

The Hanes Wine Review, January 2018 Edition

Hanes has noticed that when he shops in retail stores (which happens mostly in New Jersey as he rarely has the opportunity to visit in-person all his former NYC wine store haunts) that he basically hits the French and Italian sections and maybe the German or Spanish. For the large amount of Californian wine Hanes buys winery direct he rarely samples offerings from retail shelves. Austrian wines have become a forgotten category as all the favored producers cost more than Hanes wants to spend. Hanes often thinks he should be buying more Portuguese wines but then just ends up buying an extra bottle of Beaujolais. South American wines seem “fine” but don’t offer the level of potential excitement Hanes finds in French or Italian wine. Australia or New Zealand are off the radar.

Hanes mentions this because he often does get “bored” by staying within a limited sandbox of wines but he still out of habit never seizes the opportunity when available to do something about it. He gets more adventurous when buying beer. This narrowed range of purchases has been exacerbated by his recent trend in buying older wines at auction rather than buying retail. At auction you really tend to stick to what you know unless the price is low enough for a random WTF bid. Alas, there’s fewer and fewer wines for bid at \$15 or \$10 levels. And Hanes does his best to stay under \$30 in all bids. Allow this as a “mea culpa” of sorts that the wine review may not be offering the breadth of reviews it did in the past, particularly when Hanes was more active in tasting groups and able to write up wines encountered while working retail. At this juncture it is reasonable to expect that Hanes will mostly be consuming non current vintage wines from auction or his own cellar and that fewer current vintage bottles consumed means *The Hanes Wine Review* may slip from bi-monthly to more sporadic publishing. As mentioned many times before, all reviews of older wines are published on a separate webpage herein with the main review intended for current releases only. So check out the older review pages although chances are high you won’t find those wines if you want to, sorry about that.

This month’s big winners... Had both the 2016 Huet Vouvray “Le Mont” vineyard Sec and Demi-Sec wines and came away with a slight preference for the Sec. Both in the \$30’s and bought one of each to go down to the cellar. Newish ownership and winemaking at Huet may have found their stride, we can hope. Hanes *likes* Petite Sirah but rarely *loves* Petite Sirah. However, the 2015 Once & Future from the Palisades Vineyard comes damn close. \$55 is awful stiff price to pay, thankfully Hanes has seen it on the aftermarket for less to round out the cellar some. As expected this new winery’s has a lifetime of experience behind it and it shows. Liked the 2016 Domaine de l’Amandier (Martin Texier) Syrah from Brézème but it a little turbulence to it so be forewarned. Pricing is good at around \$22 and shows some moderate aging potential. As Sandlands get more vintages under their belt things are slowly coming into focus regarding which wines Hanes prefers most. The Carignan wines consistently impress while the Trousseau can come real close to true excellence. Their Mourvèdre offerings don’t have the same track record but seem worth following, particularly impressive was the 2015 Contra Costa County bottling coming in at a fair \$28 winery direct (before the usual insane shipping prices). Still not sold on Sandlands’ Chenin Blanc wines, just bought some of the 2016’s and if they don’t impress will likely only buy their reds going forward. Had been meaning to try a sparkling wine from German winery Peter Lauer for some time. Finally made it happen and it proved an intriguing experience and one worth repeating. The \$38 price is arguably worth it, considering what you get these days for Champagne at that price (which is not much). The 2016 Bedrock Sauvignon Blanc from the Judge Family Vineyard was juicy and delicious and perfectly fine in the Californian idiom, should have bought more for those moments when you want to drink without taking notes (all 2-3 times a year this happens). \$28 is kinda pricey but what the hey. Really enjoyed the 2010 Pierre Peters Champagne “Les Chétillons” but that is sort of a no brainer, one of the more popular high end bottlings out there these days. Prices vary around \$120 or so per bottle.

The best \$20 and under picks... The Domaine du Pavillon de Chavannes’ Côte de Brouilly called “Cuvée des Ambassades” never hits the highest notes but year in and out it’s a solid bet. The 2016 is no different it remains one of the dependable cru Beaujolais under \$20 and should be sought out. Staying in France the Domaine Giachino Savoie blend of local grape Persan with Gamay called “Frères Giac” is pleasant and shows different sides of itself in the glass over time to hold your interest. \$20 or so seems right. Scarpa is an old school producer from Piedmont, Italy and their 2014 Barbera d’Asti is proof of this, rugged and chewy in the best way. \$20 price of admission. From the Minervois in Southern France, Hanes has often had good luck with Château Massiac. Saw

the 2015 basic bottling on the shelf for \$16 and snatched a bottle. While a touch backward and deserving of a decant, thumbs up for over delivering at the price. When buying inexpensive sparkling wine most folks don't think Crémant d'Alsace but these wines can produce positive results. Hanes sampled the non-vintage Mittnacht Frères Extra Brut bottling and for \$19 no complaints. Kitchen sink blend of the regular Alsatian grapes.

And the disappointments... Liked the 2014 entry level Etna Rosso from Terre Nere, missed the 2015 release, and picked up the 2016. Not a wine to easily cozy up to. Sour and bound up in its structure, \$16 is a fine enough price but no pleasure here. Two Côtes-du-Rhône wines underwhelmed this time around (trying to get back to buying these wines now and then hoping to hit a few decent QPR buys). At \$25 the Domaine Gramenon "Poignée de Raisins" ain't exactly cheap and it wasn't bad per se but for the extra \$10 or so wanted more. The Domaine La Réméjeanne "Les Chèvrefeuilles" was not enjoyable, the second straight vintage of this wine for Hanes that was ehh so despite the reasonable \$15 price tag, done with it. There is general positive buzz on Division Villages wine from Oregon. Picked up their entry level red blend, the 2015 "Béton." Was *not* impressed, volatile and angry and not even sure the bottle was finished. \$25 probably fair for underlying production costs. Willing to accept that this bottle may have been squirrely but not in any great rush to try more of their stuff. Loved the 2015 Gilles Berlioz Roussanne from the Savoie called "Les Filles" but the 2016 was a pale shadow of the previous vintage. High \$30's price. We shall see as based on the 2015 Hanes bought a second bottle of the 2016 to age without first tasting. Buying via the gray market you have to buy on spec these days and you get burned both ways, too many or too few purchased. Searching for alternative grapes for cheap everyday drinking, Hanes turned to a 2015 Vespolina from the Colline Novaresi area of Piedmont, produced by Ca' Nova. No dice, maestro. Too rough and tumble and tires you out. Priced around \$18.

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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/oldervintages2017.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 January!

CALIFORNIA RED

Once & Future
Napa Valley, Calistoga, Palisades Vineyard
Petite Sirah
2015, \$55.00, 14.9%

Has as much of a lively core as could be expected from black, sliver thin dark magenta rims, warm glow, visually hums in the glass. Vanilla fudge, molasses, violets and burnt cocoa in the nose, offers dense to immobile plum, cassis, black cherry scents adorned with a floral dew, some mixed white citrus helps it stretch out. Full-bodied, smooth and fluid for its size, the tannic skeleton is broad but doesn't clench too

hard. Notes of caramel, cocoa and coffee sweeten further the blueberry, plum, cherry to strawberry fruit. Here it's more of a tangerine to orange based citrus. Quick herbaceous burst in the mid-palate. Doesn't avoid being tart as well as ripe sweet. Keeps extending through the finish after you think it's gone. 90

Sandlands

Contra Costa County

Mourvèdre

2015, \$28.00, 12.9%

Soft look to the dark purple to maroon, scarlet coloration, lacks the glow but saturated enough, nicely clear rims. Juicy, gregarious nose of raspberry, blackberry fruit, hint of cocoa powder, freshly pressed flowers, orange blossom, clean and pure and more stony or sandy than wooly, funky, exhibits a steady lift. Full-bodied, spreads fully to coat the palate and luckily has the acidity to keep a spring in its step. Darker complexion to the fruit with cherry, blackberry to blueberry flavors. Spicier, ginger root and sage, the white grapefruit to orange citrus more authoritative. Does manage a fresh leathery swipe at the end and more like slate than say river stones. Without undue sweetness, the fruit is so youthfully plump that it is irresistible. 90

Harrington Wines

San Benito County, La Cienega Valley, Siletto Vineyard

Trousseau

2016, \$30.00, 13.0%

Unusually thick looking ruby-violet in color, consistent through to the flush rims where some transparency is achieved. Musky, fruity nose of strawberry, raspberry to rhubarb fruit, lemon custard, dried tar and molasses crisps, struggles to release any floral notes, does streamline and turn a touch stonier after being open for awhile. Full-bodied, the tannin and to some extent acidity mop up excess juiciness so overall it feels firm. More sour, though, with cranberry, blueberry to strawberry fruit and more white grapefruit based citrus. Stone and sand styled foundation rather than earthy or leathery, clean presentation. Fleshy enough that it is hard to discern its true bone structure but loaded with primary flavor now and no reason to doubt this will last as it sheds weight in the future. 90

Bedrock Wine Co.

Russian River Valley, Papera Ranch, Papera Ranch Heritage Blend

Blend

2015, \$38.00, 14.5%

Completely opaque black core, heavyset crimson red rims, when it's not a black hole holds light well with

pleasing surface shine. The nose is densely stuffed with plum/prune, cassis and cherry compote elements, extremely floral, softened further by caramel and milk chocolate nuances, and ginger spice, fairly simple but comes at you wave after wave. Full-bodied, sweet and sugary with just enough mix of tannin and acidity to stand up for itself and not slouch. Sweet and sour grapefruit, Smarties candy, hard butterscotch candy and violets float in and out. Here too the plum, cherry, blueberry, strawberry fruit the undisputed star of the show. Despite the confectionary feel not too dry. Unlikely to develop into anything complex, however, viscerally pleasurable now. Approximately 50% Zinfandel, 40% Carignane, 10% Valdigue, Petite Sirah, Syrah. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma Valley, Weill a Way Vineyard, Mixed Blacks Blend

2015, \$38.00, 14.8%

There's a lovely warmth to the opaque black core, that and the heavily saturated maroon to dark ruby rims draw you in, looks "impressive." There's no lack of oak to the nose with vanilla, milk chocolate, caramel and charred campfire wood notes, mild piney breeze, the plum, blackberry, cassis scents are massive enough to more than match the oak, can lift given its heft but as likely to choose not to. Full-bodied, the tannin and to a lesser extent acidity are strong and display the ability to go the distance. Here the caramel, cocoa oak tones crushed under its total weight. Some mixed citrus livens things up. The fruit more diverse with blueberry and raspberry playing off the plum and currant. Definitely feels like an assemblage, finishes dry and muscular, can't imagine you'd know what you have here for at least 4-5 more years. Unspecified percentages of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Grenache, Tempranillo, Mourvèdre. 89

Sandlands

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast

Trousseau

2015, \$28.00, 12.4%

Sort of rusty red water to dried blood in color, fully transparent with fully washed out rims. Sandy and gravelly nose with old pressed flowers, leather and dried lemon rinds, the lack of moisture truncates the strawberry, red cherry fruit scents, as it opens there's a curious streak of bell pepper. Medium-bodied, round and pleasingly expansive, there's a pickled quality to it, however, the ripeness of the strawberry, watermelon, cherry to apple fruit pushes through. A lot more citrus here, mainly lemon to grapefruit. The bell pepper is prevalent here as well, not sure if there were any underripe phenolics. More gravel and stone bits, if anything more smoky than mineral. Acidity feels

adequate. Burst of caramel at the end. Has a certain awkwardness to it, yet there's a lot going on to manage. 89

Turley

Amador County, Sadie Upton Vineyard

Zinfandel

2015, \$40.00, 15.9%

Dull purple core, mostly opaque with more transparent ruby red rims, no real glow to it albeit no visible weakness. The nose is borderline overripe yet more immobile than flowing, caramel, vanilla fudge and butterscotch battle the blueberry, boysenberry, strawberry jam for ascendancy, menthol and lavender blend in, light mountain breeze, at this stage the oak taking up most of the stage. Full-bodied and muscular, shows more purpose and intent here. The acidity is at a plus level whereas the fruit takes on a dried fruit edge, plum to prune with persimmon, cherry and blueberry fruit. Licorice and menthol, more sour orange here. The caramel, butterscotch oak waits until just about the finish so it will linger longest at the end. Strikes you as a wine in need of 3-5 years to gel completely. 89

Turley

Napa Valley, Atlas Peak, Mead Ranch

Zinfandel

2015, \$40.00, 15.4%

Dense ruby-violet color, more red magenta at the rims, neither really dull nor shiny. The nose has some pine and menthol notes, however, on the main it's raspberry, cherry, blueberry fruit with a burst of white grapefruit citrus, its juiciness does not prevent a pungent perfume from lifting. Medium-bodied, firmer than expected with a fresh acidic spine. That said, it is very sweet with candied, syrupy blueberry, boysenberry, cherry to strawberry fruit flavors that break away from the pack. At the same time does not come off as oaky, passing brush of caramel and butterscotch. The grapefruit drops off here but the pine breeze stays consistent along with sage and thyme accents. Not profound but warms the cockles of your heart. 89

Harrington Wines

Central Valley, Mokelumne River, Heirloom Ranch
Corvina

2016, \$25.00, 13.0%

Glowing orange to cherry red color, almost eerie, overall though light and transparent with mostly washed out rims. Some Initial funk blows off with minimal air, orange to tangerine citrus, sour strawberry to cherry fruit, lavender, funky wet mown grass with a light earthiness, airy enough that any flaws lost in its swirling perfume. Light-bodied, the acidity is strong

and brings added palate presence. Floral with an overload of lemon, tangerine citrus zest and lesser caramelized brown sugar. Does have a briny, pickled side which pushes back the appearance of the strawberry, pear, persimmon fruit, the latter being borderline candied once it asserts itself. Tart finish without turning herbaceous. Off-center enough to hold your attention. (Composite Cork) 89

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Dusi Vineyard
Zinfandel

2015, \$43.00, 15.5%

Dusky reddish purple core, minimal glow, more brick red to rust red rims, looks a bit older than it truly is. The nose has a crunchy stoniness to it as well as sour white grapefruit edge, underneath is jammy blueberry, raspberry fruit scents, closer to strawberry than plum, a little bit of pine and meadow scrub, some caramel and butterscotch but the oak treatment comes across as lighter of touch than might usually be the case. Full-bodied, decent smoothness although there is astringency at the finish which feels close to underripe phenolics. Mint and pine stronger here, liqueur like blueberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit. Some sage or fennel notes. That astringent quality also heightens the perceptible alcohol. Lots of fruit and unlikely to offer much beyond that. 88

Turley

Amador County, "Buck" Cobb Vineyard

Zinfandel

2015, \$28.00, 15.7%

While clear the purple core falls somewhat flat, the more crimson to brick red rims more attractive, on the whole unremarkable and devoid of saturated glow. Fresh and fruity nose of crushed raspberries, strawberries, blueberries with supporting notes of golden raisin and apple, some ginger spice, has an openly knit florality as well as a few dabs of honey and orange marmalade. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with an astringency which contributes to its general shortness. Candied sweetness in the raspberry, blackberry, blueberry fruit but it lacks the kind of persistence you expect from the producer. Tannic, fills out with orange pekoe tea, sage and dry milk chocolate. Does not leave the impression that it will transform into a swan down the road. 88

Harrington Wines

San Benito County, La Cienega Valley, Siletto
Vineyard, Symetrie

Blend

2015, \$25.00, 13.6%

More cherry red to scarlet than purple, full rims of a young brick red cast, fully transparent and clear.

Smoky nose with a tarry earth and herbaceous unto vegetal streak, really digs deep into your nostrils, as you acclimate there's ample pretty strawberry, raspberry to green apple fruit but little by way of citrus or florality in support, a bit too heavy for the elements to separate. Full-bodied, musky like a rain cloud hovering in your mouth. Sour orange to white grapefruit evident here and combines with the tar, limestone and damp leafy matter for a big pucker factor. Not too dry, on the whole seems more tannic than acidic. The cranberry, strawberry, sour cherry fruit lasts credibly well. Feels like it is in attack mode for no real reason. 50% Trousseau, 50% Pinot Noir. 88

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Bedrock Wine Co.

Bennett Valley, Judge Family Vineyard

Sauvignon Blanc

2016, \$28.00, 14.2%

Clear greenish to gold straw color, pools well into the glass as well as presents a pleasingly reflective surface. Fresh and fruity nose of green apple, strawberry, melon and apricot fruit, sweetish pink grapefruit pulp, powdered sugar, does have an herbaceous kick as well, asparagus and snap pea, more stone to chalk dust as it warms. Full-bodied, layers onto the tongue with that sweet pink grapefruit to tangerine citrus, lively for its weight but you wouldn't confuse it with Sancerre. The acidity is decent plus, willingly yields the floor to the pear, melon, apricot, peach flavors and does not obstruct length in the juiciness. Hard to get much earthiness or stoniness, that grassy bite not as pronounced as in the nose. Crafted for back deck pleasure. 90

Sandlands

Central Valley, Lodi, Kirschenmann Vineyard

Chenin Blanc

2015, \$24.00, 12.0%

Fat, glowing worn gold ring color, only slight diminishment at the rims, squats solidly in the glass. While there's a flatness to the nose which intensifies its blunt power, the lemon to white grapefruit citrus zest gives it momentary lift and the floral musk helps here too, metallic smokiness has it hovering and then heavy cream and a light brininess bring it back to earth, at times minty which helps tease out more of the lackluster kumquat, guava, nectarine to drier pineapple scents. Medium-bodied, its strong acidic skeleton allows it greater palate impression and length. Herbaceous and stony with that metallic, smoky edge which ratchets up the sour pucker. The tart orange, tangerine to lemon citrus adds turbulence. While angular never hard. As an afterthought it releases pear, apple, guava fruit of moderate staying power.

Seems young and in need of much time to unclench. 88

OREGON RED

Division Villages

Regional Blend, Oregon, Béton

Blend

2016, \$24.99, 13.0%

Dark and cloudy crimson-purple core draws you into the glass, the filminess saps some of the energy out of the red magenta to brick red rims. The nose has a damp, barnyardy feel to it, matted straw, flatulence and pickle brine, manages a high-toned character with strawberry, blueberry to rhubarb fruit notes, the vague florality has a potpourri feel, maybe some orange peel, given how it starts dissolves bluntly. Full-bodied, has enough lift to feel layered on the tongue. Volatile acidity keeps it uneven and unsettled. More white grapefruit to blood orange citrus here, minerally cut to the earthiness. Still has a wet feel but spicy and almost seems hot. Blackberry, blueberry to cherry fruit ripe but clenched. Needs a good shower and shave and get civilized. 60% Cabernet Franc, 30% Gamay Noir, 10% Côt. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 86

FRANCE RED

Amandier (Martin Texier), Domaine de l'

Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Brézème

Syrah

2016, \$21.99, 12.5%

The cloudiness in the purple core adds to the opacity but at the same time masks some of the saturated glow, ruby battles crimson for ascendancy in the rims. Lavender, flower petals, leather and pickle brine pull the nose in multiple directions, never quite gains the lift you suspect it capable of, finds an anchor in the plum, blackberry fruit scents, feels like wet cotton balls stuffed into your nostrils, thickly pungent. Full-bodied, layers like beams of steel on the tongue, great tannic and acidic backbone. Violets, green olives, wet leather to animal fur, stones and iron shavings. Ripe if sluggish plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, more concentration than sweetness. Greener finish with an herbaceous lift. Great pucker at the end. Revving its engine now, should become more cerebral with age. 91

Giacometti, Domaine

Corsica, Vin de France, Sempre Cuntentu

Sciaccarellu

2015, \$27.99, 14.5%

Bright ruby to watermelon red in hue, clear with a more gauzy, washed out look at the rims, can imagine the reds getting darker as it ages. Big lift in the nose from

strawberry, rhubarb, persimmon to green apple fruit scents, light patina of honey and lemon reduction, violets led floral lift at the end, smells like dessert. Medium-bodied, well-layered and hugs into the tongue. Cinnamon, nutmeg spice, orange and lemon peel, lilacs and a pinch of cocoa keep it friendly in the face of the firm grip and steady drying feel from the tannin and to lesser extent acidity. Watermelon, strawberry, raspberry to blueberry fruit, sweet first than lightly tart. Keeps expanding with a round contour as if it wants to exceed your cheeks. Relaxed and confident in itself. 90

Pavillon de Chavannes, Domaine du
Beaujolais, Côte de Brouilly, Cuvée des Ambassades
Gamay Noir
2016, \$17.99, 12.5%

Violet to cranberry red of good concentration, remains transparent but certainly fills the glass, rims a saturated pink ruby. Traces of minerals and stone dust to the nose as well as meadow grasses and hay, however, you mostly register the strawberry, raspberry fruit, on the whole firm and taut and not giving much. Medium-bodied yet feels anchored in place, the tannin and to lesser extent acidity really glue it all in place and suggest it merits a decanting. Here you get a nice white grapefruit citrus bite. More leather and tar than crisper minerality. The cherry, blueberry, raspberry fruit probably stronger than it's letting on right now, gets to the finish still resisting the drying sensations. Does not leave you unsatisfied but best days many miles ahead. 90

Giachino, Domaine
Savoie, Frères Giac
Blend
2016, \$19.99, 12.0%

Trim and clear ruby-violet in color, very good reflectivity and no weakness at the rims. Minerally, stony nose with a dusty texture, sour cherry, cranberry to strawberry fruit scents, dried mown grass, some mixed indistinct citrus, clean with decent lift for its overall weight in the nostrils. Medium-bodied plus, odd note of cocoa at first before turning to sauna stone smoke, wet minerals and fallen wood. The citrus here more a biting white grapefruit. Here thicker cherry, blueberry, blackberry fruit predominates, pretty gosh darn tart. The acidity alternates between slicing and bluntly pummeling. Fruity enough for most to enjoy and the high energy profile holds your attention. Unspecified percentages of Persan, Gamay Noir. 89

Massiac, Château
Languedoc/Roussillon, Minervois
Blend
2015, \$15.99, 13.8%

Reddish black core, clear enough, crimson to red rust rims, has a menacingly medieval look to it. Peanut shells, burnt mocha, and rye toast give the nose a crisp profile, stony yet with a prettier violets infused lift, the plum, dark berry fruit scents taut with moderate length. Medium-bodied, while it has a noticeable tannic frame here the sweetness of the cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit comes through, finishing on a sour note. More floral, aided by a burst of white grapefruit to lemon citrus zest. Any oaky or toasty nuances get wrapped back into the whole. Tangy, dry ending. Takes some time to find itself so best to give it a 1-2 hour decant as a head start to maximal enjoyment. 75% Syrah, 25% Carignan. 89

Clos de la Roilette (Coudert Père et Fils)
Beaujolais, Fleurie
Gamay Noir
2016, \$17.99, 13.0%

Not all that much purple in the core, quickly shifts into the crimson, brick red hues, not showing any sign of magenta or pink around the rims. Upon opening there's a great deal of flatulence, merde, mud and damp horsehide, really gets in your face and mandates a lengthy decant, once it subsides it begins to stretch out with cherry, raspberry fruit, mixed citrus and anise, not a wine you'd want to judge solely by the aromas. Medium to full-bodied, puts on extra weight with air time. You feel the heft of the tannin more than any drying effect. Richer and darker blackberry, cherry fruit, some raspberry and apple but no strawberry. Some liquefied stone and slate notes, no minerality but does connote a sense of place. Awkward and gangly but the material is all there lurking in the shadows. 88

Gramenon, Domaine
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, Poignée de Raisins
Grenache
2016, \$24.99, 13.5%

Magenta inflected purple core, easily opaque, the rims a reddish magenta with pink flecks, doesn't have any eerie glow. Sour fruited nose of red cherry, cranberry to strawberry, a few notes of brine, then a whole lot of violets with some roasted cocoa and then dry stone and dust. Medium-bodied, uncommonly high level of tannin without coming off as marred by underripe phenolics. More by way of pebbles, stones and meadow underbrush, almost evoking tar or asphalt now and then. The blackberry, cherry fruit unadorned and straightforward enough. Has a pleasing swell in the mid-palate with a burst of sweetness. On the cusp of being a Grenache you could serve to someone who doesn't like Grenache. 88

Réméjeanne, Domaine La
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, Les Chèvrefeuilles
Blend
2015, \$14.99, 14.0%
Clean with a warm glow to it, purple core with wide ruby-magenta rims and pink edges. Sour cherry, mixed berry driven nose, leafy and earthy, white grapefruit pulp, final quick whisper of cocoa powder, does show a bit of alcoholic roughness. Medium-bodied, while sour here as well there's also hard candy sweetness in the raspberry, strawberry, green apple to cherry fruit. More floral with extra cocoa dusting. However, tannic enough to make the flow fitful. Brightens via tart orange, grapefruit citrus. Leaves a dry, tacky residue on the tongue. Has a few pretty moments but overall dull. 70% Syrah, 10% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre, 5% Carignan, 5% Marselan. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Huet, Domaine
Loire, Vouvray, Le Mont, Sec
Chenin Blanc
2016, \$32.99, 13.0%
Extremely clean and shiny, almost blindingly so, yellow hay with a green glint at some angles, hueless rims. Lanolin, candle wax, and dried honey give it richness in the nose without affecting its erect posture, lime and tangerine citrus, persimmon, peach, to pear fruit all give it further stuffing, some wet stone notes, has heft but everything about it leads to a conclusion that this is a "sec" wine. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, spreading its weight evenly for full palate coverage, the acidity cuts in quit swipes. More tropical here with pineapple, kumquat notes among the nectarine, apricot, green apple. The lime citrus remains, supplemented more by pink grapefruit. Too fresh for the waxiness to really take hold, some brown sugar though. Smoky finish which seems to indicate more terroir under the baby fat. Should be long lived. 90

Huet, Domaine
Loire, Vouvray, Le Mont, Demi-Sec
Chenin Blanc
2016, \$37.99, 13.0%
Light golden hay color, shimmers and moves well in the glass given its level of transparency, rims are hueless but still seem active. While there's a decent amount of smokiness and crushed stone to the nose as well as fresh doughy yeastiness right now it is quite primary and emphasizing the apricot, peach, quince to mango fruit scents, much more ripe than zesty, plenty of honey notes, close to molasses, orange sherbet, big and joyful about it. Full-bodied, there's an underlying stream water freshness to it which creates nice pacing as well as counterbalance to the fruitiness. Not as

sweet as the nose suggests, the cherry, apricot, peach to pear fruit does not get overly concentrated and releases at the end. Pie crust and honey, minimal smokiness and at the moment too plump to provide a sense of terroir. The acidity is somewhat weak which does not bode well, may end up a medium-term ager. 90

Baudry, Domaine Bernard
Loire, Chinon
Chenin Blanc
2016, \$21.99, 12.5%
Pleasingly full golden color, pools well, brilliantly shining surface as well. Powdered sugar, soft drink like notes of orange and lime, light coating of chalk dust, simple and direct peach to apricot fruit scents, if allowed to warm you get a bit of pickle juice. Full-bodied, firm to the point of feeling more anchored than fluid. The acidity is adequate but lacks meaningful cut. Pineapple, kumquat to apricot fruit, more in the higher register with some residual sourness. Doughy, bready notes, potpourri, less stone or chalk but more snap in the lime to lemon citrus. Ends with an apple cider sort of note. You expect more liveliness and overall pep but in the end perfectly acceptable. 88

Berlioz (Domaine Partagé), Gilles
Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin-Bergeron, Les Filles
Roussanne
2016, \$38.99, 12.5%
Dark gold color that could just as easily be called lightly bronzed, dull and dense, average clarity despite like of shine, rims filled in decently enough. Ginger and cumin spice infuse the nose, apricot paste and dried pears, honey, caramel and spiced oranges, too bottom heavy right now to achieve meaningful expressivity but what you get is certainly pleasing. Full-bodied, same general story here as it is more or less inert. Lemon and orange citrus try to give it some zip and there's ample underlying stoniness. The honey and baking spices more subdued here. The pear, peach, apricot to persimmon fruit fresher but leaves you thinking it will concentrate over time. Acidity is moderate, impresses more via general grip. Should not be shutting down yet, however, this bottle is playing its cards right up against its vest. 87

FRANCE SPARKLING

Peters, Pierre
Champagne, Le Mesnil, Les Chétilons Cuvée
Spéciale Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs Brut
Chardonnay
2010

\$119.99, 12.0%

Green inflected gold hue, layered if clean, steady stream of very small bubbles but not in tight beads. Fresh nose, bready without heaviness, good clarity, floral water, the peach, apricot, pear fruit scents of above average density, round in feel, seems coiled up and not showing its all. Medium-bodied, very strong pétillance, almost steely as a result. Chalky, noticeable lemon peel, the acidity is strong and contributes to the overall dusty texture. Green apple, pear skin, apricot pit styled fruit softened by a modicum of molasses and licorice. Takes some time to get to the yeasty, doughy element. A baby right now, you know right away that you are not getting much out of it and the best is down the road. 91

Mignon, Christophe
Champagne, Brut Nature Pur Meunier
Pinot Meunier
NV, \$44.99, 12.0%

Darkish golden color, a bit dull, light fizz with tiny bubbles and few clear beads. Odd cocoa note to the nose, broad and somewhat diffuse, has a slightly maderized feel, firm core of ripe apricot, peach fruit, however, does not seem especially minerally nor chalky, forward in nature. Medium-bodied, tight pétillance, lemony and here the chalkiness comes alive. Subtle yeast underpinning, not doughy. Kumquat, pineapple, papaya fruit, taut and close to linear. Finishes with an elevation of white grapefruit. The acidity tends to flatten it out. As in the nose ends with squared shoulders and little interest in nuance. (Disgorged 19/07/2016) 89

Henriet-Bazin
Champagne, Sélection de Parcelles Premier Cru Brut
Blend
NV, \$39.99, 12.5%

Big initial mousse which swiftly dissipates, has a light yellow straw color with great shine, in the glass offers more of a cloud of bubbles, no tight beads. Fresh yeastiness first in the nose then crisper green apple, pear scents with a hint of Bing cherry, some lemon with a meager trace of florality, more thrust than expansiveness. Medium-bodied, a sparkly fizz massages the tongue from the start. Chalky and here the lemon element even bigger. Crisp but not austere, dry finish. The fruit remains more steady than spectacular, simple array of peach, pear, yellow apple

with a dollop of honey for added richness. Clean, consistent, meets expectations for a basic non-vintage Champagne. Unspecified percentages of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir. 89

Mittnacht Frères, Domaine
Alsace, Crémant d'Alsace, Extra Brut
Blend

NV, \$18.99, 12.0%

Not a lot of surface fizz, very tiny bubbles which are more loose than beaded, deep golden straw color. Bread, dough and honey set the stage in the nose, cinnamon develops over time, straightforward green apple, pear, peach fruit scents, can come off as sugary but more so fresh with good expansiveness in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, tight pétillance with focused prickle. Generous yellow apple, bosc pear, peach, apricot fruit, stays steady through the finish. Accents of lime zest. The breadiness appears mostly as an aftertaste. Broad shoulders, not too dry despite the labeling as extra brut. Just a pleasant every day sparkler. 60% Pinot Auxerrois, 10% Pinot Blanc, 10% Riesling, 10% Pinot Gris, 10% Pinot Noir. 88

ITALY RED

Scarpa, Antica Casa Vinicola
Piedmont, Barbera d'Asti
Barbera
2014, \$19.99, 13.5%

Deep purple core which easily attains opacity, rich red magenta rims in turn glowing firmly. The nose is too dense to present itself with clarity, peanut shells, wet leather, sour oranges, cinnamon stick, the plum scents close to plum, white grapefruit, has some latent lift. Full-bodied, tannic and to a lesser extent acidic. Quite ripe cherry, blackberry, plum fruit with orange peel, tea leaf and sage notes. Offers snatches of leather now and then. Pushes outwards across the palate with insistence, fewer reductive notes here and consistently sour. Big in a throw back style. 89

Colombera (Colombera & Garella), Azienda Agricola Carlo
Piedmont, Coste della Sesia, Cascina Cottignano
Blend
2014, \$19.99, 12.0%

Ruby-violet color of good effulgence, brighter ruby rims, no filminess. The nose reaches out right away and grabs you by the nose hairs, sour orange citrus, red cherry to raspberry fruit, dusty stone, fallen leaves, not much diversity, too muscular to truly spread out broadly. Medium-bodied with more bracing white grapefruit, stays dry via stony earth and dried leather. Manages to be angular without hardness, the acidity close to arch and the tannin clamps down through the

finish. Lean and pushy fruit, mainly green apple, strawberry, raspberry to sour cherry. Turns a bit more velvety, though, through the finish. You have to get used to its consistent aggressiveness on the palate. 70% Nebbiolo, 15% Croatina, 15% Vespolina. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Ca' Nova (Azienda Agricola Giada Codecasa)
Piedmont, Colline Novaresi
Vespolina
2015, \$17.99, 12.5%

Deep crimson red to purple in color, transparency tends to mask the saturated glow, hint of burnt orange at the rims. High pitched nose of tar, autumn leaves, stone shards and super sour cherry, mixed berry fruit, at times hints at anise or mint, dusty texture in your nostrils. Light to medium-bodied, acidic and tannic to the point of distraction, dry and tart. With this in mind, credible core of cherry, strawberry to green apple fruit, gets extended by lemon citrus zing. Less leafy and more stony here, you lose mild funkiness and get harder contours and edges. A honest wine and gets right to its point, however, there's little charm and after a glass your jaw feels sore. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 87

Terre Nere, Tenuta delle
Sicilia, Etna Rosso
Blend
2016, \$15.99, 13.5%

Crystal clear ruby to watermelon red, glows well for as transparent as it is, fully hued through the rims. There's a sandy, ashen quality to the nose, a dry dustiness, provides interesting contrast to the strawberry, red cherry fruit scents, mild echo of pressed flowers, meadow grasses and tar but really not much going on. Light to medium-bodied, the muscular tannin puts it a bit more in the latter camp. More by way of green apple and strawberry with raspberry to maybe even pomegranate fruit in the rear. The tar, damp black earth, campfire smoke beats out the sand or stone dust qualities. Pulls up short at the end, the structure dominating the primary material. May even out in 1-3 years but right now like a sock to the jaw. 98% Nerello Mascalese, 2% Nerello Cappuccio. (Composite Cork: Diam10) 87

ITALY WHITE

Tramin (Cantina Produttori Termeno), Kellerei Cantina
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Stoa
Blend
2015, \$29.99, 14.0%

Under the surface it's dull yet from a distance you get a shinier surface, standard issue golden hue, rims washed out and hueless. The nose shows toastiness,

lime juice, floral water, and a light nuttiness, neither blunt nor especially keenly edged, hovers more than lifts, humble pear, red apple, peach, apricot fruit scents, nothing out of the ordinary. Full-bodied, there's a sort of electrical shock sizzle to it, never feels calm in the mouth. That said, has whipped cream, orange sherbet, grilled nut notes which soften the rougher patches. The acidity seems off and herky-jerky. Here that toast gives it welcome spine and likely helps to tease out more pineapple, guava notes among the base of peach, pear and apricot. Honey and some lanolin as it warms. Feels like it needs 2-3 more years to try and knit together the disparate elements. 70% Chardonnay, 20% Sauvignon Blanc, 5% Pinot Bianco, 5% Gewürztraminer. 88

Venica & Venica, Societa Agricola
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Collio, Jesera
Pinot Grigio
2016, \$23.99, 13.5%

Bright shine to the orange, yellow gold color, a bit duller under the surface. Round and expansive nose of orange marmalade, mint, honey, pear to peach skin fruit, clean given its weight although on the mute side, probably needs a solid decanting for it to give more today. Full-bodied, cinnamon, ginger spice, lemon reduction and nuttiness first to the table. The acidity is fat and sluggish yet has very good traction on the tongue. Accents of clay and damp chalk. The honey dappled apple, pear, apricot fruit is firm than juicy. Powerful finish, if lacking in finesse. 88

GERMANY WHITE

Haart, Weingut Julian
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Moselle QbA AP #3
Riesling
2016, \$23.99, 11.5%

Typical light straw gold color, pitch perfect shine, even a light bit of fizz clinging to the glass sides, falls short of crystal clear transparency. Heavy smokiness to the nose, like a pool of hot sauna stones, the rubber scents more taut than one usually experiences with them, as it opens the pink grapefruit, lime citrus takes off, the core of sweetness in the peach, pear, star fruit to kiwi fruit scents enough to lift it into a strongly supportive role. Medium-bodied, more tangy than dry or juicy, the acidity feels like a broad sheet unfurling rather than the cut of a knife. Here too the lime, tangerine to pink grapefruit citrus takes a decisive lead. More stone, mineral water and quinine than smoke though. The rubbery notes more noticeable at the finish. Reticent peach, pear, red cherry fruit flavors, as if shoved out onto the stage by their fellow eighth graders. Nice total package that has you licking your lips to rewet them. 89

Richter, Weingut Max Ferd.

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Brauneberger, Juffer, Kabinett AP #39

Riesling

2016, \$19.99, 8.5%

Nicely layered and translucent appearance, soft golden color with enough green glints to add interest, fresh and youthful. The nose filled with honey, molasses, orange to lime citrus pulp, lilacs, vanilla fudge and cherry, apricot fruit, starts to develop some stony smokiness but the plumpness of it all gets in the way. Full-bodied, fleshy but not fat, the acidity comes off weak at first but the more you sip it starts getting assertive and actually grips better as it warms too.

Deeper florality here with some mint and basil in support. Firmer orange, tangerine citrus as well. Pear, cherry, apricot, peach fruit juicy and very long, more sweet than possessed of tropical bite. Slows down at the end and becomes somewhat slow of foot.

Anyone's guess if it deserves more than 3-4 years to slim down and become more fluid. 89

GERMANY SPARKLING

Lauer, Weingut Peter

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Saar Sekt (Brut) AP #18

Riesling

NV, \$37.99, 12.5%

The mousse is a lot of extremely large bubbles which don't last long, hyperactive storm of bubbles below the surface does constantly refresh the surface coating, pale yellow hay color, neither especially dull nor shiny. Gently honeyed nose with mint, licorice and lemon drop in quick support, gossamer chalk dusting, fresh, fuzz skinned peach and apricot fruit scents. Full-bodied with a willingness to layer itself on the tongue, the carbonation can be lazy at times, fat and pushing outwards always. Here it's much more chalky and lemony and drier as a result, still the honey to brown sugar weaves in and out and there's a riper profile to the peach, apricot to yellow apple fruit. Turns sour and close to herbaceous at the end but a welcome twist.

Would never be confused with Champagne, stands on its own. (Composite Cork) 90