

The Hanes Wine Review, January 2019 Edition

Lots of catching up this time around, plenty of bottles purchased some time ago but not consumed. Which is the age old story, after all. Hopefully 2019 will see Hanes catch up get below 10-12 cases of wine for "immediate consumption." Chilling out on WineBid would help. The mid-January release of new Turley wines will not. For those of you who are not avid gardeners, January to February is when you buy most of the plants or seeds for spring planting. This past week Hanes blew his wine budget on spring horticultural fancies for at least the next couple of months, whoops. But it will sure look pretty one day.

Also, need to spend a good amount of time figuring out what in heck to do with this website and the review in general. *Zero* has to be done to the website since 2000 or so. And as Hanes has aged like a fine wine it is getting harder and harder to dedicate time to a monthly or bi-monthly large review. Maybe it's time to not "blog" per se but find a way to simply upload each single wine review along the way. Rather than make the review an all day affair for Hanes. Dunno, that's why Hanes has to think about it.

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This month's big winners... Still getting around to digging into wines purchased during a trip to Sonoma this past summer. Since we tasted them at the winery, duh, the ones we bought should be good. Among these were Fogline's 2016 Syrah "Summit Select," good tang to it and not overwrought, should age well. \$50 at the winery. Likewise, Nalle's wines tend to get overlooked these days and they are the only winery visited that did not automatically add Hanes to their winery direct mailing list (great wine, hope lack of marketing aplomb doesn't hurt their finances). Their basic 2015 Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel was delicious and "market priced" at \$40. Made in a lush and more forward style, the Pinot Noirs from Sojourn can be quite nice, if pricey. When reading the notes of other wine geeks they tend to prefer other single vineyard bottlings but for 2016 it was the Rodgers Creek Vineyard and Ridgetop Vineyard which got Hanes all excited like. Both \$48 at the winery. Did not buy any to cellar, would be curious to see how they evolve over time, will have to scan the secondary market. In a similar winemaking style, Hanes has always enjoyed the wines from Ty Caton from the Moon Mountain District. These are crazily highly priced so Hanes does not often purchase them, however, they are fun "guilty pleasure" wines. The 2016 Upper Bench Merlot and 2016 George's Malbec were both up to standards and Hanes did buy a Malbec for the cellar along with a couple of random Cabernet Sauvignon wines. In retrospect, one thing is for sure, the wife and Hanes spent a lot of money on wine this trip! Outside of Sonoma, as mentioned in the past Gamay Noir from the Rhône Valley is the new thing. Guillaume Gilles made a fantastic one in 2016 called "Combeaux Massardières," well worth the \$30 and should age nicely. Catena is a huge force on the Argentinian wine scene, to the point where it's easy to pass them by in search of the next new thing. But while consciously slick, the 2015 Malbec "Historic Rows" is a great wine and underscores that "showy" wines can still be tasty. \$40 or so price, as expected this would be a wise choice at a steak house. Sampling a few more 2016 Beaujolais while they remain on the market. The 2016 Guy Breton Morgon "Vieilles Vignes" bottling is definitely one for the cellar, thus Hanes put two in the cellar. Luís Seabro is a name on the upswing when it comes to still table wines in Portugal. The 2016 wine "Xisto Ilimitado" is, Hanes believes, their entry level wine at around \$22. Good structure, on the dry side, pleasing diversity of flavors and such. Confident that the more expensive wines are good. Buy Hanes one and he will report back.

The best \$20 and under picks... Hanes has a soft spot for the wineries in Austria which he actually visited way back when. So, he saw the 2017 Meinklang red blend from the Burgenland and coughed up the \$17 for it. Nice wine, clean and energetic, free of guile. A definite food wine. A new producer in the Neil Rosenthal portfolio, the Château du Petit Thouars offers a lineup of Chinon wines at varying price points. Hanes tried two sub-\$20 offerings and preferred the 2016 "l'Épée" bottling, well perfumed and savory, the real deal for about \$19. Hanes already has respect for the Domaine de la Chanteleuserie for making credible, affordable wines. Their 2017 Bourgueil called "Cuvée Alouettes" is another well-made Loire Cabernet Franc for under \$20. While there's no lack of super pricey Loire wines out there, this region has to be near the top of the list for "QPR" values. Budget conscious buyers look to the Loire. Northern Italy can produce some stunning Sauvignon Blanc. On the less expensive end of the spectrum there's the 2017 Elena Walch "Vigna Castel Ringberg" wine clocking in at an even \$20. Has grip and verve but not pushy, treads a sort of middle ground between the Loire and New Zealand expressions of the grape. As can be said of many wine regions, Hanes does not sample enough Chacolí from Spain. Snatched the 2017 branded as "Antxiola" (much more prominent on the label than the producer name). For

\$13 hard to quibble and while there are wines from this region creeping up in price there's more than enough cheapies to satisfy the jones.

And the disappointments... Anytime you see the name "Conterno" on the label of a wine bottle from Piedmont that means quality and a serious price tag. So, seeing the recently acquired Nervi winery in Gattinara — with "Conterno" — also splayed across the label and for "only" \$40 Hanes had to try it. This is Conterno's first foray into the Alto Piemonte. So, this bottle of 2015 Gattinara was okay, a touch disjointed and not especially forthcoming. But, trusting the producer, still put a bottle into the cellar. We shall see in a decade or so. Hanes finds the wines from Broc Cellars to be hit or miss. On the less impressive side was the 2017 "Got Grapes," an unique blend of Trousseau and Zinfandel. Felt like a lab experiment which got out of hand. At least it was under \$30. In a similar vein everyone seems to get all juiced up for the wines from Jolie-Laide. So, Hanes finally ponied up the \$30 to buy their 2017 Melon de Bourgogne, the grape most famous for Muscadet wines from France's Loire Valley. Absolutely nothing wrong with this Jolie-Laide wine and it's in many ways unfair to compare it against its Loire brethren *but* you can buy Muscadet wines just as good for about half the price. Hanes will likely buy a few more Jolie-Laide wines in the future to prove the smug superiority of his palate. A bottle of 2017 Falkenstein Riesling Kabinett Trocken from the Herrenberg vineyard underscores again that Hanes much prefers the full-on Prädikat wines of this producer. The \$22 price tag is very fair but Hanes will leave these dry wines for those who will better appreciate them. Hanes was thoroughly entranced by the 2016 Martin Texier Côtes du Rhône Brézème wine so when he saw the 2017 had come out he snagged two bottles. Having tried one and found it somewhat volatile he can only hope that time is kind to the second bottle as it ages. No sure what's up here. For those heavily into Friulian wines the producer Borgo del Tiglio is well-respected. Yet, Hanes had no experience with this producer. Clearly, this had to stop. Hanes acquired a few and here we have the 2015 bottling of the Friulano grape. It was certainly a good wine but it's hard to say it's worthy of the \$45 price tag. Although the producer already releases the wines late in the normal cycle maybe it needs more aging. Dunno. Being of partial Armenian ancestry, when Hanes saw a bottle of non-sweet Armenian wine on a shelf he had to try it. The producer Karas, the vintage 2015, the region Armavir, the grapes a kitchen sink of mostly European Vinifera. The price \$11. The owners are Argentinian folks of Armenian ancestry and the winemaker is Argentinian. But even with the "flying winemaker" Michel Rolland as consultant the end result is still "ehh." Generic in taste and character. Perhaps 2015 was a poor vintage in Armavir. Hanes will likely buy future vintages to prop up Armenia's economy. But he won't expect much.

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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/oldervintages2019.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

Bedrock Wine Co.

Russian River Valley, Papera Ranch, Papera Ranch Heritage

Blend

2016, \$39.00, 14.5%

The purple core dark enough for opacity but not for want of clarity, the rims shift between crimson and magenta red, heavy glow present. Floral with a mixed white citrus zest, the nose lifts immediately aided by focused raspberry, red cherry to rhubarb fruit scents, eucalyptus and some sauna stone, mineral water, tar accents make certain any fruitiness is balanced out, youthfully in search of an organizing principle.

Medium-bodied, cleansing burst of acidity keeps it on a swift pace through the palate. Playfully tart blueberry, boysenberry to currant fruit, lifts into an active perfume. Lemon and close to lime citrus.

Violets, licorice and more warm tarry earth. Attractive mix of sweet and savory, would be interesting to see how it integrates further over time. Approximately 50% Zinfandel, 40% Carignane, 10% Valdigue, Petite Sirah, Syrah. 90

Turley

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Rattlesnake Ridge Zinfandel

2016, \$45.00, 15.2%

Mildly translucent, dark purple core with broad and dull scarlet rims, no over saturation. Dewy florality, spiced orange peel and syrupy blueberry, raspberry fruit make for an immediately impressive nose, as earthy as spicy, possesses enough "mountain air" freshness to not seem cloying. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, for as juicy as it is the tannins manage to tame the blueberry, boysenberry, cherry to green apple fruit. More citrusy but not in a clear way, tobacco leaf, eucalyptus, twigs and tree bark, definitely has a more rugged side. Clamps down tightly through the finish, while truncated now once the structure relaxes over a few years it will seem more integrated. Very good but a baby today. 90

Fogline Vineyards

Sonoma County, Summit Select

Syrah

2016, \$50.00, 14.5%

The liquid has clarity, however, the core too dark to see through, the rims a trim and shiny youthful brick red. Attractively floral nose with a eucalyptus buttress, anchored by coconut custard and vanilla fudge, the currant, cherry scents glide well and for its overall weight in the nostrils feels openly knit. Medium-bodied,

has sufficient acidity to tighten its pores right from the start. Spearmint, menthol and lilacs swirl about, just as in the nose the butterscotch and caramel stick it to the ground. Tangy and earthy with some wood smoke to it, needs to shave away a good bit of the considerable chubby plum, blackberry, boysenberry fruit and you should get more leatheriness and solid tertiary development. Sour white citrus frames the finish and contributes to a clean lift. 90

Nalle

Dry Creek Valley

Zinfandel

2015, \$40.00, 13.8%

Plum purple core yields without a fight to scarlet and fresh blood red hues. spotless throughout, no real saturation. Blueberry, boysenberry, blackberry infused nose, eucalyptus and a dollop of caramel, pure and openly knit, can see it developing more earth and forest tones with age. Medium-bodied, sappy texture though especially at the end where the gluey feel extends things. Lemon drop and sage, parsley stiffen it enough to take the fruit from blueberry into raspberry, strawberry, apple flavors. There's an attractive neutrality to it, plenty of flavor yet can adapt to many possible situations. Has enough innate structure to age for a good while. 90% Zinfandel, 6% Petite Sirah, 4% Carignane. Grapes sourced from 65% Henderlong Ranch, 35% Bernier-Sibary Vineyard. 90

Pax Mahle Wines

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast

Gamay Noir

2016, \$40.00, 12.3%

While clear and transparent, the color is muted from the scarlet, purple core further out to the cranberry red rims, as if it was already passing through middle age. The nose fills up well, raspberry to blueberry fruit, lemon pith, dried meadow grasses, stony backwoods dirt paths, never gets remotely near what you'd consider "ripe" although, again, no lack of fruit. Medium-bodied and closer to light, the tannin wastes no time squeezing your tongue in a vise grip. In the same vein, the acidity packs a punch and brings out sourness in the cranberry, blueberry, red cherry fruit. Some sous bois pairs up with tar, stone notes to ensure it stays on the savory, if close to funky, side. The lemon to white grapefruit citrus peels off another layer of tongue skin towards the finish. Borderline smoky at the very end, distinct personality. (Synthetic Cork) 90

Sojourn
Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Rodgers Creek
Vineyard
Pinot Noir
2016, \$48.00, 14.2%
Gauzy purple bruise colored core, shifts to clay reds which shade more to brown and orange than brighter red, full if semi-dull rims. Good tautness to the nose, you can sense the fleshiness pushing against the corset, damp earth, tar, matted straw, can see it developing a nice “sous bois” funk over time, tangerine zest relieves some weight in the black cherry, raspberry scents, following up on the first impression ends succinctly but not abruptly. Full-bodied, shows a strong tannic underpinning, upon which is laid a bodacious amount of cherry, blackberry to almost currant fruit. More savory herbs than eucalyptus but the latter is there too. Molasses to vanilla oak notes come off as minimal. Nice briny to metallic twist at the end. Compact finish here too. Should reward aging. 90

Limerick Lane
Sonoma Valley, Bedrock Vineyard
Zinfandel
2015, \$50.00, 14.8%
Ruby hues lighten the purple bruise core, barely opaque and perhaps not, the rims more brick red to crimson in cast. For as earthy as the nose gets it's even more floral, can smell like an air freshener, simple black cherry to blackberry fruit scents, the earthiness opens into charcoal and tar accents, whisper of eucalyptus as well as vanillin oak. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a noticeably high level of perceptible acidity, fresh and energetic. Here too the florality dominates, supplemented by black licorice and caraway. The more you sip the more the tannin comes to the forefront. Stony parched earth trumps the few moments of buttered popcorn, butterscotch. The cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit lean and long, not doing much to juice it up. Looking to be the Zinfandel for people who don't drink Zinfandel. 90

Caton, Ty
Sonoma Valley, Moon Mountain District, Caton
Vineyard, Upper Bench
Merlot
2016, \$38.00, 15.1%
The purple core looks inky yet somehow remains close to transparent, quite the feat, crimson to rust red rims full of life and danger. At first the nose is riven with buttered popcorn and caramel but with air time it normalizes into beef jerky, grill fat, and freshly cut leather, much more cut than expected, the black currant to black cherry fruit thick and close to savory in nature, muscular lift while staying user friendly. Full-bodied, the tannic has thrust but really there's a

shocking amount of perceptible acidity to scrub the palate. Violets, molasses, mesquite grill smoke lend off-center oaky notes and there's no faulting the core of sour blueberry, blackberry, cherry fruit. Turn to a citrusy end, at the edges you sense a mentholated touch. Really young and has the stuff to absorb the oak over the long haul. 90

Sojourn
Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Ridgetop Vineyard
Pinot Noir
2016, \$59.00, 14.4%
Not filmy per se but translucent, plum purple-red core with a mild shift to more scarlet, red brick hues approaching the rims, the latter fully hued. Densely pungent nose of cola, menthol and incense, almost wooly in texture thus slowly releases juicy black cherry, blackberry scents, a waft of butterscotch and caramel, built to steamroll. Full-bodied, viscous and slathers itself on the palate. More eucalyptus to menthol notes here and spiced orange, spearmint. The blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit breaks off in chunks and does come with an unfortunate allusion towards stewed tomatoes. Grill smoke and mesquite more than vanilla or butterscotch for oak. A real guilty pleasure wine today, hard to predict if when it loses weight and fruit it will also gain clarity. 90

Bedrock Wine Co.
Sonoma Valley, Weill a Way Vineyard, Mixed Blacks
Blend
2016, \$36.00, 14.8%
A scarlet red infusion helps the purple core glow, saturated ruby red rims, no lack of color. Roasty nose and surprisingly so, then minerally black earth, violet pastille and leather, the plum, black cherry to cassis scents clearly ripe but don't seem wet nor juicy per se. In the mouth it's full-bodied and immediately framed by its tannic skeleton, impressively drying for how fruit-driven it is. Floral here too but the roasted coffee and lightly buttered toast trump the former. More thrust in the blueberry, blackberry to cherry fruit, wiry and more punch than sugariness. The components are there but they are not quite jelling at the moment, probably best to check back in 4-6 years. Unspecified percentages of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Grenache, Tempranillo, Mourvèdre. 89

Turley
Napa Valley, Turley Estate
Zinfandel
2016, \$40.00, 15.5%
Rich scarlet to purple core, falling short of opacity, bright blood red rims, overall not that saturated in appearance. Gregarious nose of menthol, pine needles, vanilla fudge, cedar, and plum to prune,

blackberry fruit scents, soaks deeply into your nostrils. Full-bodied, sugary and super-sweet, manages to stay fresh enough to avoid sluggish overripeness. Orange citrus, eucalyptus, sandalwood and sage lend it some dimension, however, it's squarely interested in displaying the black cherry, blackberry, Italian plum to apricot fruit. While the structure gets buried in the fruit, it's not trivial. Spicy tingle at the finish. Nothing subtle about it but also not as simple as you might think at first. 89

Fogline Vineyards

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Fogline Estate
Vineyard, Hillside Block

Pinot Noir

2014, \$65.00, 14.0%

Clear with as much cranberry red as violet in the core, cough syrup red rims with some orange clay tint as well, no excess saturation at all. Filed grasses and tilled stone and earth comprise the lion's share of the nose, dried orange peels, the candied strawberry to raspberry fruit soften it some but its ruggedness is a positive. Medium-bodied, well set tannic skeleton will keep it standing up straight for some time to come. Spicy with a sour grapefruit to tangerine bite. Stony and minerally here more so than grassy. Needs the strawberry, raspberry to blueberry fruit to recede some for the terroir to fully come to the fore. Should be balanced out in the regard 5-7 years out, maybe more if you want complete transparency. 89

Caton, Ty

Sonoma Valley, Moon Mountain District, Caton
Vineyard, The Ridge – George's Malbec
Malbec

2016, \$60.00, 15.2%

Inky purple-black, looks eager to stain your tongue, thin rust red rims, saturated and glowing. Toasty nose of freshly ground coffee, butterscotch and coconut flakes, not quite able to release its floral side, could have used a decant, slabs of plum and black cherry fruit close to immobile, brooding and taciturn. In the mouth it's full-bodied with loads of tannin, both natural and wood tannin, no expense was spared on the oak here. Cedary with caramel, butterscotch overtones, minty and here the floral dew comes to life. The full array of makeup doesn't extend through the black currant, cherry fruit, more flavor than fluid juiciness. Built to make an immediate impression as well as to age, any judge now should be provisional. (Composite Cork) 89

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder, Tribidrag

Zinfandel

2016, \$45.00, 15.4%

Flat reddish purple core, not fully opaque, well-hued crimson to rust red rims, no saturated glow. The nose comes across as closed off, pine sap, grill smoke and beef jerky, violets as well as a moderate amount of cherry, currant fruit, more succinct than terse. Medium-bodied, wiry with long tannins that seems to stretch from start to finish. Continues with that gamey, grill edge while blending in minerally black earth. Turns citrusy as it opens. Overall more savory than sweet, the currant, blackberry to cherry fruit steady and should have the depth to persist as it ages. Today, warrants a decanting and food in need of a sturdy wine pairing. 89

Fogline Vineyards

Sonoma County, Rockpile, Rocky Ridge Vineyard
Zinfandel

2016, \$50.00, 14.9%

Red clay and brick tones lighten the purple core into a darker sort of transparency, the rims a light to washed out brick red, no saturated glow and arguably looks middle-aged. Curiously mute nose, pinch of clove to nutmeg spice, eucalyptus, vanilla pudding and basic dark berry fruit, comes off more as empty than closed up, odd. Medium-bodied with very nice framing acidity/tannin for the grape, comes off as fresh and youthful. Here there's no lack of exuberance with the floral dew dappled blueberry, boysenberry to raspberry fruit, buttressed by sweet and sour lemon citrus. The caramel, vanilla fudge oak tones consistent without getting overbearing. Turns a touch meaty, smoky at the end. Interesting contrast between nose and palate experience, styled in the more voluptuous body without seeking to push it too far. 89

Sandlands

San Benito County, Lime Kiln Valley, Enz Vineyard
Mourvèdre

2016, \$35.00, 13.4%

Lightly hazy violet core, already starts to glow before reaching the magenta to pink rims, richly hued throughout. Sands, pulverized stone fueled nose, just feels dry and dusty in the nostrils, there's some fart and merde in there too, over time you get some menthol notes which help lift the cherry to mixed red berry scents, you sense it could get more floral as it settles into itself over the years. Medium-bodied, here the violets, lemon zest and cinnamon stick notes more prominent. Still, tannic as heck and it clamps down just when you are starting to enjoy it. Blackberry, cherry to raspberry fruit, humble and unadorned. Stony but not earthy. That's the general story here, naked and without makeup, warts and all. 88

Broc Cellars
Solano County, Green Valley, Got Grapes
Blend

2017, \$28.99, 12.0%

Filmy and dilute cranberry red, translucent with an obvious lose of color at the rims. Piercing lemon to white grapefruit citrus introduces the nose, pickle brine and shoe leather next, conversely there's a hard candy sweetness to the raspberry, strawberry fruit scents, pulls back into itself just when you think it is going to expand and invite you in. Medium-bodied, has sufficient heft to make a statement out of the gate and follow through to the finish. Tannic and acidic, cannot seem to lose this subtly fizzy, turbulent feel which is often indicative of a natural wine gone awry. Softer note of caramel at the end. A few unexpected twists and turns given an unusual blend. Needs air time to smooth out and much more enjoyable once it does. 50% Trousseau, 50% Zinfandel. 88

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Harrington Wines
San Benito County, Vernalis Ramato
Pinot Gris

2017, \$30.00, 13.2%

Filmy reddish orange color with washed out rims, almost like you crushed a strawberry and a tangerine into the same glass, while dull does have a steady glow. Vinous with a strong citrus peel aspect, wax to lanolin as well, apricot, peach, strawberry fruit scents, overall much more steady and grippy than explosively pungent. Full-bodied with, as expected, more tactile grip and stick here. The acidity can slash and come clash to volatile but mostly behaves. Sourly energetic grapefruit, blood orange citrus, lots of pucker to be had. Again, vinous with a vinegary bite. Here it possesses a floral dimension as well as latent doughy notes. Pomegranate, peach, strawberry, cranberry fruit, more "red fruit" a normally produced white wine. Puts on weight closer to room temperature and the flavors and textures persist long after the liquid is gone. 89

Jolie-Laide
Monterey County, Chalone, Rodnick Farm
Melon de Bourgogne
2017, \$29.99, 11.8%

Glassy yellow straw, pools deeply, the rims dilute but the translucency fills things visually. Bold nose of candied ginger, nutmeg, flower water, and a trace of challah bread, moderate chalkiness pales before the ripe pear, peach, apricot to persimmon fruit scents, chugs along for an extended period. Full-bodied, the perceptible acidity is good plus, however, it's not the type of acidity shows the cheekbones, more of a

drying blanket on the tongue. Nice addition of blood orange, tangerine accents here, the honeyed and doughy notes remain main players. Red apple, pear, apricot the core fruit flavors yet again with that persimmon spiciness. The tactile palate traction outlasts the flavors. Good wine, not to be confused with its Loire cousins. (Synthetic Cork) 89

Groth
Napa Valley
Sauvignon Blanc
2017, \$18.99, 13.8%

Green glints to the yellow hay base, neither especially dull nor shiny, what hue there is gets fully to the rims. Green melon, apple, apricot fruit in the nose proportionate to the citrus and honey notes, minimal allusions to stones or minerals, more round and soft than piercing. Medium-bodied and fleshy, the acidity is nothing to write home about and lacks zip. That said, given its softness it is also dry enough to firm up by the finish. Tangerine, lemon citrus wake it up through the mid-palate forward. There's tenuous juiciness in the apricot, peach, pear to pineapple fruit. Bitterer finish with a growing nuttiness. Lacks precision and clarity and in the end feels overcropped and/or slightly underripe. 87

OREGON RED

Vincent Wine Company
Willamette Valley
Gamay Noir
2017, \$20.00, 12.5%

Vivid ruby-violet, not squeaky clean but transparent nonetheless, minimal variation in hue through to the outermost rims. Deep and resonant nose, not much lift, close to meaty, leather and stone dust, mixed citrus flits about the outskirts, hard-nosed cranberry, raspberry to strawberry scents dart and jab, overall just anchored into an impassive earthiness. Full-bodied, the acidity is on point and stimulates the palate from the start, playing up tart orange, lemon citrus. Minerally, stony sparkle, offers notes of leather but less of the overt gamey, meaty qualities. Over time it reluctantly releases perfectly reasonable cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, less "red" than in the nose. Broad-shouldered finish, not an iota of power lost. 89

FRANCE RED

Gilles, Guillaume
Rhône, Vallée du Doux, Combeaux Massardières
Gamay Noir
2016, \$29.99, 14.0%

Dark purple core just allows you to make out its inherent clarity, fat red magenta rims with a healthy

glow to them. Dusty texture to the nose with pulverized stone, sand and parched earth notes, this although the cherry, blackberry scents verging on plum, damp flower petals and licorice lend prettiness, has heft in the nostrils but tightly wound at the moment. Medium-bodied, firm tannic and acidic skeleton but the weave is open enough to let the flavors shine through as well as generally crackle with life. Jolt of grapefruit pith wakes you up and even the florality and twigs/bark stand erectly. Behind it all is a core of maraschino cherry, blueberry to raspberry fruit. Graphite, asphalt sort of smokiness at the end. Has miles to go and everything on hand to get it there. 91

Breton, Guy
Beaujolais, Morgon, Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir
2016, \$33.99, 12.5%

Gauzy magenta to purple core, more ruby red at the rims but even now hints at bricking. Floral, minerally nose with a lot of retronasal action, firm blueberry, raspberry fruit scents, good purity for its size and scale, finishes with a nod towards tarry earth. Medium-bodied, compact yet not unyielding. Tart blueberry, blackberry to cherry fruit with a "pit fruit" feel. The acidity packs a punch and there's plenty of structure for the long haul. Sour white grapefruit plays along with the theme and even the mineral and tar nuances heighten the tension. Lingers for some time without losing any power or presence. Does soften some now with air time so a decant may make sense. Fantastic energy level. 91

Petit Thouars, Château du
Loire, Chinon, l'Épée
Cabernet Franc
2016, \$18.99, 13.0%

Ruby-scarlet with a touch more violet in the core, dried blood red rims, clear, unblemished throughout. Certain flightiness to the nose, zips hither and yon, high-toned raspberry, blueberry to even strawberry fruit scents, damp herbaceousness, the bell pepper lurk in the wings, white citrus zing, feels ever so fresh in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, strong floral perfume like you walked into a department store. More stony and even minerally here than expected, adds to a certain chewiness, this exacerbated by tough minded tannin. Savory character to the blueberry, blackberry to raspberry fruit, not underripe just lots of punch to it. Lighter cedar, tar and graphite notes, nice spiciness to the finish. Offers a close to complete experience for the price. (Composite Cork) 90

Bouland, Daniel
Beaujolais, Morgon, Delys
Gamay Noir
2017, \$29.99, 13.5%

Dark purple bruise core, wide scarlet rims, fine clarity and shine. The nose mostly floral at first before a decided turn towards stony, minerally notes, crisp cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit scents, curious touch of glazed ham, overall muscular to the point of getting bound up. Medium-bodied, in the mouth you can pin things on the tannin and to lesser extent acidity for the stunted flow. Stony as well with keenly edged white citrus to add sour dryness. Dense core of cranberry, red cherry to red currant fruit, nothing light and pretty about it. Turns a touch twiggy, leafy at the end but not necessarily akin to underripe phenolics. Needs a lengthy decant today. Its structure seems like it might outlast the fruit. 89

Texier, Martin
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Brézème
Syrah
2017, \$24.99, 12.5%

Filmy purple bruise core, starting out moving into saturated magenta before veering into dried blood red, looks "heartly." The nose shows some volatility, sour with notes of kimchi, grapefruit pulp, leather and green olives, the cherry to blackberry fruit seems an afterthought, stays angular after the bottle has been upon for some time. Light to medium-bodied, powerful acidity runs the show from start to finish, lots of punch and thrust. More leather, muddy straw, earth than red fruits, hard to not consider in the "sauvage" style. Olives, cedar, beef jerky smooth out some of the roughness, tart citrus driven finish. Comes across like it needs more bottle time to settle into itself. Hard to say, though, if the volatility will ever go away. 89

Chatagnier, Aurélien
Rhône, Indication Géographique Protégée des
Collines Rhodaniennes
Syrah
2017, \$21.99, 13.5%

Vivid purple core without saturated glow, the rims a wide ruby-violet, lots of youthful vigor. Muscular lift in the flowers and orange peel notes, tart plum to cherry scents, lightly herbaceous while clean on the whole, incipient accent of grilled meat fat, no meaningful complexity but has more than enough fruit to satisfy. Medium-bodied, molasses and toffee notes outline the mouth entry. The red currant, cherry, blackberry fruit juicy and lasts fully into the finish. Tannins relaxed Dried beef, grill fat crackle at first then gets more floral softening at the end. Modern in style yet recognizably Northern Rhône in origin. Its suave profile should attract man fans. 89

Chanteleuserie, Domaine de la
Loire, Bourgueil, Cuvée Alouettes
Cabernet Franc
2017, \$14.99, 13.0%

Heavily saturated purple core, fat magenta rims, clean throughout. Sour blueberry, Italian plum to blackberry fruit provides a twist from the start, dense enough to mask a good bit of the otherwise powerful bell pepper element, lightly floral, minimal earthiness or leatheriness, just fruit, fruit and more fruit. Full-bodied, sappy and broad in the mouth with some ginger and baking spice notes, heightens the violets. The tannin sort of plodding and doesn't provide a lot of structure. Yet the forward momentum of the plum, black cherry, dark berry fruit sufficient to establish decent pacing. Here the leatheriness bursts through from the start. The bell pepper not dominant, more steady, most present as a perfume at the end. Sturdy, user friendly entry level Loire Cabernet Franc. 88

Petit Thouars, Château du
Loire, Chinon, Les Georges
Cabernet Franc
2016, \$15.99, 13.0%

Bright and reflective violet core, fully transparent with saturated magenta red rims, bursts with color. Earthy and close to poopy nose, tree bark and twigs more than bell pepper, as the merde resolves it's fairly straightforward, stony dirt and black cherry, blackberry fruit scents of modest means. Light to medium-bodied, brawny acidity creates both dryness as well as steady focus. Little deviation here, stone, earth and dried underbrush and barely any bell pepper. The fruit super-sour, cranberry, blackberry to blueberry, much more length than density. Extended air time does little to change it, a tight package that stays on message no matter what the line of questioning. 88

Balthazar, Franck
Rhône, Vin de France
Syrah
2017, \$19.99, 12.5%

Ruby-violet core of moderate darkness, more ruby-magenta at the rims, fully hued but no super-saturated glow. Dense, heavy nose of strawberry jam, cherry pie and violets, trace echo of cocoa powder, then dried clay and mud, no lift but clean enough with a modern feel to it. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, velvety and clings to the mouth pores. The tannins massaged into a friendly state, acidity relaxed as well. Increase in level of leather, earth tones, same for mesquite grill smoke and white grapefruit zest. The cherry, red currant fruit juicy but clumps up now and then, plummy through the finish. Credible entry level Northern Rhône Syrah at what is now a fair price. (Composite Cork) 88

Davenne, Clotilde
Burgundy, Mâcon Rouge
Gamay Noir
2015, \$16.99, 12.5%

Mild gauziness to it, the sunset red brightness permeates the purple core as well as dominates the rims where there's also orange clay shades. Dusty nose of broken stone, parched dirt and twigs and leaves, smoky but not funky, the ruggedness tends to overshadow the crisp liveliness of the strawberry, red cherry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, the tannins pop you in the jaw right from the start, much more effect than any acidity. Green apple, strawberry to raspberry fruit plus white grapefruit pulp gives it sourness and, source indeterminate, there's a pervasive toastiness as well. More craggy stoniness and autumnal leafiness. There's something about its orneriness that is attractive but it's not a wine with which to mindlessly relax. 88

FRANCE WHITE

Reverdy et Ses Fils, Domaine Hippolyte
Loire, Sancerre
Sauvignon Blanc
2017, \$28.99, 11-14.0%

Shiny gold color, excels at both pooling into the glass as well as surface reflectivity. While there is a honeyed aspect to the nose in addition to lilacs, any prettiness pierced by the powerful grapefruit element, even the chalkiness to crushed seashells bows before the citrus, gooseberry, peach to pear fruit rounds it out. In the mouth it's full-bodied with a broader sort of acidity than pinpoint zing, a blanket over the tongue. More floral here but with the grapefruit to tangerine citrus it is reminiscent of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc as much as Sancerre, just missing the cat pee or chillies. Boisterous pineapple, papaya to nectarine fruit, ripe enough to avoid puckering. Here it's hard for the chalkiness or minerality to fly solo. Impresses more for its power and thrust than nuance. 89

ITALY RED

Nervi (Conterno), Azienda Vitivinicola
Piedmont, Gattinara
Nebbiolo
2015, \$39.99, 13.5%

Very light and transparent rust red core, more rose petal red to a beginning shade of orange closer to the rims, not particularly shiny. Raspberry, red cherry fruit in the nose, black licorice, forest underbrush, unfortunate stewed tomato element, cinnamon stick, comes across as too young and thus not as expressive as it might be down the road. Medium-bodied, spicy with rose petals, lemon zest, leather and

some stony earth, however, it's all prologue to its matured state. Right now the candied cherry, red berry fruit taking center stage and showing it has what it takes for longevity. The tannin level is good plus without overdetermining things, you might want it a bit stronger for aging purposes. Overall, hard to get your head fully around it due to youthful reticence. Yet, if given time to open has basic appeal today too. 89

ITALY WHITE

Borgo del Tiglio di Nicola Manferrari, Azienda Agricola Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Collio

Friulano

2015, \$44.99, 14.0%

Shiny golden straw color, reflective surface while hold steady down into the glass, hue empties out at the rims still attractive overall. Floral and citrusy nose with anise overtones, coquettish, feels fat and viscous in your nostrils, layers of apricot, peach, pear fruit, suggests an underlying minerality which struggles to register. Full-bodied, the credible acidity helps it manage its heft so you don't lose sight of forward momentum. Tangerine, lime citrus, gingerbread and licorice activate the palate well. Kiwi, persimmon, apricot to pear fruit resonant, can easily see it taking on a dried fruit nature over time. Tingly finish, the minerality takes hold better than in the nose. Hard to say if preferable well chilled or getting near room temperature. 89

Walch, Elena

Alto Adige/Südtirol, Vigna Castel Ringberg

Sauvignon Blanc

2017, \$19.99, 13.5%

Mild filminess to the golden straw color, holds decently into the rims. Sparkly nose of chalk dust, crushed minerals and pink grapefruit, lime citrus, filled out well by kiwi, apricot, persimmon fruit scents flirting with tropicality, offers more power than nuance, lots of length. Medium-bodied, strong grip with burly acidity, here too not subtle at all. White to pink grapefruit, lemon citrus creates a good deal of pucker. Minerally, glance of jalapeno pepper but not all that herbaceous. Feels a little hot, maybe it's the general teeth rattling vibrancy. Apricot, cherry, pear to peach fruit, more straight up here. You get some nice mint, anise accents retronasally. Bonus points if you like it with punch. 89

GERMANY WHITE

Keller, Weingut

Rheinhessen, QbA Trocken AP #3

Riesling

2017, \$16.99, 12.0%

Moderate shine across the surface, pale yellow straw hue, colorless rims. Wet slate and chalk in the nose, zesty lemon to lime citrus, feels very dry in the nostrils hampering full tropicality in the pineapple, nectarine, guava fruit scents, more honeyed than smoky, and comes of as more compact than lingering. In the mouth it's got great acidity, just short of searing. Which is needed as there's evident ripeness underneath, even if vinified as a Trocken wine. Loads of pear, peach to apricot fruit with just a hint of pineapple. The citrus takes on a bright character of lime to pink grapefruit, sweet at first than sour through the finish. Stream water, slate to clay, hard to find much minerality. Ends with a nice burst of licorice and honey. In the final analysis maybe trying to do too much and losing clarity of purpose as a result. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Falkenstein, Hofgut

Mosel Saar Ruwer, Niedermenniger, Herrenberg,

Kabinett Trocken AP #1

Riesling

2017, \$21.99, 10.5%

Pale white straw hue, crystal clear with plenty of sparkle, trace amount of bubbles hugging the glass. Fresh stream water and pebbles, quietly floral, some tangerine spritz, pear skin and peach fuzz, if allowed to warm there's also a growing warmed rubber presence. Medium-bodied, stern acidity and a sour disposition, excessive pucker factor. Green apple, pear to apricot fruit with close to zero juiciness. Same basic gossamer florality and tangerine to lemon citrus. Not minerally nor especially possessed of diesel or rubber notes. The proverbial sucking on a stone. Does grow on you a little but there's no generosity through the finish, just clamps down. Suspect it was crafted to create this impression. 87

AUSTRIA RED

Meinklang (Michlits)

Burgenland

Blend

2017, \$16.99, 12.0%

Kind of a blurred rust red, magenta and violet throughout, no differentiation core to rims, spotless, transparent and with above average shine. Good lift to the nose with lemon zest, lilacs, and a menthol-like burst, crushed cherries and blueberries, nice juiciness and doesn't dry out the nostrils. Light-bodied, energetic acidity ratchets up the salivation and general brightness. The mixed white citrus, stoniness and dried flowers lend it prettiness and there is a softly honeyed aspect as well. Blueberry, boysenberry, raspberry fruit, tart and juicy. No greenness nor offputting aspects, clean finish without seeming short.

Should prove versatile at the dinner table. 60% Zweigelt, 30% Blaufränkisch, 10% Sankt Laurent. (Screwcap) 89

SPAIN WHITE

Zudugarai, Bodegas
Chacolí de Guetaria, Getariako Txakolina, Antxiola
Hondarribi Zuri
2017, \$12.99, 11.0%
Dark gold color verging on bronzed orange, full throughout, neither particularly shiny nor dull, traditional aggregation of bubbles stuck to the glass sides. Stone and wet clay infused nose, has a somewhat inert feel, however, lemon zest as well as pineapple, green apple to papaya fruit scents do their best to counteract this, somewhere tucked inside is a floral breeze trying to get out. Medium-bodied, the fizziness is pronounced yet it sets itself firmly on the palate. Angles itself in with more of that lemon to lime citrus, washed white pebbles and here minerality. The green apple, peach, nectarine to pineapple fruit active and zesty. Not fully precise but on point and way easy to drink. 90% Hondarribi Zuri, 10% Hondarribi Beltza. (Composite Cork) 89

SPAIN SPARKLING

Cava Bertha
Penedès, Cava, Brut Nature Reserva
Blend
2016, \$14.99, 11.5%
Big head upon the pour which is gone in an instant, crisp and shiny yellow straw, packed side to side with hyper aggressive bubbles that show no signs of slowing down. Supple yet focused nose of apple, pear fruit, chalk dust and mineral water, suggests whipped cream and vanilla but does not fully deliver. In the mouth it's light-bodied, crisp even as the sheer volume of foaminess works against its focus. Lemon peel, licorice, chalk and limestone, balances flavor and cleanliness and never approaches seeming dilute. Peach, apricot, yellow apple fruit has snap but gives when it needs to. It's user friendly and versatile more than intriguing but at this price point the former is of greater value. Unspecified percentages of Macabeo, Xarello, Parellada. 88

PORTUGAL RED

Seabra Vinhos, Luís
Douro Valley, Xisto Ilimitado
Blend
2016, \$21.99, 12.5%
Bright ruby-violet core, albeit close to opaque, more scarlet approaching the rims, excellent clarity

throughout. Some funk at first in the nose, blows off in favor of freshly cut flowers, leather, maple syrup, squeezed orange juice and thick cherry, dark berry fruit, the scents don't fully separate. Light to medium-bodied, baking spices play off of violets, lilacs and rose water, very pretty with a swirl in the mouth. Raspberry, blueberry to cherry fruit, with a hint of persimmon. Fresh leather, has sneaky tannins, after a few sips your mouth is drying out. Its prettiness makes it seem simple but there's a lot going on under the surface. 30% Touriga Franca, 20% Tinta Amarela, 20% Tinta Roriz, 10% Rufete, 10% Tinta Barroca, 5% Malvasia Preta, 5% Donzelinho Tinto. 90

Saes, Quinta de
Dão
Blend
2014, \$16.99, 13.0%
Opaque purple core glowing softly, duller brick red to red clay rims, dark without saturation. Pressed flowers, dark chocolate powder, leather and bundled hay give it a "mature" feel if not matured per se, the plum, dark berry fruit well stuffed but not juicy as the nostrils feel dry throughout. Full-bodied and dense enough that it moves forward at a languid pace. Good amount of tannin to hold it together, nothing wimpy about it. Plummy, black currant, blueberry, more sour fruit than sweet. Stony, clayish notes contribute to inert feel. Woody too but like driftwood or kindling, not oak. Grapefruit citrus and more pressed flowers. Rugged and sometimes chewy while still accessible. 25% Tinta Roriz, 25% Touriga Nacional, 25% Alfrocheiro, 25% Jaen. (Composite Cork) 88

ARGENTINA RED

Catena, Bodega y Viñedos
Mendoza, Catena Alta Historic Rows
Malbec
2015, \$39.99, 13.5%
Blackish core, full opacity yet in no way murky, bright sunset red rims look like they'd easily brick over time. While the nose is thick overall, there's a heightened crispness to the coffee, toast and vanilla bean notes, mixes in mint and cedar, more subtly expressed leather or earth, the blackberry, red cherry fruit scents snappy and energetic. Full-bodied, the tannin is firm but yields at the right moments so that it does not feel clenched. Savory with garden herb, leather and white grapefruit accents, the sourness of the cherry, dark berry fruit matches the savoriness quite well. The oaky toast woven in and not obtrusive. Indeed, the wine's overarching integration is a strong suit. Should age easily over the medium term. 90

Catena, Bodega y Viñedos
Mendoza, Catena High Mountain Vines
Malbec

2016, \$20.99, 13.0%

Opaque, huge saturated glow to the purple core, thin ruby-magenta rims hum just the same, pleasing surface shine. Elbows its way into your nostrils, sour cherry, Italian plum scents, leather and a whiff of menthol, there's a blockish quality to it and you sense that there's more in there waiting to be released, maybe if it loses some primary fruit. Medium-bodied, you feel the tannic skeleton yet it has close to zero drying sensation. Leather, muddy earth, grill smoke, as in the nose there's no overt oakiness, a certain vanilla, cinnamon patina at most. Suggests a floral, meadowy side it doesn't deliver on. The plum, cherry, red currant fruit more chewy and thick than fluid, does slip some green apple in there. Some tang on the finish wakes things up. Not sure it has anywhere meaningful to go from here. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 87

ARMENIA RED

Karas
Armavir
Blend

2015, \$10.99, 14.0%

Dark purple core while showing full clarity, wide and shiny brick red to blood red rims. Dusty, rocky character to the nose, coffee grinds, offset in part by juicier blackberry, blueberry to cherry scents, overall not especially expressive and may lack distinct aromas due to the "kitchen sink" blend. Medium-bodied, mostly structured by acidity with a moderate tannic spine in reserve. Again, the coffee notes and general toastiness mark the presence of oak for body and zip. That said, the blueberry, raspberry, cherry fruit holds on well enough given its general dryness. Mildly leathery, something close to pine or pressed flowers. In the end tastes like decently made "red wine." Which in this instance may be an achievement. 30% Syrah, 30% Tannat, 15% Petit Verdot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 10% Montepulciano, 5% Khndoghni. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 87