

The Hanes Wine Review, February 2014 Edition

Hmmm. It seems that all Hanes drinks these days are wines from California, France or Italy. Used to be there was more diversity in the drinking diet. But consumption of craft beer cuts into wine time, and when wine is wined, it needs to be more of a known quantity or minimally something with a likely interesting payoff. Plus, as noted ad nauseam, with prices going up, up, up, one ineluctably chooses to buy fewer total wines at higher average prices, and fewer experiments at any price point.

What Hanes misses the most is drinking German and Austrian wines above the basic entry level stuff (which can still be had at okay prices). But just not feeling the value vis-à-vis French or Italian competition. Everywhere else across the globe has been relegated to “now and then” purchase status. Or maybe Hanes is at a dinner party where someone brought a Spanish or Chilean wine and he can dash off a quick tasting note. At any of his favorite wine stores he could walk out with a mixed case of French wine, no problem. So, why “force” a purchase of Portuguese or New Zealand wine? Ehh. You invest decades learning what you like, might as well stick with the new vintages of old favorites and manage risk exposure. But feel free to buy a United Nations of wine and invite Hanes over for dinner and drinks, he will be grateful.

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This month's big winners... Tried a Beaujolais producer new to Hanes called Jean-Claude Lapalu, the 2012 Côte de Brouilly. Nice wine, good structure, no wimpiness. But at about \$33 not sure there's a repeat purchase in the future. There's not much Ribolla Gialla made domestically but Cowan Cellars has made a nice one in the 2012 vintage, from Russian River Valley fruit. A touch pricey at \$28 but plenty to like here. Time for a different Occhipinti, this time from Lazio, it's the 2011 Andrea Occhipinti “Alea Viva” bottling of the Aleatico grape. Much fun, sweet and open, everyone finds something to like and “only” \$21! The 2011 Soléna “Hyland Vineyard” Pinot Noir from Oregon ain't cheap at \$50 or so but it is classy juice lets you “see” the grape rather than cover it in unnecessary makeup. Winter time is a good time for the wines of Faugères in Southern France, so cranked up the 2011 Clos Fantine “Tradition” bottling, another winery new to Hanes. It's a big boy but rewarding, you could probably leave a glass on the counter and come back to it two days later and it would have barely budged. Relatively good value at \$22. Must have been time to go nuts and try new producers, same story for the 2010 Domaine du Mortier from Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil called “Dionysos.” Juicy Cabernet Franc goodness, good palate richness, another wine that these days you are happy with at the price of \$23. And a new one from Italy, hit the bullseye with the 2011 Salvo Foti “I Vigneri” blend of Nerello Mascalese and Nerello Cappuccio from Sicily. Not too pruney, you get a good feel for the terroir but not so that's all you get. Easy pleasure. \$34 is at the limit of what it's worth, though.

The best \$20 and under picks... Even with pushing the price threshold up from \$15 to \$20, not much going on this time around for quality cheapie wines. That noted, threw back the 2012 Domaine Luneau bottling from the Gros Plant grape, another Loire Valley special. Now this is what value is, \$12 and drinkable all night long – flavor, freshness and character. Good job all around. Also from the Loire, the 2012 Sauvignon Blanc produced under the (for now) label Puzelat-Bonhomme is open for business and sparkly. Not for those who love New Zealand style SB but a good potential “crowd pleaser” selection. Muscular in style, the 2011 Sandro Fay “Rosso di Valtellina” is old school Nebbiolo still, and for those who want some kick in their red wine, for \$15 this ain't a bad choice at all.

And the disappointments... It is not often Hanes is unmoved by a wine made by Albert Boxler but, alas, that is the case with the 2011 Riesling from the Brand Vineyard in Alsace, France. For \$80 you should get a lot more layering richness and length. It did not suck outright but not a winner on the QPR scale. The sheer number of Bedrock Wine Co. offerings on a yearly basis are getting to be beyond what Hanes can afford. So, using this year's releases to try and determine what Hanes wants to keep buying going forward. Based on the 2012 vintage it may not be the Kirschenmann Vineyard Zinfandel, not an especially fun wine. Note to self. Maybe it's simply that you don't find many tannic beast style Barolo wines anymore so when you do find one it is confusing, but there just wasn't much immediate pleasure to be found in the 2009 Francesco Rinaldi Barolo basic bottling. Good producer, just have to assume that it needs to get lost in the cellar for many a year. In the end, probably not such a bad value at \$42 if it comes around and loses its impenetrability. Usually a big fan of the wines of McPrice Myers but their 2011 Grenache called “l'Ange Rouge” lacked distinction and for \$42, you want distinction. Don't know what was up here but the 2012 Terres Dorées regular bottling of Beaujolais rouge called “l'Ancien Vieilles

Vignes" was just not doing it, lacks gregariousness and approachability, not sure if additional bottle time would do much to make it happier to drink. Ever the risk taker, Hanes went after yet another new producer, this one the 2010 Società Agricola Vigna de Franco bottling of Gaglioppo called 'A Vita. Not the best Cirò Rosso Hanes has ever swilled, lacked that hard candy quality which can make these wines attractive. Another \$20 down the drain.

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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/oldervintages2014.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 February!

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Pesenti
Vineyard

Zinfandel

2011, \$35.00, 16.3%

Mostly opaque purple core, solid glow to it, wide brick red rims, burnt edges, heavy saturation throughout. Thick nose of molasses, brown sugar, blood orange, oodles of prune, fig, date fruit, more so than the black cherry, blackberry bits, unwinds further with cinnamon, ginger, heavy cream, the floral musk struggles to get going, on the whole while clearly overripe not stupidly oaky, just big and super-juicy. Full-bodied, almost the same exact story in the mouth, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, spiced oranges, honey, molasses, chocolate, pine sap, violets, real sweet and clingy. Plum, prune, date, boysenberry, blueberry, blackberry, just as fruity as fruity can be. Pile driver of sugary sweetness. 89

Cowan Cellars

Bennett Valley, Moaveni Vineyard

Syrah

2011, \$26.00, 13.6%

Rich and opaque purple core, spotless and glowing, wide cranberry red rim, vivid presence in the glass. In the nose you initially get violet led florality and a brisk coffee to mocha toast, segues to saddle leather and muddy earth, more stony than herbaceous, takes some air time for the cherry, blackberry, elderberry fruit scents to rev the engine, overall there's a briskness to it like it's late for the next meeting. Full-bodied with a very strong skeleton, it is not tannic in a way which diminishes the fruit but rather in a way that cloaks it all in a suit of armor. Floral here too, delivers more white grapefruit citrus and a certain pine forest breeze. Lots of stoniness, less earthy or leathery qualities. The chocolate, mocha stuff lingers around but the cherry, raspberry, cranberry, Italian plum fruit not afraid to assert itself. Has a strong grip through the finish, you feel it fully across the tongue. Packs enough fruit to warrant waiting a few years for the structure to settle down some. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Contra Costa County, Evangelho Vineyard, Evangelho
Vineyard Heritage
Blend

2012, \$30.00, 14.2%

Moderate glow to the watermelon red inflected purple core, has a gauzy sort of opacity, flirts with pink at the rims and then stays within the area of beet red instead, average surface luster. The nose is very plump, well-stuffed with ripe, sugary cherry, blackberry, rhubarb, peach fruit scents, while not as noticeable at first there's a fair amount of caramel, butterscotch, some floral dew and mixed citrus, some meadowy freshness, extremely primary, perhaps to a fault. Full-bodied, equally round and juicy here, not much chiseled about it, however, there is just enough tannin to form a web to hold it together. Menthol, orange zest, caraway seeds, glimmer of poor earth. There's a little tangy bite at the end but hard to tell where it comes from. No oak bomb, plenty of blueberry, boysenberry, blackberry to dark cherry fruit, moments of plum. Enjoyable now, leaves you with no hints of what it might turn into with age nor why you should wait for it to do so.

Approximately 40% Carignane, 38% Mourvèdre, remainder Zinfandel, Palomino, Alicante, Mission. 88

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder

Malbec

2011, \$45.00, 14.1%

Opaque purple core, sort of gauzy but not because of anything like sediment, the rims are a heavy set ruby red, glowing saturation throughout, fully plays the part. The nose has a bit of peanut shell, earth and volatility but it's floral with right sized oak toast, generous plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit, maybe some apple skin too, orange peel, it's not that it lacks complexity it's more that it seems to want purity (even with that turbulence factored in). Full-bodied but moves with a steadiness which if not grace per se, at least shows it cares to not step on your feet. The tannin is average but it manages to leave a dry tacky feel on the tongue, especially after the blackberry, Italian plum, boysenberry fruit starts to fade. Has mixed citrus, stone, tree bark and burnt toast to charred oak accents, nothing enough to drag the overall impression in any one direction. Well made, there's interplay between energy and restraint. But not anywhere near the price of admission. 88

Anthill Farms

Russian River Valley, Tina Marie Vineyard

Pinot Noir

2011, \$49.99, 13.9%

Mild gauziness to the otherwise transparent liquid, cranberry to cherry red in color, not a lot of purple

there, stays consistent to the rims where there's a slightly more burnt red edge, seems to be going for the "natural" look. The nose is on the subdued side, solid if unspectacular raspberry, rhubarb, cherry, strawberry fruit with a big initial splash of caramel popcorn, moderate does of orange peel, flowers, camphor yet not much to imbue it with a sense of terroir. Medium-bodied, has a semi-velvety texture which creates for a slow glide forward through the palate. The tannin has grip without getting in the way, never going to let structure dominate. Can't shake that popcorn, butter, caramel thing even with extended aeration. Cherry, raspberry, cranberry, not sugary, appears to want to have a certain tartness but not fully committed to it. Strong, not pushy, finish. Residue of cola, chocolate and butterscotch at the end. Nice wine, could easily pass for refined if one never experienced truly refined Pinot Noir before. 88

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma Valley, Old Vine

Zinfandel

2012, \$20.00, 14.6%

Vibrant magenta-purple in color, more bright than saturated, deep from core to rims, the latter dark in their own right. Strong blueberry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit scents while not "wet and juicy" per se, there's also a woodsy forest floor aspect, not a lot going on overall, dried beef, moderate mentholated effect, something about it keeps resisting you. medium-bodied, tannic and hard through the attack. Caramel and molasses soften things a bit, then gets salty and beefy. Orange peel, low level of eucalyptus, some apple in the red cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit, ripe not that long. Tempted to call it simple but more like it is just of few words. Going to show its best served with fatty meat dishes. Sourced from Bedrock Vineyard, remainder Casa Santinamaria Vineyard, Monte Rosso Vineyard, Stellwagen Vineyard, Los Chamizal Vineyard, Scatena Vineyard. 87

Bedrock Wine Co.

Central Valley, Lodi, Kirschenmann Vineyard

Zinfandel

2012, \$28.00, 14.6%

Deep ruby to violet color, consistent but brighter at the cranberry hued rims, clean and as transparent as possible given coloration. The nose is fat and somewhat inert, more earth, dirt, stones than blackberry, boysenberry, cherry fruit, not excessively oaky more like grill smoke, ends with a flutter of pine and menthol. Medium-bodied, drier than expected even as you can't deny the ripeness in the blueberry, black cherry, blackberry, cranberry fruit, a few prune notes. However, not a lot of length in said fruit. Here there's a full presence in the caramel, toffee,

butterscotch start to finish. Pine cone, eucalyptus, the stony earth not as strong as in the nose. Has a roasty, smoky quality to it. Needs the oak to keep it soft and at least somewhat soaking into the palate. Alright yet lacks fun factor. 87

McPrice Myers Wine Company
Santa Barbara County, L'Ange Rouge
Grenache
2011, \$42.00, 15.2%

There's a good deal of crimson red in the otherwise purple core, this takes on a burnt hue towards the rim but not close to any bricking, more medicinal, in any event clear and spotless throughout. The nose is marred by a lot of butterscotch, caramel oakiness, covers up the youthful exuberance of the plum, cherry, raspberry fruit scents as well as a lot of the pine, flowers and citrus blossom, it has richness no doubt but just comes off as a one trick pony, no real nuance at this point. In the mouth it's full-bodied with a velvety smoothness, softly grips the palate as it flows by. Coffee, chocolate, caramel continue to dominate, roasty before the wetness of the cherry, blueberry, raspberry, red apple fruit takes hold. Average at best tannin or acidity, weight and momentum hold it together. Pinch of ginger, cinnamon spice. The thing is, it's pleasant enough. It just lacks that element that makes you sit upright and go "Yes!" 90% Grenache, 7% Syrah, 3% Mourvèdre. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Cowan Cellars
Russian River Valley
Ribolla Gialla
2012, \$28.00, 11.7%

Fairly deep golden color, mild dullness, hue is strong enough to fill out the rims so you don't miss the absent shine. Fresh nose of apricot, yellow apple, peach fruit, palpable orange zest component, something akin to mint or sweet fresh herbs, overall more open and breezy than powerful. Close to full-bodied, possesses very good framing acidity, this creates a dryish mouth feel. Spicy, more like clove than mint, the orange to white grapefruit citrus spreads itself broadly, notes of marmalade. The pear, peach, apricot, apple fruit has a cool cellar aged quality to it, stops short of dried fruit. With time develops notes of wet stone. Sneaky length and persistence. More wiry than gently balanced, likes to poke you now and then. 90

Scholium Project, The
Central Valley, Lodi, Phillips Farm, Rhododactylus
Cinsault

2012, \$29.99, 12.66%

Has a distinct pinkish cast to it that is not really near rosé type hues, more like an "orange" wine, otherwise it's a metallic yellow with a deep enough translucent shimmer to keep it dense looking from core to rims. Honey and molasses sweeten up the nose, gingerbread, milk chocolate, full fruit range from cherry, strawberry to green melon, peach and pear scents, seems very settled into itself, not quite congealed but kind of folded into layers, that said it's not heavy nor ponderous. In the mouth it's full-bodied and the relative lack of acidity here makes it a slowly paced experience and at times you do wish it had more pep. Cinnamon, nutmeg to a pinch of cumin spice, you also get a coating of something like crushed stone dust. Peach, nectarine, cherry, strawberry fruit, here too there's an excess of sweetness, plenty of whipped cream, vanilla, butterscotch notes in support. In tandem it does develop a light herbal bite and some tree bark and fallen wood elements. Interesting for its textures, less so for its flavors, warms the gut and a worthy pairing for food with thick cream sauces and the like. 89

Cowan Cellars
Lake County, Isa
Sauvignon Blanc
2010, \$22.00, 13.1%

Orange rust hues deepen the worn golden ring color base, minimal shine and has more of a blockish than layered look in the glass, rims stay full, does not look aged, simply different than the standard youthful sparkle one sees in most wines. The nose is a mix of fresh orange juice and marmalade, not all the breezy but creates a pregnant rain cloud sort of lift up into the nostrils, as much pineapple, star fruit, guava as any apricot, peach or apple scents, vague uncooked dough nuances, sprigs of mint and wildflowers too. In the mouth it's full-bodied, not dry but more so tacky and semi-gluey on the mouth, this angular coating diminishes the presence of the otherwise credible plus level acidity. Herbs, flowers, sour orange to lemon citrus, more pith than pulp. Pineapple, nectarine, peach, some apple to pear. Hangs in the mouth like wallpaper waiting to be pressed into place. You can say it has good length but it's not like it is energetic about it, it just has momentum and can't be bothered to figure out how to stop. A little whipped cream softness brings it on home. 88

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Sinskey, Robert
Napa Valley, Los Carneros, Vin Gris of Pinot Noir
Pinot Noir
2012, \$29.99, 13.1%

Extremely light pinkish to yellow onion skin hue, has a high surface sheen, even paler rims, pretty in a mannered fashion. The nose has a stony, almost briny nature at first then presents lean, angular strawberry, red cherry scents along with a mutter of orange peel and flowers, fairly mute overall but is no doubt clean and focused. Medium-bodied, on the muscular side with a tannic punch in addition to above average acidity. Big elevation here in the sour blood orange to grapefruit citrus. the lowgrade strawberry, watermelon, raspberry fruit has more zing than juiciness. Blends in a few cocoa notes before the stone and streamwater, not quite minerally. Lots of traction on the tongue versus perfumed lift. Seems to want to be taken seriously. 88

OREGON RED

Soléna
Willamette Valley, McMinnville, Hyland Vineyard
Pinot Noir
2011, \$50.00, 13.9%

Brick red core stained by a touch of purple, fades around the rims, still mostly red but some orange there. The nose is bracingly tart, loaded with white pepper, then delivers brown dirt, straight ahead red cherry, raspberry scents, there's some oak in there but it's really quite pure. Medium-bodied, spicy and buoyant, the gently expansive mouth perfume consists of clove, cinnamon, lemon zest, rose petals and tea leaves. The bright red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit dances with life. Some tree bark, flirts with notes of sous bois. The citrus just explodes on the finish. Minimal oak presence and transparent in the best way. 90

Hyland Estates
Willamette Valley, McMinnville, Coury
Pinot Noir
2011, \$60.00, 13.8%

Slight burnt red touch to the violet color base, minimal hue loss at the rims, good depth as well as clarity, presents more straight up red ruby rims. Initially the nose bursts with popcorn, caramel and fried butter, the oak a dominant factor, this pulls back to highlight crunchy black cherry, raspberry scents with a burst of lemon to white grapefruit, more of a puncher than possessing a gentle, delicate touch. Medium-bodied, lots of structure and sternness, spicy attack with clove and ginger, gains zip from a white grapefruit, orange

citrus component. The cherry, blackberry fruit is round yet more firm than giving. Stone, earth contributes to overall chewiness, moves at a steadily ponderous rate than easy flow, but this does help keep it balanced. In the end it could share more of itself, too reserved. 88

Soléna
Willamette Valley, Yamhill-Carlton District, Domaine Danielle Laurent
Pinot Noir
2011, \$50.00, 13.7%

While there's purple in the core, it strikes you mainly for its garnet to cranberry red coloration, clear and while transparent, dark enough you don't really notice. The nose is fully dominated by caramel and butterscotch and it takes some time for this to relent and yield any space to anything else, then there's rhubarb, raspberry, red cherry fruit, perhaps more sour than sweet, follows on with pulped lemons, pickle brine, stone shards, and black tea leaf, there's a fair amount going on but it lacks delicacy. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, has sufficient acidity to force a medium tempo flow to it, ungumming the works from that caramel, toffee, vanilla, clove stuff. The cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit has an angularity to it, has to make a conscious effort to stretch forward. This cannot be said for the white grapefruit, lemon citrus, stone and brown dirt components, which all have energy to spare. There's depth and power to the underlying material so there's a chance it will knit together with time into something more commanding than today. 87

Soléna
Willamette Valley, Grande Cuvée
Pinot Noir
2011, \$25.00, 13.5%

Dark purple core, you have to look closely to really get the transparency, the violet extends through the rims, allowing for some ruby but more a dried blood red hue, thick and heavy appearance in the glass. Repeats this impression in the nose with plummy fruit, cherry and persimmon notes, too dense to become airy, an undercurrent of herbal grassiness, more smoky than spicy, like doused campfire embers, a little too roasty for the orange citrus or any florality to really show. Full-bodied, some tannin but it's on the clumpy side and dries out the finish prematurely. Otherwise, stays monochrome with a roasted aspect which stops short of tomato or metallic notes but does allow for some prune added to the plum, cherry, blackberry base, flavorful rather than graceful. Hint of nutmeg or cinnamon, similarly for any grapefruit or orange citrus. Ends with increase in both caramel and milk chocolate. Nothing wrong with it but it's not a dapper nor cerebral expression of the Pinot Noir grape.
(Synthetic Cork) 86

OREGON WHITE

Soléna

Willamette Valley

Pinot Gris

2012, \$20.00, 13.5%

While it's more or less a pale yellow to brown straw color, there's enough translucent shimmer to help it deepen and pool into the glass, has a clear acrylic block appearance. There's a light ginger to clove spice to perk up the nose, otherwise it's mainly dried orange peels, pear, apple, to peach pit fruit, a dusting of fine powdered sugar but little suggests overt sweetness or overripeness, some molasses and flower water just before it dissolves. Medium-bodied, its relative sluggishness at times makes it seem weightier, not a lot of acidity so when it settles in, best to bring some popcorn and get ready for a long show. Retains that sweet baking spice edge and the tangerine to grapefruit citrus here gets both sweeter and more tangy. In keeping with this, ripeness more than flavor in the pear, melon, yellow apple, apricot fruit. Not stony but there is a sort of smoky element pushing through at the end. Has a round sort of fullness and lasts quite well. Just lacks the sort of verve and intensity which would take it to the next level. 98% Pinot Gris, 2% Gewürztraminer. (Synthetic Cork) 87

FRANCE RED

Lapalu, Jean-Claude

Beaujolais, Côte de Brouilly

Gamay Noir

2012, \$32.99, 13.0%

Visually it's like it fights the brighter ruby hues in favor of wanting to go for more brooding blood and scarlet reds, not much purple and there's a good deal of consistency core to rims, clean and sparkly as they usually are. The nose has attractive fullness to it, with balance struck between the mineral dust, stone and light fox fur notes to the cranberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit, ends up with some ash like a dry Texas badlands campfire gone out by midnight. Medium-bodied, its broad tannic shoulders can at times make it feel bigger. Has that worn leather, animal hide aspect which makes the wines of this Cru Village distinct. Plus a generous amount of stoniness and touch of meadow herbal matter. Cranberry, cherry base, here the fruit goes a little darker into blackberry and Italian plum territory. Retains a strong savory character with garden herb notes. Cleans up at the finish and tempers its innate animality. Has the stuffing to age but not sure what you'd get for the effort. 89

Barou, Domaine Emmanuel

Rhône, Saint-Joseph, Un Autre Monde

Syrah

2012, \$19.99, 13.0%

Simple cranberry red to violet in color, good clarity, the rims flushed with ruby hues, while not light per se it is close to fully transparent, dances nimbly in the glass. There's a bag full of white pepper in the nose, freshly mown grass, wet leather and horsehide then another bracing shot, this time white grapefruit, amidst all this the liqueur like raspberry, red cherry scents crest and fall, never missing fruit yet likewise never the star of the show, if it can be said, delicately sauvage. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with the sort of strong acidity and then tannin that keeps the pacing brisk and lots of saliva percolating. At first there's a noticeable amount of caramel to milk chocolate but then it fades away as the stone shards, grass and leaves, shoe leather and just outdoorsy funk assert themselves. The grapefruit to orange citrus is pleasingly assertive. Here the red fruits are more sour and recede some into the background. Not very floral, this is towards the more "masculine" side of what Saint-Joseph usually offers.

89

Terres Dorées (Jean-Paul Brun), Domaine des Beaujolais, Côte de Brouilly

Gamay Noir

2012, \$21.49, 12.5%

Sparkly and transparent, while there is purple in the core it's more about the fresh blood red to cranberry color, glistens in the light, the rims stay a darker red than fade to a pink or magenta hue. Curiously open and accessible, big on the strawberry, watermelon, cherry fruit without a lot of leather or animal notes, the lemon to orange citrus spray is sweet too, tiny glimmer of caramel, you get a little dusty prickle from grassiness, overall it lays its simplicity out for all the see, without embarrassment. Light to medium-bodied, muscular acidity which adds to its sourness, here you get a helluva lot more stone, grass elements in addition to white grapefruit, lemon, the citrus more puckering. Still, stays pure with only some leathery accents. Floral touches adorn the strawberry, raspberry, rhubarb fruit, has ripeness without giving up snap. Leaves you wondering what the future has in store for it. 89

Clos Fantine

Languedoc/Roussillon, Faugères, Cuvée Tradition

Blend

2011, \$21.99, 14.0%

It's a bit too dark and opaque for the glow to really manifest in the saturated purple core, the rims have a semi-brooding red blood to scarlet hue, very rich yet not necessarily inviting looking. The nose has a little

bit of everything for everyone, rock salt, dried beef, leather and then violets, white grapefruit, milk chocolate, coffee rinds and ripe currant, cassis, dark berry scents, the gamey qualities emerge victorious in the end. Medium-bodied, there's a sternness to it, tannic with something at times reminiscent of underripe phenolics. No denying the juicy sweetness of the plum, blueberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, nothing lacking in this regard. The leathery and gamey aspects recede in favor of bigger grapefruit and stone notes. Loses some of the floral grace typical of the region. After a glass or so leaves you suspecting it needs a good 3-4 hour decant. There's a willful roughness about it, needs something like a hearty stew or mutton or some shit like that. But it's very honest. 40% Mourvèdre, 25% Carignan, 25% Grenache, 10% Syrah. 89

Terres Dorées (Jean-Paul Brun), Domaine des Beaujolais, Fleurie

Gamay Noir

2011, \$25.99, 12.0%

Deep garnet red to lighter purple hued core, the rims stay more on the red side with a glimmer of pink at best, clear but dark enough to approach opacity. In the nose it has a slight hard candy sweetness in the strawberry, cranberry, cherry fruit scents, the few chocolate notes overcome by some damp barn floor earth and straw, has more fullness than cut but the stoniness keeps it somewhat fresh. Medium-bodied, solidly built, has good acidity, perhaps too astringent and biting at times. More floral here with orange zest as well, some red fruit array of cranberry, cherry, raspberry and then minor strawberry. Cleaner here but not necessarily fresher, stone, hard dirt, dried leaves, nothing herbaceous about it. Moderate length, sits broadly cheek-to-cheek even as the flavors recede. 88

Mortier, Domaine du

Loire, Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil, Dionysos

Cabernet Franc

2010, \$22.99, 13.0%

The deep purple core displays great vivacity while the glowing magenta rims are broad and heavily saturated, no lack of color that is for sure. Sure, at first it smells like someone farted in your face and then tried to make up for it but lighting an equally smelly match but there's also an overabundance of black currant, black cherry, plum fruit, flower water and some additionally softening cocoa to milk chocolate notes. In the mouth it is full-bodied, close to velvety given the decent power in the tannin, really coats the palate and stays with you a long time, especially in terms of sheer weight. Mild grapefruit to orange citrus, some flowers but here it leans more on that plum to cherry, blackberry fruit to attract you. At the same time,

here you definitely get a greater sense of stone and dirt, tastes like it came from somewhere. The flavors do pull up short, though. So juicy upfront, take a zillion smaller sips and the bottle will be gone. 88

Terres Dorées (Jean-Paul Brun), Domaine des Beaujolais, l'Ancien Vieilles Vignes

Gamay Noir

2012, \$13.99, 12.0%

Very clear and transparent, mostly red ruby with some violet, has a pleasing sparkle to it, softly pinkish hued rims. Lots of crackle to the nose, stone shards, pepper, tree bark, leather and cranberry, red cherry, raspberry scents, angular but not short, more so tautly succinct. Light to medium-bodied, acidic but more tannic than arguably expected. Same cranberry, red currant, red cherry, raspberry fruit, snappy, lean but not juiceless. Very peppery and spicy. Offers stone accents, not so much minerals. Touch of sour grapefruit at the end. Fresh and zesty, maybe at times unforgiving yet certainly food friendly and versatile. Not so much a casual sipper. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Roally, Domaine de

Burgundy, Viré-Clessé, Tradition

Chardonnay

2011, \$25.99, 14.0%

Layered with average shine, gold to a mildly dried hay coloration, softly distorts your vision, which also helps fill in the rims. Violets, lilacs, licorice, pie dough, cinnamon and orange peel make for a diversely arrayed nose, the peach, apricot to gentler pineapple actually gets nudged into the background, at moments it delivers something like oiled stones or petrol, not all just pretty makeup. Full-bodied and verging on heavy, leans into you with a lot of weight. Lime, tangerine citrus brings tang, aided by cinnamon to clove spice. The dough qualities are slightly more baked here but there's yeasty notes as well. Green apple, peach, nectarine, pineapple, persimmon, more ripely sugary than sweet per se, no lack of fruit and can see it developing a dried fruit character. Not a delicate, fluid wine, it will get up in your face, that noted, not without its own version of finesse. 89

Petit Chambord (François Cazin), Le

Loire, Cour-Cheverny, Cuvée Renaissance Moelleux

Romorantin

2011, \$19.99, 12.5%

Decent depth to the yellow gold hue, neither especially shiny nor dull, the rims lose what color is there, fills there glass in a block-like fashion. The nose has a smoky, stony side to it but it is mostly straightforward pear, peach, apple fruit, honey, orange citrus, there

are moments when there's something like jalapeño going on, easy to like and guileless. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity is strong enough to give it additional shape and focus. Here it's applelicious, green apple, yellow apple, red apple. Followed by pear and some apricot. The honey freshens it up without adding too much sweetness. Tangerine and mandarin orange citrus add sweet and sour interplay. Some stone and pebble influences, quite clean. The length is moderate, tactful throughout. Suggests more complexity down the road, however, likely not the most classic bottling of this wine. 89

Luneau, Domaine

Loire, Gros-Plant du Pays Nantais Sur Lie, Vieilles Vignes
Gros Plant
2012, \$11.99, 11.0%

Pretty white straw color, flecks of green, both clear and layered into the glass at once, just about hueless at the rims, enjoyable sparkle to it. Bushel of apples in the nose, buttressed by pear, peach skin and a dash of whipped cream, has a good floral touch, stays admirably uncomplicated and openly knit, spreads widely and lifts well. Medium-bodied, comes with a dry and somewhat tacky mouth feel which helps it cling and lengthen as well as spotlight some of the crushed seashell, chalk, stone elements. Here you get lemon to white grapefruit, which was mostly missing from the nose. At the same time keeps that creamy vanillin component to blur any harder edges. Emphasis remains on apple fruit, red cherry and strawberry play with apricot, pear nuances. Stays muscular through the finish, enjoys displaying oomph more than delicacy. Fun quaffer at a highly respectable price.
(Composite Cork) 89

Puzelat-Bonhomme

Loire, Touraine
Sauvignon Blanc
2012, \$14.99, 12.0%

Deep yellow color, sort of looks like fruit juice, stays full to the rims, semi-flat but, as noted, fills the glass well. Full, ripe nose of pink and white grapefruit, pineapple, peach, papaya fruit alongside dried apples, smells like "old vine" fruit, some pressed flowers but not much minerality nor general cut in the nostrils. Full-bodied, extremely relaxed and on the sweet side with a powdered sugar like coating. Loads up on tangerine, pink grapefruit, lime citrus. The apple, pear, nectarine, persimmon, peach fruit is juicy and densely concentrated. In spite of its overall sweetness has a salt to saline quality too, not quite minerally nor stony. Holds its weight and flavors through the finish, not lively as you would find with a good Sancerre but

makes up for it in easygoing approachability. Good cleanliness given its weight and so-so acidity. 89

Pépière, La

Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Les Gras Moutons

Melon de Bourgogne

2012, \$15.99, 12.0%

No nonsense, straight no chaser, yellow straw hay color, pale luminescence, even translucency to help fill the rims even with the nearly full absence of color there. Lemon zest, licorice, rose petals and peach, red apple, pear fruit combine for a serenely gentle nose, underneath there is a mild chalkiness as well as something close to basil in nature, shows nice density before a swift unravel and lift. Medium-bodied, has okay acidity, however, still comes across as body heavy, the proverbial bean bag chair. Highly floral here, mix of zesty lemon, orange and white grapefruit citrus. Those anise notes sweeten up the apricot, peach, nectarine fruit, the latter seems to want to go for maximal tartness a lot. Delivers pebbly, dusty stone accents near the end. Big-boned, fun in a good naturally clumsy way, keeps you smiling. 89

Lapuyade, Château

Southwest France, Jurançon Sec

Blend

2011, \$13.99, 14.5%

Thick, advanced golden color, on the verge of being bronzed, clear given its pooling deep into the glass, rims hold the hue nicely. The nose is at first minty and floral but the custard and vanilla pudding aspect soon dispels that, the full range of baking spices including clove and ginger, curiously not that fruity but what apricot, peach, pineapple is there has a paste to dried fruit nature, kind of remains coiled and doesn't unwind. In the mouth it's full-bodied and the oak comes through like a double barrel shotgun, coconut custard, vanilla, butterscotch and toffee in spades. That said, here the mint, flowers and meadow pine notes fare better. Plus there's more concentration in the nectarine, apricot, apple, pineapple fruit. Acidity is negligible but not weak. It has an over-the-top nature which allures for a glass or so but it would wear you out much more after that. Unspecified percentages Gros Manseng, Petit Manseng. 88

Boxler, Albert

Alsace, Brand

Riesling

2011, \$79.99, 13.5%

Plain golden color, neither that sparkly nor dull, trails off towards the rims, hints at nothing to come when judges by visual appearance. The nose punches hard into your nostrils with pink grapefruit, tangerine citrus,

flowers, dried honey and a concentrated apple, pear, apricot fruit core, mild wet stone to diesel accents, mint to violet prettiness, it takes some time for the fruit to really unwind and show its best. In the mouth it's full-bodied, full coverage cheek to cheek and the acidity helps prevent excessive solidity. Highly floral, lime to lemon sorbet flavors, mint, violets, pretty without the need for makeup. Has some honey and molasses notes. The apricot, apple, pear fruit imperiously stand-offish, will satisfy you but on its own terms. Chalky finish, very terroir driven. Sort of lost in the middle ground, no man's land, not fruity and not a clear distillation of a place, very much an intellectual wine without a lot of immediate pleasure. 88

Hahn, Peter
Loire, Vouvray, Le Clos de La Meslerie
Chenin Blanc
2010, \$29.99, 12.0%

Deep gold to light bronze color, mildly flat, loses intensity at the rims, when it brightens it is with an orange tint. The nose is massively about apple cider and then pear and apricot fruit, brown sugar and honey, sweetened lemon citrus, has a wet wool to sweet grill smoke aspect, on the whole it is heavy but it has that certain sweet sparkle which makes it dance when needed. The pear, apple, peach, apricot fruit pours onto the palate like wet cement. Floral, essence of tangerine and blood orange, cinnamon and nutmeg infiltrate with time. The acidity is there, no doubt, but it has no power over the general sweetness, this is a demi-sec level if not sweeter. Ends with lanolin, beeswax accents. Perhaps too friendly, would welcome additional structure and punch. 88

Saint Pierre, Domaine de Jura, Arbois, Château Reynard
Blend
2010, \$22.99, 12.5%

Dull golden hue, expansive and lasts through the rims, lack of shine does not detract from the strong presence in the glass. The nose is yeasty with lots of dough and unbaked bread notes, briny with seriously sour orange citrus tones, smokily pungent, has something to prove and won't stop until it feels you understand it. Medium-bodied, the acidity straight off cuts away most of the flesh. Flor, yeast, unbaked dough, all in spades. Nutmeg, cinnamon, spiced orange peel. Curiously alcoholic in a good way, the booziness gives it life. Apple, pear, apricot, languidly stretch out across the palate. At the same time it on the whole never relaxes and this for the best. Smoked meats and metal appear as it warms. For whatever it may lack is the social graces it makes up for in verve. Unspecified percentages of Chardonnay, Savagnin. 88

ITALY RED

Occhipinti, Azienda Agricola Andrea Latium/Lazio, Lazio Rosso, Alea Viva Aleatico

2011, \$20.99, 14.0%

Possesses a light and clear scarlet red core which turns easily to an orange hue with a hint of brown at the partially dilute rims, does have a nicely attractive shine. Zippy nose, penetrates effortlessly with candied raspberry, strawberry, blueberry scents, juicy tangerine to pink grapefruit citrus, powdered sugar, black licorice and sweet garden herbs, even given its airy nature has wonderful staying power. Light-bodied close to bracing acidity which still does not have a mean bone in its body. Broad array of anise, rose petal, lemon, tangerine to grapefruit citrus, something close to basil. The raspberry, rhubarb, strawberry fruit has a touch of persimmon. Underneath all this lavish sweetness is wet leather. Incredibly fun and engaging, not without its own sort of complexity, if you want a sweet table wine make it this. 90

Foti, Azienda Agricola I Vigneri di Salvo Sicilia, I Vigneri IGT Rosso
Blend
2011, \$33.99, 14.0%

The core has some violet mixed into the brick red to blood red base, very fully hued rims, bright and sparkly. Floral musk in the nose, generously fruity featuring prune, date alongside cherry, raspberry scents, lemon zest, bit of tea leaf and ashen stone, expansive and fun from first sniff to last. Full-bodied, the acidity sets the tone from the outset and keeps the pacing brisk throughout. Stone, ash, leather and white grapefruit bust out initially before space is created for that plum to prune, black cherry, blackberry fruit, ripe and full of personality. A few cocoa notes. Rugged in a good way, has those unshaven good looks. Lowkey explosiveness. Unspecified percentages of Nerello Mascalese, Nerello Cappuccio. 90

Fay, Casa Vinicola Sandro Lombardy, Rosso di Valtellina
Nebbiolo
2011, \$14.99, 12.0%

Not much purple in the core, more blood red which segues to broad bright orange rims, very clear but not dilute in any fashion, pretty in its own way. has a twiggy, earthy nose with a touch of ash, while ripe the cherry, black raspberry fruit isn't heavy, dried potpourri, leather, apple skin, free of most funkiness and has a relaxed firmness about it. Light to medium-bodied, strong webbing of tannin as the foundation, supported decently by acidity. Close to candied cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, ably blends in white

grapefruit, pressed flowers, licorice, damp brown earth, able to salve any wound it creates. Overall, has a lot of a little, in a good way. Can be enjoyed on its own but probably best served with stronger dishes. 90% Nebbiolo, 10% unspecified other. (Synthetic Cork: enoPE 502) 89

Vallana, Antonio
Piedmont, Colline Novaresi Spanna
Nebbiolo
2011, \$12.99, 13.0%

Pure violet core, trim and shiny, the ruby rims have a mild outer rim of burnt red, good glow throughout. Ripely perfumed cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit in the nose, even watermelon and apple skin, primary without being too fruity, steady presence, slowly opens so you might consider decanting. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, has a very good tannic spine but doesn't push it too far, allows for forward flow. Begins with white grapefruit to lemon citrus, stones and pressed flowers and then lots of leather, cowhide. Stops short of being barnyard and through the mid-palate the cherry, plum, blackberry fruit starts to uncoil. After like 30 minutes of air time starts to hit the high notes. Dusty residue left behind on the tongue.
(Composite Cork) 88

Rinaldi & Figli, Francesco
Piedmont, Barolo
Nebbiolo
2009, \$41.99, 14.0%
Light violet core, quite clear throughout, cough syrup to brick red, just the smallest hint of orange at the outer rims. At first the nose delivers a great deal of caramel, butterscotch, this does not prepare you for the more bracing meadow grasses, leather and black tea leaf, the sourish if hard candy cherry, raspberry fruit scents bolstered by licorice and pressed flower notes, outside of that oak it's on the inexpressive side. Medium-bodied, powerful tannin lays the smack down right off, layers dust on the tongue. Small core of liqueur like cherry, blackberry fruit, not especially longlasting. Traditional rose petal, orange peel, tea leaf accents, with air time starts to steady itself but never close to sweet. The caramel lurks in the background, kind of more toasty, burnt. Decent length, structure tends to shorten the experience. If you gotta drink it now, give it a long decant. 88

Vigna de Franco, Società Agricola
Calabria, Cirò Rosso Classico Superiore, 'A Vita
Gaglioppo
2010, \$19.99, 13.5%
Clear burnt sunset red to brick red color, touch of violet to the core, thins out around the rims where there's a touch of orange, in spite of clarity coloration gives it a

slightly older look. The nose is very herbal, meadow grasses, straw, hay as well as a field of cow patties, afterwards you get pulped and dried oranges, licorice, the liqueur like cherry to red berry scents all but fully masked by the funk, in no way reticent yet not a lot coming through. Medium-bodied, has a pronounced dryness and powerful tannic blanketing of the palate. Again, can't blame the ripeness as there is clearly a candied character to the cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit. Dry enough that the herbaceousness too gets stunted, making it appear more stony and earthy than grassy. Clean, free of any unnecessary adornment, however, too rough and tough to really win your affections in the end. 86

ARGENTINA RED

Mendoza Vineyards
Mendoza, 1907
Malbec
2011, \$14.99, 13.8%

Dark purple core yet nowhere near opaque, more red garnet at the rims with good brightness, basic bouncy red visual appeal. Somewhat dull nose of plum, cherry, spice and cedar, mildly vanillin, on the straightforward side, light hint of leather and white grapefruit, moderate staying power in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, has some grit to the texture but smooth enough on the whole. Tangy sour edge to the plum, dark berry, cherry fruit, the grapefruit contributes more to this. Moderate acidity. Any leather notes mostly overcome by cocoa, toast even as its not oaky per se. Never pushy, just really on the simple, safe and ultimately uninteresting side of things. 86