

A problem which plagues Hanes in both his wine writing as well as his current work in the wine storage biz remains how to classify the grape type in the data structure employed. At home Hanes uses Filemaker Pro to create his database of tasting notes and at work a proprietary software package to record customers' wines. A seemingly simple function would be to create a "grape type" field that just has the grape's name in it. Were life so simple. It seems we live in a world where people have the audacity to employ different languages and local customs and as a result, yes, the very same grape can go by different names! That's messed up. Nevertheless, some sense has to be made of all this. What to do, what to do...

First, let's get the nomenclature down correctly. That's always important. Hanes among others makes the common mistake of substituting the term "varietal" for "grape name." Actually, the term "varietal" as a wine descriptor is fairly new, originating in the mid 20th century. What it means is that a specific bottle of wine is labeled after the dominant grape(s) from which it is made. Putting the grape name on the label is, historically speaking, a relatively new phenomenon and traced mainly to the "New World" wine producing countries, e.g., the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile, Argentina, etc. So, there really is no thing as a "varietal" per se, it's more of an adjectival or adverbial kind of situation pertaining to labeling. "Chardonnay" is the name of a grape type, not a varietal. Putting the word "Chardonnay" on a label means that the wine is varietally labeled.

This makes more sense when one considers the varietal labeling approach when it comes to blends of grapes. Australia produces lots of wines like this, for example, labeled as "Shiraz - Cabernet" or "Grenache - Shiraz - Mourvèdre." Varietal labeling is about naming dominant grapes used, so noting the grapes used in the blend conveys information to the consumer about the type of grapes used. Here let it be noted that, in contrast, the wines of France's wine region called Châteauneuf-du-Pape commonly blends Grenache, Syrah (aka Shiraz) and Mourvèdre together in their red wines but they do not name the grapes used on the label (by French law any of 13 grapes may be used in Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines). Australian wines which mimic the Châteauneuf-du-Pape blends underscore this fact by employing varietal labeling: "Grenache - Shiraz - Mourvèdre." The popularity of this is such that they can now even shorten it to "GSM" and consumers know what that means. Australian wine producers cannot (and, my word, would not) label their wines as "Châteauneuf-du-Pape" but they do want to, and succeed at, forging a link between those wines and the ones they make by using varietal labeling.

So, we see that varietal labeling gains a great deal of useful flexibility in being able to encompass blends as well as simply being mono-varietal labels. It does not even have to underscore an affinity to the wines of an "Old World" wine region but can just express any kind of wacky blend of grapes. However, varietal labeling has led to the creation of a whole new tier of descriptors such as "GSM." Among these are the labeling terms "Meritage" and "Claret" which are intended to convey that the wine is made of a specific blend of wine grapes. There's nothing stopping anyone from creating new varietal labeling terms and if they gain traction, so be it. But there's no such thing as a Meritage grape.

Even more potentially confusing, there is a logical position that could advocate that classification by "grape name" is incorrect as what is really being discussed are "vine varieties" or "cultivars." More wine pedantry, always cool. Of course, this ignores the rootstock types most fruit bearing vines are grafted onto, take that suckas. Since wine reviewing and wine collection describing is focused on the names of grapes normal people know, let's leave that debate to the esteemed scientific community and drunken vineyard managers.

Once we accept that we are talking about grape names and not varietals we can talk about grape names. Back to the problems of different folks using different grape names. As well as those who still don't use grape names at all on their labels.

The goal is to create a practical, easy to navigate set of descriptors to aid recognition as well as enable tasks such as sorting wine data. This is achieved in a snap when it comes to varietally labeled wines. If a Malbec from Argentina says "Malbec" on the label then the term in the "Grape Name" field is Malbec. (Please, let's not get into the less than 100% percentage of a dominant grape required by governmental law to use a single grape form of varietal labeling as this varies throughout the world and Hanes's fingers get tired.) If a Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand says "Sauvignon Blanc" on the label then the term in "Grape Name" field is Sauvignon Blanc. And so on.

Since most descriptors get patterned on "Old World" wines it's easy enough to come up with "Grape Name" descriptors for blends such as "Bordeaux Blend" or "Rhône Blend" and most people would know what you mean. The rest can go complain on eBob. You could even come up with a descriptor such as "Tempranillo blend" to describe wines similar to those of Spain's Rioja or Ribera del Duero regions where Tempranillo is the very dominant grape with smaller amounts of grapes such as Mazuelo, Garnacha or Graciano. The rest would just have to get their freak on under the generic "Blend" and be happy with that.

In creating a database the owner would then just have to "know" that non-varietally labeled wines are made from this or that grape. That Vouvray is made from Chenin Blanc and red Hermitage from Syrah. And then populate the database with this information despite the lack of the information being on the actual labels. This is mentioned because, first, people should know what they are drinking but also, second, it makes comparisons among the world's wines easier. Then an individual can learn about wine and grow into a better person.

An individual should know that white Burgundy (save those of Saint-Bris or Bourgogne Aligoté) are made of the Chardonnay grape so if she wants to sort a database and find all Chardonnay wines not just the wines which are varietally labeled will come up. This is a learning opportunity dammit! At work the inventory management software Hanes uses was not set up to be input this way, very lame and hopefully to be addressed by early 2008 at the latest. The process of beginning to fix this is what in the main drives this essay.

For what to do with the aforementioned linguistic differences? Does one do violence to the language of origin and "force it" to correspond to a selected grape name? That is, screw "Garnacha" or "Cannonau" we're calling it "Grenache"? Such a Draconian act not only bespeaks of the lack of a moral compass but creates opportunity for much confusion. Say, someone is in a wine store or restaurant. She knows she loves Grenache. But the wine list says the wine is made from 100% Cannonau! If she is not educated and uplifted to know that this is just another name for Grenache she may miss out on tasting a wine she would find delicious. Nay, we must seek for an approach that remains ecumenical and accepts all grape names, regardless of language of origin, race, religion or creed.

There's a practical dimension to this as the software has to be sophisticated enough to recognize the different names and sort them together. Or we're back to the linguistic violence tip of forcing the many names into one name so searches will be complete. Rats. If you type in "Syrah" you want the returned hits to include all wines named "Shiraz" since they are the same damn grape. But should this be done strictly via a static "drop down" list of grape names? Or via the ability to use this or also type in a grape name? Should the names be straight characters or employ diacritical marks? "Gewurztraminer" or "Gewürztraminer" with the umlaut over the "u"? This is important! How can a wine writer truly say he educates while carelessly discarding diacritical marks treasured in languages the globe over?

The stinking software developers better figure this out.

So, like, anyway, it is truly useful to try and learn and memorize the different names of grapes. It not only helps in wine stores, restaurants and in database sorting but just makes the world a better place. To help in this process, Hanes now presents a list of alternative grape names. Be kind and teach them to the young. Future generations depend on your actions today.

Note: Distinctions among slight genetic differences and/or mutations ignored here for both the sake of laziness and simplicity as well as to annoy pedants.

Red

Cabernet Sauvignon: Bouche, Bouchet, Petit-Cabernet, Sauvignon Rouge, Vidure

Carignan: Carignane, Cariñena, Mazuelo, Gragnano

Gamay Noir: Anjou Gamay, Bourguignon Noir, Gamay Noir à Jus Blanc, Gamay de Touraine, Petit Gamai

Grenache: Grenache Noir, Garnacha, Cannonau, Alicante, Granaccia

Malbec: Cot, Auxerrois, Pressac, Gourdoux

Merlot: Merlot Noir, Bigney, Crabutet, Médoc Noir, Merlau, Petit Merle, Vitraillie

Mourvèdre: Monastrell, Mataro

Nebbiolo: Spanna, Chiavennasca, Picotener, Pugent

Pinot Noir: Blauburgunder, Blauer Klevner, Blauer Spätburgunder, Burgundac Crni, Nagyburgundi, Pineau, Pinot Nero, Savagnin Noir

Sangiovese: Sangiovese Grosso, Brunello, Sangiovese Piccolo, Prugnolo Gentile, Sangiovetto, Calabrese

Syrah: Shiraz, Hermitage, Marsanne Noir, Sirac, Petite Syrah

Tempranillo: Tinto Madrid, Tinto de la Rioja, Tinta del Pais, Tinta de Toro, Cencibel, Ull de Llebre, Ojo de Liebre, Tinta Roriz, Aragonez

Zinfandel: Primitivo, Plavac Mali, Crljenak Kastelanski

White

Albariño: Alvarinho, Albarín Blanco

Arbois: Menu Pineau, Petit Pineau

Chardonnay: Beaunois, Gamay Blanc, Melon d'Arbois, Pinot Chardonnay, Morillon

Chenin Blanc: Pineau de la Loire, Pineau d'Anjou, Gros Pineau de Vouvray, Pineau de Savennières, Steen

Gewürztraminer: Traminer, Roter Traminer, Traminer Musqué, Traminer Parfumé, Traminer Aromatico, Edeltraube, Rousselet

Inzolia: Inzolia, Ansonica

Muscadet: Melon de Bourgogne (purists will argue that the primary name is Melon de Bourgogne)

Muscat: Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains, Muscat d'Alsace, Muscat Canelli, Moscato Giallo, Moscato Bianco, Moscato, Muskateller, Moscatel, Brown Muscat, Frontignan

Pinot Blanc: Pinot Bianco, Pinot Blanco, Weissburgunder

Pinot Gris: Pinot Grigio, Tokay Pinot Gris, Tokay d'Alsace, Pinot Beurot, Petit Gris, Malvoisie, Fromentot, Ruländer, Grauburgunder, Grauer Burgunder, Szükerbarát

Riesling: Johannisberg Riesling, Johannisberger, Klingelberger, Riesling Renano, White Riesling, Weisser Riesling, Rhine Riesling

Sauvignon Blanc: Fumé Blanc, Petit Sauvignon, Sauvignon Jaune, Sauvignon Musqué

Savagnin: Traminer, Klevner

Sémillon: Chevrier, Green Grape, Wyndruif, Gros Sémillon, Sémillon Muscat, Hunter Valley Riesling

Ugni Blanc: Trebbiano, Saint-Emilion, Cadillac, Thalia

Vermentino: Rolle

Welschriesling: Riesling Italico, Graševina, Olaszrizling, Laski Rizling (this is not the regular Riesling yo!)

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This month's big winners... Bodegas Faustino for some reason always comes across as a lower rent type of Rioja but Hanes snagged a bottle of their 1996 Gran Reserva anyway, looking for something different that night. For \$30 a pretty damn good drop and one which may even result in squirreling away a couple more bottles for further aging. Drouhin's 2005 Beaune "Clos des Mouches" is one tasty red Burgundy and one of the first high end wines of this vintage sampled by Hanes. Not overblown but "bigger" than usual, a sign of why this is an esteemed (and very expensive) vintage of red Burgundy. Not sure how purists will see these wines with some age on them. Purists buy lots of expensive 2005 red Burgundy and open them with Hanes in ten years please. 2005 also continues to prove a good year for red wines from the Loire, Mabileau's \$20 or so Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil "Les Rouillères" an easy one to swill. Why mention Yarra Yering when it will only result in fewer bottles for Hanes? Sacrifice, that's why, sacrifice. The 2004 "Dry Red Wine No 2" from this Australian producer is worth the near \$60 and then some. An entirely underappreciated winery. The wines of Stéphane Tissot in the France's Jura region are wine geek specials and the 2004 Chardonnay bottling called "Les Bruyères" is delicious now and merits aging too. Fairly priced at \$30. Give credit where it's due, Casa Lapostolle has the recipe down stone cold for their "Cuvée Alexandre" line of wines. Getting more expensive but wines to impress the non-geek every time out. The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon for \$24 highly representative of this trend.

The best \$15 and under picks... With summer comes the latest vintage of Pépière's regular Muscadet bottling, now the 2006. Hurrah! Hanes thinks he likes the 2006 better than the 2005 version. Is this so wrong? In any event, for \$12 or less a perennial buy. 2006 also brings a welcome surprise in J-P Brun's white Beaujolais made from the Chardonnay grape and varietally labeled as such. This wine has never completely clicked with Hanes, always "nice" but not much more. But for \$13 this is a tough Chardonnay to beat, regardless of place of origin. Kellerai Cantina Tramin (aka Cantina Produttori Termeno) is a quality producer in Italy's Alto Adige region and they make a Pinot Grigio worth drinking. The 2006 version is a nice buy at \$15 and may get you out of some tough spots where you have to drink something meant to please others first. With many Spanish or Portuguese bottlings you won't see the producer's name in big letters, more so the brand name. So look for "Chaminé" and not Cortes de Cima and you'll find a pleasing cheap (\$11) red wine from Alentejano, Portugal for your delectation.

And the disappointments... Cheap wines disappoint too. The wines of Savoie are becoming more popular as crisp summer white sippers. There's a bunch made by various producers named Quénard and Hanes recently was ho-hummed by the 2006 "Anne de la Biguerne" bottling from Jean-Pierre et Jean-François. Not bad for like \$13 but nothing to rave about either. When you're on the mailing list there's always another Turley to taste. Their 2005 Zinfandel from the Turley "Estate" vineyard was just OK. Young vines? Why did they buy this vineyard to be their "Estate"? People want to know. Domaine de la Haute Borne seems to have been finally officially renamed as Domaine Vincent Carême. Too bad this

occurred with the 2006 Vouvray Sec which does not match up to previous vintages. Oh, well. El Sequé from Alicante in Spain is another Spanish wine producer of inexpensive wines which leave Hanes repeatedly flat. So too with their basic 2005 bottling for \$12. Hey, someone else brought it. The Australian Premium Wine Collection's "house brand" Shiraz called The Wishing Tree sucked as usual, just the vintage changed to 2005.

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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/oldervintages2007.html>

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 #34: "It's the points that matter fools!"

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 August/September!

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Rattlesnake Ridge
Zinfandel
2005, \$40.00, 15.1%
The violet core hazy and easygoing enough to not fight off the encroaching ruby to crimson rims, incredibly well-hued throughout while looking natural. The oak toast has a sour, pickled aspect which plays nicely into the tart cranberry, raspberry, pomegranate fruit scents, burly blasts of salted dried beef, white grapefruit, leather and lower wildflowers fill all the gaps, builds and builds as it sits in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, given the fullness of the nose one might be taken aback at how light and easy it is in the mouth. Smooth and stable, it makes no effort to impress, simply lays out the beef jerky, leather, stony earth as well as grapefruit and flowers. By the time it gets to the raspberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit, they seem like a latecomer to an early party. The highly credible acidity manages to check the milk chocolate, whipped cream oak flavors. Will disappoint those who want a "Turley." 90

Outpost
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, The Other
Petite Sirah
2004, \$50.00, 15.1%
Jet black core, only gets around to purple coloration nearer to the crimson to brick red rims, unblemished surface. While the alcohol is obtrusive in the nose, enjoyment to be had in the flowers, orange peel, mocha chips and forest floor matter, the plum, cherry fruit scents deep and able to resonate for some time. Full-bodied, the

tannins pile themselves thickly on the tongue, in spite of the resulting dusty texture the inherent sweetness of the blackberry, cherry, plum fruit, lasts completely throughout. If anything gets truncated it's the lemon to orange citrus, florality and mountain air freshness. More leathery here with a suggestion of tanned animal hide. For its degree of density, does manage to maintain admirable fluidity and release enough to carve out a more accessible finish. 90

Outpost
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain
Petite Sirah
2004, \$35.00, 14.6%
Fully opaque purple core, while thin the ruby-magenta rims sit heavily in the glass, a touch more transparent. The nose is dense enough to resist exploration into it, has moderate floral lift and certainly well-packed plum, black cherry, currant fruit scents, there's a kind of balsam wood and leafy quality that conjures up the image of a Japanese forest. Of course. In the mouth it's thickly constructed but not fat, mostly supporting beams of tannin and what you'd like to call the gristle and sinew of musculature. The floral dimension able to assert itself more effectively here, the lemon citrus acts in concert. This lift forestalls the herbaceousness as well as allowing the cherry, raspberry, blackberry and, oddly enough, hints of strawberry, fruit to gain traction. The leather and earth components not yet beginning to coalesce but should grow in a 4-6 year time horizon. Gives you its all, leaves it out there on the stage. 89

McPrice Myers Wine Company
Santa Ynez Valley, Larner Vineyard
Syrah

2005, \$30.00, 15.2%

Incredible saturation, the onyx black core glows with a luminescent purple aura, heavy ruby rims barely given any space to provide contrast, immaculately shiny surface. Slight reductive muteness, the plum, blueberry, boysenberry fruit scents feel like they've been through a pneumatic press, cocoa and some floral essence but, really, there's not a lot at the moment to draw out. Full-bodied, chewy with broad tannins which don't chomp down as hard as they could. Attack comes off as more herbal bite than floral embrace, the sourness of the lemon citrus could push it to either side depending on the taster. Releases appreciably by the mid-palate, adding flow to the cherry, plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit. As it nears the finish comes up with cumin, ginger spice, perhaps the only nod towards the presence of oak. Needs lots and lots of time. 88

Turley

Napa Valley, Turley Estate
Zinfandel

2005, \$38.00, 15.6%

Unblemished red-ruby to violet color, brightens into crimson rims, transparent without seeming light in color. Bouncily juicy raspberry, strawberry, cranberry fruit in the nose, lemon peel, dried honey, mentholated airiness, plays it close to the vest and simple. Medium-bodied, more sugary richness than expected given the nose, prune and plum equal to cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit. Has stability in face of low tannins and acidity. Uses what weight it has well. Same honey to toffee edge, sweet lemon and mint too. Vanilla and milk chocolate notes present throughout. Stays close to its message, clear and direct, not much to add to any extended debate. While easy to drink, doesn't grab you. 87

Medusa

Amador County, Deaver Ranch Pig Pen Vineyard
Zinfandel

2004, \$37.99, 14.4%

Light, almost transparent brick red to violet color, becomes fully scarlet around the rims. The nose too is light but knows how to penetrate, marshals the eucalyptus, pine and white grapefruit elements to push the strawberry, raspberry, persimmon fruit scents forward, outdoorsy airiness. Medium-bodied, soft and coating yet in no way heavy nor clumsy, like a thin rubber suit for your tongue. Attack framed by sour white grapefruit to lemon citrus, wakes you up in preparation for the bright raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit and fresh grassiness. More vanilla creaminess here, adds to the overall gentle approach. Has the pine and menthol edge still, earthier too. Despite the general "red fruit" nature, it does end with an uptick in prune and raisin notes. Wears its alcohol well, tactfully succinct finish. 87

Herman Story Wines

Santa Ynez Valley, Larner Vineyard
Syrah

2004, \$29.99, 15.2%

Moderate murkiness darkens the black-purple core into opacity, saturated red-ruby rims remain dark, nice sheen on the surface. Ginger and cinnamon spiced plum, cherry fruit in the nose, densely packed flowers, earth and orange peel make it on the immobile side and hard to fully soak in.

Medium-bodied, possesses the same density in the mouth creating a tightly wound, stone-like feel in the mouth. The spice lower, the orange citrus and florality higher, in addition to elevated herbal tones. The tannins dusty enough to create a gritty texture on the tongue. The cherry, currant, plum fruit has a tart, rough appeal as well. Can't say the finish is short as there's minimal overall sense of movement and thus little expectation for a prolonged ending. 87

WASHINGTON WHITE

Coeur d'Alene Cellars

Columbia Valley

Viognier

2005, \$20.99, 14.7%

Dull, old wedding ring sort of golden coloration, little shine and the rims definitely turn transparent. Lemon custard, vanilla, ginger, a bit too airy for the pear, apple, peach fruit scents to appear poached, more floral as it dissolves, however, the spiciness remains in firm control. Medium-bodied, clove and ginger spice doing their thang here in the mouth too, fairly openly knit and avoids heaviness while keeping the spotlight on the pear, peach, apple fruit. Offers some mintiness too. No acidity at all, were it not for the spice and tangerine, orange citrus would fall pretty flat. That said, it's possessed of a clean enough finish and nothing here really grates on you. If it wasn't for the spice and enclitic lack of stone or mineral, it could be gosh darn refreshing. 87

FRANCE RED

Sauveuse, Domaine de la

Provence, Côtes de Provence, Cuvée Philippine
Blend

2004, \$17.99, 13.5%

Semi-opaque purple core, spotless and completely integrated with the broad maroon rims, radiates warmth. Leather, dried beef, pewter and stone comprise most of the nose, quietly segues into lavender, wildflowers and currant, cherry fruit, dissolves with a suggestion of powdery milk chocolate. Full-bodied, yet with enough looseness in the knitting to release swiftly and with grace. The cherry, blackberry, black currant fruit strides more authoritatively here, a steady and measured stream of juiciness throughout. More basic earthiness and stoniness, less gaminess, definite sharp spicy bite. The tannins build with each sip until they become a force to be reckoned with. Continues to bristle with energy through the finish, not the most couth of wines but that's besides the point here. 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Syrah, 15% Mourvèdre, 5% Grenache. 89

Drouhin, Maison Joseph

Burgundy, Beaune, Clos des Mouches

Pinot Noir

2005, \$74.99, 13.0%

Fully integrated and seamless ruby-purple color throughout, the rims plush and glowing, resplendent in its youthfulness. Initially the nose is dominated by hot caramel and butterscotch notes before opening into damp tilled soil, forest underbrush and tar, does a highly credible job of bridling the enthusiasm of the cherry, raspberry scents into a pure, intelligible message. Medium-bodied, the tannins are firm yet yield with grace, a sign of both early accessibility and stuffing to age. That said, maintains a rougher grainy texture throughout, keeps it up front and

center. Sour tang brings some cranberry and persimmon to the foundation of raspberry and red cherry fruit. Twiggy and leafy more than grassy, a chunky sort of herbaceousness. Touches of sunburned leather, aged and cracked. The lemon to white grapefruit citrus holds off until the back half before pricking holes in your mouth walls. Here in the mouth the oak is more neutral and knit in. 89

Tissot, Domaine André et Mireille
Jura, Arbois, Singulier
Trousseau
2004, \$28.99, 13.0%

Pale blood red in color, while light has a fuzziness which holds transparency at bay, fades even more around the rims. Spicy nose of dried merde, white grapefruit, white pepper, clove, powdered dry grass, the strawberry, raspberry fruit taut and as eager to penetrate as the other scents, no soft sinking in here. Light-bodied, the acidity grabs you by the short hairs right off and coats the tongue with a thick filminess. Tar, tree bark, white grapefruit pith, lemon, tea leaves, parched brown earth, meadow grasses and straw twist through the palate. Its extreme dryness makes the lifespan of the red cherry, strawberry, rhubarb fruit shorter than desired but certainly possesses a vivid attack. Curious note of prune at the end. Clings to your mouth pores for some time after the majority of the liquid is gone. For a light wine it demands attention. 88

Mabileau, Frédéric
Loire, Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil, Les Rouillières
Cabernet Franc
2005, \$19.99, 13.0%

Attractively simple purple core, gauzily opaque, broad red-ruby rims, looks like a picture of a red wine in a magazine. Hits you with a great deal of flower petals in the nose, considerably more than bell pepper or grass, this aided by mixed white citrus and sweet tea leaf notes, easily understood minerals and earth, the cherry and blackberry scents hew too to a clear, recognizable message. Medium-bodied, has tannins yet remains soft and round, the sort of juicy Cabernet Franc that won't get newbies running from the grape, focuses on cherry, plum, blackberry goodness. Not lacking in tobacco ash, stone, cedar or orange citrus, they simply serve as embellishments. Acidity also moderate. Slides down the chute, alrighty. 88

Clos Roche Blanche
Loire, Touraine, Cuvée Gamay
Gamay Noir
2006, \$12.49, 12.0%

Good depth in the ruby-violet core, holds its richness through the rims, the ruby lightened a touch by pinkish magenta hues. Bracingly sour cherry, raspberry fruit in the nose along with mineral powder and cut grass, this even eviscerates the lemon citrus scents, feels anchored in your nostrils but not bottom heavy, doesn't life per se either. Medium-bodied, quite compact and balanced, nary a hair out of place. This is both good and bad for contrast bolsters the ability to register the wine, as a result, there's lulls in your enjoyment of the grass, twigs, earth, stones, lemon peel in addition to the tart cranberry, strawberry, raspberry fruit. The tannins, and to a lesser degree acidity, gain hold during the back half and don't shorten the evening but do card at the door. Add a few points if you're a bona fide terroiriste. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

Chave, Jean-Louis
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, Mon Coeur
Syrah
2005, \$21.99, 14.0%

The dark purple core holds onto its squeaky clean nature, aiding the eventual transparency nearer the flush red-ruby rims, a pleasing visage in the glass. At first the nose overflows with wet flower petals before the leather, beef blood and iodine catch up, flirts with developing a grassy side but demurs in favor of closely woven currant, blackberry, black cherry scents. Medium-bodied, feels bigger due to the strength of the tannic structure. Mixes in olive pits, tree bark and forest brush into the flowers and orange zest, the latter more short-lived. Dries out a good deal before the mid-palate, corralling the blackberry, currant fruit before its breaks into a trot. Could be considered a touch over-aggressive, however, doesn't lose its balance nor its composure. Today needs food, otherwise another 1-2 years in bottle. 88

Fontsainte, Domaine de
Languedoc/Roussillon, Corbières
Blend
2005, \$8.99, 12.5%

Perfectly spotless and unblemished ruby-purple in color, comes with a healthy warm glow, the violet hues reaching completely into and darkening the rims. Nice funk to the nose, muddy, wet leather, wooly, like riders back from a late November fox hunt, alongside this you get more precocious strawberry, red raspberry and cherry scents and a fistful of mixed fresh garden herbs, never quite gets as sauvage as its initial impression suggests it might. Light-bodied, you have to really focus on measuring palate weight as the tannins and acidity are ratcheted up about as much as the primary material can withstand. In the mouth you get more traditional white grapefruit and olive pit notes in tandem with the dry earth, broken stones and fallen twigs and leaves. Less gamey or funky, just dry as dry gets before you start saying desiccated. A bit too rough. 70% Carignan, 20% Grenache, 10% Syrah. 87

Noblaie, Domaine de La
Loire, Chinon, Les Chiens-Chiens
Cabernet Franc
2004, \$18.99, 13.5%

Impenetrably black purple core, heavy set red-magenta rims, comes with a smooth and reflective surface. Tobacco ash, mineral dust, parched earth, dried bell peppers comprise most of the nose yet there's also an abundance of cherry, raspberry fruit, the latter just not winning the battle right now. Medium-bodied, very tightly wound, no matter how long you try to let it open. The tannins make your mouth a bowl of dust, allows for minerality, stone bits, earth and dried meadow grasses but little else. Any lemon citrus or bell pepper stunted, doubly so for the cherry, currant, mixed berry fruit. Still, as in the nose, there's a certain richness of the primary material which impresses. Can the flavors ever come close to outlasting the tannins? Or even catching up? Debatable, but still an enjoyable wine for terroiristes. 87

Cascavel, Domaine de
Rhône, Côtes du Ventoux, Le Cascavel
Blend
2004, \$14.99, 13.5%

Light ruby-violet in color, trim and spotless, mostly consistent from core to rims, slight reddening around the latter. Dried game, leather, fallow earth and sauna stones

set the stage in the nose while tart raspberry, cherry fruit and mixed white citrus scents fill in the cracks, smartly doesn't try to do too much and comes off as more complete as a result, even if semi-shorter. Medium-bodied, light on its feet, much more impelled by acidity than tannins, bright red fruit character to the strawberry, cranberry, cherry flavors. aided by lemony bite and stream stones. Less "animal" aspects here but they do flit in and out. Fairly compact, biggest complaint could be its relative shortness, not a lot of flavor nor mouth weight left by the finish. Unspecified percentages of Syrah, Grenache. 86

Gaudou, Château de
Southwest France, Cahors, Tradition
Blend

2003, \$11.99, 13.5%

Deep purple core to the edge of blackness, undiluted ruby-crimson rims provide lively rims. An intriguing burst of black licorice impels the nose, mint, dark chocolate and ripe raspberry, blackberry fruit come on next, displays a light stemminess before finally dissolving. Medium-bodied, round and smooth attack gets you expecting more juiciness in the cherry, raspberry fruit than you actually get. Holds on tenaciously to that licorice edge. The tannins somewhat lacking in maturity and definitely truncate the finish. There's energy in the parched earth and stones giving it a bit of a rustic profile. However, there's not a lot going on beyond that, smattering of dried old flowers and that's it. Simple bistro wine, needs food, especially something fatty. 80% Malbec, 15% Merlot, 5% Tannat. 85

FRANCE WHITE

Pépière, Domaine de la
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie
Muscadet

2006, \$11.99, 12.0%

Excellent brilliance along the surface, draws the yellow straw color out while beneath pools deeply, the rims lose hue intensity but hard to notice. Most of the diversity in the nose masked by the smoky minerality and stoniness, beyond that does a 180° turn into soft flower petals and creaminess, cobbler character to the minor peach, apricot scents there. In the mouth more of a whole cloth, medium-bodied with acidity of steely resolve and enough flint, gunpowder, mineral shards and old dinosaur bones to dust anyone's palate. Bitter wild grasses keep this going, the floral dimension a bit roughed up and the peach, apricot, pear fruit taste like they've soaked overnight in mineral water. Lemon zest infuses the finish, as if it needed more energy. It's peppy! (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 90

Brun, Jean-Paul
Beaujolais, Terres Dorées
Chardonnay

2006, \$12.99, 12.0%

Slightly below average concentration in the old yellow gold color, minimal shine, keeps what hue it has from core to rims. Stripped down, bear bones nose of mineral, chalk, stone, thin coating of lemon citrus and pear, peach, apple fruit, nothing else unless you're like Hanes and smell grass in every wine. Medium-bodied, in no way wimpy and unconsciously flexes its wiry muscles, the acidity well-sharpened and cutting with precision and without malice. The lemon to mandarin orange and pear, apple, apricot fruit kick it up a few notches, enough to sweeten the mid-

palate and allow for a momentary brush of honey. The stoniness, chalkiness and white dust cloud remain its signature. Releasing a floral sigh at the end. Superb. (Synthetic Cork: Vinova) 90

Tissot, Domaine André et Mireille
Jura, Arbois, Les Bruyères
Chardonnay

2004, \$29.99, 13.5%

Heavy set golden color with a patina of amber, pools deeply in the glass even as the surface continues to prismally reflect light. Razor sharp oak permeates the nose, very toasty with lime zest and fried butter notes, even the floral dimension seems driven by military precision, the apple, pear, peach, guava fruit notes ride a laser beam in and out of your nostrils, you can barely register them. Medium-bodied with a great deal of firmness, doesn't come off as overtly acidic though, just dry and unyielding. As with certain high-end Burgundies it's dominated by youthfully sharp oak, all buttered toast and melted caramel alongside the usual lime citrus and floral notes. More peach, apricot, nectarine, apple fruit here, level throughout. Not crafted to bowl you over, more so slowly work the body until you can't get off the ropes. Tastes very young and unevolved. 89

Lafouge, Domaine Jean et Gilles
Burgundy, Auxey-Duresses, Les Boutonniers
Chardonnay

2005, \$24.99, 13.0%

Transparent, it's green-white to faded gold in color, not so clean but this more a product of a lack of reflectivity, empty rims. Streamlined, no nonsense and borderline reticent nose, trim lemon/lime zest, stone shards, both overshadow the oak toast component, peach, nectarine, pineapple fruit verges on sharp-edged tropicality, actually comes up with a touch of chili pepper before dissolving. Medium-bodied, flows easily with a rumble in its belly, nice dimpled texture so it keeps the pace back. The acidity dries steadily throughout without taking the fun out of the lime juice and peach, nectarine, pear, papaya fruit. More street smarts than erudition in the oak, no big words to excuse its presence, keeps tingling with ease start to finish. Better off less elegant. 88

Clair, Domaine Françoise & Denis
Burgundy, Saint-Aubin, En Remilly
Chardonnay

2005, \$21.99, 13.0%

Pale yellow to white gold in color, a faint glow lends some depth, dull surface. Understated crisp oak in the nose, penetrates but not looking for blood, no real creaminess nor sugary notes, orange sorbet, hint of clove with round, non-flashy peach, apricot, fig fruit scents. Medium-bodied, more clean and fresh than overpoweringly bold, same blend of old and new oak, toasty and spicy but smartly fades by the mid-palate. Lime, orange citrus in turn yields to stone and streamwater aspects. Lowkey hovering feel to the apricot, pear, apple fruit, always there yet by no means the focal point. Does see a revival of the spiciness through the finish. 88

Quénard, Domaine Jean-Pierre et Jean-François
Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin, Anne de la Biguerne
Jacquère

2006, \$13.49, 11.5%

Nothing unusual about the light gold color, neither resplendent nor dull, clean while also bending light, rims

lose intensity. There's a certain textural fatness to the nose, feels full, this in spite of the huge quantity of wet mineral and stone powder, smokiness and clay, the floral side fades in and out, more consistent presence in the lemon to white grapefruit citrus, has basic pear and apple scents but not a wine where fruit is something you think about a lot. Medium-bodied, not round but the contours devoid of angles. The acidity channels things with firm determination, never flashes any blades though. The grapefruit and lemon citrus plays even a larger role here, not to say that the stone, mineral water, parched earth any less present. Suggests black licorice or mint here rather than lighter, airier floral notes. Ends with elevating bitters and herbaceousness. Plenty of general heft left at the end too. 87

Faiveley, Domaine J.
Burgundy, Bourgogne, Georges Faiveley
Chardonnay
2005, \$18.99, 13.0%

Basic golden color, naught unusual about it, pleasing surface reflectivity, soft green tint, holds well through the rims. White minerals to stone powder in the nose, light herbaceousness adds to its austerity, moderate lime and lemon citrus, licorice, at best a glimmer of pear, apple, green melon fruit scents. Light-bodied, steps gingerly through the mouth, the oak edge is keen but not biting, suggesting somewhat older oak used. The acidity has energy to spare and cleaves easily through whatever gets in its way. The lemon, lime and tangerine citrus bigger and bolder here, sweetened by a dusting of violets. As in the nose, much more minerality than oakiness, however, it doesn't quite come off as expressing a definite terroir. Tenuous presence in the peach, pear, apple fruit, not absent yet at the same time a bit player. Cleanliness a strong suit, length not so much. 87

Romaneaux-Destezet (Hervé Souhaut), Domaine
Rhône, Vin de Pays de l'Ardèche
Blend

2003, \$26.99, 12.0%
Cloudy, seemingly unfiltered gold color, touch of amber, glows nicely in the core, dilute rims. Smoky nose, dense, doesn't lift more so hovers, chalk and stone dust yields to ripe peach, apricot, nectarine fruit scents, there's something indistinctly sour about it but hard to nail down. Medium-bodied, possesses a dustiness reminiscent of an oxidized character. There's no lack of zest in the pineapple, nectarine, apricot fruit, this buoyed by a bubbly mineral water aspect. Baked glazed bread and bitter herbs alternately drag it from sweet to sour, not meshed well. Ends with a suggestion of jalapeño pepper, definitely favoring the latter. The acidity is stronger than expected. Overall, unique but not especially enjoyable. Unspecified percentages of Viognier, Roussanne. 86

Leflaive, Olivier
Burgundy, Bourgogne, Les Sétilles
Chardonnay
2005, \$16.99, 13.0%

Light, if not quite transparent, yellow gold color, the lack of depth helps make the rims appear thicker, flat surface with minimal shine. The nose features crisply penetrating oak toast, some vanilla cream but on the whole more finely grained, lime zest, floral water, understated pear, peach, apricot fruit scents. Medium-bodied, loosely knit and open so that it flows easily across the palate. The oak dominates just as much here, burnt toast, butter, toffee and lime

juice, honey before you even start to perceive the apple, pear, apricot fruit. The acidity does what it should for such a wine, support and nudge more than compel. Not hot but gets spicier the more you sip. Round contours, not soft but even with the lumber no splinters to stick out. If you didn't know better you'd think it's pretty good. 86

Carême, Domaine Vincent
Loire, Vouvray, Sec
Chenin Blanc

2006, \$19.99, 13.5%

Very pale brown to yellow straw color, lacks vividness but mostly clear and not especially translucent. Apple sauce, ginger bread and tangerine citrus infuse the nose, takes some time for the smoky minerality to get going, so-so peach, apricot, pear fruit in addition to that apple base. Medium-bodied, sluggish and sweet enough despite the "sec" label, again ginger, cinnamon spice, tangerine and lemon citrus, custard and a touch of grassiness. The acidity is pretty slack, not invisible but incapable of much orchestration. Peach, apricot, pear fruit stays basic and accessible, lasts well into the finish. Stoniness and smokiness do slowly crest and fall. Easygoing enough for early consumption, doesn't strike you as an ager. 86

FRANCE ROSE

Lafond Roc-Epine, Domaine Jean-Pierre & Pascal
Rhône, Tavel, Rosé
Blend

2006, \$15.99, 13.5%

Fat, glowing magenta-ruby color, clear without seeming transparent, light rims. Brightly grassy nose, keeps your nostrils open for the lemon zest and sour raspberry, red cherry scents while moments of milk chocolate and floral dew ground it. Full-bodied, immediately shows it has enough tannins to stick to your mouth walls. Juicy, the sourness in the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit stops sugariness from accruing. Coffee bean, milk chocolate and violets swell in the center, the lemon holds off a bit longer. Stays broad and full throughout, a stronger benefit than complexity or fluid integration. Becomes a touch bitterer as it ends. A good example of its type but could lose a few bumps in the road. 60% Grenache, 15% Cinsault, 9% Clairette, 5% Syrah, 5% Grenache Blanc, 3% Carignan, 1% Mourvèdre, 1% Picpoul, 1% Bourboulenc. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 86

Daumas Gassac, Mas de
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vallée du Gassac, Rosé Frizant
Brut

Cabernet Sauvignon
2006, \$15.99, 11.5%

Watermelon red in color, very tiny and dispersed bubbles, gets more pink than orange nearer the rims, fine clarity. Simple, fairly inexpressive nose of red cherry, strawberry fruit, lemon zest, stone dust and chalk. In the mouth the "frizant" part lasts for the first five to ten minutes or so after which it's more or less a still wine of medium body. The lemon citrus and stoniness pair up well together, at times taking the lead over the strawberry, watermelon, red cherry, peach fruit. Has a credible tannic bite to it, keeps it dry and on an even keel throughout. Does pull up slightly short but not horribly so. On the whole innocuously fun, fits right into the middle of the pack when it comes to easy drinking rosé wines. 86

ITALY RED

Burletto (Marina Burletto), Comm. G.B.
Piedmont, Verduno Pelaverga
Pelaverga
2005, \$17.99, 12.5%

Crystal clear blood red with a slight orange cast at the rims, completely integrated and consistent appearance. The nose has a brisk, lively demeanor, featuring white pepper and white grapefruit bursts as well as sour cherry, strawberry fruit and a coarse dusting of dry minerally earth. Light-bodied, active acidity sets an early tone and buttresses that white grapefruit element. The white pepper more toned down here, doesn't quite have the lift. The overall dryness keeps the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit in check and planes off any excess. Herbaceous at times, yet, blends well with the earthiness so that neither too extreme. Versatility a core strength, could go with a lot of foods, fish, light poultry and so on. 87

Montecristo, Marchesi di
Piedmont, Nerello del Bastardo
Blend
2000, \$7.99, 13.5%

Light and clear garnet to black core, fades to orange and crimson red rims, good brightness. Sourly bracing nose but in the good way, the cherry and blackberry fruit clumsily cuts through, herbaceous, dried flowers, black licorice, increasingly candied with a mesquite smoke aspect. Medium-bodied, the acidity makes it lurch forward before the raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit gains traction. Flowers, pine sap and anise notes are pleasing, not deep but on the whole present. The spoonfuls of lemon juice blunted by creaminess and vanilla. That herbaceousness accelerates through the finish with tobacco ash dashes. Surprisingly drinkable. Unspecified percentages of Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, unknown. 85

Santi
Veneto, Valpolicella Classico Superiore, Solane Ripasso
Blend
2004, \$15.99, 13.5%

Clear scarlet-purple in color, mostly consistent until stronger red comes out just at the rims, close to transparent. Somewhat herbaceous nose with a twiggy sort of appeal, pine resin, cinnamon and candied cherries, doesn't really come across as that sweet nor concentrated. Light to medium-bodied, the acidity is brawny enough to throw it out of whack and let the oak toast, grassiness, tree bark elements gain sway. As in the nose the cherry, raspberry fruit lacks concentration and natural sweetness, hard-nosed. Lemon peel, dried garden herbs and pine try to pretty it up but it's a little too late. One might reasonably expect more richness from a Ripasso wine and more length. Unspecified percentages of Corvina, Rondinella. 84

ITALY WHITE

Tramin (Cantina Produttori Termeno), Kellerei Cantina
Alto Adige/Südtirol
Pinot Grigio
2006, \$14.99, 13.5%

White straw in color, gold embellishments, the pleasing surface shine tries to make up for the transparency and all but total lack of real coloration. The lemon to lime citrus scents give the nose a sorbet like feel, soft but not without bite, floral and in no way herbaceous, dancing quality in the

pear, apple, apricot fruit, open and fresh and without much interest in traditional rhetoric. Medium-bodied, manages to at once assert itself as identifiably Pinot Grigio to, err, just about anyone while also offering enough acidity and general stoniness to placate those who would recoil in a knee jerk fashion. Still, juicy and full, not shy about the sweetness of the lemon and orange citrus, some mintiness too, the peach, apricot, apple fruit friendly, more so by character than rote. There's a minute herbal twist on the finish, quite good job of keeping the lights on until closing time. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

Torre Gaia, Fattoria
Campania, Sannio Greco
Greco
2006, \$15.99, 12.5%

Simple green-gold color, neither especially dark nor light, adequate surface shine with some pooling below, rims hold well. Soft nose of lemon citrus, lilacs, peach and apricot fuzz, light honey coating, holds for a few moments and then fades gently. Medium-bodied, the acidity strong enough to carve out a more forceful mouth entry with lilacs, orange blossoms, mint and brown sugar notes. The peach, apricot, apple fruit ably extends its presence through the mid-palate while allowing more minerals and stream water traces to come to the fore and make for a clean finish. While not an especially deep wine, presents an attractive balance between complexity and accessible simplicity, simply what you want it to be. Avoids any flaws which would detract from enjoyment on its own or with food. 87

ITALY ROSE

Beati, Torre dei
Abruzzi, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Cerasuolo
Montepulciano
2006, \$14.99, 14.0%

Despite being super-light and crystal clear, there's a deep luminescent glow to the pink-magenta core, looks like you could see it with the lights out, does turn to straight-on pink around the rims. There's a certain standoffishness to the nose, like it could hit you with more than it does, the raspberry, watermelon, red apple fruit fulfills the contract and just, equal parts dried grass and stone chunks to lemon peel, dense but mute. Full-bodied, unusually tannic for such a wine, blankets the tongue, dry without becoming insufferably so. It's broad, steel-like skeleton could easily hold even more weight and pressure, however, there is a pressed feel to the cherry, raspberry, watermelon fruit. Something really clamps down on the incipient grassiness, caught dead in its tracks. Less distinct citrus but no less discernible. Keeps grinding on the tongue long after the flavors have gone. 87

GERMANY WHITE

Wittmann, Weingut
Rheinhessen, QbA Trocken AP #1
Riesling
2005, \$19.99, 12.0%

Dull green-white gold in appearance, makes up for it some via considerable translucent layering, rims whiten out a bit. Oil, pineapple rind, orange peel, tart nectarine to peach scents, in general so intense that it is difficult to find any soothing qualities in the mineral dust. Medium-bodied, not quite as piercing as the nose but cuts well nonetheless. Lots of lemon to white grapefruit citrus, smoothed out by

wet flower petals, if then in turn brightened by freshly cut grass and stone dust. The papaya, nectarine, pineapple, apricot fruit angular and blazes a swift path through the mouth. The acidity seems more coiled to strike than actually striking, the flavors sting more than the structure. Long finish full of mouth weight, have to gulp to get it finally down. 88

GERMANY ROSE

Dostert, Weingut Matthias
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Tafelwein
Roter Elbling
2006, \$11.99, 10.5%

Palest of red-orange rose hue, sort of metallic in some ways, very good shine, rims devoid of color. The nose has a muscular sort of lift, substantial watermelon, cherry, strawberry fruit without being fruity, violets, lemon drops, there's a "strong silent type" of stoniness beneath it all. Full-bodied, has a velvety plushness to it which helps it cling to each mouth pore equally. Doesn't have the kind of acidity to interfere with the forward strawberry, raspberry, watermelon, red cherry fruit, super-friendly juiciness. Lemon to lime citrus, wet stone, maybe a glimmer of flower petals. Charms you to the point where the whole issue of complexity seems downright silly. 88

SPAIN RED

Faustino, Bodegas
Rioja, Gran Reserva
Tempranillo
1996
\$29.99, 13.0%

The violet in the core has yielded to deep red ruby almost in its entirety, shiny and transparent, consistent coloring through to the rims, no visible aging. Tightly wound vanilla cream, cocoa and cedar anchor the nose, tart cherry, raspberry fruit rise high in your nostrils, tobacco smoke and burning autumn leaves contribute to the lift. Medium-bodied, very evenly paced and balanced, doesn't try too hard. Hands over spices, cedar, orange peel, cigar leaf, the tannins beginning to unwind while the acidity continues to steady things. No lack of cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit. Appears in a transitional state, enjoyable but as full of promise as delivering today. You have to like unassuming suave wines here. 90

Sequé, Bodegas y Viñedos de El
Alicante
Blend
2005, \$11.99, 13.5%

Flowing violet core surrounded by heavy-set red-ruby rims, totally unblemished and reflective, can't glean much other information from it visually. Plummy nose full of cherry and mocha notes yet still as dusty as juicy in texture, the florality stunted some, pleasing overall fullness. Medium-bodied, delivers on the dryness found in the nose with arch tannins through the attack. Here there's lemon and orange citrus to pair with and support the floral element. Minimal oakiness, offers cocoa dust and vanilla bean at best (worst). The fruit mostly plum, cherry, blackberry, yet remains dry throughout. Unspecified percentages of Monastrell, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah. 87

PORTUGAL RED

Cortes de Cima, Casa Agrícola
Alentejano, Chaminé
Blend
2005, \$10.99, 14.0%

Deep purple core edges into black, as opaque as the magenta rims are transparent, very nicely hued and just easy to look at. The nose feels concentrated but not so the sweet plum, blackberry, cherry fruit scents, yet dense enough to make it hard to get the cedar, clove, mocha powder as well as floral oil. Medium to full-bodied, layers itself heavily on the tongue, has a dried concentration to the plum, cherry, currant fruit. The much stronger than expected tannins extinguish the fruit during the mid-palate. Lemon oil, cedar, white grapefruit and a certain degree of earthiness try to pick up the slack. Tangy spiciness throughout, extends the finish very credibly. Drinks well, stays in the forefront of your mind too. 51% Aragonez, 37% Syrah, 4% Trincadeira, 4% Touriga Nacional, 4% Cabernet Sauvignon. 87

Teodósio, Caves Dom
Dão, Cardeal Reserva
Touriga Nacional
2002, \$10.99, 13.0%

While unblemished there's a dusky semi-opacity to the black-purple core, dark crimson influences this base and extends the reddish rims further in. Sweet, borderline grapey, nose of plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit, furnished with sweet cinnamon, nutmeg spice, toffee and vanilla ice cream swirls, even as plump as it is it can't absorb all the alcoholic fumes. Medium-bodied, acts like it's going to put on more weight than it actually does, this perhaps aided by a slight fizziness. If you had to say, the acidity nudges out the tannins for most overall effect on the proceedings. Beyond the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit there's some cedar and orange spice, very lowgrade herbal tones. But not much going on, keeps its presence known with a sour twist on the finish. 85

AUSTRALIA RED

Yarra Yering
Victoria, Yarra Valley, Dry Red Wine No 2
Blend
2004, \$58.99, 14.0%

Perfectly clean and unblemished, great deal of red to lighten the violet core, red-magenta to crimson rims full and sparkling. Leathery nose with salt, cocoa bean, tobacco ash, tree bark and then a whole lot of juicy red cherry, cranberry, strawberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, strong netting of tannins lets the flavors through, but in a measured and paced manner without any sudden movements. That said, stays decidedly dry with the pressed flowers, lemon peel, leather and beef jerky staying close to your tongue pores rather than swirl around. There's a wiry muscularity in the cherry, red currant, raspberry fruit that is emphasized by the smokiness from the oak. That oak starts off creamier but stiffens with just a little air time. Protracted finish, steams right along. Lots of life ahead. Unspecified percentages of Shiraz, Viognier, Marsanne. 92

Riggs, Mr.
South Australia, McLaren Vale, The Gaffer
Shiraz
2005, \$19.99, 15.0%

Adequate cleanliness brightens the crimson purple core, matches well with the brick red to ruby rims, clearer there. palpable floral perfume in the nose, then plummy with sweet cherry scents and a soft menthol undercurrent, manages to swell with notes of grilled meats before dissolving, not much oak evident. Full-bodied, sweet yet not sappy nor overly concentrated, accented by maple syrup and mesquite smoke flavors. Boysenberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit stable throughout. Powdery tannins bring out more oak here than in the nose. Slight roughness gives it character and a s a bonus masks a portion of the alcoholic heat. Right where it needs to be, plus. [Screwcap] 89

Eskadale Vineyards
South Australia, Langhorne Creek, The Winner's Tank
Shiraz
2005, \$16.99, 15.5%

Suitably dark crimson-purple core while at the same time remarkably clear, brick red rims with a thin burnt orange aura. There's enough smokiness, grill fat, roasted meat in the nose to cloak a lot of the oak toast, hides some of the stone dust and tobacco leaf, black pepper scents too, keenly edged currant, plum scents don't soak in much. Medium-bodied, super-firm due to the tannins, these being slightly underripe. Dried game and blood, black pepper, lemon peel, cut grass and poor stony earth fashions quite the rugged profile. Struggles to create a floral impression that doesn't coalesce. Not short at all but feels like the machinery gears slowly wind down during closing time at the factory. [Screwcap] 88

Black Chook, The
South Australia, Shiraz Viognier
Shiraz
2005, \$19.99, 15.0%

Soft glow saps the blackness out of the opaque purple core, the thick brick red rims suggest a slightly older wine. Dusty nose of pressed flowers, salted dried beef, pine sap and only moderate caramel and mesquite smoke from the oak, the black cherry and currant scents more consistent than splashy. Full-bodied, quite easily hammers beams into the the walls of your mouth to build a broad skeleton. White grapefruit, beef jerky, salt, grass, pine and ginger spice all thrown into the mix. The plum, cherry, currant fruit again rich as in the nose, here certainly able to fend off the tannins. Enjoyably familiar yet always with a twist or turn. 95% Shiraz, 5% Viognier. [Screwcap] 88

Australian Premium Wine Collection, The
Western Australia, The Wishing Tree
Shiraz
2005, \$10.99, 14.5%

Light ruby-violet in color, simple appeal and entirely unblemished, more red-magenta at the rims. The scents careen into your nose without much thought given to how they are going to mesh, this without the burly alcoholic fumes, menthol, milk chocolate combine with candied raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit to sweeten things into some form of acceptability if you're not sensitive to alcohol. Medium-bodied, redux in the mouth, on the hot side albeit not as bad as the nose. The super-sweet raspberry, cherry, strawberry, watermelon fruit balms some wounds, aided by lemonade and menthol coolness. Not sure what to say about the tannins or acidity, anything

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they are doing ain't good. Powder candy aftertaste on the finish. [Screwcap] 84

AUSTRALIA WHITE

Grosset
South Australia, Clare Valley, Polish Hill
Riesling
2006, \$34.99, 12.5%

Green-yellow straw in color, moderate degree of translucency which gives it a blockish appearance, average surface luster. There's a subtle touch of rubber to the nose but it's mainly violets, lime to tangerine citrus, clean stream stones, and well-contoured and long peach, apricot, yellow apple fruit scents. Full-bodied, manages to achieve an agreeable initial softness on the attack that allows the same peach, nectarine, apple fruit to soak in a bit before the acidity flash sears the flavors into inertness on the tongue. Here the citrus stays white and the lemon accented by white grapefruit. More stony but not minerally per se, the rubber element a lurker. Any floral shades hold off until perfume after the finish. Shows the structure to age but also not inaccessible today. [Screwcap] 90

Pikes
South Australia, Clare Valley, Dry
Riesling
2006, \$20.99, 12.0%

All but completely transparent green to white straw color, clean enough that not even that reflective. Soft rubber notes give the nose some bounce, very fresh like lemon Pledge, floral as well, maybe even a touch creamy at turns, stony, if missing anything the peach, pear, apricot fruit might be a little light. Medium-bodied, nice broad mouth entry with withering acidity, lights up your mouth with lemon and lime citrus, even the floral notes sharp-edged. Much higher level of fruit, the peach, apricot, nectarine, apple flavors last fully through the finish. Presents a little herbal bite, however, this melds into the stony and minerally components without much fuss. The citrus keeps humming through the end, not going to back down to no one. [Screwcap] 89

Pewsey Vale
South Australia, Eden Valley, Individual Vineyard, Selection
Riesling
2006, \$16.99, 13.0%

Just about fully transparent, the green-gold hay hue goes in and out, the surface stays flat, light sort of seems sucked out of it. The nose feels both round and full without being soft nor hard, fresh cream, lemon and lime juice, peach, apricot and apple fruit scents, as much raw bread dough as rubber notes. Medium-bodied plus, keeps its weight due to the acidity's being firm rather than cutting. Nice mineral water and stone components, holds any creaminess at bay, accentuates the lemon citrus too. More streamlined here, thus more rubber than dough flavors. The floral side fits in better in the mouth too. Not clipped but there's a tenseness in the pear, apple, apricot, melon fruit which brings things to a swift conclusion. Best when chilled over room temperature. [Screwcap] 87

CHILE RED

Lapostolle, Casa
Colchagua Valley, Apalta Vineyard, Cuvée Alexandre
Cabernet Sauvignon
2005, \$23.99, 14.5%

Not exactly opaque but still a black purple core, effulgent red rims, looks like brand new cough syrup. Sweet caramel, vanilla ice cream filled nose, mint, cedar too, strives for "classy" oakiness, sugary ripe red currant and cherry fruit, touch of orange zest too. Full-bodied, the tannins lightly but completely dust the palate to create an impression of strong bones. Here the sweetness of the cherry, blackberry, raspberry re-wets the tongue by the mid-palate. Cedar, coffee beans, hard caramel candy, the oak less desirous of stealing the spotlight than in the nose. Consistent presentation through to the finish, no faulting its script. 88

Chilcas
Rapel Valley, Reserva
Carmenère
2005, \$11.99, 13.8%

Perfect blend of violet and dark ruby color, entirely unblemished, remains this side of opacity, displays youthful crimson hued rims. Kindling smoke and tobacco ash most prominent in the nose, more field flowers than perfume, minimal herbaceousness, sour enough to add cranberry flavor to the strawberry, red cherry foundation. Medium-bodied, on the whole soft but there's some roughness in the tannins, of a natural sort. Large white grapefruit element, as much discernible pepperiness as grassiness here. Greater level of sourness in the cherry, raspberry fruit. Maybe some leather during the finish. Nondescript, no flaws, a drop in the sea. 85

Odfjell Vineyards
Maipo Valley, Armador
Cabernet Sauvignon
2005, \$9.99, 14.0%

Trim purple core, dark yet spotless enough to see through, particularly around the burnt crimson rims. The nose is flat, alcoholic fumes provide the most energy, beyond that toasted vanilla powder, cocoa and some loamy forest floor earthiness, the cherry, black currant scents inexpressive. Medium to full-bodied, definitely squeezes every ounce of fruit juice possible, if there's cherry, blackberry, raspberry flavors to be had, it's in the glass. That said, the tannins feel fabricated and there's not much balance. Cocoa and sharp spices pair up with lighter herbaceousness and, again, forest floor matter to muddy any hopes for clarity. The alcoholic heat elevates through the finish, ending any hopes for a triumphant ending. 83

CHILE WHITE

Anakena (A.F. Arco Iris)
Regional Blend, Ona
Blend
2006, \$14.99, 14.0%

Flat yellow gold in color, no real shine, not excessively translucent, it's just a damn white wine, why can't you accept that? The nose intrigues because just reading the blend and country of origin leaves you open to anything, hits you with chili pepper juice, keen white grapefruit, there's this pervasive pickled aspect to it that penetrates the peach, apricot, papaya fruit, you want to give it credit for stoniness but maybe it's not there. Medium-bodied, has good firmness, maintains the decided emphasis on the white to pink grapefruit, lemon and lime citrus, much more bite than juice. The stone component maintains itself credibly, that "stony smokiness" may be masking the chili pepper heat. Apricot, nectarine, pineapple, papaya fruit, dry and prickly, not anything to enjoy without preparation.

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It's an intriguing wine, the sort you want to open with friends so everyone can try it but no one has to drink more than a glass. 35% Viognier, 35% Riesling, 30% Chardonnay. 86

ARGENTINA RED

900, Bodega del
Mendoza, Roble
Blend
2004, \$43.99, 14.0%

Fully opaque black purple core, a touch on the murky side, richly saturated ruby-violet rims. There's a dusty earthiness to the nose that slowly gets run down from behind by chocolate and coffee notes, smattering of buttered popcorn as well, curiously the cherry and currant fruit scents mostly obscured. Full-bodied, tightly wound with unyielding tannins that are more blunt than biting. Less creamy oak, more toast and fried butter. The fruit has a red complexion, cranberry, raspberry, red cherry. Light accents of white grapefruit and cut grass, pine cone. Struggles some to decisively move past the mid-palate, almost as if already shutting down. Big wine, needs to find a clearer voice. 75% Malbec, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Syrah. 87