, probably needs food. 53% Garnatxa, 30% Carinyena, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon. 85

## PORTUGAL RED

Tapada do Chaves  
Alentejo, Tinto Reserva  
Blend  
1997, \$14.99, 13.0%

Kind of a murky glow in the red-purple core, fat red to orange brick rims keep the color solid. Some dusty attic funk to the nose, cedar, sandalwood, dried whole oranges, merde, dried wildflowers, overall it is sharp-edged enough to stem any dried fruit character, thus mainly red cherry and blackberry scents. Medium-bodied, the firm and dusty tannins give it broad shoulders as it enters the mouth, certainly remains on the dry side while here revealing more prune and date notes to go along with the red cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit. Coffee grinds, cedar, cumin and ginger foster the matured feel. The acidity maintains its strength and shapes the beams of white grapefruit to lemon citrus. Opens up considerably with air time. Has that "change of pace" drinking appeal. Unspecified percentages of Aragonez, Touriga Franca, Trincadeira, Periquita. 88

Cabriz, Quinta de  
Dão, Colheita Seleccionada  
Blend  
2003, \$6.99, 13.0%

The rich red-purple core achieves a fair degree of opacity, the red-crimson rims are dark enough to appear flat. Cinnamon and nutmeg spice give the plum, currant, blackberry fruit scents even more of a pie-like feel, strong milk chocolate component with only a hint of lemon zest for any edge. In the mouth it is full-bodied and super-ripe, not sweet enough for full-on prune or raisin yet plenty of plum, cherry, blackberry to go around. As fruit-driven as it is, does develop a tacky dryness albeit hard to attribute this to any tannins. More of that lemon citrus with additional smoke, earth shades. Cocoa and milk chocolate swirl mostly as an cloud in the mouth than any denser flavor. Real juicy. Unspecified percentages of Alfrocheiro, Tinto Roriz, Touriga Nacional. 85

## AUSTRALIA RED

Battely  
Victoria, Beechworth  
Shiraz  
2002, \$35.99, 13.9%

Not black but the purple core is dark enough for full opacity, heavy-set scarlet rims take on a mild ruby tinge. Mint, flowers and orange citrus make the nose swiftly approachable, it's nice how the cherry, boysenberry, red currant fruit stays steady but not dominant, lets out some attractive grassiness as well as dusty pebble notes. Medium-bodied, from the get-go takes an unexpected approach by striving for a high degree of fluidity and suppleness. Not so much offered for tannins but the acidity remains constant and freshen the red cherry, raspberry, red currant fruit. Lemon citrus, mentholated

mountain air, flowers and just a wee touch of toast do nothing to slow the pace down. Sure, it's homogenous but it ain't a bad theme song and it deserves points for chugability. Polished, the price the only real concern. 95% Syrah, 5% Viognier. 89

Nugan Estate  
South Australia, South Eastern Australia, Wally's Hut  
Shiraz  
2004, \$7.99, 14.0%

Dullish, semi-light crimson-tinged purple color, burnt red-ruby to brick red rims. Really smoky, almost acrid nose of bitter toastiness, sour cherry, raspberry fruit scents, grassy too, disjointed and not going to joint. Medium-bodied, more sour oak, tomato skin, wet grass, tart cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit. The acidity is arch, plenty herbal too. Smoky, mean-spirited and really there's no reason to go on further unless you're a glutton for punishment. Anyone can do better, even your grandma. 80

## ARGENTINA RED

Salentein, Bodegas  
Mendoza, Finca El Portillo  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2002, \$8.99, 14.0%

Its purple core is dusky with a crimson tinge, rims comprised of a burnt scarlet to brick red coloration with a brown cast. Very plummy nose with an almost rubbery texture, has cherry and currant fruit scents, very gentle caramel and earth accents which pulls it in opposite directions, show white grapefruit juice, doesn't seem sweet given how concentrated as the fruit is. Medium to full-bodied, spicy at first, subsides quickly into all of that plum, cherry, currant fruit. Good degree of white grapefruit citrus too, touches enough on minerals and earth to suggest it's a Cabernet. Tannins durable if on the soft side, acceptable as the oak is nicely lowgrade, minor vanilla or caramel at best (worst?). Smokiness helps it release some weight and keep moving forward. Big, broad finish helps it meander about for some time before final ending. 88

Rutini, Felipe  
Mendoza, La Consulta  
Malbec  
2003, \$14.99, 13.0%

While unblemished, the black purple core reaches opacity, the saturated dark ruby rims extend broadly. Very creamy, buttery nose, brimming with butterscotch, ginger and vanilla notes, plum and cassis fruit, spiced orange peel and a whiff of mint. Medium-bodied, the broadness in the black cherry, blackberry, plum fruit doesn't last long, turns hollow by the mid-palate, especially as a measure of grassiness emerges. The tannins feel off-balanced and artificial but it's the acidity which provides most of the spine anyway. Chocolaty, clove and ginger spice, some toast but, counter to the nose, not really that overtly oaky in the mouth. Some pucker on the finish. 85