

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

Mostly cheap stuff of little overall value these days. Kissing pigs trying to find a prince. Went to a distributor tasting and got to sample a bunch of fun wines from the importer Wine Traditions, so much so got totally loaded and bought many to try more “professionally” [sic]. Hence, the obscurities within. Not necessarily the obscenities. Still drinking craft beer two-thirds of the time, wine starting to pile up. Life can be quite tragic some times.

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**This month’s big winners...** Not many expensive wines slurped of late. Not many wines slurped of late. But wanted to at least try one or two 2006 red Burgundies before the vintage switches. So, Voillot’s Bourgogne Rouge got the call. For \$28 *slightly* overpriced, yet it’s very credible, particularly if you prefer firm wines that don’t lean too hard on the fruit. One reliable Dolcetto bottling comes from Cavallotto and their 2007 version is lively and engaging and still under \$20 by a buck or two. Whew. Weinert in Argentina has been around a long time. Maybe long enough to be forgotten. Which would be a shame, as their basic 2004 Malbec (still the current vintage) shows that tradition yet lives in Mendoza. Worth \$22 and then some.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** There’s actually a lot of domestic white blends in the market which are pretty good, in many cases blending four or more grapes. From Oregon, David Hill has a non-vintage blend called “Farmhouse White” which is around \$14 and very pretty and easy to enjoy. Never tried these guys, Verdier-Logel, but if it’s Gamay Noir and from the Loire, why not try it? Good, earthy stuff for around \$13, more for the geek set. Can’t say that Hanes is very familiar with wines from Van Ruiten in California but their second label “Glory Days” offers a nice little 2008 Zinfandel for around \$11, real easy to quaff. Lafage’s southern France white blend “Côté Est” is usually one of the better bottlings in the Solomon portfolio and the 2008 represents good value for \$12 or so, should please many palates. If you want super-cheap Chardonnay, Rockbrook Cellars has a 2007 bottling that at around \$6 or \$7 is hard to beat. No idea who or what this winery is, the label might have existed five years ago or be gone next week. But if you see it, not bad. Jouclary from the Languedoc in France is also new to Hanes, and their 2006 “Cuvée Tradition” is a pleasant drop for \$13, naturally, it can’t compete with something like 14 Hands Merlot. A new white is a 2008 Chenin Blanc from Saumur from Domaine du Pas Saint Martin for \$14. Solid, workman-like performance. Every once in awhile Hanes finds an Australian wine he enjoys. This time around it’s Gotham’s 2008 Shiraz from Langhorne Creek. For \$15 or so, this is true to type but stays within itself nicely and it’s hard to fault it for being what it is.

**And the disappointments...** The place where Hanes works sells a shitload of 2007 Beringer “Knights Valley” Cabernet Sauvignon and finally it was time to taste and scribble. Very generic and uninteresting. But does help pay the landlord. Hard to find good Muscadet here in Charlotte, thought the 2007 Domaine des Trois Toits (Hubert Rousseau) sold by importer Rosenthal might do the trick. However, underwhelmed for \$18, which is fairly pricey. Also hard to find quality Riesling so leaped at the chance to taste the 2007 Weil QbA “Estate Dry” from the Rheingau. That said, someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed and this wine just was not aiming to please at all. Rats butt. As opposed to the Gotham wine, there’s the Australian wines which show why Hanes keeps his wallet closed to them. Witness the 2008 Woop Woop Shiraz which is pretty much an abomination. Previous vintages of this wine have been OK. But this year they slathered as much makeup on the pig as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CALIFORNIA RED

Van Ruiten Vineyards  
Central Valley, Lodi, Glory Days  
Zinfandel  
2008, \$10.99, 15.0%

Deep red ruby more of a force at the core than purple, as transparent as dark, full scarlet to red ruby rims, fully integrated with a warm glow. Thick nose of molasses, caramel, glazed orange peel and sugary plum, black cherry, blueberry fruit scents, little toast or other "crispening" elements, minor mentholated lift. Full-bodied, glides into the mouth smoothly, greased by considerable blackberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit. Given its frictionless progress, you barely miss the absent tannin and acidity. The orange citrus still sweet and mostly pure juice. Molasses, honey, eucalyptus lend additional sweetness without overplaying any buttery texture. Hard to tell if it has a floral side or this just an effect of the sugar. Pure sunshiny Zin fruit, screw structure or complexity. [Synthetic Cork: Supremecork] 88

California Cellars  
Regional Blend, California, 41st Avenue  
Merlot  
2007, \$10.99, 14.5%

Garnet to purple core, reddish cast, while fully hued it's transparency is obvious up close, starts to brick red far from the rims, might suggest an older wine. Brown sugar, molasses and candied orange peels let you know it wants to pile sweetness into your nose, so it's a mild surprise that there's good shape and composure in the cherry, currant fruit scents, no real toastiness but does show a menthol touch, any greenness absent. Medium-bodied, any tannin seems wood-based, however, what's there is sufficient to claim its presence. Natural, ripe sweetness in the cherry, red currant, blackberry fruit, juicy and moves forward with ease. Tangy pink grapefruit and tangerine citrus contributes to inner mouth perfume. The molasses, honey oak remains to coat the fruit further. Has balance, no major detracting qualities and good length on the finish. Plus, it tastes just like chicken. [Composite Cork] 87

ForestVille Vineyard  
Regional Blend, California  
Zinfandel  
2006, \$7.99, 12.5%

Clean ruby-violet hued core, light enough that there's not a great deal of change towards the more garnet red rims, above average surface reflectivity. Simple, juicy nose of blackberry, black cherry, plum fruit, a little bit of grassiness, but this ably covered up by cola, chocolate and a little bit of orange peel, nothing here upsets the apple cart. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a great deal of upfront sweetness, no lack of prune and raisin alongside the cherry, blackberry flavors. That same cola to eucalyptus lift, milk chocolate and the orange citrus a little more pronounced. It's sugary and when that dissolves the herbaceousness moves further out of the shadows. Dries out noticeably by the finish, still, with the amount of flavor it has in the fruit, it's hard to damn it for the price. [Composite Cork] 86

Stonewood Cellars  
Regional Blend, California  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2004, \$7.99, 13.5%

Dusky brick red takes the glow out of the purple in the core, leads to dark crimson to garnet red rims, fully hued, up very close you can see through it, quite clear. Basic red cherry, raspberry fruit scents in the nose, while not that deep it is juicy and easy to absorb, some molasses and sweet grill smoke, light menthol waft, yet, in the end, it's like 99% fruit. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, quite sweet and comes with minimal tannin presence. Here, you get a darker fruit profile, prune along with blackberry, black cherry, plum flavors, sugary enough to thwart any opposition in its path. Vanilla, chocolate appear along with even sweeter molasses to honey accents. Nothing here bespeaks of "Cabernet Sauvignon," simply juicy red wine. If you take it as that, not bad. [Composite Cork] 85

Beringer  
Knights Valley  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2007, \$21.99, 14.3%

Brick red infused purple core, fades into wide rims of crimson and garnet with more brick shadings, sleek surface, has an almost brooding quality to it, looks angry. Ripe and juicy cherry, blackberry, plum fruit join forces with ginger, allspice and mint leaf to keep the nose sweetly user friendly, soft orange juice accents, the vanilla bean and mocha accents remain as such, wants very much to stay agreeable and simply fill your nostrils as much as you like. Medium-bodied, round and pliable mouth feel which helps cover up a relative lack of length in the blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit. Vague degree of flowers, orange citrus, menthol and pine attempt to fill things out as much as possible. The tannins make a half hearted attempt at structuring but not much success. Oddly, even the oak toast seems stingy. In the end, just seems too generic, even at the relatively competitive price. 85

Fat Cat Cellars  
Regional Blend, California  
Pinot Noir  
2008, \$8.99, 12.5%

Pink cast to the ruby color, nice depth of hue as well as clarity, extends fully through the rims, very pretty. Confectionary quality to the raspberry, strawberry scents in the nose, lemon oil, caramel and butterscotch, then after all that comes the herbaceous stemminess to throw things off, actually seems alcoholic even at a relatively low 12.5%. In the mouth it is medium-bodied, again super sweet attack, almost as if chaptalized, red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, tastes more like candy than wine. Flowers and orange to lemon citrus continue the theme, piling on are caramel and molasses accents. Less outrightly herbaceous here, more underripe tannins to dry things out and create grit. Sour finish, the fruit doesn't fall off at all, more that the detracting elements catch up. Appropriately priced and not bad for the expenditure required. [Composite Cork] 85

Brownstone Winery  
Regional Blend, California, 99 Vines  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2005, \$8.99, 13.0%

Lightly hued and remarkably transparent, as much crimson to brick red in the core as violet, more red clay mud hues towards the rims, orange rust, not that much

shine. Bell pepper, cut grass, orange rind fill up most of the nose, surprisingly big floral perfume, simple and concise cherry, blackberry scents with a meager hint of cedar, overall covered in powdered sugar makeup for a confectionary feel. In the mouth it's light-bodied with cedar, wet wood and more bell pepper and grass/hay elements. The white pepper to white grapefruit components are strong. The tannins are drying, not sculpting, neither weak nor strong, just there if needed. Sour cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, again bolstered by sugar. Weakens through the finish. Even cheap wine should have more stuffing than this. 84

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Rockbrook Cellars  
Regional Blend, California  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$5.99, 12.5%

Pale but steady yellow gold color, faint glow to it, usual fade towards the rims. Soft, creamy nose of butterscotch, whipped cream, toffee which cuddles the peach, pear, melon, yellow apple scents, the mint and orange pulp helps it sink fully into your nostrils. Full-bodied, dense but not as soft as in the nose, still no lack of vanilla fudge, butterscotch, caramel oak derived flavors. The tangerine, lime citrus is sweet and sour, more of the former. Plush core of peach, apricot, nectarine fruit, lasts from start to finish, good determination given its relatively humble primary material. Licorice and mint pretty it up further. Any acidity a role player but plays the role. No real change chilled to nearer room temperature. Highly credible. 87

Foxglove  
Regional Blend, Central Coast  
Chardonnay  
2008, \$16.99, 14.4%

Bright golden color, that said, does have a fair amount of translucency, helps solidify it visually, some hue loss around the rims. Mild tropical edge to the fruit in the nose, pineapple and guava scents accompany the peach, nectarine base, quiet florality, more oomph in the orange citrus, has a nicely firm nostril presence and balanced length. Full-bodied with a thick gluey quality, not creamy nor soft, just adheres completely to your every mouth pore. Plenty of juice in the nectarine, peach, pineapple, pear fruit and the lack of oak allows the acidity to play a more formative role. Retains a honeyed edge which adds to the body. While going for the ripeness gusto, stays as slim as it can. Touch of cinnamon and nutmeg spice. If you have to drink Californian Chardonnay, you can do a shitload worse around this price point. (Composite Cork) 87

Stonewood Cellars  
Regional Blend, California  
Chardonnay  
2006, \$7.99, 12.5%

Dilute worn gold appearance, transparent on the whole, fully faded rims, unremarkable. Light nose, mainly featuring spice and peach, apricot, pear fruit, tenuous orange blossom and mint notes overshadowed by caramel, while not complex ends up pleasant enough. Medium-bodied, semi-dusty mouth entry resolved by toffee and butterscotch accents. The orange and lime citrus not that tangy but gets on you quickly. The acidity fulfills its contract to moderately dry out and shape the liquid. Brush of mint and licorice brings out sweetness in the apricot, peach, nectarine fruit. That said, more of a fluid, fast-paced

experience than slow moving fruit bomb. Not devoid of all sourness, however, not many glaring pimples here, just a simple blue collar cheapie. (Composite Cork) 86

California Cellars  
Regional Blend, California, 41st Avenue  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$10.99, 14.65%

Slightly washed out yellow straw color, looks like a solid block in the glass though, no layering nor surface shine for internal contrast top to bottom. There's a pickle/brine edge to the nose which really doesn't fit the whole, otherwise basic tangerine, orange citrus, floral dew and adequately rich pear, yellow apple, peach scents, pleasant enough, just doesn't cohere for the aforementioned reason. Medium to full-bodied, here the pickle juice makes for a kinda sour mouth entry which does possess grace in segueing to the vanilla cream, hard butterscotch candy and sugary pear, apricot, peach fruit. The acidity is entirely consistent with expectations, quick drying presence and, at times, gives the fruit a tropical character. The floral side more mixed, muted. Your opinion of it changes with each sip, here the last one is positive. (Composite Cork) 86

Beringer  
Napa Valley, Private Reserve  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$34.99, 14.5%

Steady light golden hue to it, mild green tinge, translucent enough to bend light and add solidity to its overall appearance, strong rims and adequate surface shine. Butterscotch, toffee and mint build first in the nose, yet, the oak is not offensively forward and melds naturally with the peach, pineapple, apricot fruit, caramelized and candied feel to the orange, lemon citrus, a touch nutty at times, for all of its makeup lacks follow through. Medium-bodied, most of the weight and oomph is front-loaded and falls off from there. Has a soft oak profile, not overtly toasty but does pile on the butterscotch, honey, fried butter notes. Lime citrus more evidence of the oak. The acidity is flat-footed yet not entirely absent. Attenuated peach, apricot, pear, apple fruit more momentary flash than true richness. It's almost funny how repeated sips disenchant you more and more. It's not horrible but it can seem desperate at times. 85

Brownstone Winery  
Regional Blend, California, 99 Vines  
Pinot Grigio  
NV, \$8.99, 12.5%

Pale yellow straw in color, not enough to see much of the loss around the rims, average surface luster. Touch of dusty sparkle in the nose, hard to say it is minerality per se, more snap than depth in the apple, peach, pear fruit scents and with a slight sour edge, almost close to jalapeño at times, grapefruit citrus, little florality but does show mint, its aggressiveness keeps it around. Medium-bodied, similar profile in the mouth, white grapefruit and lemon pucker from the start, you can add pineapple and star fruit to the base pear, yellow apple, peach fruit. Unremarkable acidity, just a part of the whole. Light sour oak toast, dill, chili pepper. Again, the paucity of florality hampers lift. Remains slightly too heavy at the end, could use more freshness. Potable. 85

Norman Estates, Greg  
Regional Blend, North Coast, California Estates  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2008, \$14.99, 13.8%

Washed out white-green hay color, obviously transparent, nothing left by the rims. There's a lemon custard creaminess to the nose, throws some lime at you too along with apple, pear, apricot fruit scents, however, there's no real anchor here, the stone powder and flowers blow away easily, no length to the olfactory experience. Light to medium-bodied, the lemon, lime, white grapefruit citrus sour and luckily evanescent. Tries to come up with a powdered sugar character to mask the lack of apple, pear, peach, apricot fruit but, really, at best all it can do is flirt with a floral impression. The acidity is okay for its overall heft but does seem forced at times. Hollow finish, not a lot left by then. There's no glaring flaws here just not a lot of positives to note. 84

## WASHINGTON RED

14 Hands Winery  
Regional Blend, Washington  
Merlot  
2007, \$11.99, 13.5%

Sort of blackish core with as much brick red and burnt crimson as purple, the red clay to brown dirt hues around the rims detract from the overall clear liquid as well as perceptible surface shine. The nose is a bit flat and inexpressive, plummy with juicy currant and cherry scents as well as mocha powder, touch of sorange blossom but that's it, can't even call it that oaky. Medium-bodied, ripe and soft albeit with some woody graininess here. That said, moderate toast and mostly that mocha or cocoa for oak influence. More textural fullness in the plum, blackberry, cherry fruit than vibrant flavor, lasts decently through the finish. Mild sour touch to the orange citrus, doesn't mesh with the floral aspect. Turns sluggish past the mid-palate and sort of just jogs across the finish line. Yet another "no glaring flaws" kind of wine that people just luv. 85% Merlot, 14% Syrah, 1% unspecified other. 86

## OREGON WHITE

Hill Vineyards & Winery, David  
Farmhouse White  
Blend  
NV, \$13.99,

Quite light yellow straw color, not quite green, easily transparent throughout, excellent visual clarity. The nose has a floral freshness to it although unexpectedly heavy, orange blossom, honey, apricot and peach fruit, clings like a morning dew. Medium-bodied, retains a semi-sweet profile which is unimpeded by the pliant acidity. Plenty of pear, peach, apricot, red apple fruit with a honey glaze. The orange, lime citrus has minor tang, more so sweet as well. Minty at times too. Does dry up some near the finish. If you don't mind it on the sweet side, a very good value. Unspecified percentages of Sémillon, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Sylvaner. (Composite Cork) 88

## FRANCE RED

Voillot, Domaine Joseph  
Burgundy, Bourgogne, Vieilles Vignes  
Pinot Noir  
2006, \$27.99, 13.0%

Clear and very light garnet red with as much orange to it as purple, little diminishment at the rims and perfectly transparent throughout. Briskly penetrating nose of mineral powder, sour Bing cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit scents, orange blossom and lemon rind, merest trace of forest underbrush or mushroom, even as it lifts doesn't relinquish its coiled tight weave. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and equally bright as the nose, the acidity as well as the tannins hardly budge from start to finish, however, allow the flavors to proceed through. In no way fruity, but it's the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit which leads the way and contributes the most to the inner mouth perfume. Some bite in the orange and lemon citrus, proportionate. Very good stone shard, mineral bits and even iron flecks, not earthiness but you get a sense of what the vines sucked on. A touch more length and you could drink it all day. As is, you can drink it all night. 89

Verdier-Logel  
Loire, Côtes du Forez, Cuvée des Gourmets  
Gamay Noir  
2007, \$12.99, 12.0%

Immaculately clean ruby-violet color, very consistent throughout, only a slight nod to magenta along the rims, good reflectivity across the surface in addition to the transparency below. Nice mix of tilled earth, animal hide and herbs in the nose, provides contrast to the fully ripened raspberry, strawberry, cranberry fruit scents, tangy grapefruit to lemon citrus too, claws into your nostrils to stick around. Medium-bodied, were it not for the power in the acidity and tannins, might appear lighter. While the ripeness is indeed evident, plenty of sour pucker found in the cranberry, red cherry, raspberry fruit. More oomph in the white grapefruit, zesty and seems to bring out more minerality as well. In turn, the animality recedes into the background. Keeps scrubbing the palate for some time after you've swallowed. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 89

Joguet, Domaine Charles  
Loire, Chinon, Cuvée Terroir  
Cabernet Franc  
2007, \$27.99, 12.0%

The purple at the core deep enough to push the ruby further out towards the rims where it blends with darker scarlet hues, unblemished and with a warm presence in the glass. Good mixture in the nose of mud-caked grass and dirty stones, along with leather accents, provides a traditional foundation for the semi-sour cherry, cranberry, black raspberry fruit scents, smattering of white grapefruit and wildflowers rounds out the whole. Medium-bodied and keeps what weight it has to the end, in good part due to the steely superstructure erected by the tannin and acidity. Little greenness, no bell pepper, and just a little grassiness. The white grapefruit, lemon zest comes through loud and clear here. Leather, brown mud and stones in effect, at times notes of merde and olive pits. Same tart cranberry, red cherry, raspberry fruit profile, super tangy. Even with a good decanting, starts to close up shop during the finish. The stuff is there to merit waiting at least 3-4 years. 89

Jouclary, Château  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Cabardès, Cuvée Tradition  
Blend  
2006, \$12.99, 13.0%

Basic ruby-purple in color, balances depth and clarity adroitly, takes on a lighter brick red, red rust hue around

the rims, clean surface. The nose shows a clarity of purpose and overall competency, that is, there's no overreaching in the black cherry, blackberry, plum fruit scents, has a fresh meadow breeze appeal with grasses, wildflowers and twigs and earthen matter, orange pekoe tea and fresh tar at times too, just simple and easy. Medium-bodied, achieves the same fluidity and composure here, the tannin and acidity give it some posture befitting its humble country origins. Not that dry, at times you almost get a touch of dried fruit to the cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit. The orange citrus zestier, sweet thyme or rosemary accents as well, blends in earth caked stones, not earthy per se. Does tighten up through the finish, gets you licking your lips for more. Nothing profound but pleasing enough you could chug the bottle in about half an hour. Mostly Merlot, remainder Syrah, Grenache. 89

Just

Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Oc

Pinot Noir

2007, \$12.99, 13.0%

Light brownish cast to the purple core, deepens it and pushes the brick red to ruby tint out to the rims, clear and close to transparent throughout. Plummy nose with ample cherry, blackberry fruit, more ripe than full, some wildflowers and cocoa but really just stays focused on the fruit, pleasingly avoids stemminess, light brush of orange, grapefruit before it all dissolves. Medium-bodied, sufficient concentration to hold the cherry, blackberry, plum fruit together through to the end. Not that acidic, the tannins seem to add more weight than drying effect. Orange citrus prettier here and teases out additional florality. As in the nose not marred by herbaceousness nor grassy notes. Credible at the price. [Screwcap: Stelvin] 85

## FRANCE WHITE

Pas Saint Martin, Domaine du

Loire, Saumur, La Pierre Frite

Chenin Blanc

2008, \$13.99, 13.0%

Flat yellow straw color with a faint glow to it, whatever hue it has it keeps nicely through to the rims, slightly below average surface reflectivity, whatever its flaws does manage to visually fill the glass decently. A broad citrus component of lime, tangerine and grapefruit sets the tone for the nose, bright and zesty while not necessarily airy, wears its density proudly, hence a floral dew rather than spritz, no excess ripeness in the peach, pear, apple fruit scents, more smoke and dust in the stoniness and minerality than solid bits, rolls along for some time. Medium-bodied, etched in stone in the mouth, no movement that wasn't absolutely necessary. The acidity combines both breadth and sharpness, firmly in control from start to finish. More pineapple, nectarine, green apple here than peach or apricot, edgy. Avoids any pickled or grassy notes while treading near the line, just has a tart quality in the smokiness and mineral water elements. Here the tangerine, lime, white grapefruit citrus almost comes across as sweet in the general framework. While tough-nosed, it sparkles in its own fashion and eventually draws you in. 89

Lafage, Maison

Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes,

Côte Est

Blend

2008, \$11.99, 13.0%

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Good sparkle in the yellow-brown straw color, fair consistency throughout, more appeal in the shiny transparency than hue per se. Wonderfully floral nose, lime and tangerine spritz as well, ripe green melon, pear, apricot and fig fruit scents, chalk and white pebbles, very light and easy and accessible. Medium-bodied, here the acidity brings out tang in that lime, tangerine citrus without hampering overall soft contours. The violet-led florality remains a prettying aspect, almost candy-like. The peach, apricot, red apple, pear fruit lends familiarity and just a touch of sweetness. Minimal minerality, instead streamwater and wet pebbles. At warmer temperatures you get notes of black licorice and mint. Moderate length, follow-through not an issue as it does, and should, lean on its winsome nature. 50% Grenache Blanc, 30% Chardonnay, 20% Marsanne. [Screwcap] 88

Trois Toits (Hubert Rousseau), Domaine des

Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie

Melon de Bourgogne

2007, \$17.99, 12.0%

Worn yellow gold color, clear yet not exactly brilliant or sharply in focus, only slight loss at the rims based on where it started. Very tight and lean nose, barely budes, even at warmer temps, hard stone and mineral water notes, white smoke, lemon peel, more substantial florality than any peach, pear, apple fruit scents but that's not saying much, has lift but it's more like kicked up dust. Medium-bodied, if it seemed bound up in the nose, throw savage acidity into the mix and you've got one snarling beast grinding its way down your throat. Slate, stream pebbles, spring water joined by an puckering herbaceous edge. Pit and skin character to the peach, apple, pear fruit flavors. Has length in the form of clamping down on you like a Gila monster. Might please the "I don't want no fruit in my Muscadet" camp but a little "give" would be greatly appreciated. [Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc] 85

## ITALY RED

Cavallotto, Fratelli

Piedmont, Dolcetto d'Alba, Vigna Scot

Dolcetto

2007, \$18.99, 13.5%

Dark violet core pools deeply into the glass while the garnet to red magenta rims spread widely, fully unblemished, clear albeit hard to judge given its darkness. The nose marked most by inert heaviness, sagebrush and wildflowers quietly adorn the blackberry, black cherry fruit scents, touch of life from orange peel accents, finally presents a moment of poor stony earth. Full-bodied, much more expressive in the mouth with a firm skeleton of tannin and acidity to boot. Juicy raspberry, blackberry, red cherry, apricot fruit has some sour moments to stay lively. The orange, white grapefruit citrus zips here and there. Stony here, less earthiness. Keeps its smoothness even as it turns drier towards the finish. Glass after glass keeps you interested. 89

Triacca, Casa Vinicola

Lombardy, Valtellina Superiore, Sassella

Nebbiolo

2006, \$25.99, 13.0%

Trim, clear ruby-violet, even at the core equally both hues, soft reddening towards the rims, shiny surface pairs well with the overall transparency. Pleasing core of red cherry, raspberry fruit in the nose, pine oil and a brush of brine, while floral marked by an absence of citrus to add cut,

unwinds a touch with air time, however, still comes across as too young to express itself fully. Medium-bodied, while wiry of build achieves good palate coverage and you feel it throughout. The acidity could tone it down a bit yet the tannin feels proportionate. More grapefruit and orange citrus here, the acidity activates this element. The florality, though, becomes conjoined with a meadow grassiness and loses fragrance. The red cherry, raspberry fruit touches on cranberry and pomegranate as well. Quiet suggestion of licorice and tar. Not much earthiness, the flavors are clean if exceedingly tightly woven. Needs a thorough decanting to consume in the near-term, most likely a good candidate for the wine geekery of the "Day Two Tasting Note." 88

## ITALY WHITE

Alovini  
Basilicata, Le Ralle  
Greco  
2008, \$16.99, 13.0%

Rich golden color that at times takes on a zinc orange cast, fills up the rims nicely, pleasing semi-translucent bending of light below the surface. Good firmness in the nose, smoky stoniness, pineapple and nectarine fruit along with white grapefruit, lemon citrus, lacks a floral side, hovers more than lifts, leverages what it has well but the cupboard not exactly full. Medium-bodied, dry and with grip, soaks in almost immediately, the acidity a grinder rather than a slicer. The grapefruit, lemon citrus blends with ease into the nectarine, pineapple, apricot, pear fruit. Not much spiciness nor florality, leans on a late burst of minerality to give sparkle to the back half. At times clumsy but not without moments of enjoyment. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 85

Bennati, Casa Vinicola  
Veneto, Ca' Brigiano  
Pinot Grigio  
2008, \$7.99, 12.0%

Very dark worn gold in color, deep enough to extend through the rims decently, just about devoid of meaningful shine. The nose is mostly apple juice, concentrated pear and lemon accents too, has a floral side and some cinnamon, not much minerality or stoniness, if any, fat but not much length to the nostril presence. Medium-bodied, the acidity is dusty, without cut. Lemon, lime citrus perjs things up a little. However, it's flat and lays across the palate and it seems that was always the plan. Pear, apple, peach soup, juicy and pliant. Again, loses freshness and verve due to the lack of any minerality, stoniness. For a Pinot Grigio, friendly enough but its lack of personality might piss off those who, gulp, seek flavors of a specific grape. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 84

## GERMANY WHITE

Weil, Weingut Robert  
Rheingau, QbA Estate Dry AP #39  
Riesling  
2007, \$32.99, 11.5%

Clear old gold in color, not that shiny but does sit in the glass solidly with little loss of hue around the rims. Smoky oil and sauna stone mist come with a metallic edge in the nose, focuses the pineapple, nectarine, peach fruit, albeit the latter doesn't need much help in this department, tart mixed white citrus notes, lilacs and violets deepen but don't soften the dissolve. Medium-bodied, hard to imagine

it more taut and muscular, needs to stop flexing and let you catch a glimpse of it at repose. Could arguably be shutting down by now, does need a good decant and warming towards room temperature doesn't hurt either. With the latter, you get more florality as well as lemon, grapefruit citrus pulp, Not as "smoky" per se here but layers of stone dust, minerals and mineral water. The peach, pineapple, guava and green apple fruit steady if at a decidedly low cruising altitude. Hugs the counters of your mouth walls, not much lift. Even if you love the Trocken style, and who doesn't, gimme some fruit here, huh? 87

## AUSTRIA WHITE

Bauer, Weingut Anton  
Donauland, Ried Rosenberg  
Grüner Veltliner  
2008, \$18.99, 12.5%

Bright yellow straw color, pale but so shiny you barely care, immaculately transparent and quite pretty. Clean and open nose, primarily constructed of stone dust, streamwater, wet flowers, lemon peel and composed pear, apple, peach fruit scents, can't say it lifts per se since it was already swirling in the air, lasts well. Medium-bodied, nothing overblown nor extracted about it, each element presented as if held up to the light. White pepper, white grapefruit and lemon citrus set the table through the attack. The sweetness in the peach, pear, yellow apple fruit never picks a fight with the stone, streamwater, light mineral shades. Gentle touch but not shy, displays more depth at a warmer serving temperature. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 88

Steininger, Weingut  
Kamptal, Loisium  
Grüner Veltliner  
2008, \$22.99, 13.5%

While pale, the yellow straw color hums warmly and fills the glass, musters some surface shine. Lemon and lime custard as well as soft peach and apricot fruit scents give the nose an inviting quality, while there's touches of wet stone and streamwater, it stays relaxed and generally devoid of grassy or peppery notes and doesn't approach tropicality in the fruit. Medium-bodied, derives some pep from the acidity which activates more white grapefruit to lemon citrus as well as adding some welcome herbaceous bite. You can find pineapple and green apple alongside the peach and apricot. Holds its body nicely start to finish, good balance between sweet and dry, could use some more lift. While it has heft and a good tight weave, doesn't shout "Grüner" from the rooftops. (Glass Stopper) 87

## SPAIN RED

Barreda, Bodegas  
Toro, Vno de la Tierra de Castilla, Torre de Barreda  
Tempranillo  
2007, \$12.99, 14.5%

Effulgent violet core, clear with lots of surface shine, nice glow in the scarlet rims, fully saturated throughout. A light twiggy bark or leaf quality to the nose, tart edge in the plum, cherry scents, clearly ripe but not looking to seem sugary, pleasing amount of wildflowers and tea leaves, possesses consistent weight and length, on the "country wine" side of things. Medium-bodied, here too rough enough to stay present start to finish, but fluid and wants to move forward more than try to stain the palate. Fair degree of tannin which brings out more herbaceous and leafy qualities, dried earthiness as well. Tangy red cherry,

raspberry, cranberry fruit has breadth and enough velvety texture to stabilize those rougher parts. The oak treatment negligible flavorwise, cocoa, maybe contributes to the tannin level. Light orange peel, tea leaf and licorice shades. Pretty good, especially if you want to avoid the spooof, but nothing hedonistic here. 87

Gil, Bodegas Juan  
Jumilla, Wrongo Dongo  
Monastrell

2007, \$10.99, 14.0%

Good depth to the violet core, pushes the red-ruby to garnet hues further out, at the rims the wine's clarity becomes, err, clear, good color throughout and unblemished surface. Ripe nose but not sugary, almost sour touch to the raspberry, cranberry, red cherry scents, a little herbaceous and metallic, overall weight keeps it more clinging than lifting, whisper of citrus blossom but not much more. Medium-bodied, while there's a grainy dryness lurking under the surface, pretty much it's an expression of raspberry, strawberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit with some orange and lemon citrus sprinkled on top. Never shakes that herbaceousness, some tacky residue on the finish, yet the lack of explicit tannin or acidity probably helps here. Funny labels move product. [Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc] 85

## SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery Ltd  
Stellenbosch, Blouberg  
Blend

NV, \$8.99, 11.5%

Noticeable green tinge to the base yellow straw color, visible mild fizz, about average surface luster, hue drops off around the rims. Spring breeze of fresh flower buds at first, eventually matched by lime zest and a certain volcanic-like mineral edge, the fruit tropical and dry featuring pineapple, papaya, star fruit as well as apple and nectarine scents, a green grassiness comes to the fore as it warms, stiffens a good deal in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, prickly acidity brings out pickle juice, brine, jalapeno accents and, further, highlights the sand and mineral dust touches. Green apple, pineapple, guava, papaya, star fruit, mouthwatering bite, minimal soaking into the palate and softening. The lemon and lime citrus plenty zesty too. As in the nose, the herbaceousness more prevalent when warm. Good length and verve, just keep it chilled. 60% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Sémillon, 20% Cape Riesling. [Synthetic Cork] 87

## AUSTRALIA RED

Gotham (Wineinc Pty Ltd)  
South Australia, Langhorne Creek, Regional Vineyard Series  
Shiraz

2008, \$14.99, 15.5%

Good depth to the purple core, reaches opacity with ease, effulgent red magenta rims, fills the glass completely. Not stingy on the oak in the nose, toasted coconut, butterscotch, caramel bust a move quickly, robust cherry, blackberry scents and menthol follow next swiftly, a good nostril full of just what you expect. Medium-bodied but has sufficiently soaking capacity to stain the palate. The oak here toastier, still coconut, butterscotch and toffee but not as creamy as in the nose. Touch of orange but not much citrus presence. Not an invertebrate but nothing tannic

nor acidic about it. Round, ripe plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, coated in powdered sugar. The eucalyptus most apparent retro-nasally. Yeah, it's an oaky Aussie Shiraz but it doesn't try to hide it. For the price, above average juice. [Screwcap] 88

Puppeteer (Ramco Wine Group), The  
South Australia  
Merlot

2008, \$10.99, 14.8%

Garnet red to violet in color, quite consistent throughout with more of a burnt red edge at the rims, sleek and shiny surface. Juicy nose, sweet yet with tang, along with the red cherry and raspberry scents come cranberry and pomegranate as well, blends in menthol and orange peel, has a touch of merde-like funk, however, nothing serious, good overall erectness. Medium-bodied, plenty of zip on the mouth entry, you'd almost say there was some acidity there. Caramel, molasses and vanilla fudge appear to sweeten, not soften. Hard candy character to the raspberry, strawberry, watermelon, red cherry fruit, lasts fully to the finish. The orange, lemon citrus a mix of sweet and sour. Mild grit to it but can't fault overall smoothness level. No sign of greenness, just agreeable fruitiness that stays within itself. [Screwcap: Stelvin+] 87

Gotham (Wineinc Pty Ltd)

South Australia, McLaren Vale, Regional Vineyard Series  
Cabernet Sauvignon

2008, \$14.99, 15.9%

Black core, fully opaque, heavily saturated brick red to crimson rims, some surface reflectivity but it's the depth underneath that matters visually. Coconut oil, butterscotch, creamed butter, mint oil, floral dew, the plum, cassis, blackberry scents rich and juicy, nothing toasty nor hard-edged about it. Full-bodied, the tannins have a drying effect through the attack, woody with cedar and toasted coconut, grilled pecans. Full ripeness, less juiciness in the plum, currant, blackberry fruit, forms the core of the wine. Mint, flowers, orange blossom ensure it continues to please. Slight dustiness through the finish, as with the attack. Has sufficient Cabernet character to be guessable as such but more enjoyable as a ripe, sweet red wine. [Screwcap] 87

Puppeteer (Ramco Wine Group), The  
South Australia  
Shiraz

2008, \$10.99, 14.8%

Moderate concentration to the reddish purple core, more glowing crimson at the rims with a faint hint of red magenta, good saturation as well as clarity, reflective surface. Tightly wound nose, on the reticent side, murmurs of eucalyptus and vanilla cream, gossamer floral musk, the cherry, currant, blackberry fruit full but succinct. Medium-bodied, sweet through the attack then slowly pulls back. A touch more tannic than expected, may be a good percentage wood tannin. Eucalyptus, orange citrus and then molasses, gingerbread and caramel pop up, these can't quite activate the juice in the currant, plum, cherry fruit. On the whole presents a dry and semi-grainy texture. Truly, it's not bad but does get caught in the middle, not a fruit bomb nor a structured, elegant wine. [Screwcap: Stelvin+] 85

Rocland Estate  
South Australia, Ass Kisser  
Shiraz  
2007, \$12.99, 13.9%

Very clear and mostly transparent violet core, quite broad red ruby rims, glows decently, clean surface. Mint, licorice, tangerine citrus contribute to a high-toned nose, the vanilla cream and caramel accents noticeable without softening the profile, moderate depth to the cherry, blackberry fruit notes, notes of green apple, open to the point of evanescence. Medium-bodied, doesn't hold its weight all the way to the finish. The fruit feels "bolstered," a grapey edge to the cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit. Mixed white grapefruit, orange citrus, kind of washed out. The oak is just woody, not toast nor sweetness. Eucalyptus and menthol tries to soften things. Don't trust funny names on labels, it's just a way to move excess juice. 85

Woop Woop  
South Australia, South Eastern Australia  
Shiraz  
2008, \$13.99, 14.5%

Dark, blackish purple bruise colored core, equally dusky brick red hued rims, albeit there the innate clarity of the liquid becomes discernible. The nose is a cavalcade of molasses, caramel, mocha and butterscotch oak with mint and orange citrus accents, the plum, black cherry scents densely woven, soaks in with good cling so not much lift in your nostrils. Medium to full-bodied, unveils sufficient acidity to shave some fat off the carcass. Same heavily oaked profile in the mouth with caramel, butterscotch, coffee ice cream, mocha, molasses, brown sugar, you name it, it's there. The orange citrus elevates a little here, welcome development. The mint and flowers don't sweeten nor soften its overall character. Moments of tartness found in the plum, cherry, currant fruit, perhaps lingering underripeness in spite of the general sugariness. Hard to judge slathered under all that oak. [Screwcap] 85

## AUSTRALIA WHITE

R Wines  
South Australia  
Pure Evil  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$12.99, 13.5%

Clear green hay in color, excellent shine to it, the hue extends well to the rims, sits prettily in the glass. There is a light toast to the nose, however, it's gentle of touch and yields to floral perfume, powdered sugar and ripe red apple, peach, pear fruit scents, sweetened by further by notes of lemon/limeade. Medium-bodied, strong grip, not acidic per se but clings to your mouth pores and then some. The lemon, lime, tangerine citrus even more to the fore here, in spite of the tang the florality able to spread and lift. Bright snap to be found in the peach, pear, apricot, yellow apple fruit, juicy and stays short of tropical notes. The sugary element persists while, as the same time, the zestiness rules the finish. It's good in that, say, at a party few may love it but most will like it. [Screwcap: Auscap] 87

Puppeteer (Ramco Wine Group), The  
South Australia  
Sémillon Sauvignon Blanc  
Blend  
2008, \$10.99, 12.0%

Simple straw gold color, without much concentration but not the kind of wine that it matters, weakens at the rims

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but gives you a nice layered visual appeal below the surface. Agreeable pear, peach, apricot scents in the nose, close to pineapple, nutmeg spice and "Orange Julius" notes add to its accessibility, honey and beeswax, a little stoniness, complex enough to take note of said fact, gentle dissolve. Medium-bodied, the acidity is quite firm but isn't out for blood, dries and shapes decently, not a hater. White grapefruit, lemon citrus displays more of a tart nature here. Honey, brown sugar not overly dulcet, does not apply unnecessary makeup on the pear, peach, pineapple, apple fruit, allows for unvarnished, natural appeal. Has flesh from the majority Sémillon while remaining fresh and light of foot. 94% Sémillon, 6% Sauvignon Blanc. [Screwcap: Stelvin+] 87

## ARGENTINA RED

Weinert, Bodega y Cavas de  
Mendoza  
Malbec  
2004, \$24.99, 14.5%

The resplendent surface masks the darkness of the purple core while the clarity really comes through the crimson rims, vividly hued throughout. The nose features mocha powder, cedar and twigs and bark, very old school in style, the cherry and blackberry scents woven into the whole, no showing off, comes up with some dusty potpourri accents, displays signs of developing dried fruit characteristics. Medium-bodied, has certainly dried out some from the three years spent in French oak casks, taking on a sort of Riojan feel. The tannin broad and powdery, no single moment of clamping down. Cedar, vanilla extract and anise are the oak's primary signature. More plum and currant here along with the cherry but not any sweeter for the darker complexion. Ditto for the orange peel dimension. The twiggy aspect remains and at times suggests dried meadow grasses. Really, there's nothing more to say than to return to the old school statement, they literally don't make them like this anymore. 89

Cobos, Viña  
Mendoza, Felino  
Malbec  
2008, \$21.99, 14.6%

Close to opaque purple core, heavy ruby-magenta rims fully saturated, cleanliness apparent in the shiny surface. The nose is dense and a touch bound-up, floral spray across the currant, plum, cherry scents, sprinkled with cocoa and mocha, momentary spritz of orange and apricot accents, the oak is mildly toasty but nothing outsized, awkward lift but lifts just the same. Medium-bodied, soft enough to soak in quickly and gain apparent weight. While not that tannic, strikingly drier than expected, so while ripe, the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit not that juicy. Cocoa, coconut flakes, mocha, vanilla bean, toasty oak, hard toffee, minimal sweetness in all. Mint and licorice appear for no close reason. Not a lot of sense of progression, just chugs along at its own pace. Doesn't deviate from the script, but the script is a pretty damn safe one. 87

Proviva  
Mendoza, Lujan de Cuyo, Cueva de Las Manos Reserve  
Malbec  
2007, \$13.99, 14.0%

Opaquely dark purple core, thin but heavily saturated red-magenta rims, some shimmer across the surface. Heavysset plum, currant, cherry in the nose, slow to move,



doesn't unwind much so you only get glimmers of orange peel, flower petals and cocoa, hints at development but does not quite deliver. Full-bodied, front weighted but holds onto enough of it to huff and puff across the finish. The oak brings toast, vanilla fudge, mocha, gingerbread to bear, not much softness, this made more apparent by tannin which at times digs too deeply. The lemon/orange citrus edge doesn't really find its place. Floral side comes out better. While dense, lack of juicy flow to the currant, plum, cherry fruit. Curiously, seems built and arranged to please but can't mesh together. 85

## **ARGENTINA WHITE**

Alamos [The Wines of Catena]

Salta

Torrontés

2008, \$12.99, 13.5%

Bright yellow glow, pale, though, so transparent with dimmed rims. High and flighty tangerine and lime citrus lifts the nose immediately, mint leaf, the peach and apricot scents more pretty than juicy which is very much in keeping with the whole, does what it does well and leaves it at that. Medium-bodied, has more grit and grip that you'd expect given the swirling movement of the dominant lime, tangerine, tangelo citrus element. Mint and licorice here but there's also a semi-bitter grassiness as well as raw nuts. The peach, apricot, pear fruit does not possess the sort of juiciness which would lend softness. By the same token, not leaning on minerality or a snappy profile to impress. So, falls in the middle and not hard to see how you could enjoy it or pass it by altogether. (Composite Cork) 86