

**The Hanes Wine Review, April 2009 Edition**

Ohh, crap. It's April 30th already. Hanes needs a drink.

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**This month's big winners...** Ahh, what more can be said about the Cornas of Noël Verset which has not already been said? Although retired, the small amount of wine made in 2006 is delicious. Even at close to \$75. Was a 2007 even made? Hanes does not know, but seek for it he shall. Hanes will say this quickly because he has said it before many times in the past. The Turley Zinfandel from the Ueberroth Vineyard rocks and the 2006 is another winner. Never heard of Twenty Rows before (as is the case with a zillion domestic producers) but their 2006 Napa Cabernet Sauvignon was very tasty and worth the \$24 it costs. Did Hanes just type that? The 2007 Marcel Lapierre strikes Hanes as a worthy, traditional wine and thankfully the price has stabilized somewhat in the low \$20's. While Lapierre receives less than glowing reviews in some quarters, Mssr. Lapierre can pop a cork in the Hanes casa any time. After sitting on it for some time, it was the moment to open the 2007 Moscato d'Asti "Sourgal" from Elio Perrone. As with previous vintages, the 2007 kicks ass. Perrone and La Spinetta rule the roost for Moscato d'Asti. Hanes would assume the 2008 vintage to be out soon and expects it to be superlative as well. A well-intentioned wine rep dropped off a half bottle of a Greek Cabernet Sauvignon for Hanes to taste. This so-called "Anny's Animus" from Konstantinos Winery is delicious and delightful. But for \$60? Pray for this young, idealistic rep, pray for him.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** A perpetual winner is Monpertuis's 100% Counoise bottling from the Vin de Pays du Gard. The 2006 version is \$15 and as beautiful as any other vintage, why one might even suggest an hour's decanting before consumption. New to Hanes is the Domaine Iarria from the beloved Irouléguay region of Southwest France. My word, for \$13 the 2005 is an outstanding Tannat based blend. Put down your glass, grab your top hat, great coat and white gloves and have Albert usher you to the wine store immediately! Fattoria Casabianca is unknown to Hanes but their little Tuscan blend called "Coppaia" in 2006 proved a very satisfying \$12 purchase. Not sure how wide this wine is distributed. Hand Picked Selections is an importer which is hand picked by a certain Dan Kravitz. He does select some winners, witness the 2006 "La Noble" Chardonnay from the Languedoc, a fetching drop for a scant \$12. Bravo, good sir! Here in North Carolina we are still on the 2007 vintage of Kanu's Chenin Blanc from Stellenbosch, South Africa. A tasty treat for like \$11. Buy it and you'll be pleased. Again, expect the 2008 to hit shelves soon. In closing Hanes would like to say that there's lots of other recommendable wines in the high teens dollar-wise which should be \$15 or under. It is regrettable that they are not.

**And the disappointments...** A true disappointment is Baumard's 2005 Savennières from the beloved plot of land the "Clos du Papillon." Baumard always releases this wine like a year behind the normal release cycle so it's hard to tell if it shuts down early or what. But for the now outrageous \$47 it costs, Baumard is pretty much off the "buy" list. Having never tried a wine from the seemingly respected winery in Virginia, Barboursville, Hanes thought he'd try one. They specialize in Italian grapes and the 2006 Barbera Reserve got the call. Whew, survived that one by the skin of the teeth. Next wine from them better be tasted for free, no more Hanes coin going to these guys. The producer Vina Robles just don't do it for Hanes, had a more than a few over the years and, eh. Same for their 2006 "Red4" blend. It's polite to say your mileage may vary. Not familiar with the producer Domaine du Moulin Neuf (Danjean-Berthou) but had hoped desperately that their 2006 Bourgogne Rouge would be a steal at \$15. Alas, not so, a credible wine at best. Curse the heavens. One cannot be truly disappointed with such a wine but, again, optimism got the best of Hanes in hoping the 2007 Louis Jadot Mâcon-Villages Chardonnay would be a true nice. Stupid, stupid, stupid. Hurm.

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

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on the *older (or non-imported) wines* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/oldervintages2009.html>

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

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

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

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

## CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Ueberroth Vineyard  
Zinfandel

2006, \$48.00, 16.1%

The purple core is dense and opaque and barely hints at the dark ruby, cranberry red which appears around the rims, average shine, visually tends to sit there impassively. The nose is a touch willy-nilly at first but firms up into a clear message of mint, molasses coated ham, clove, candied orange peels, at times verges on gamey notes, the vivid blackberry, black cherry, boysenberry fruit scents thick and close to syrupy as well as longlasting. Full-bodied, graceful for its size, moves forward fluidly without steamrolling that which is in its path. Eucalyptus, mint, wildflowers and orange citrus more in charge than the molasses, honey, caramel flavors, the oak borderline restrained here. There's an uncommonly refreshing current of acidity throughout, helps to channel the juiciness of the blackberry, boysenberry, black cherry to cranberry fruit. The citrus elevates through the finish and in the process brings out some of a stone and poor earth element. Delivers the goods. 91

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Santa Ynez Valley, Larner Vineyard, Hommage à Stevan  
Larner  
Blend

2006, \$45.00, 15.7%

Deep purple core, vivid surface shine helps extend the line of vision through to the garnet, scarlet rims, looks serious. The floral lift in the nose doesn't last long, waft of popcorn, starts off with raspberry, blackberry fruit and deepens into cherry, plum, ginger and other baking spices, pressed flowers, chocolate powder, very firm presence which keeps it plowing ahead big time. Full-bodied, again very firm with equal parts acidic and tannic structure, channels the blackberry, boysenberry, blueberry fruit into a streamlined package. Sour mandarin orange, fennel, thyme herbs, the oak comes across with dill, cedar, mocha toast. The floral dimension is somewhat bottom heavy but keeps slugging away. Hits a second gear right before the finish and kicks across the finish line. Needs time but can be masticated today. 82% Grenache, 18% Syrah. 90

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Santa Barbara County, L'Ange Rouge, Grenache  
2006, \$36.00, 15.4%

Fresh and clear, as much dark ruby to the core as violet, more of a burnt crimson to brick red around the rims, retains hue intensity throughout. Wet wool, animal hide and garrigues like floral notes more than an equal for the hard candy sweet raspberry, strawberry, red cherry scents, the butterscotch and caramel accents are just that, accents, despite ripeness more rugged than polished presence. Medium-bodied with some crests into full-bodied, has more tannic grip than expected which restrains the sweet raspberry, strawberry, pomegranate fruit and opens space for the lemon, orange citrus and broader florality. More earthiness than animality here, dirt caked stones and fallen wood. The oak again just light toast and butterscotch. Manages the alcohol level well.

The citrus really lifts through the finish. Youthful with a good deal of upside. 90

Twenty Rows

Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2006, \$23.99, 14.4%

Trim and spotless ruby-purple in color, surprisingly clear, begins to switch over to brick red and then a lighter crimson towards the rims. Nice cedary edge to the nose, finely grained oak toast which remains unobtrusive, sweet caramel, good elongation to the black cherry, blackberry scents, stay fresh and nimble, orange zest, pine cone and sweet tobacco leaf add further depth. Medium-bodied, doesn't force itself on you, has the tannic grit to set on the palate and from there slowly soak in. Caramel and butterscotch intertwine with buttered toast through the attack and pull back in favor of cedar, tobacco, tea leaf and freshly tanned leather. Supple cherry, red currant, raspberry fruit, lively and nowhere near too sweet, contributes to the full inner mouth perfume. Retains its firmness and structure in the mouth through the finish without fatiguing the palate. 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc. 89

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Arroyo Grande Valley, Les Galets Vineyard  
Syrah

2006, \$36.00, 16.2%

Impenetrable black core, the only traces of purple might be as a darkening effect on the ruby-magenta rims, heavy glow in the latter, sits impassively in the glass. The nose is as dense and compressed as if a road grader came through, saltlick, leather, tar, smushed into buttered popcorn, caramel and blackberry, black cherry, blueberry scents, digs deep to produce shades of mint, pine, candied orange peels and floral musk. Full-bodied, slowly and surely layers itself onto your palate, exploding water balloons of molasses, butterscotch, caramel, white grapefruit and orange citrus juice, pine sap, clove and ginger. The tannins at first seem aggressive but thread back into the whole as it opens. All that cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit finds any crack or fissure and fills it like glue. Sweet grill smokiness keeps it lifting into a perfume cloud through the finish. A thoroughly enjoyable guilty pleasure. 89

Beringer

Knights Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2006, \$21.99, 14.3%

Deep purple core which passes over into opacity, beyond this turns clearer and more transparent as the hue drops into red ruby and garnet hues. Thick, almost gluey, nose of caramel, toffee and plum, cherry fruit, adroitly avoids becoming annoyingly sweet, however, the mint, eucalyptus, orange peel accents don't necessarily diverge from the scripted playbook. Medium to full-bodied, has fullness without becoming round and shapeless, holds its weight and form from start to finish. Same crowd-friendly mint, licorice, caramel, butterscotch thing going on yet calculated to never elevate to an annoying level. The tannins are heavy and blunt, more like a drying sponge than shaping force. Density more than juice in the black cherry, plum, currant fruit, good staying power. With additional sips you can tease out orange blossom, cedar

and sweet tea notes. It is what it is and what it is is just that. 87

Vina Robles

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Huerhuero Vineyard, Red4

Blend

2006, \$16.99, 14.2%

The core is mostly dark purple, however, clean enough that even there transparency is possible, more of a ruby to brick red through the wide rims, looks impressive but not necessarily massive. Massively oaky nose of buttered popcorn, butterscotch, caramel, brown sugar and mint, a sourness pervades the otherwise juicy black currant, plum, prune fruit scents, moderate amount of orange peel and leather but really that's about it. Full-bodied, as uni-dimensional in the mouth as the nose, more perceptible toastiness to the oak treatment, grainy roughness in addition to the buttered popcorn, butterscotch and toffee flavors. Curiously, the fruit comes across as a little dried out, juice missing from the plum, currant, persimmon flavors, as you swallow even drops into the strawberry range. While squarish and possessed of a clear shape, neither the tannins nor the acidity makes much of an impression. Again, minor splash of leather, earth and mushroomy forest floor matter. Ehh. 53% Petite Sirah, 38% Syrah, 7% Tannat, 2% Touriga. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 84

## WASHINGTON WHITE

Coeur d'Alene Cellars

Regional Blend

Viognier

2007, \$24.99, 14.3%

Deep golden hues in the center, peters out appreciably towards the rims, layers nicely below the reflective surface. Big, spreading nose of freshly whipped cream, orange sherbet, honeysuckle and citrus blossom, the sweet spiciness gives a pie-like character to the peach, apricot, nectarine fruit, a little too juicy for it to start getting tropical per se. Medium-bodied, firm and adopts a military posture throughout, no slouching. Very spicy, ginger, clove and cinnamon, candied orange peels and caramelized brown sugar soften things a touch. Yet, at the same time, there's insufficient richness to the peach, apricot, red apple fruit to hold off all of the alcoholic heat. The creaminess and vanilla accents go some ways also towards keeping the heat down. The floral dimension somewhat lost in the shuffle. It's slightly above average but best consumed as cold as possible. 87

## VIRGINIA RED

Barboursville Vineyards

Regional Blend, Reserve

Barbera

2006, \$24.99, 13.0%

Blood red to violet in color with a subtle orange tinge, slight gauziness but otherwise transparent, rims more of a youthful brick red. Dumps a ton of tar, asphalt and animal fur into the nose, smoky cherry, raspberry fruit scents, its hyper-aggressiveness likely masks much of the orange citrus, floral notes, exits with a flurry of muddy earth and merde. Medium-bodied, possesses the brawny acidity one would desire from the grape type but, man, this is one surly, get-up-in-your-face kind of wine. Once you get used to the churning acidity you might hope to find semi-sweet

fruit, yet the cherry, raspberry, cranberry flavors all sour and puckering. The orange citrus is a little sweeter here and the flower petals more pronounced, however, these remain no match for the merde, clay, iron and horsehide elements. There's not a lot of oak, it would have to be damn strong to break the surface here. Tannins clamp down hard on the finish too. I'm breaking a sweat typing this tasting note. 84

## FRANCE RED

Verset, Noël

Rhône, Cornas

Syrah

2006, \$73.99, 12.5%

The violet hued core gets dark enough to slide into opacity, slow and subtle shift to dark ruby around the rims, where clarity trumps saturation. Floral nose with a palpable underbrush side of matted field grasses, cracked stone and dried brown earth, touch of merde, more leather to horsehide than real meatiness, the red currant, cherry fruit scents trim and focused, last as long as tactful. Medium-bodied, more plumpness here in the mouth with the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit juicier and taking up a larger percentage of the whole. The acidity has some kick to it but it's the tannin that truly has the guiding hand right now, vacuums up moisture from the mid-palate to finish. Green olives, white grapefruit, beef blood and field stones give it character for its youth. Light presence of caramel, mostly retronasally. Remains fairly openly knit as it ends, certainly to cease soon enough. Not the most sauvage Cornas ever but it's damn close to the bullseye. 91

Lapierre, Marcel

Beaujolais, Morgon

Gamay Noir

2007, \$22.99, 12.5%

Perfectly clear red-ruby in color with moments of darker violet, the rims sufficiently saturated to stay more magenta than pink. Well-ripened strawberry, raspberry, pomegranate fruit in the nose with a touch of apricot pit to boot, generous floral perfume lifts higher with supporting white grapefruit zest, finishes with a mineral smokiness which still never cloaks the fruitiness. Medium-bodied with consistent firmness throughout, does not come across as unnecessarily tannic nor acidic, although neither lacks in presence. Sweet enough that a caramel, toffee edge develops next to the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit, could tone it down a notch or so. Otherwise, the abundant florality continues to please. The orange, white grapefruit citrus not as zesty as in the nose but the general stoniness manages to dry out the finish and lend some erectness to its bearing. Nice today but most likely best with some years on it. 90

Monpertuis, Domaine

Rhône, Vin de Pays du Gard, Vignoble de la Ramière

Cépage Counoise

Counoise

2006, \$14.99, 13.0%

Crimson red influences the purple core, giving it a sinister edge, the good twin shows through the lively ruby-magenta rims, clarity and glistening surface add to its beauty. There's a tight punch of funk and merde at first in the nose, needs time to open up into rich plum, black cherry scents, floral musk, orange marmalade and even a hint of black licorice (yes, black licorice damn you), offers caked

brown dirt and clay more than fecund earthiness. Medium-bodied, lots of twists via the grassy bitterness, stone shards and sour oranges, as well as the muscular acidity. Leather, tobacco leaf and milk chocolate lend diversity but it's anchored in that plum, cherry, currant fruit. Tannin present too, particularly before it breathes. The citrus turns to sharper white grapefruit and lemon as it finishes. Pine, wildflowers can pretty it up so much but in its heart it's still a country wine. Please decant. 89

Illarria, Domaine  
Southwest France, Irouléguay  
Blend  
2005, \$12.99, 12.5%

The dark purple core gets into opaque territory, yields willingly to saturated ruby-magenta, rims quite wide, looks like a "serious" wine in the glass. Densely packed nose of cigar ash, bell pepper, tar, asphalt, metallic mineral dust, almost smells like a construction site, that said no quibbling about the push in the black currant, black cherry scents, overall, chiseled in stone, no drips nor splatters. Full-bodied, layers of tannin bury the tongue, drying but not rough nor annoying, just... heavy. White grapefruit zing picks up the currant, cherry, red apple fruit, there's more edge than give in the fruit. The tobacco, cedar, concrete, dried blood and metallic notes keep working their magic, it's a wine slam dancing around your mouth. There could be some floral notes in there and, more likely, deeper citrus but not going to show today. If the tannin isn't enough, the acidity really revs up through the finish. Zowee. 70% Tannat, 20% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. 89

Bonnaventure, Etienne de  
Loire, Chinon, Les Quatre Terroirs  
Cabernet Franc  
2006, \$16.99, 13.0%

Guileless ruby-purple colored core, close to opacity while retaining a noticeable clarity and cleanliness, effulgent magenta to red ruby hued rims. For a nose which initially pours forth buckets of raspberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, there's a solid kick of tobacco ash, granite, mineral powder, green peppers and tanned animal hide, at times nags at you as being "slick" but then you just go with the flow and enjoy it for what it offers. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with an initial polished smoothness which knowingly releases into a grittier mouth feel. As in the nose, it can't help but lead with an abundance of cherry, blackberry, currant fruit and then grapefruit, lemon citrus in supplement. The grit may be in part attributable to tannin but just as likely is a slight green phenological underripeness. Whatever, the tobacco, cigar ash, stone and mineral dust, bell pepper and leather sufficiently flavorful that it takes on a more rugged profile where perfect "balance" is not the end goal. Comes with upside for 5-6 year horizon, very good Loire red "entry drug" today. 89

Saint-Roch, Château  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Côtes du Roussillon Villages,  
Chimères  
Blend  
2006, \$17.99, 14.0%

Dark purple core with patina of ruby, the clarity of the rims helps to brighten the pink magenta to ruby hues, no lack of surface reflectivity. Big fruit-driven nose of plum, cassis, blackberry fruit, juicy enough to stain your nostril hairs, pine, fresh orange peel and floral musk very much in step,

sharpens a little more via sweet garden herbs and tea leaf accents, nothing here which would throw off even the most unschooled wine drinker. Full-bodied, follows the pattern established by the nose by focusing on the plum, blackberry, black cherry fruit first, then orange citrus juice, mint, flowers, licorice and pine. The tannin doesn't lend consciously planned structure as much as appear more evident due to lack of complete phenological ripeness. Some bark, twig type greenness rather than cut grass or straw. Maintains its mouth weight even as the flavors turn more tart and slim down. Should satisfy more than a few folks, especially if they get some food in their mouths before the wine reaches the finish. 60% Grenache, 30% Syrah, 10% Carignan. 87

Ferraton Père et Fils  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône Villages Plan de Dieu  
Blend  
2007, \$16.99, 14.5%

For the cépage, the purple core close to black and certainly opaque, thin dark ruby rims, not as saturated per se as just dense. Thick nose of plum, cassis and black cherry fruit, pie like consistency if not close to dried fruit, the orange juice, cinnamon spice and floral musk coagulates in your nostrils. Full-bodied, were it not for a swift burst of acidity, not sure it would make it past the attack, concentrated to a fault, ripeness without the ability to move. But if fully-ripened and sweet goopy plum, strawberry, blackberry, raspberry fruit makes you swoon, you won't care. The orange, flower and something akin to pine or mint persist here, only at the end betrays a slight herbal twist or sign of unripe phenolics. It's odd trying to eat a fruit pie out of a wine glass. 80% Grenache, 20% Syrah. 87

Sainte-Eugénie, Domaine  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Hauterive, Le Clos  
Blend  
2005, \$13.99, 13.0%

Trim and mostly transparent ruby-violet colored core, more of red rust cast around the rims, closer to orange than to any ruby or magenta, clean surface. The nose starts off kind of wacky with lactose, merde and peanut oil notes, bit by bit normalizes into tart red cherry, blackberry fruit, pine needle, shoe leather, stony poor earth and clay, dried lemon peels. Medium-bodied with an immediate lift off the palate into a hovering mode, from there sprays downward flavors of white grapefruit, limestone, stream pebbles and cowhide, no lack of depth in the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit but it never manages to "solo" – Grenache presence clear here. More acidity than tannin but it's the latter that texturally lasts the longest. Maybe it's the unusual blend but it tends to veer off on you at times, loses consistency in its message. Grapefruit reverbs the most at the end. 45% Merlot, 20% Carignan, 20% Grenache, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon. 86

Moulin Neuf (Danjean-Berthoux), Domaine du  
Burgundy, Bourgogne  
Pinot Noir  
2006, \$14.99, 12.5%  
Crystal clear and utterly transparent light violet to red ruby in color, highly reflective surface, rims barely change hue, just attenuate some. Crisp nose of mineral smoke, stone dust and forest floor scrub, never quite angular but there's no extra fat on the raspberry, red cherry and lemon peel scents, trails off with accents of tarry earth. Light-bodied

but has a "country wine" ruggedness from the burly tannic and acidic structure, creating additional mouth presence. When the cork is first popped there's more bright sweetness in the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit but as it opens the herbaceousness starts to dominate. The lemon citrus tart enough to suggest white grapefruit at times. Regrettably, even the stones and minerals get shunted aside by the green grass and meadow grasses. Some sweeter tea leaf notes linger around the finish. If it were a Bordeaux the Brits would call it a nice "luncheon claret." 86

## FRANCE WHITE

Noble (Hand Picked Selections), La  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Oc  
Chardonnay  
2006, \$11.99, 13.0%

Light gold color, some green flecks here and there, has both pleasing surface reflection and pooling below, the hue holds on decently through the rims. The nose at first suggests a touch of petrol, adds complexity, then settles into robust peach, apricot, pear scents with a splash of orange mist, the floral side brings a buoyancy, it verges on tropical which makes it even more alive. Medium-bodied, lays down thick slabs of apricot, peach, nectarine, quite sugary until the acidity firms things up and brings out spidery webs of lime, lemon, tangerine citrus. Pungent florality also plays a role in lifting and swirling. Grips your mouth pores well, lengthens the total presence without it seeming to press. Never drops off, maintains a friendly demeanor throughout and seems eager to please without doing so slavishly. That is, a guiltless chugger, which is a good thing. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 88

Tribut, Laurent  
Burgundy, Chablis  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$27.99, 12.5%

Super pale white straw to lemon pulp in color, stops maybe an inch short of complete transparency, about average surface shine. Lean, aggressive nose of wet limestone, chalk, sour lemon zest, anise seed, tersely expressed apricot, apple, pear fruit scents, again lingers more because of its energy level than thrust of scents. Medium-bodied, more expressive generally and possessed of a clean, classic profile. The acidity strong without dominating and the oak touch not at odds with the rest. Tautness does not effect length of nectarine, pineapple, apricot, green apple fruit, not juicy enough to qualify as "tropical" per se. The lemon, lime, tangerine citrus steady enough. Curiously, the stone, cave water element less clear here. Solid wine, probably best consumed in next 2-3 years. 87

Jadot, Domaine Louis  
Burgundy, Mâcon-Villages  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$14.99, 13.0%

White-green hay in color, very light, possesses a great deal of brilliance even as the rims empty out of hue. Linear nose, gets in and out without much spreading, chalk and white pebbles, lemon zest, attractive floral side, muted apricot, peach, pear, apple fruit, covers the basics competently. Medium-bodied, attractively dry and lean, doesn't weigh down the palate at any point. Slight grassiness but intertwined with stone, chalk, limestone elements and thus hidden at large part. The pear, peach,

apricot fruit stands at attention, not lacking for depth but shares few opinions. There's a strong lemony streak throughout, touches on lime as well. The acidity can be forceful at moments but always feels natural. Overall, let's its energy level take precedence over richness of flavor, a good bet at that. The floral dimension contributes to a moderate inner mouth perfume. It's really just about where it should be. Contextualized. (Composite Cork: Diam) 87

Bonnet, Château  
Bordeaux, Entre-Deux-Mers  
Blend  
2007, \$13.99, 13.0%

Very pale, if luminescent, straw gold color, doesn't thin out much around the rims because kinda just can't, more blockish than shiny. Crisp white smokiness of ground seashells, limestone, white minerals and spring water in the nose, ably supplemented by white grapefruit to lemon citrus zest, no deception about its desire to infiltrate all your nostril pores, floral uptick as the green apple, pear, peach scents become evident. Medium-bodied, possesses sufficient weight/palate traction and fresh acidic bite to stay versatile. Here there's a spicy chili pepper edge which even the Sémillon cannot fully blunt, plays off the stoniness, green grass and general dustiness for length. Has the sheer heft to sweeten the peach, apricot, apple, pear fruit and forestall the herbal qualities. Bouncy white grapefruit and lemon crest and fall throughout. Solid, yeoman's effort. 50% Sauvignon Blanc, 40% Sémillon, 10% Muscadelle. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 87

Baumard, Domaine des  
Loire, Savennières, Clos du Papillon  
Chenin Blanc  
2005, \$46.99, 13.0%

Semi-washed out white to yellow hay color, dullness actually contributes to solid, blockish appearance, transparent more than translucent bending of light. At first the nose displays some smoky minerality, however, it swiftly segues into lemon-honey, whipped cream and peach, apricot cobbler, switches back to a little grassiness, tends to lurch in different directions and thus doesn't reach its footing. In the mouth it's full-bodied and its sheer density holds it together more than in the nose. Honey and lemon citrus still the major players, hints at the quintessential wooly notes, not that minerally but the stoniness shows more staying power. The acidity is lacking thus the apricot, peach, pear, pineapple fruit lacks verve and comes close to banana flavors. Creamy texture asserts itself through the finish. Leans too hard on sweetness to keep your attention. (Screwcap: Stelvin Lux+) 87

## ITALY RED

Leverano, Cantina Sociale Cooperativa di  
Puglia/Apulia, Salice Salentino, Vecchia Torre  
Blend  
2006, \$11.99, 13.5%

Scarlet red influences through the dark purple core, deep blood red to ruby hued rims, strongly rings the middle and makes itself distinct. Thick leather, grill smoke, tar aspect to the nose, thick lemon wedges as well, the plum, cherry, fruit base supplemented by scents of persimmon and guava, has a slow but steady lift overall. In the mouth it's full-bodied, the initial roasted feel mouth tempered by very good acidity and accompanying bite from the white

grapefruit, lemon citrus. The leather, animal hide, tar and black earth make themselves known here too, a metallic to volcanic ash coating throughout. Keeps just about getting to prune and date flavors before falling back into plum, cherry, strawberry, green apple fruit flavors, stays diverse in array. Trace of greenness or twiggy qualities as it finishes, suggests mild issues with phenological ripeness. But, screw it, for the price it's easily chuggable, especially with well-seasoned food. Unspecified percentages of Negroamaro, Malvasia Nero. 88

Casabianca, Fattoria

Tuscany, Coppaja

Blend

2006, \$11.99, 14.0%

Crystal clear, moderately light ruby-violet in color, rims turn to purer ruby, transparent throughout with above average reflectivity. Sour raspberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit frames the nose, next to this comes tobacco ash, twigs, dried lemon peels, caked mud without it seeming like a "country wine," pine notes and no oak as vinified in steel vats, very pure message. Light to medium-bodied, sleek acidity tightens up the flesh and helps forge a refreshing profile. Bright sweet and sour, almost candied, red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit very attractive. Thereafter develops an inner mouth perfume of lemon zest and rose petal dew. More dependent on acidity than tannin for structure as well as refreshment. The twig, bark, dried grass component compartmentalized, bit player. More piney through the finish. Straightforward, uncomplicated inexpensive food wine. Unspecified percentages of Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon. (Composite cork) 88

Agriverde

Abruzzi, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Piane di Maggio

Montepulciano

2007, \$10.99, 13.0%

Just as much red ruby as purple in the core while shading more crimson around the rims, clean surface with a little fuzziness below the surface. Leather, dried beef, blood and iron give the nose a semi-rustic character, conversely has a slightly overripe and raisinated plum, black cherry feel in the fruit scents, with air a gentle milk chocolate nuance appears. Light to medium-bodied, acidic and tannic in a vaguely underripe way, phenologically speaking. This dries out the palate to the point where registering the juice in the red cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit gets difficult. Very toasty, sour dill notes alongside the beef blood, iodine and leather. No lack of herbaceous bite at the finish, which itself is truncated. Needs more body to absorb the more jagged sides of its personality, otherwise too sour and clipped. (Synthetic Cork) 84

## ITALY WHITE

Maso Canali

Trentino

Pinot Grigio

2007, \$15.99, 13.0%

Shiny straw gold in color, subtle green tinge to it, catches and reflects light very well, squeaky clean. While the nose is comprised mostly of juicy pear, golden apple and peach fruit, there's a noticeable smokiness to it, redolent of sauna stone mist, this in turn heightens the grassiness over any florality, retains a moderately thick presence for some time. In the mouth it's full-bodied and moves at a slow, measured pace. Dry in texture even as the acidity comes across as semi-round and lacking in crispness.

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Conversely, plenty of clarity to the apple, pear, peach, apricot fruit. Stronger presence here to the lemon, lime citrus helps tease out a few more inches of flower petals. The smokiness replaced by a generalized mineral powderiness, helping to manage the overall sweetness factor. No real herbaceousness. Broad finish, you feel it throughout the mouth, more of a slugger than a ballerina in the end. 86

Lis Neris

Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Isonzo del Friuli

Pinot Grigio

2007, \$23.99, 14.5%

Nice depth to the golden color, pretty surface shine while also bending enough light below to create layers versus pure transparency, holds most of the hue at the rims. Thick cloud permeates your nostrils, scents of mint, violets and citrus blossom, pine oil, odd moment of buttered popcorn, dense but blunt pear, apple, melon, peach fruit scents, no minerality nor stoniness worth remark, pure textural fullness best part of the nose. In the mouth it's full-bodied, places more emphasis on the pear, melon, red apple, peach fruit, if for no other reason than there's not much else going on. Orange and lemon juice, pine and more mixed wildflowers fill in some blank spaces. Slight smokiness teases out white stone and pebble aspects. The acidity is soft and doesn't do more than put a girdle on the flesh. In spite of its girth and plumpness, becomes a touch bitter at the end, not sure why. Could use a more crisp snap to it. (Composite cork) 86

Baroncini

Veneto, Delle Venezie

Pinot Grigio

2007, \$10.99, 12.5%

Green straw in color, virtually bleached, naturally it's transparent, blindingly reflective, though, so there's no lack of visual presence in the glass. Competent apple, pear, peach fruit in the nose, almost produces cider notes at times, some stone powder but not a great deal of non-fruit scents, a touch of lemon peel, thankfully not herbaceous nor showing any signs of immature phenolics. Light-bodied, does put on some weight as it progresses. Powdery texture, not really dry per se but clumps up on the tongue rather than glides. That said, zesty enough and has a pleasing mix of lemon/lime citrus. The apple, pear, peach fruit gentle yet steady, it never feels hollow. As in the nose, no herbal bite nor truly bitter moments. Ends smoothly enough and with sufficient incentive to take another sip. As with so many of its peers at the price, best assessed for its lack of flaws than positive attributes. 86

## ITALY DESSERT

Perrone, Azienda Agricola Elio

Piedmont, Moscato d'Asti, Sourgal

Moscato

2007, \$11.99, 5.0%

The mild fizz momentarily brings a bone white foam to the surface, below it's an extremely washed out white straw color, let's just say that color is not an attribute to really consider. The nose wraps its density in a cloak of freshness, bursts forth with pear, peach, apple fruit with a morning dew florality, wet mint leaf, derives posture from the mineral water and wet stone shades, delivers sweetness without heaviness. Medium-bodied, very even-keeled and conscious of how it measures itself out. Sweet baking spices, tangerine and lime citrus, honey, flower

water and mint Robust and expansive apricot, peach, pear, yellow apple, melon fruit, again never gets too sweet which makes you sip it even faster. The fizz is moderate and acts as supplementary force rather than seek attention. Remarkably clean finish, has you looking for the bottle to refill your glass. 375 ml bottle. 90

## GREECE RED

Konstantinos Winery  
Trifilia, Anny's Animus  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2000, \$59.99, 12.5%

The blackness to the purple core slightly misleads for it's on the whole a very clear and clean wine, easily seen through up close, betrays some age via the brick red to flat crimson rims. The nose produces a good deal of vanilla powder, cedar, pine sap and floral musk, there's a palpable prune element surfacing through the plum, cherry, cassis fruit scents, sugary enough to bring out molasses notes before it dissolves. Medium-bodied, has more acidity than expected as well as a pleasant enough sour edge, that said, few could deny that this is aimed at an international audience, the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit succulent and as in the nose butts against dried fruit concentration. The oak has a grainy toastiness at first before pooling into butterscotch, mesquite smoke, caramelized brown sugar. The relatively high acidity allows tangerine to grapefruit citrus accents to achieve clearer delineation. In a good way, there's some herbaceous nips at the end. No problem refilling the glass here. 89

Skouras, Domaine  
Peloponnese  
Blend  
2007, \$10.99, 12.5%

Soft violet to red ruby in color, drops into a more pink magenta around the rims, very well-hued throughout. Sweet and sour raspberry, strawberry, watermelon, apricot fruit scents in the nose along with bubblegum accents and floral paste, soft and clingy texture, soaks into your nostrils, almost closing them. Medium-bodied, a touch more sour here through the attack, still this can't darken the strawberry, watermelon, raspberry fruit, here accented by banana too, not surprising given the bubblegum component. The tannins crest high enough to imbue a twiggy note. Orange blossom leads the floral waft, not much lift though. The fruit intensity lasts completely through the finish, plush and dense. A better, more complete version of Beaujolais Nouveau? 95% Saint George, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. [Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc] 86

## SPAIN WHITE

Ulacia e Hijos, Nicolas  
Chacolí de Guetaria, Getariako Txakolina  
Blend  
2007, \$26.99, 11.0%

Very traditional appearance, close to bleached white in color, light yellow tinge, plenty of stormy bubbles upon the pour and anytime you swirl the glass, above average sparkle helps keep the eye trained on the glass. Lean, business-like nose that wastes no motion, crisp lemon peel, smoky minerals, wet warmed stones and wildflowers, displays minimal interest in expressing more than the minimum of pear, apple, apricot pit type fruit scents. Light-bodied, yet with plenty of palate traction, there's no

ignoring its being there. Laser beams of acidity make micro cuts into the palate for iron, white minerals, white pebbles, lemon to lime zest, mineral water, the proverbial 100 watt bulb right in yer kisser. Never approaches turning herbaceous, however, the relative paucity of apple, pear, peach fruit might suggest a higher toned greenness to some. It's really not there but this is a wine for the "I suck on stones" crowd. Long, invigorating finish, gets you salivating big time. Unspecified percentages of Hondarribi Zuri, Hondarribi Beltza. [Agglomerate Cork: REF] 89

## PORTUGAL WHITE

Fonseca, José Maria da  
Vinho Verde, Twin Vines  
Blend  
2007, \$9.99, 10.0%

Very slight green-white hay in color, fully transparent with a pleasing surface luster and shine, hueless rims. The nose stutter-starts on you, on one side there's abundant creaminess and vanilla, marshmallow scents, on the other wet stone, oil and burning leaves, finds some balance in the middle through pear, red apple, apricot scents and to a lesser extent dried flowers and lemon peels. Medium-bodied with most of its weight before the mid-palate, doesn't extend much towards the finish. Here the oil and diesel come out, making you think twice about it being an entry level German Riesling. Sort of lingers on the sweet side, perhaps due to the creaminess and tangy lemon, orange citrus. The acidity not able to add vibrancy nor freshen up the red apple, pear, melon fruit flavors. As the primary flavors fade becomes more bitter and herbaceousness, although stops short of turning arch. Basic quaffing stuff. Unspecified percentages of Loureiro, Arinto, Trajadura. [Screwcap] 85

## SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Kanu  
Stellenbosch  
Chenin Blanc  
2007, \$10.99, 13.5%

Simple green-gold color with an excess of sparkle, dances in the glass even with its full transparency, washes out completely around the rims. Smoky nose, more stone dust and volcanic ash than metallic minerality, thick wedges of lemon and lime citrus bring both sweet and sour scents, more twigs and earth than flowers or vanilla extract, that citrus and the taut pear, apple, peach fruit scents take up most of the territory. Medium-bodied, stays fluid with some ripples and splashes as it moves forward, better for it. The acidity quite drying and tightens your mouth close to a pucker. The lemon, lime, pink grapefruit citrus and peach, nectarine, pineapple fruit boost the energy level. Still smoky and here develops a jalapeño pepper dimension. Past the mid-palate a pacifying floral side appears, this even more so as the wine warms. Ends with a dollop of honey, pleasant from start to finish. [Screwcap: Savin] 88