

The Hanes Wine Review, August 2016 Edition

Seventeen years of wine collecting brings with it some curious trends. One at the forefront of Hanes's "mind" has been how trend driven wine appreciation can be or has become, this especially in The Internet Age. Back in the late 90's it used to be the thing to wait every day with baited breath for the postman to deliver the latest edition of Parker's *The Wine Advocate*. Which came out bi-monthly. It is pretty hilarious now to even consider waiting for the postal service to deliver desired information. But that was how you kept up with the new vintage of old favorites as well as, and more pointedly, discovered new wines.

With a sea change in the dissemination of information and the speeding up of its delivery it seems to Hanes that this has dramatically favored new producers and wines over those who have been around some time. The pull of chasing the "new hot thing" or being on the "inside" and knowing that XYZ is now the cat's meow in Fleurie or Sicily is irresistible. And no one likes being left behind or out of fashion. Of course, there's nothing inherently wrong with exploring new wines. But it remains a curiosity how often and easily tried and true producers with great ongoing track records get pushed to the side.

Analyzing his own buying habits, Hanes can be as guilty as anyone. Really great wines go unpurchased due to limited resources/time and the excitement of finding some superlative new wine. In Beaujolais maybe you don't buy Clos de la Roilette because you think Yvon Métras must really be the shit. Or screw Château Montelena Cabernet, let's see how good Bevan cellars or Ulysses are! It's human nature but at the same time a lot of great wines become "unsexy" by no fault of their own as they continue to pump out wonderful wines vintage after vintage.

Hanes feels badly for wineries such as Domaine du Closel in Savennières, Alban in California's Central Coast, Green & Red in Napa, or Guy Breton in Morgon. Not that they can't sell their wines, surely they do and will continue to do so. But what used to be a "must buy" every year now looks less attractive as some new shiny thing catches your fancy. Hanes has even noticed that certain wines of recent historical import do not get stocked by stores that loyally carried them year after year. When Hanes *does* want to buy a recently ignored wine it turns out to be pretty hard to even find a store that carries it. Instead they have Dirty & Rowdy or Massican or Jules Desjournays. Who themselves might now be around for almost a decade or so, which makes them ripe for becoming next to be consigned to the dust bin.

Part of the "problem" is that we now have so many wines from so many regions available to us. Where once a wine lover stuck to Bordeaux, Burgundy, Tuscany, Piedmont or the Mosel, now it's hip to sip from the Savoie, Ribeira Sacra, Jura, Canary Islands, Lake County, or Baden. But the calendar has not gotten longer, still 365 days in a year. So, in order to accommodate these new wines, something has to get the toss.

Again, no right nor wrong here. Just an interesting trend. For those who "want to try the best across the world" these are challenging times. The world just keeps getting bigger.

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This month's big winners... First time around with Julie Balagny and this producer's 2014 Fleurie "Chavot" is an impressive wine and displays formidable structure, certainly "serious." As is the \$42 price tag. It leaves you wishing it cost a third less so you could drink it more often but the 2014 Bow & Arrow "Rhinestones" Pinot and Gamay blend from Oregon is nice drinking, clocking in around \$25. Been some time since drinking a Neyers wine and their 2014 Vista Luna Ranch Zinfandel was just the kind of fruit driven "fattie" that was expected and enjoyed as such. Big, hearty wine. It's weird that Hanes will spend the same high dollar amount on Californian wines and not blink an eye but hesitates with wines from elsewhere. He shouldn't because then he'd drink more Domaine de Bellivière wines. Like their 2014 Pineau d'Aunis wine "Le Rouge-Gorge" which is simply delightful if \$45. Hanes buying Chardonnay is a rare sight these days. Nevertheless, it does happen, as it did with the 2014 Domaine de la Cadette "La Châtelaine" Bourgogne Vézelay bottling. \$25 and worth it, good tang and smokiness. Not that into rosé this season but managed to grab a taste of the 2015 Lucien Crochet Sancerre rosé and it had bright fruit and a pleasing saline edge. Tasty stuff, about \$27 or so.

The best \$20 and under picks.... The “Autrement” rouge blend bottling from Jacques Maillot in France’s Savoie is fast becoming a year after year fave and thankfully where Hanes bought the 2014 it clocked in at \$20 so still a “bargain.” Character and crunchy fruit and plenty of life. Borell-Diehl continues to shine as a value producer and their 2015 Müller-Thurgau from the Pfalz is good stuff, only \$13 for a liter bottle, even better. As the prices of cru Beaujolais go up and on it’s nice that Domaine du Pavillon de Chavannes continues to make impressive wine at a fair price. The 2014 Côte de Brouilly “Cuvée des Ambassades” is only about \$18 and stays with the pack which charges twice as much. Anselmo Mendes has made a wine to proud of in the 2015 “Contacto” Vinho Verde, 100% Alvarinho (aka Albariño), \$14 for a buoyant and thoroughly enjoyable drop. An off the beaten path wine, enjoyment can be found in the 2014 Causse Marines white blend of Loin de l’Oeil and Ondenc from Gaillac, France and called “Les Greilles.” \$18 gets you a nice rich texture and broad flavor array. Not a fan of the label but the 2012 Luc Sebille Chinon called “Les Débonnaires” is a playful little Cab Franc and worth the \$20 or so it costs.

And the disappointments... It had been many vintages since Hanes had sampled a “Geyserville” bottling from Ridge, the 2004 being a not so appealing wine. The 2014 is nowhere near as disappointing but it’s not great like this wine was in the 90’s. Defenders say that Geyserville needs time but Hanes has tasted many young and old “Geezers” and knows a few things about the wine. Anyway, to be fair, Hanes has added one bottle to the cellar to try in ten years or so. We shall see. The \$30 he paid for the Ridge seems to be on the low side these days. Thanks, Bottle King. Not sure what was up here but Occhipinti usually knocks it out of the park with their Nero d’Avola called “Siccagno.” The 2013 lacks grace and harmony and just does not come together. A \$34 whoopsie. Jean Foillard deserves much respect as a producer of Beaujolais wine. And he gets it. Hanes never had his wine from Fleurie so seeing the 2013 on the shelf thought, let’s buy that. \$37 later it was not horrible but way too simple for what it should be. Still, you never know what the future will bring and they always say stuff like “producer over vintage” and “buy low, sell high” so one bottle goes into the cellar for future analysis. Hanes still does not “get” the Chenin Blanc wines from Sandlands and he may never. So, no need to share his disappointment over the 2014 Amador County bottling if you are a fan. The 2015 Sancerre from Vacheron was acceptable and one expects more of this producer. Not \$25 wasted but not great ROI. Was hoping for “lightning in a bottle” with the 2015 “Cune Rosado” from CVNE in Rioja but was not meant to be. Boring wine, at least it was only \$11.

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

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

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

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

Winery/Producer Name

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

Grape Type

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

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

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Pesenti
Vineyard
Zinfandel

2013, \$35.00, 15.9%

Ruby to cranberry hued core with a touch of supporting violet, pure primary red rims, good clarity throughout as well as surface sleekness. Nose of crushed strawberry, blueberry, red cherry fruit, ginger and orange peel, light glance of baked ham, any menthol notes play up the alcohol. Medium-bodied yet so sappy that it sticks to the palate like glue. Here too it runs on the hot side yet so sweet from the raspberry, strawberry, blueberry fruit that it tastes like spiked pancake syrup. Gingerbread, clove and again that meatiness, slightly more roasted here. Floral with some vanilla bean, it's quite beauty and were it not for the instability introduced by the alcohol smoothly balanced. Close to no tannin nor acidity. Perhaps if it had more weight that would mask the booziness. Very good, nevertheless. 90

Neyers

Central Valley, Lodi Borden Ranch, Vista Luna
Vineyard
Zinfandel

2014, \$18.99, 14.3%

The purple core comes with a reddish clay tint, opaque, heavy set brick red rims, looks a little ponderous in the glass. Voluptuously perfumed nose of dewy cut flowers, mint, licorice and raspberry to strawberry syrup, slathered in milk chocolate and caramel, all of which clearly places it in the "big Zin" stylistic vein of the grape. Full-bodied, has a grainy wood tannic feel and squats on the tongue, pushing its weight downward. Candied cherry, raspberry, blueberry fruit abounds, more menthol to mint here, less delicate florality. Its massiveness forces the oak toast to knit in and become less obvious. Ginger and coriander spice up the finish and there's light tones of white citrus too. Shows some heat but the sweetness generally relieves it. Only for those who like their Zinfandel super sassy. 90

Ridge

Sonoma County, Geyserville
Zinfandel

2014, \$29.99, 14.6%

The purple core has a "black light" intensity, opaque yet glowing heavily, at first the rims seems magenta but closer up are a fresh blood red, for what can be made out perfectly clear and unblemished. Smells like

an IHOP restaurant, pancakes with blueberry syrup and raspberries on top, cherry compote, benefits from a cleansing mentholated lift, buttery oak with whipped cream nuances, while not exaggerated there's little about it which bespeaks of demure restraint. Medium-bodied, as it opens it displays a brawny tannic spine, this welcome as a check on the cherry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit which has a green apple edge too. The vanillin oak brings sweet butter, coconut and caramel tones which are larger in scale than desired. The menthol or eucalyptus does not do much until the finish, where things are generally blockish. May be showing some youthful clumsiness. 60% Zinfandel, 24% Carignane, 12% Petite Sirah, 4% Mataro. 88

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma Valley, Staves of Waidhofen
Sauvignon Blanc

2015, \$28.00, 14.1%

Deep golden color which pools into the glass and has very good solidity and presence, no lack of surface brilliance either. In the nose the apricot, peach, pear scents have resonance yet overmatched by coconut custard, molasses and mint notes, spiced orange and ginger finish things off, broad array of scents middling tradeoff for lack of cut. Full-bodied, sets itself heavily and broadly, the acidity not strong enough to fend off all the caramel, butterscotch, coconut and mint. Semi-poached character to the peach, apricot fruit, plenty of green melon, pear, pineapple to persimmon too. The finish is full but sort of clunky, loses nimbleness. Clearly made as a stylized wine which puts it more in the take it or leave it camp. 87

Sandlands

Amador County
Chenin Blanc

2014, \$24.00, 12.4%

Pale golden hue which fades out at certain visual angles, high degree of transparency. Buttery nose with lime and some lemon citrus, the stoniness seems more fried than smoky, like sizzling on a griddle, apple, pear to peach fruit which is consistent but not spectacular, decent enough florality, lacks broad expressivity but steady enough. Light to medium-bodied yet capable of setting itself well without the body heft. Quince, pear, apple and some peach fruit, slightly overshadowed by that buttery creaminess to whipped cream accents. Offers more by way of mineral water to wet stone than any meaningful minerality. Lilacs to violets and maybe cherry blossom near the end. It's pleasant but little jumps out at you as "necessary." 87

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Edmunds St. John
El Dorado County, Witters Vineyard, Bone-Jolly Rosé
Gamay Noir
2015, \$22.99, 12.8%

A metallic sheen helps lend concentration to the salmon pink color, close to hueless rims. There's a saline to stone edge to the nose which gives it very good acceleration and penetrating power, still there's a whipped cream foundation for the cherry, strawberry scents, a little cocoa powder too and lemon drop, overall more clean and airy than these constituent parts may suggest. Medium-bodied, dry and firm mouth entry which bespeaks of tannin as much as acidity. While savory from the saline, streamwater, stone and garden herb elements, there's expressive ripeness in the raspberry, strawberry fruit as well as lemon to blood orange citrus. A briny quality brings sufficient pucker, though, to shorten the finish. Strikes you as at its best well-chilled rather than allowed to get near room temperature. (Screwcap) 88

OREGON RED

Bow & Arrow
Willamette Valley, Rhinestones
Blend
2014, \$24.99, 12.5%

Filmy burnt red to purple core, even more brick reddish around the rims, not close to opaque but certainly lacks clarity. The nose has a feral quality to it, wet cowhide, leather to camphor, muddy earth, even the flowers seem matted down, both a roasted and liqueur-like sappiness to the raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit scents, does hit you with some green apple snap though, licorice and witch hazel lift things as it dissolves. Full-bodied, muscles its way into and around the mouth, not the most delicate of wines. The foxy, wet fur thing persists but it really fits the overall demeanor, the acidity creates a few jagged edges to go with it. Much stronger grapefruit and lemon citrus, same for a molten caramel touch. There's a rough hewn character to the rhubarb, cherry, blackberry fruit, very ripe yet without smoothness. This all sounds like an unenjoyable wine but somehow it keeps attracting you in. Big, rolling finish. 60% Pinot Noir, 40% Gamay Noir. 88

NEW YORK WHITE

Bloomer Creek
Finger Lakes, Auten Vineyard, Tanzen Dame Clone
239
Riesling
2013, \$22.99, 11.5%

Clean, pale white hay color, about average shine, doesn't look watery in the glass. Transitory whiff of rubber to the nose, juicy ripeness to the apricot, apple, pear fruit scents, lightly honeyed, no lack of sweetness to the orange to lemon citrus as well, more wet stream pebbles than out and out stoniness. Medium-bodied with very good grip and palate traction, the acidity more so glues it in than scrubs. More cut to the orange citrus, here more limey. The fruit also takes on a more sour feel with nectarine and pineapple joining the apple, apricot base. Not quite as honeyed as in the nose but lingers. More consistent stoniness, no meaningful minerality. Have to like how it remains lively even as it dries appreciably through the finish. 89

FRANCE RED

Bellivière, Domaine de
Loire, Coteaux du Loir, Le Rouge-Gorge
Pineau d'Aunis
2014, \$44.99, 13.5%

Bright watermelon red to violet in hue, positively glows in the glass, full saturation all the way through the rims, spotless throughout. The nose oozes white pepper, mineral dust, fallen leaves and kindling wood, it's rugged and high-toned enough that you need to focus to really register the liqueur-like raspberry, strawberry scents, has sinewy length and persists quite well in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, its palate grip is immense, especially given that the tannin and/or acidity do not dominate the experience. Meadow grasses, white pepper, tar, saddle leather, here there is a mild elevation in the white grapefruit component. The fruit holds off so as to concentrate and make a bigger splash entering in the mid-palate, red cherry, strawberry, rhubarb flavors. Tingly finish, it keeps scrubbing away. A wine which crackles with life. 92

Maillet, Domaine Jacques
Savoie, Autrement
Blend
2014, \$19.99, 12.5%

Bright violet to magenta in hue, great clarity while retaining full glow, the rims hum with a pinkish red cast. There's a hard edged funk to the nose that tenaciously holds on and takes some time to blow off, wet matchstick and sun scorched merde, behind this is lovely raspberry, cherry, watermelon fruit scents, pressed flowers and forest scrub, tingly white citrus pith. Light-bodied, here in the mouth it really finds itself as the acidity and tannin support a lively feel while also creating forward momentum. Leather, mud caked rocks and field straw present, the white grapefruit elevates the sourness. The cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit has a roguish ruggedness to it, can both please and tease. Really needs a few hours of

decanting but quite nice if patience is granted. 45% Gamay Noir, 30% Pinot Noir, 25% Mondeuse. 90

Balagny, Julie
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Chavot
Gamay Noir
2014, \$41.99, 12.2%

Light gauziness to an otherwise transparent liquid, more bright cranberry red than violet in hue, solid scarlet rims, overall looks fresh if brooding. There's something like a matchstick, sulfury funk to the nose at first, broad nostril presence, nice supporting minerality and sour grapefruit pith notes, spicy with incense like notes, the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit scents as ruggedly dense as ripe. In the mouth it's full-bodied and here too sets up with legs spread wide and shoulders squared, the acidity has brawn and there's tannic punch as well. That said, there's a savory penetrating energy in the cherry, cranberry, blackberry fruit, almost stinging at times. The grapefruit, orange citrus buttresses that impression and the stony and dusty notes finish it off. Agreeable yet in no way an easy sipper, appears built for the longer haul. 90

Pavillon de Chavannes, Domaine du
Beaujolais, Côte de Brouilly, Cuvée des Ambassades
Gamay Noir
2014, \$17.99, 12.5%

Squeaky clean and buffed to a fine polish, the magenta red to violet hues dance in the glass, quite pure in appearance. Gravelly nose, dusty pebbles, ash and tar predominate, sour lemons, cranberry to red cherry fruit scents, a light herbaceous to twiggy aspect increases its lift in the nostrils. Light-bodied, lean without seemingly missing weight, built to run long distances. Tannic but more so acidic, yet in a way that does not overshadow the flavors, especially given its weight. Tart cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit with even a hint of apple. Here the citrus as much white grapefruit as lemon. The stony, tarry components blossom through the finish. Given the purity of the fruit there is some funk there but nothing to turn you off. 90

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon
Gamay Noir
2014, \$26.99, 12.0%

Has a warm, sort of fuzzy glow to it even through the liquid is perfectly clean, some violet in the core but it's mostly cranberry red to garnet in hue. Sharply contoured nose of red cherry, raspberry fruit, white citrus zest, cinnamon to ginger spice, dusty pebbles and dried potpourri, has good length given its angularity. Full-bodied, has tannic punch as it enters the mouth, this without detracting from the juiciness of the raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit. More tangy

sandalwood incense, baking spice and potpourri notes. The white grapefruit to tangerine citrus breathes life into what might otherwise be a more languid expression. Good stoniness and avoids greenness. Easy drinking given its heft and has a playful intensity which has it linger long after you swallow. 90

Rottiers, Domaine Richard
Beaujolais, Moulin-à-Vent, Dernier Souffle
Gamay Noir
2014, \$29.99, 13.0%

The core is a bright, a mixture of violet to cranberry red, perfectly clear, mild segue to magenta around the rims, lively glass presence. Big, borderline fluffy nose, floral musk, orange pulp, ripe raspberry, blackberry scents, very big and fruity albeit there is a witch hazel like alcoholic burst too which adds some burn. In the mouth it's full-bodied, round and feels more like it's apt to be structured by tannin than acidity. Here too dominated by dewy florality, sweet orange to lemon citrus and a thick layering of cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit, as much black as red in character. Trace amount of stone and earth but it's all but entirely primary. Both baking spices and pepper enliven the finish. Very nice, hard to predict its profile after the baby fat goes away. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 89

Puffeney, Jacques
Jura, Arbois
Poulsard
2014, \$34.99, 12.5%

Semi-washed out pinkish orange to red color, completely transparent with a high level of shine, given its at times almost burnt look it may appear older to some than it is. Big and round punch to the nostrils, slugs its way in there with sour cherry, rhubarb to cranberry scents, there's a few notes of cheese as well as damp leather, that notwithstanding remarkably pure and primary. Light-bodied, yet engages from the start with its tannic and acidic grip, no weakling regardless of girth. Candied cherry to strawberry here, lighter rhubarb notes, overall the sourness just edges out the sweetness. Comes close to developing an herbal edge but avoids it in the end. But it does get that leathery thing going. Good stand a few years to settle, no reason to suspect the fruit won't be there. 89

Bertrand, Yann
Beaujolais, Morgon, Coup d'Canon
Gamay Noir
2014, \$23.99, 12.5%

There's a filminess which adds to the glow of the purple core, just into opacity, the rims are mainly ruby red with a shadow of pink, average surface luster. The nose has a semi-feral character to it, then chocolate, orange spice and pressed flowers before finally

unfurling juicy wet blackberry, blueberry, raspberry fruit, the latent stoniness never quite takes hold, perhaps due to the exuberance of the fruit, gains deeper florality as it opens. Medium-bodied, possesses a firm tannic web which cements it in the palate and brings the dryness needed to restrain the sweetness of the cherry, strawberry, cranberry fruit, much “redder” here. In turn there’s more edge to the citrus, predominantly white grapefruit and blood orange. This helps the stone aspect persist longer too. The wet fur accent shifts about towards the end where it turns spicier as well. To its credit has a lot going on and on the whole manages to harmonize most of it. Not so easy to tell if additional time will continue to knit things together. 89

Desvignes, Louis et Claude
Beaujolais, Morgon, Côte du Py
Gamay Noir
2014, \$27.99, 12.5%

Crystal clear and splendidly reflective, from the purple core through to the more garnet red rims just so vivid and bright. The nose brings some funk at first, however, the ripeness of the cherry, dark berry fruit steamrolls this, floral with moderate sweet citrus, so plump and unevolved that it defies more incisive analysis. Full-bodied, just about the same thing can be said about experiencing the wine in the mouth, loaded with cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit to the point little else registers. More tart white grapefruit citrus, while the floral notes more subdued. Under all that blubber is some decent tannin and maybe even enough acidity to break flesh, but right now irrelevant. Good stoniness in the background. A roll of the dice as to where it will go down the road but no denying the sheer brute power of the primary material. 89

Sebille, Luc
Loire, Chinon, Les Débonnaires
Cabernet Franc
2012, \$19.99, 13.0%

Strong red brick influence throughout the otherwise dull purple color, brighter sunset red hues enliven the rims, not filmy but not necessarily clear either. As sappy as the blackberry, plum, black current fruit is, and it is sappy, the bell pepper scents are an equal if not greater match, positively sinks into the nostrils, some graphite and leather too, its general fullness prevents fine parsing of constituent parts. Full-bodied, grippy and velvety textured in the mouth with good tannic punch which yet does nothing to get in the way of the layered flesh of the cherry, plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit. Here even the bell pepper gets nudged to second place. Stone, slate, hint of merde pushes it from basic leather to horsehide. Fruity, approachable

Chinon which is another example of a good gateway drug to Loire Cab Franc. (Composite Cork) 89

Foillard, Jean
Beaujolais, Fleurie
Gamay Noir
2013, \$36.99, 12.5%

Cloudy ruby-violet color, more of a brighter ruby towards the rims but not any clearer really, can’t say it looks matured but it does look adult. Floral with a light in weight yet concentrated plum to prune, cherry, blackberry array of scents, orange sherbet, hints of leather or mountain scrub but remarkably pure and primary, most interesting for how the texture changes in the nostrils. Full-bodied, more solidly constructed in the mouth with a decent level of tannin to buttress the smoothly formidable cherry, blackberry, almost blueberry fruit. The weight of those restrains any breeziness in the otherwise deep florality. Very light earthy or leathery qualities. While nice now, it’s actually kind of simple and raises questions of what you’d get for the effort to age it, especially at the price. 89

Taillandier, Domaine Benjamin
Languedoc/Roussillon, Minervois, Laguzelle
Blend
2014, \$17.99, 13.0%

The purple core barely holds on before yielding to scarlet to red magenta hues, has good clarity but most attractive for its richness. Some flatulence and merde to the nose, matchstick notes, light olive pits and wildflowers otherwise it’s mainly blended darker fruits, sweet and juicy. In the mouth it’s medium-bodied, velvety smooth as it slowly glides across the palate. Much less funky here, the blackberry, cherry, plum fruit far and away the star of the show. Some mixed citrus, lesser florality. Maybe anise or lavender. Along with losing the funk apparently lost most else beyond the fruit. still, quite pleasant and possessed of a lengthy finish. Unspecified percentages of Cinsault, Syrah, Carignan. 88

Combel-La-Serre (Famille Ilbert), Château
Southwest France, Cahors, Cuvée Château
Malbec
2014, \$17.99, 13.0%

While the liquid is entirely unblemished, the darkness of the purple core achieves opacity, the rims are mostly a fresh blood red with a mild magenta tint. The nose displays a lean angularity which still allows for a full expression of the tart cherry, red currant fruit scents as well as the white grapefruit, poor dirt, stone and tar elements, should not misconstrue focus for lack of breadth. In the mouth it’s medium-bodied with a sturdy tannic frame. Merde, earth, wet horsehide and

tar elevate, the oak treatment seems light and of a sour nature. No lack of snap to the currant, cherry, blackberry fruit, perhaps a touch short. White citrus supports the biting profile, you sense the florality trying to add some makeup but ultimately failing. Guileless but not charmless, displays the strengths and weaknesses of the grape. 88

Venier, Christian

Loire, Cheverny, Les Hauts de Madon

Blend

2014, \$20.99, 13.5%

Light dusky filminess to the otherwise vibrant ruby to sunset red color, turns more pure brick red towards the rims. Firm nose built on stone and earth and sourly dense cranberry, red cherry, blackberry scents, the lemon citrus brings additional tang, it's all packed together so it makes it harder to parse and enjoy the constituent elements. Medium-bodied, similar experience in the mouth, chewy with ample tannin and acidity in support of this feel. Sour bite to the green apple, strawberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit, the mixed white citrus recedes some. More leather here, softens the earth and stone. Remains coiled through the finish, thus less breadth and lift. Could sacrifice some ripeness for clarity. 80% Pinot Noir, 20% Gamay Noir. 88

Mas Coutelou

Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de France, Classe

Blend

2014, \$19.99, 14.0%

The richly glowing and dark purple crosses over into opacity, the rims a lively garnet to sunset red, plenty of color and then some. Plump nose of lavender, violets, cinnamon stick and orange peel, has an underlying meatiness and beef blood which balances out the ripeness of the plum, blackberry fruit scents, more mentholated dissolve with some alcohol showing. Full-bodied, starts off fat and velvety until the finish when the tannin finally gains control and brings a dry, tacky texture. Almost grapey at times, plum with a hint of prune, black cherry, blackberry, luckily more ripe than outright sugary. The florality gets buried some here, but there's more chocolate notes and the mixed citrus does well. Modicum of stone or leather, all about that fruit. Were it not for that astringency at the end it would have great mass appeal. 80% Syrah, 15% Carignan, 5% Grenache. 88

FRANCE WHITE

Closel, Domaine du

Loire, Savennières, Clos du Papillon

Chenin Blanc

2014, \$36.99, 14.5%

Rich golden hue, looks quite solid in the glass, slightly dull but the color pushes well into the rims. The nose displays ginger, clove spice, zesty orange citrus, honey and whipped cream, the base of apricot, pear scents easily yields to pineapple and kumquat, at the last second gets balanced out by stone dust and chalk, while texturally there is a dense tautness to it, the scents themselves are all baby fat. Full-bodied, just as dense here with a strong handshake to set the tone, dusty acidic netting on the tongue. Lively lemon, lime to tangerine citrus a major factor, more minerally than stony here with an echo of yeasty dough and bubblegum. The fruit is ripe and longlasting, pineapple, nectarine, papaya and persimmon. Everything seems "turned up to 11" so maybe best to wait until things get dialed back to a "9" with time. 90

Berlioz, Domaine Gilles

Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin, Chez l'Odette

Jacquère

2014, \$26.99, 12.0%

Fairly dark golden hue, close to lighter apple juice in appearance, on the dull side. There's a relaxed sort of "old vine" feel to the nose, cellar aged apples and apricots, cool damp stone, honey to beeswax, almost oily texture at times, just a slow and steady unfurling of a few basics. In the mouth it's full-bodied, the acidity is good plus but it does not seem to be the deciding factor in the extremely strong palate grip, something has it glued to every mouth pore. Good ripeness in the apricot, peach, pineapple, kumquat fruit and it gets a nice kick from sour grapefruit at the end. Lanolin, honey and mint cushion the finish. Moderate nuances of wet stone. It's a big wine that can at times seem foursquare. Needs some time in the glass if not a decanting. 89

Causse Marines

Southwest France, Gaillac, Les Greilles

Blend

2014, \$17.99, 12.5%

Perfectly direct golden hue with a little orange glint at the edges, layers well into the glass and the solidity does not diminish the shine. Sparkly tangerine to pink grapefruit zest in the nose, honeyed with some rose water and stone notes, the fruit mainly fresh peach fuzz, apricot, to green melon, has more richness than staying power. Medium-bodied, possesses a relaxed mouth feel which adds palate coverage, this in the face of what is pretty good and persistent acidity. That honeyed quality higher here, at times bready. The orange, tangerine, lime citrus likewise steps it up, keeps the sweeter components in check. Beeswax and apricot, peach, nectarine fruit, apple cider, sort of buttoned up. It grows on you and offers that "old vine"

laconic nature. Unspecified percentages of Loin de l'Oeil, Ondenc. 89

Cadette, Domaine de la
Burgundy, Bourgogne Vézelay, La Châtelaine
Chardonnay

2014, \$24.99, 12.5%

Despite the high level of shine, the deep golden hue looks more worn than fresh, consistent core to rims. Smoky nose with a crisp toast to it alongside white grapefruit to lemon pulp, tropical pineapple, papaya, mango fruit and and wet limestone inflected finish, fairly aggressive and willing to get in your face. Full-bodied, the acidity level is good but it does not do a lot to provide liveliness, instead things steadily march forward. Same basic profile of tangy pineapple, nectarine, papaya to apricot fruit with pink grapefruit and tangerine accents. The oak treatment more knit in here and softer as well, mild vanillin creaminess. The stony smokiness most obvious through the finish. Displays more personality than most at this price point. 89

Roc d'Anglade
Rhône, Vin de Pays du Gard
Blend

2013, \$45.99, 12.5%

Shiny pure gold color, layers well into the glass and holds well enough into the rims, leaves a fair amount of tartrate crystals behind at the end. Pineapple, green apple, melon and apricot in the nose, the smokiness percolates in the background, close to briny with a sour pickled nature, hard to distinguish sour white citrus as well. Medium to full-bodied, the power of the acidity gives it a strong presence as well as extended footprint. Bitter lime, lemon citrus and pungent minerally smoke make it hard to approach at first, no way to put your foot in the door. Eventually the star fruit, pineapple, nectarine, green apple and then orange to tangerine citrus soften enough to relent. The herbaceousness at the end comes with a jalapeño edge. Overall, it reveals a lot of structure and ample flesh yet does not seem ready to enjoy, best to wait quite a few years and hope it softens further. Mainly Chenin Blanc, remainder a blend of Grenache Blanc and/or Chardonnay, Pinot Gris. 89

Vacheron et Fils, Domaine
Loire, Sancerre
Sauvignon Blanc

2015, \$24.99, 13.5%

Pale white straw with a green glint, looks more or less like a shiny glass of water. There's an undercurrent of smokiness to the nose but the major factors are the sweet pink grapefruit to lime citrus as well as noticeably ripe peach, apricot, pineapple, pear fruit

scents, only after some time do you get any tauter herbaceous or asparagus like notes, lasts well. Medium-bodied, the acidity tightens it up through the mouth entry and than tends to keep things dry, however, is not impactful in a broad manner. Here you get cherry or even strawberry mixed in with the peach, apricot, this contributes to a rounder mouth feel. Moderate stoniness to chalkiness. More pleasurable than galvanizing, real easy to drink but not the one for those who demand precision and intellectual challenge. 88

Pinon, François
Loire, Vouvray, Silex Noir
Chenin Blanc

2014, \$23.99, 12.0%

The gold hue is deep enough to suggest incipient amber, solid block-like presence in the glass, not to say it lacks shine either. The nose is evocative of cellar dried apples and peaches, more lemon peel than honey but has both, some gun smoke and saline but not quite minerally, manages a light floral breeziness yet overall not giving much, just hangs there pregnantly. Full-bodied, nice mesh-like weave of acidity keeps it firm and alert if not that refreshing. Mint, orange marmalade, lanolin and damp limestone give it some life while the laconic richness of the apricot, peach, persimmon to pineapple fruit has it settle back down into the palate. It has length based on momentum not wiry frame. May show more nuance with age but right now lacking in subtlety. 88

FRANCE ROSE

Crochet, Lucien
Loire, Sancerre, Rosé
Pinot Noir

2015, \$26.99, 13.0%

Pale metallic pink salmon hue, transparent yet possessed of high shine. Sparkly nose of chalk dust, minerality, strawberries and cherry pits, has a light herbaceous lift, deftly balanced and with penetrating power. Medium-bodied, lots of acidity and bite, drying sponge on the palate. Displays above average nervousity, notes of saline, noticeably salty and minerally. Bright bing cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit of good length. Supported well by lemon citrus zest. Great energy, posture stays erect, with an elongated finish. Arguably shows best while still well chilled. 89

Lauverjat, Karine
Loire, Sancerre, Rosé
Pinot Noir
2015, \$15.99, 12.5%
Semi-washed out pinkish orange color, attractive clarity as well as surface reflectivity. Quiet tingle to the nose with a mineral, stone powder character, the cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit scents have equal snap and cut as juicy freshness, strong lemony element, gains a curious note of cocoa as it warms. In the mouth it's close to full-bodied, round and coats fully. The acidity has pep, flattens more than lifts but don't take this to mean the wine is not refreshing. The lemon citrus gets as close to grapefruit and orange and the strawberry, cherry fruit closer to green apple than watermelon. The mineral qualities contribute to a pleasantly choppy finish. Becomes more interesting nearer room temperature and gains length as well. 88

ITALY RED

Occhipinti, Azienda Agricola Arianna
Sicilia, Terre Siciliane, Siccagno
Nero d'Avola
2013, \$33.99, 13.0%
Strong crimson red infusion to the purple core, broodingly vibrant through the sunset red rims, something about looks like it's about to explode, clear and spotless throughout. There's some merde to rubber in the nose which is offputting and forestalls the advent of the adequate red cherry, blackberry fruit scents, tar, leather and incense ash, even giving it air time it lacks expressiveness. Medium-bodied, the strength of the tannin gives it lasting presence and a bigger feel. Here you get more of the fruit's ripeness, albeit the cherry, plum, mixed berry flavors have to compete with the tannin. Arguably more floral but the white grapefruit to orange citrus races to the head of the pack. The tar, asphalt to horsehide percolates in the background. Good, not great. 88

GERMANY WHITE

Borell-Diehl, Weingut
Pfalz, QbA Trocken AP #6
Müller-Thurgau
2015, \$12.99, 12.5%
Yellow straw in hue, for its lightness achieves a block-like solidity in the glass, good layering. Leaps right into the nostrils with lemon/lime citrus, saline, pineapple, papaya, star fruit scents and a measured stony smokiness, overall angular in an agreeable manner. Medium-bodied, brawny acidity with sufficient extract to glue it to the palate. Positively dripping with sour citrus, pink grapefruit, tangerine, lime and lemon. The florality is there but ripped apart by the also sour to

bitter pineapple, green apple, papaya, kumquat fruit. Less smokiness but still stony and perhaps earthy, not mineral. Maybe a slight vanillin creaminess at the end. But most impressive for its liveliness. 1 liter bottle. (Screwcap) 89

Müller, Weingut Egon
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Wiltinger, Braune Kupp, Kabinett AP #3
Riesling
2014, \$40.99, 9.5%
Soft pale gold color, clear and trim, perfectly clean with empty rims. There's a gentle rise to the nose, floral with orange blossom, rose and honeysuckle notes, tangerine, honey, white pit fruits, waits before releasing mild diesel fumes, for all of its softness it can be quite direct in what it wants to express. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity is somewhat weak but taken overall it has adequate firmness. Broad range of citrus focusing on pink grapefruit, lemon and tangerine. The apple, apricot fruit mostly escapes notice. Honeyed with a slight nuttiness even, the stoniness feels inert and does not contribute strongly. It stays anchored in the palate yet does slowly fashion a semi-musky perfume. The finish releases well, and it trails off when it should, not showy. 89

Hexamer, Weingut Helmut
Nahe, Quarzit QbA AP #28
Riesling
2014, \$14.99, 10.5%
Deep green-gold in hue, flat without much luster, large amount of bubbles cling inside the glass long after the pour, the rims hold on well enough. Pear, yellow apple, apricot, nectarine fruit with whipped cream notes, sweet pink grapefruit to lemon juice, never quite gets to tropical this too with only a minimum of any stone or mineral. Medium-bodied, starts out fleshy and sweeter but the acidity is able to shave that off at a steady clip. Bubblegum, vanilla and honey start things off before quickly getting to green melon, pineapple, nectarine and peach fruit. Here there's an uptick in mineral water to quinine if not outright minerality. For its sweetness retains a taut mouth feel. Offers a great deal of "fun factor" without being a simpleton. (Screwcap) 89

PORTUGAL WHITE

Mendes Vinhos, Anselmo

Vinho Verde, Contacto

Alvarinho

2015, \$13.99, 13.0%

There's sufficient glow to the green-yellow straw color to make up for its more general flat and washed out look, distorts your vision, the hue generally extends through to the rims. A mild whipped cream to vanilla element softens the nose and allows the florality to spread more widely, overall it is firm but delicate with green apple, pear, apricot scents which have a young, not quite fully ripened character, very nice freshness. Medium-bodied, muscular such that it loses some flexibility, yet the flow from start to finish is complete and uninterrupted. More pineapple, guava here in a dry manner, mutes some of the apple, pear, white pit fruit. Orange blossom gets out in front of the lilacs, even the florality comes across as just got home from the gym. It's serious but still can be fun, shows optimally when fully chilled. 90

SPAIN ROSE

Compañía Vinícola del Norte de España (CVNE)

Rioja, Cune Rosado

Tempranillo

2015, \$10.99, 13.5%

Dark and luminescent watermelon red to ruby in color, clearly it is a rosé but as close visually to a red wine as possible, excellent clarity as well. The nose is mostly cherry with supporting strawberry to green apple notes, pulverized stone dust, ginger to clove spice, not especially complex but it is likewise devoid of flaws. Medium-bodied, the acidity is strong enough to firm it up and lend additional personality, throws a spotlight on lemon to sour orange citrus notes. The fruit remains a basic cherry, raspberry to strawberry front. Less of the spiciness and a touch more stone, particularly at the end. Shows about the same cold or warmer. Serviceable, fairly priced for what you get. (Screwcap)
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