

## *The Hanes Wine Review, July 2007 Edition*

Everyone likes to talk about global warming and how this contributes to higher alcohol and overripe fruit in wines traditionally not plagued by these problems. Hanes is down with that. But that doesn't mean there are no upsides. The big running joke right now is to invest in English countryside vineyards and get ready to release your \$100+ Cabernet Sauvignon in 10-15 years. But there's some more realistic scenarios too. To wit, the potential for richer and perhaps more interesting red wines from Germany. Could the Pfalz be the new Chambolle-Musigny of the mid-21st century? Hmmm.

Red wines from Germany (i.e., "Rotwein") usually aren't popular outside of Deutschland because they are perceived as too high in acid and light in fruit. They don't often get confused with Australian Shiraz. While they remain popular with wine appreciators who like high acid, terroir-driven wines, these folks are not large enough in numbers to get a lot exported to the United States. But the point here is that this may change along with climate change. Of course, the wines may *in general* become more popular but not for the wine geeks who loved them in the pre-global warming age. More money for German winemakers and importers of these wines, fewer wines to luv for the wine geek set. The usual fair tradeoff.

One thing that may make German red wines popular is that one of the most popular and successful red wine grapes grown there is *Spätburgunder*. That is, in translation, the ever popular Pinot Noir. Current versions are definitely high in acidity, light in body and probably have too many herbaceous qualities for the casual drinker to really enjoy (the same goes for Pinot Noir from Alsace, France which should also benefit from global warming in terms of broader market acceptance, Alsace possessing similar terrain to much of Germany — if not to some *part* of Germany [don't go there]). As Pinot Noir reacts perceptibly to its environment, even a few degrees of warmth throughout the growing season could have a dramatic effect on the concentration of the final wines. Add in a little oak barrique aging and you have a winner! That said, prices are not going to be like \$15 a bottle so don't expect a sea of value Pinot from Germany.

After Pinot Noir the situation gets a bit hazier as you're dealing with mostly native grapes which are unfamiliar to many American customers. But there's some precedent established, as wines such as Zweigelt from Austria, Malbec from Argentina or Albariño from Spain aren't grown in large quantities here in the U.S. but have a fair degree of market acceptance now. So, you might be able to slowly build a market for alternative German red wines if priced and marketed in a cautious, savvy manner. And, uhh, if they taste good.

*Dornfelder* is a grape that has been grown in increasing quantities in Germany, having been bred there in 1956 especially for local growing. The idea was to create a grape that would ripen better in the cool German climates than the existing choices at hand. So, they crossed the ever popular Heroldrebe grape with the equally irresistible Helfensteiner grape to create Dornfelder. Dornfelder is on the sweet side, kind of plummy, and achieves a fuller body than most other German red wines. There's maybe a half dozen different German Dornfelders sold in the United States and a few intrepid souls who are domestically growing it. But, Hanes said it first, Dornfelder will be the summer barbeque hit of 2012!

*Blauer Portugieser* is German for a Portuguese grape that eventually spread to Austria and Germany. It seems not a lot is being done with this grape in Germany today, it hovers around 4-5% of total vineyard acreage. While it usually makes for a light-bodied and more delicate wine, this grape too may become more popular with conditions which allow better ripening. For grape growers, the best thing about Blauer Portugieser is its vigor and ability to grow and thrive under adverse conditions. So, duh, warmer weather should make the wines a bit richer as well as make a lot more of it. Not sure it will ever be more than just a simple table wine, though. But we all need everyday drinkers. Especially those who drink everyday. A fair amount of Blauer Portugieser is made into rosé wines.

After these three you find small amounts of Trollinger, Blaufränkisch (aka Lemberger, Limberger), Schwarzriesling (aka Samtrot) and Sankt Laurent. That is, you find them in Germany, not in the United States. Maybe one day. Hanes can't say he sees much (any) around and those he has tried were pretty much brought back from Germany by hand. But can you really blame the Germans for keeping all the Schwarzriesling for themselves?

With warmer climates and the dictates of the international marketplace for wine, a question ineluctably rises around the planting of non-indigenous grapes in Germany, many of which are considered "international varieties." So far it appears that experiments have been limited to Cabernet Sauvignon. But as things change and young, bold winemakers want to stride onto the international stage it shouldn't surprise to see Syrah, Cabernet Franc or Merlot get planted. Whether this will be additional planting or come at the expense of already established varieties is yet to be seen.

As of this point in time the Pfalz and Rheinhessen remain the best regions for red wine production, especially when it comes to Spätburgunder. After that, you could count Baden and Württemberg as the regions most likely to make inroads with red wine production. Nahe is kind of a wildcard, red wine might eventually take off there. The other, more northerly regions, well, that depends on the true extent of global warming over the decades to come. Hanes can only predict so much.

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**This month's big winners...** With the prices of good Burgundy spiraling ever upward, poor white trash like Hanes has to dumpster dive the lesser known appellations for worthy consumption candidates. So this month it's Saint-Romain we explore for a tasty treat, specifically the 2004 "Les Jarrons" from Deux Montille. Good wine, close to maxing out on its

price at \$32. Hadn't really expected a Cabernet Sauvignon from "Ital-Cal" producer Luna to be that good but their 2004 from Napa is damn nice. As per usual, nowhere near worth the price (\$84), but if the drinkin' is free, why not? Lighter than many previous vintages the 2005 Crozes Hermitage from top producer Grailot was nice for it, easy to drink if probably not destined to make old bones. No one does Furmint like Heidi Schrock, yo. The 2005 from this esteemed Austrian producer maintains her impeccable reputation, worth the \$23 for sure.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** Not everyone is on the South African bandwagon but if you try the 2004 blend of Cabernet and Shiraz from Kaapzicht you shouldn't be disappointed. \$13 gets you a lot. The "Sfida" bottling from Puglia, Italy's Decordi winery is a nice little wine for \$10 or so and the 2006 is quite credible and more complex than most at the price. Tiefenbrunner is a damn solid producer which rarely screws up. Their 2006 basic Pinot Grigio is a winner for about \$13 and no wimp. You won't see the name Loimer anywhere on the bottle but the Grüner Veltliner with the big word "Lois" on it is a perennial value purchase, the 2006 version well worth \$12.

**And the disappointments...** Among the "inexpensive but good" Vouvray producers, Aubuisières is among the best. Except in 2005 where their Cuvée de Silex is surprisingly lame, even given the generally good vintage the Loire enjoyed in 2005. No sense mincing words — Spanish producer Martín Códax should stick to white wines. There's a reason that Bonny Doon has become an afterthought to many wine buyers. Known for many years for successful wines at all price points, the wheels have more or less come off. And so it goes for the 2004 Syrah from the Central Coast called "Le Pousseur." Robert Foley, the winemaker at Pride Mountain and Switchback Ridge, has his own boutique label. He makes a super-pricey Cab-Merlot blend. He makes a funky Charbono. And now it appears he makes a god awful Pinot Blanc from Napa Valley as well. A joke for \$30. St. Urbans-Hof is a German producer capable of good wines but Hanes has never been impressed by their basic "QbA" Riesling and, even for \$10, the trend continues in 2006. A reminder that, even as much as we love German wine, they are not all superb. Hanes usually enjoys the Rhône styled wines of McCrea from Washington State, however, their 2005 Viognier from the Ciel du Cheval Vineyard was pedestrian at best. Maybe it was the large percentage of Roussanne in it but blah.

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

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on the older (or non-imported) wines he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/oldervintages2007.html>

The challenge. Each month Hanes will try out a new "tagline" for *The Hanes Wine Review* empire. The goal is to sum up and represent The Hanes Brand. This month's entry is...

**Tagline #33:** "It's not called redding out nor whitening out, it's called blacking out!"

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 Varietal  
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 July!

### CALIFORNIA RED

Turley  
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Dusi Ranch  
Zinfandel  
2005, \$42.00, 15.6%  
While the ruby-purple core lacks not for saturation, it also has uncommon clarity which pretties up the purer red-ruby rims. Super-juicy nose, like jumping into a tub of just picked raspberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit and squirming around, dab of baking spices and orange peel, very light menthol and herbal qualities and next to no meaningful oak

presence. Medium-bodied, the level of acidity surprising at first, really sets the tone early as well as releases the white grapefruit to orange citrus. Higher level of stony earth and grass than expected, keeps it fresh if not adding a bitter twist. Sleek lines to the raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit, you can't pinch an inch off it. As in the nose, barely a trace of oak toast, maybe a light dusting of caramel. Invigorating finish, the flavors reach a nice choral crescendo that positively scrubs the tongue. 91

Turley  
Dry Creek Valley, Grist Vineyard  
Zinfandel  
2005, \$40.00, 15.1%

Light purple core with an equal degree of red-magenta and ruby, heavy luminescence through the purer magenta rims. Cocoa cream, coconut flakes give the nose a custard pie kind of feel at first, then menthol and white grapefruit breeze through to cleanse and focus, there's a sort of pine forest appeal too, the red raspberry, cranberry, strawberry fruit worms its way through your nostrils avoiding most contact with the sunlight. Medium-bodied, the acidity surprises and sets the tone early, throws the cocoa, coconut, vanilla aside with ease. Here the white grapefruit and lemon citrus has elevated bite and brings with it a certain measure of herbaceousness. Stony hilly earth, dry and dusty kicks up some, however, there's ample juiciness in the raspberry, cranberry, strawberry fruit but the sourness is what extends it fully through the finish. While it has thickness and alcohol in terms of getting you drunk, keeps its balance just fine to the end. 90

Turley

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Rattlesnake Ridge  
Petite Sirah

2005, \$40.00, 14.1%

Completely opaque black-purple core, by looking at this you'd never suspect the ruby-magenta rims would glow so brightly, the surface reflects light easily. There's a surprisingly breezy florality to the nose, breaks up a lot of the denser mocha chip, fresh belt leather and blueberry, blackberry, cherry scents, dissolves with a beam of grapefruit juice. Medium-bodied, held firmly in place by steel beams of tannins, that said, not overly dry nor dusty. Presents an unusually high degree of white grapefruit, sour and lightens the mouth feel appreciably. The flower component more in the background here but stays steady enough. Minerally with a grassy streak too, nothing about the blackberry, plum, cherry fruit strikes you as over-extracted nor too sweet. The oak toast too finds its place and stays there. More versatile than you'd suspect. 89

Luna

Napa Valley  
Cabernet Sauvignon

2004, \$83.99, 14.7%

Consistently purple from core to rims, immaculately arrayed, opaque and bright at once, the rims do redden just a bit. The black cherry, blackberry fruit in the nose shows poise and restraint in the face of its abundant ripeness, you don't have to go far to find the coconut, butterscotch, vanilla fudge oak scents, youthfully plump with little else to offer, that is except for the bracing bursts of alcoholic heat. Medium-bodied, extremely smooth, if not seductively so, glides effortlessly through the mouth with nary a bump. If it's not because of the velvety currant, cherry, blackberry fruit it's from the grease provided by all that creamy vanilla, toffee, butterscotch oak. Sweet spices, cedar and orange peel provide a modicum of contrast but beyond a glimmer of sweet tobacco leaf there's really no complexity here. As "red wine" per se it's eminently quaffable and in large quantities. Obviously, though, for a price. 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. 89

Luna

Napa Valley, Canto  
Blend

2002, \$41.99, 14.7%

Fully opaque black core, sucks in the light from the surface, there's a crimson to brick red coloration along

the rims which suggests maturity beyond the calendar's years. Cedar, mint, cigar leaf, pork loin and orange peel comprise a good deal of the nose, no paucity of ripe cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit scents, borderline jammy, actually has a nice variety of scents but no conductor to organize them. Full-bodied, sweet and tangy mouth entry, covers a lot of ground in hitting multiple pleasure nodes. The blackberry, black currant, cherry, blueberry fruit soaks in with ease, the tannins and acidity have been taught to do what they are told. The same cedar, tobacco, leather, orange peel, mint flavors weave in and out. It's heavy-footed and at times lacking in finesse but it fills your glass and mouth well. 47% Sangiovese, 17% Merlot, 14% Cabernet Franc, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petite Sirah. 89

Sutton Cellars

Mendocino County, Trimble Vineyard

Carignan

2005, \$20.99, 13.5%

Fully mixed red-ruby to violet core, wide scarlet rims, keeps glowing throughout, sits well in the glass. Cocoa and mocha in the nose without seeming oaky, hint of grilled meats, floral without the muskiness, earthy enough to turn the blackberry, black cherry fruit semi-inert. Medium-bodied, the acidity slows builds from start to finish and with repeated sips, draws out orange, lemon citrus and well as finer stoniness. That said, leather and earth provide most of the profile beyond the cherry, blackberry fruit, can't quite escape appearing four-square. Chewy without the fat body, like a baguette, makes you bite hard to get to the soft parts. The tangy reverberations help extend the finish some. 87

Hansom

Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2003, \$29.99, 13.9%

Straightforward red-ruby to purple colored core, notable most for its cleanliness than depth, full brick red rims provide for seamless viewing pleasure. Juicy red raspberry, cherry, even strawberry fruit flows through the nose, anchored partially by thick vanilla cream, even at a relatively low 13.9% there's an inordinate amount of alcoholic fumes present making it hard to discern much else. Medium-bodied, keeps the focus on that sweetly juicy raspberry, cherry fruit, little apparent reason not to as beyond the oak toast and caramel there's nothing of great distinction offered, only moderate amounts of lemon citrus, flowers or cedar. Minimal, if that, earth, leather or tobacco. Alcohol less biting here. Perhaps a touch or greenness on the finish. Drinkable plus. 86

Amador Foothills Winery

Shenandoah Valley, Clockspring Vineyard

Zinfandel

2005, \$17.99, 14.5%

Fully clear and transparent red-ruby to violet in color, consistent from core to rims, almost looks like an unextracted Pinot Noir, pretty but not what you expect. The creamy vanilla to whipped cream scents seem out of place in contrast against the white grapefruit, pine cone, menthol scents, the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry scents have enough of an inert hard candy feel that they can't quite bridge the gap, more intriguing than fulfilling. Medium-bodied, curiously starts off lighter and digs its heels in as the tannins make themselves more evident. The white grapefruit to lemon citrus keeps it vibrating and

steals some of the spotlight from the basic raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit. More twiggy and leafy than earthy, not green enough to be herbaceous per se. Cleanliness, freshness and spine most positive attributes. 86

Bonny Doon

Blend, Central Coast, Le Pousseur  
Syrah

2004, \$15.99, 13.5%

Its unblemished quality distracts from the easy opacity it achieves in the red-purple core, enough violet left in the rims to noticeably darken the glowing ruby rims. The nose is odd because both the white grapefruit and the caramel expand exponentially within seconds, albeit in different directions, more cut grass than expected, bracing almost, slight hard candy feel in the cherry, raspberry, cranberry scents. Medium-bodied, the caramel and toffee confuse the mouth entry as once you break past that there's finely honed acidity and enough sour white grapefruit and lemon bite to wake up the dead. Herbaceous, more minerality than you might think, The cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit throws a flurry of early punches and perhaps tires as a result. Honestly, it's just pulled in too many directions, intentionally or not. Thus, would benefit from decisive direction. (Screwcap) 84

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Hall

Napa Valley  
Sauvignon Blanc

2005, \$19.99, 14.7%

Its semi-translucent state heightens the glow in the green-gold color, however, its inherent paleness washes out the rims. Crisp nose, more minty than infused by chili peppers, the pink grapefruit, lime citrus hits sweeter notes as well, moderate element of crushed stone, the peach, pear, apple fruit scents more serene than tropical. Full-bodied, the acidity comes in waves and picks things up nicely without hogging the spotlight. Bit more cut in the grapefruit, lemon, lime citrus and breadth in the stone dust and mineral powder. Competent core of peach, apricot, pear, apple fruit, no show stopper here either. Despite the high alcohol level comes across as balanced and without undue heat. Most agreeable for being a whole rather than group of soloists. 88

Ca' del Solo

Monterey County, Ca' del Solo Vineyard  
Albariño

2006, \$20.99, 12.5%

White to yellow straw in color, while reflective does draw light into itself well enough to create a consistent, block-like appearance. The nose has this airy, powdered sugar and bubblegum character to it, sweet lime, tangerine citrus unto a soft drink, so overdetermined in these regards that if you can draw out any melon, apple, mango, guava fruit you're ahead of the game. Medium-bodied, presents a similar profile in the mouth with the added effect of wiry acidity, cuts down on some of the sugariness even though it's already in powder form and not unduly concentrated. The tangerine, lime, lemon citrus and floral breeze guide the ship forward, followed on by chalk and seashell touches. Any herbaceous bits swallowed in the whole, the papaya, mango, pear, nectarine, pineapple fruit tropical yet without the keen bite. The kind of wine where you may

doubt it at moments but at the end it all makes sense and works. (Screwcap) 88

Topanga Vineyards

Central Valley, Clarksburg, Esperanza Vineyard, Celadon  
Grenache Blanc

2005, \$29.99, 14.5%

Pale yellow hay in color, there's a sense that it could glow deeper if there was anything to build off of, the gauziness across the surface masks the dilute rims. There's an unnecessary creaminess to the nose, adds a poached quality to the peach, apricot, melon fruit as well as lemon custard, light mint, more agreeable than complex and better for it. Medium-bodied, for its weight has some flab, as in the nose done in a jolly manner. The floral dimension more prevalent during the first half, then melds into lemon and tangerine juice and apricot, peach, pear fruit. The acidity achieves enough of a presence to push things gently through the back half. Stays fat through the finish, keeps doing what it does well, and not much more. No sense digging deeper than that. 87

Luna

Napa County, Barrel Fermented  
Pinot Grigio

2005, \$19.99, 14.3%

Glassy golden color, nothing dramatically unusual about it, bends the light below the surface with ease, some loss at the rims. Very toasty nose, they weren't kidding about the barrel fermentation, brings a roasted feel to the lemon/lime citrus parts, eventually takes on a creamier dimension as it warms but no less cloaking of the repressed pear, apple, peach fruit scents. Medium-bodied, just about all front-loaded with most of the impact during the mount entry. Spicy with ginger and clove notes, zippy tangerine and lime citrus, much more toast than cream. There's still an attenuated aspect to the peach, pear, apple fruit. Not much sense of stoniness nor minerality, as a result hard to peg the grape type without reading the label. Acidity weak, doesn't prod the herd forward. Clean enough finish if you didn't want to call it out-and-out empty. 84

Foley Vineyards, Robert  
Napa Valley

Pinot Blanc

2006, \$29.99, 14.1%

Pale yellow straw color, mostly transparent and definitely so at the rims, nice surface shine. Bubblegum and peach, apricot fuzz give the nose a friendly appeal, followed by banana and violets, very primary with contrasting elements. Full-bodied, lots of extract and heaviness, like a sheet of lead on the tongue. The tangerine to pink grapefruit citrus stunted by spiciness and some alcoholic heat. Watery pear, apple, peach, apricot fruit, turns bitter by the mid-palate. Something like nuttiness before vanilla cream and banana notes elevate through the back half. Short denouement. While not horribly flawed, not especially enjoyable. 83

## WASHINGTON WHITE

McCrea Cellars

Yakima Valley, Red Mountain, Ciel du Cheval Vineyard  
Viognier

2005, \$19.99, 14.5%

White to yellow straw color, has shine but also an attractive translucent layering below the surface. In the

nose there's a creaminess to it, both in terms of texture and vanilla ice cream scents, orange blossom, mint, the floral perfume not thick enough to become musky, lightly poached aspect to the apricot, peach, pear scents. Full-bodied, round and soft, virtually no acidity, however, spicy enough to give it some energy. With the spice comes that vanilla and whipped cream flavorings. Orange gummy candy, oddly nutty, just as much so as floral. While it stays thick, the lifelessness of the apricot, peach, nectarine, melon fruit makes you start to lose interest past the mid-palate. Plops too much, dances too little. 79% Viognier, 21% Roussanne. 86

## OREGON RED

Saint Innocent  
Willamette Valley, White Rose Vineyard  
Pinot Noir

2005, \$49.99, 13.5%

Has sufficient ruby in the violet core to bring it back into clarity rather than opacity, conversely a dusky kind of crimson darkens the ruby rims. Wet wood smoke, damp mineral earth and cut grass lend the nose a good deal of funkiness, sour black cherry to blackberry scents leave bruises as they worm their way into your nostrils, all of the aforementioned powerful enough to impede flow and any chance at a graceful dissolve. Full-bodied, despite the heft in both the tannins and the acidity, does achieve a semi-velvety feel due to the richness of the cherry, raspberry, red currant fruit, that said quite masculine in approach. There's some initial florality and then more palpable white grapefruit citrus but by the mid-palate it's mostly herbaceousness and stony earth. Any oakiness comes across as older, more neutral. Could keep you wide awake at 3:00 AM, that's how energetically bitter the finish is. Taking this into account, it's really interesting to taste if not easily pleasurable. 88

## FRANCE RED

Esmonin, Domaine Sylvie  
Burgundy, Gevrey-Chambertin, Clos Saint-Jacques  
Pinot Noir

2004, \$79.99, 13.0%

Dark purple core, easily achieves opacity, lightest shift to youthful brick red to crimson along the rims. The nose shows a lot of sulfur at first mandating a long decanting, beneath are thick hunks of cherry, plum, blackberry fruit, enough so to suppress the flowers, orange citrus and milk chocolate, reasonable to expect more clarity with age. In the mouth it's full-bodied and very sturdy, hardly moves at all. Spicier with something like a reductive feel, peanut shells, merde and traces of sulfur. Becomes quite herbal by the mid-palate, even as the stoniness and dried earth elements attract your attention. Harder profile to the fruit here, the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit less juicy and full than in the nose, easy to finger the tannins and then acidity as the culprits. All the parts are there but not really ready for prime time. 90

Graillot, Domaine Alain  
Rhône, Crozes Hermitage  
Syrah

2005, \$32.99, 13.0%

Brightly hued, the purple core achieves opacity without blackness, while thin, the magenta rims have as much pink as red in them and sparkle nicely. The nose has fullness but impresses more for its "pared down to the basics"

approach, shotgun full of flower petals, white grapefruit and pimento olives, pork roast and baked molasses next, the cherry, red currant fruit scents rock steady. Medium-bodied, here too has a trim and streamlined character, the tannins play a role but it's truly quite a vehicle for spotlighting the acidity. This may make the cherry, blackberry, currant fruit less splashy but, at the same time, it weaves the whole fabric tighter. The flowers, stony earth, white grapefruit all stretch out from start to finish, less presence in the game, molasses and olive elements. Strides gracefully, likely more versatile at the dinner table than many other vintages of the same wine. 89

Clos Roche Blanche  
Loire, Touraine, Cuvée Côt  
Malbec

2005, \$18.99, 12.0%

Upon closer inspection the opaque purple ain't all that opaque and displays a red-magenta infusion, the ruby rims oscillate between pink and violet. The nose is curiously reluctant to integrate, seems certainly capable of it yet prefers to let the wildflowers, leather, dried orange peels and cherry to blackberry fruit do their own thing. Medium to full-bodied, the tannins are youthful but not arch and help it gain traction and weight. That said, the ripeness of the cherry, currant, blackberry fruit extinguished by the mid-palate, leaving the flowers, orange to lemon citrus, stones and tree bark to do the heavy lifting. Sheer momentum and energy extends the finish admirably, however, even extended air time isn't coaxing the flavors to remain expressive as long. That is, today. 88

Tours, Château des  
Beaujolais, Brouilly  
Gamay Noir

2005, \$14.99, 12.5%

The deep red-magenta to purple color extends throughout, while dark it's the lack of blemishes which catches your eye, no loss at the rims. Freshly sour cherry, raspberry fruit gains added lift from a floral breeze, wee bit of orange juice and then a quick herbaceous nip and that's it. Full-bodied, teeters on the edge of becoming fat, however, displays sufficient acidity to at least keep kicking it forward. Completely ripe cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit cascades from mouth entry to finish, during the back half the dustiness of tannins mops up some excess juice. Murmur of lemon to orange citrus, the floral dimension cruises easily along. As in the nose a touch of herbaceousness spreads through the finish. Goes down real quick like. 87

Lafarge, Domaine Michel  
Burgundy, Volnay  
Pinot Noir

2004, \$59.99, 13.0%

Luminescent red-ruby in color, only a suggestion of purple anywhere, drops a tick at the rims, noticeably transparent throughout. There's a reticence about the nose, ankle chains around the raspberry, red cherry scents keep them shuffling at best, their sweetness easily overshadowed by wet grass, tree bark and twigs, dirty stones and a faint waft of dried wildflowers, not the longest presence. Medium-bodied, very tannic to the point of backwardness, your tongue begs for water after just a few sips. Dried out lemon and orange citrus match up with the dried grass and stony poor earth to ensure you ain't gonna relax. There's about two seconds of sweetness in the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit before the muzzle is in place.

You really have to like the “vin de garde” style to dig this one, but not beyond enjoyability. 86

Puligny-Montrachet, Domaine du Château de  
Burgundy, Montheilie  
Pinot Noir

2004, \$26.99, 12.5%

Very light and transparent scarlet red to faded purple color, more garnet with a mild orange tinge at the rims, easy to see through. Very herbaceous nose, sour to the point of seeming pickled or full of chili peppers, hard to concentrate after all that, you can rescue some cherry or raspberry scents if you move quickly. Medium-bodied, unfortunately, more of the same in the mouth with the spicy pickled aspect and a decided paucity of cherry, raspberry fruit. Herbaceous as hell, sour lemons and sharp edged stones keep it on edge and thus you as well. There’s a momentary floral lift near the mid-palate but lightening hits the kite and that’s that. The tannins are in no mood to question the ethics of the order to burn the village to the ground. 83

## FRANCE WHITE

Deux Montille, Maison  
Burgundy, Saint-Romain, Les Jarrons  
Chardonnay

2004, \$31.99, 12.5%

Consistent straw yellow color from the core through the rims, glassy enough to bend light slightly and gain in presence, pretty in a simple way. There’s a collected bearing to the nose which prevents any one element from gaining sway, toffee balanced by mineral water, lemon juice shaving away the peach, apricot scents, all smoothed by mint and flower petal shades. Medium-bodied with a clean outline and stable mouth presence which may create the deceptive impression that there’s not much movement. However, it just moves at a slow and steady pace as the lemon peel, mineral water and stone unfold. Mint and sweet garden herbs act as tasteful makeup. The apricot, peach, pear, yellow apple fruit stays consistent from start to finish, perhaps sweetened by a caramel-cream residue at the end. Tastefully done. 89

Picard, Jean-Paul  
Loire, Sancerre  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2005, \$19.99, 12.5%

White to pale yellow straw in color, transparent on the whole, particularly so at the rims. Softer, not soft, nose of mint, lemon and white grapefruit zest, lilacs, wet stone, agreeable level of peach, apple, pear fruit scents, most noticeable for its ability to smell as it should without not smelling as it shouldn’t. Medium-bodied, displays more personality here with chili pepper and salt mixed in with penetrating herbaceousness, doesn’t quite possess the fine acidity to take it all the way home but cuts more than bruises. Lemon juice takes the fruit more into peach, nectarine, pineapple, yellow apple territory, more consistent than vibrant. Non-obtrusively herbaceous, in no way upsets the integration of the whole. Right there. 87

Leflaive, Olivier  
Burgundy, Bourgogne Aligoté, Bourgogne Aligoté du  
Domaine  
Aligoté  
2005, \$13.99, 12.0%

The green-white straw color complemented by flecks of yellow, translucent from a distance while almost completely transparent up close. Powdered sugar, cotton candy, violets and licorice make for a pretty nose and not as sweet as it may sound, plenty of juicy lemon and apple, pear, peach fruit too, enough stoniness to keep it legit. Medium-bodied, the acidity helps carve a path into the mouth and provide contour and shape for the spiced peach, apricot, pear fruit and heighten the zest in that lemon too. The mineral and stone components more active here, about equal to the florality. Slight bitter bite on the finish but not offputting. Good floral lift at the very last moment. Not horribly complex, however, just off-center enough to raise an eyebrow. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 87

Aubuisières, Domaine des  
Loire, Vouvray, Cuvée de Silex  
Chenin Blanc

2005, \$14.99, 13.0%

Hazy deep yellow straw in color with a brown tinge, the translucency helps the color extend through the rims. Lemon honey and violets make for an easygoing nose, mere shade of beeswax, actually more salty, the round and amiable peach, apricot, green melon, pear fruit scents keep it slightly dumbed down. Medium-bodied, firmly chubby, the acidity helps it avoid being too soft, however, the primary material isn’t quite strong enough to finish the workout. The lemon to lime citrus and the peach, apricot, apple fruit attenuated and lacking in expressivity, peter out through the mid-palate. There’s more stoniness and mineral water than the nose suggests and a little more lanolin. Some smokiness helps to fill out the finish. (Synthetic cork) 85

## FRANCE ROSE

Pradeaux, Château  
Provence, Bandol, Rosé  
Blend

2006, \$25.99, 13.5%

While mostly watermelon pink, there’s a palpable orange zinc tint to it as well, very clear with a sleek surface, the rims turn diffuse. The nose isn’t muted per se, it’s more about a subdued demeanor in the stone dust, pressed flowers, dried lemons and quiet cherry, strawberry, red apple fruit scents. Medium-bodied with an erect bearing, has the acidity, and probably tannins, to keep things dry as well as possessed of crisp outlines. There’s equal portions of stone, chalk dust and lemon peel as there is cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit, by no stretch a fruity wine but not devoid of it either. Lemony but not juicy, could say the back half experiences increasing grassiness. All its mouth weight persists through an extended finish. Mostly Mourvèdre, remainder Cinsault, Grenache. 88

## ITALY RED

Fay, Casa Vinicola Sandro  
Lombardy, Sforzato di Valtellina  
Nebbiolo

2002, \$35.99, 14.5%

Clear and trim, red rust to ochre tinge permeates the dilute purple base from the core through the rims, the latter transparent even if not the fault of the color’s strength. While there’s an airy openness to the nose, there’s still no denying the dried fruit sugariness in the plum, cherry scents, green apple too, sweet whiskey oak

barrels, the pressed flowers have and aged quality, no real counterpoint to the sweet elements. Medium-bodied, the sweetness and concentration in the plum, cherry, blackberry, pear, apple fruit puts it immediately in your face, even as it remains on the whole openly knit with a paced dissolve. Some baking spices and a hint of dough, however, this remains a very primary wine. Leaves you guessing wildly where it might go in the future. 88

Decordi, Vinicola  
Puglia/Apulia, Sfida  
Blend  
2006, \$9.99, 13.0%

Purple bruise of a core, strong scarlet red cast, despite the darkness of color its clarity shines through well, fully saturated garnet rims. There's a matted wet straw and "meadow after a rain" kind of grassiness to the nose, juicy white grapefruit pulp, hint of dried milk chocolate before settling in with tart raspberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit scents. Light-bodied, gains a certain bounciness from this and relieves most of the tartness which might be present here in the same cherry, raspberry, red fruit flavors. Considerably more stoniness and parched brown earth in the mouth, almost ashen on some sips. This heightened by the keenly fresh acidity. The grapefruit and lemon citrus goes a long way towards keeping it bright through a long finish while that milk chocolate cream also makes sure there's a soft moment of relief. More contrasts than usual for the price. 70% Primitivo, 30% Negroamaro. 87

Hofstätter, J.  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Steinraffler  
Lagrein  
1999, \$40.99, 13.5%

The core has enough blackness in the purple to suggest nothing about it age-wise, however, the rims do have a more mature brick red appearance and with decidedly brown tones. There's butterscotch, coffee ice cream and taffy in the nose which at once helps to settle it in some while also knocking its IQ down by like 30 points, the boysenberry, black cherry, currant fruit hard to assess as it lacks clarity, floral with a little bit of a lime/lemon swirl but you better like oak. Medium-bodied and close to repetitious in the burnt coffee, fried butter, caramel flavors, the grill smoke alludes to honeyed glaze which burnt off. The cherry, raspberry, watermelon fruit has a solid center and all but tends to drift off some and get caught in the thick smoke cloud. tar, earth, bell pepper and mixture of seashells and metallic sand. Not afraid to disagree, the white grapefruit and lemon citrus help it stick up for itself. Just can't shake all that... oak. 86

Castellani  
Tuscany, Chianti, Biagio  
Sangiovese  
2005, \$9.99, 12.0%

Blood red infusion throughout the purple core, more old brick red around the rims, not filmy but not quite clean either. Flowers, leather, dirt and pieces of cedar give the nose a "country wine" appeal, the cherry and red raspberry fruit equal parts snap and juice. Light-bodied, does manage to stay consistent with what it has, no noticeable dip from start to finish. The lemon citrus more active here, possesses pleasing acidic freshness and avoids turning grassy or bitter. The red cherry, raspberry fruit acceptable throughout, drier by the finish. Less earth, leather, tobacco, lacks resonance in the bottom for that. Basically a humble everyday table red that makes few

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pretensions to more and the better for it. Unspecified percentages of Sangiovese, Canaiolo. 85

## ITALY WHITE

Tiefenbrunner  
Veneto, Delle Venezie  
Pinot Grigio  
2006, \$12.49, 12.5%

Basic golden straw color with a mixture of green and brown flecks, nice surface brilliance, hue empties out around the rims. Very dusty, mineral nose, gives it an erect bearing, not to downplay the crisp floral notes and tart lemon to orange citrus accents, the apple, pear, peach fruit very focused, almost to the point of evanescence. Medium-bodied but all the body it has feels full, not an ounce of fat on it. The acidity is quite strong but also denuded some by its density. While packed with crushed stone and minerals it derives a really energizing kick from bitter nuts and grass. Agile, if not evasive, apricot, peach, nectarine, green apple fruit, there and then scoots away. Finishes with elevating lemon to white grapefruit citrus, adding to its already formidable cleaning feel. [Screwcap] 88

Castelfeder, Azienda Agricola  
Alto Adige/Südtirol  
Gewürztraminer  
2005, \$19.99, 13.5%

There's a pale deadness to it, no shine, this detracts from the actually dark amber orange to gold coloration, gauzily translucent and filled with extremely minute bubbles. The nose is nutty and floral but also furnishes a less expected oiliness, like a knife sharpening stone, also waxy, could be confused with a Chenin Blanc or Riesling, the peach, pear, apple fruit scents offer no complexity, just play it straight up. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and lean, you notice the acidity way before you think you would. Sliced oranges and floral water dominant, stoniness before any nuttiness, its dryness makes the peach, apricot, nectarine, apple fruit a bit player. While it ends with an increasingly creamy texture, at the same time also hits you with some bitter notes. Not sure what it's trying to do. [Synthetic Cork: Vinotop] 87

Rocca Bernarda  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Colli Orientali del Friuli  
Tocai Friulano  
2005, \$16.99, 13.0%

Clear yellow straw in color, can't fade a lot at the rims since not much hue at the core, basic, non-massaged white wine color. Smoke, cream, mint, flowers, lemon scented mineral water, with the peach, apple, pear scents, there's something for everyone in the nose but none will have to surreptitiously unfasten their belt from over-satiation. Light-bodied, stones, twigs, streamwater, licorice and lemon peels hit first, then there's a crest of honey before the acidity washes across things and a dull silence falls upon your palate. The peach, pear, yellow apple fruit enters and exits unobtrusively. not weak yet at the same time not vocal. Clings nicely through the finish, doesn't wash out with ease. Just lacks personality. 86

Maddalena, Borgo  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Grave del Friuli  
Tocai Friulano  
2005, \$14.99, 13.0%

Brown to yellow straw in color, fades out appreciably along the rims but still displays a decent shine along the surface. Peaceful nose, quietly supplies lemon zest, stone and chalk dust, rose petals and a whisper of peach, apricot, pear, yellow apple fruit scents. Medium-bodied, rounds out well through the attack, immediately makes its presence known. Slight bitter bite infuses the lemon to lime citrus as well as the pear, apple, peach fruit. This focuses and heightens the floral side, if perhaps shortens it as well. Spicier past the mid-palate, both the former and this tend to overshadow the more muted stone, streamwater elements. Plenty of weight left through the finish. Somehow, though, the parts don't coalesce into a greater whole. 86

#### GERMANY WHITE

Stolleis, Weingut Peter  
Pfalz, Haardter, Herzog, Kabinett Trocken AP #15  
Riesling  
2005, \$11.99, 12.5%  
Presents a yellow base with sufficient orange tint to keep the rims full, bends light without sacrificing clarity, miniscule bubbles stick around long after it's been poured. The nose seems to be of two minds, wants to highlight the fullness of the pear, apple, pineapple, peach scents but relents and stuffs your nostrils full of mineral water and wet stone only to once more remember the honey, lemon reduction and violet elements, definitely more accessible as it warms. Medium-bodied, dry and you can feel the extract rub its weight into the tongue, raw and determined. Wedges of lemon, bitter garden herbs, stone, clay and a lower touch of flowers fill it out but it's always going to be more about character than flavor. The pineapple, nectarine, peach, apple fruit cruises along well. Dry enough that it almost demands raw shellfish. Lyle likes glass closures. (Glass Stopper) 88

St. Urbans-Hof, Weingut  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, QbA AP #5  
Riesling  
2006, \$9.99, 10.0%  
Not especially shiny but more clear than translucent, the yellow hay color of average depth, not much effect on the more hueless rims. The nose is somewhat angular and resistant, moderate lemon peel and peach, pear fruit scents yet dominated by hard chalk, stone, smoke, bitter garden herbs, not particularly out to please. Medium-bodied, however, the hardness exists as well in the mouth, dry and extracted into near immobility with dully throbbing acidity. The pink grapefruit, lemon, lime citrus does an admirable job of lending the mid-palate some sparkle, the peach, apricot, green melon fruit ambiguously committed to showing up. Less bitter here but there's a light herbaceousness, like weeds between stones. Has personality and certainly thrust for the price but never easy to swallow. 87

Rapp, Weingut W.  
Nahe, Ebernburger, Schlossberg, Spätlese Feinherb AP #10  
Riesling  
2005, \$19.99, 12.5%  
Brown straw to dull gold in color, no shine at all, transparent rims. Highly appley nose, dried and serene, cinnamon, lemon meringue, whipped cream, pear and peach follow the apples, touch of minerality. Full-bodied, spicy and full of tang, like cinnamon and nutmeg apple

sauce, again followed on by pear and peach fruit. The lemon, lime, tangerine citrus sparkles in the mouth yet more sweet than zesty. Not much minerality nor stoniness, just emphasizes the fruit. Honey, brown sugar increase the sweetness. No complexity, the acidity so-so, as a result ends on a flat note. Hard to fault the fruit's effort, though. 86

#### AUSTRIA WHITE

Schrock, Weingut Heidi  
Burgenland, Rust  
Furmint  
2005, \$22.99, 13.0%  
Flat yellow color, translucent despite the lack of hue, what hue is there has a mild day-glo aspect. Mineral powder, white grapefruit pith and floral dust make the nose decidedly on the dry side, firm enough too that the pear, peach, apple scents not able to stretch out much too, overall dense and somewhat bottom-heavy. Full-bodied, again more a matter of sheer extract and viscous mouth feel than something like thick fruit or oak. The pear, apple, peach, apricot fruit yields to white grapefruit and lemon with nary a fight, the may be in large part to the formidable acidity which keeps things dry and dusty from start to finish. Even keeps the minerals and stoniness submerged until the end. The florality is low grade but much more consistent throughout. (Screwcap) 89

Loímer, Weingut Fred  
Kamptal, Langenlois, Lois  
Grüner Veltliner  
2006, \$11.99, 12.0%  
Purely transparent, fetching shine to cover up the barest of white straw color, why even mention it? Fresh and juicy white grapefruit, white minerals, stream stones in the nose, floral as well, features approachably ripe peach, apricot, yellow apple scents, airy and open, dances effortlessly. Medium-bodied, leads with tangerine to white grapefruit citrus and sharper mineral dust, the acidity has plenty of brawn and runs the show without challenge. Grassiness elevates through to the finish. The peach, apricot, pear fruit more consistent than full. Ends with a white pepper bite. Has a little bit of everything and makes it hard to want to find fault with it. (Screwcap) 88

Leth, Weingut  
Donauland, Wagram, Scheiben, Lagenreserve  
Roter Veltliner  
2005, \$25.99, 13.0%  
Bright golden hue with a slight bronzed patina as well as green flecks, pools deeply in the glass and betrays only slight hue loss around the rims. Intense white grapefruit and lemon citrus pierce the nose, more peppery than flowery, presents a pine or menthol like cleansing burst too, the peach, apricot, green apple fruit honed down to all muscle. Medium-bodied, salty and peppery, along with the white and pink grapefruit to tangerine citrus, no lack of overall zing. The acidity gives it a full, heavy feeling rather than cleansing, while biting it plays up dense tropical fruit flavors such as papaya, pineapple, nectarine rather than apricot or apple. Gives up a waft of powdered lilacs but it tends to grind to a halt at the end rather than suavely extend. Not that it ends easily, sticks to your cheeks for some time after you swallow. 88

Stadlman, Weingut  
Thermenregion  
Neuburger  
2005, \$12.99, 12.0%

Glassy appearance of green-yellow straw, clings enough to bend might and gain depth, sits attractively in the glass. Sharp lemon and lime zest focus the nose, smoke and stone dust follow suit, crisp green apple, pear and peach fruit scents toe the line as well, doesn't cut particularly deep but has a good degree of military precision. Medium-bodied, has the same general approach in the mouth, not going to wow you with complexity, however, does everything it does well. The acidity neither dominates nor submits to the ripeness of the apple, pear, apricot fruit and lemon to orange citrus, allows for a brush of brown sugar too. The dusty minerality and stoniness holds off until during the mid-palate and coats the tongue through the finish. Again, doesn't leave you with an "impression" per but no problem chugging it down. 87

### **SLOVENIA RED**

Movia  
Brda, Veliko Rosso  
Blend  
2000, \$41.99, 12.5%

Truly more orange-black than purple at the core, very light and almost transparent dried blood red hued rims, has a "middle aged" look about it. Strong contrast in the nose between the plummy cherry and blackberry fruit scents and the much drier cedar, animal hide, saltlick and factory smoke elements, more pleased to stay at a comfortable distance from each other than blend into a whole. Medium-bodied, has noticeable tannins yet remains on the soft side, soaking in and becoming bottom heavy enough to feel a bit larger in size. Here it achieves a full-on plum and raisin feel to lend sweetness to the basic plum, cherry flavors. Sweetly spiced as well, the cedar and animal-like notes more subdued, more earthen with clay and mud notes. On the whole the sweetness prevents much complexity from developing and it tends to fade out some before the finish. Interesting for a glass or two. Unspecified percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Nero. 87

### **SPAIN RED**

Ombllancas, Finca  
Jumilla, Delain  
Blend  
2004, \$13.99, 14.0%

Murkily opaque blood red to purple core, washed out brick red rims, appear older than its true age, albeit not transparent. Cinnamon, clove and orange spice play off the baked ham, meat notes in the nose, juicy ripeness in the cherry, boysenberry, blueberry fruit gives it weight and depth, some leather and smoky grill fat but sticks with the girl it brought to the dance. Medium-bodied, sweet attack featuring molasses, candied orange peel and milk chocolate, passes off nimbly to the cinnamon, ginger, clove spice. Dusty, can't necessarily finger the tannins, however it still takes some of the starch out of the raspberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit. Not as gamey nor meaty here, a little more elevation in the earthiness. Nothing wrong with it, but doesn't keep the conversation going as long as one might like. 70% Monastrell, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Syrah. 84

Códax, Bodegas Martín  
Bierzo, Cuatro Pasos  
Mencía  
2004, \$13.99, 14.0%

Consistent red-purple throughout, very little difference from core to rims, mild luminescent glow too. Wet earth, tar, leather, the nose just has a general stink about it, dog shit takes on a greater and greater portion as it sits in the glass, all but obliterating the cherry and raspberry scents. Light-bodied, dilute attack leads to a dilute finish. Herbaceous, earth and merde give it too much attitude to hold a decent conversation with it. The raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit attenuated and seemingly incapable of keeping its feet squarely planted on the ground. Dill and pickle notes percolate through the back half. Someone just made a mistake here. 81

### **SOUTH AFRICA RED**

Kaapzicht  
Stellenbosch, Cabernet Sauvignon & Shiraz  
Blend  
2004, \$12.99, 14.0%

While opaque, the purple core is clean and light enough to admit of broad blood red to crimson rims, full coloration throughout. Heavy black smoke and sunbaked wet earth and minerals, rawhide leather, saltlick, the nose presents hardcore terroir, enough so that you can't suss out much oak or even blackberry, red currant, cherry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, slightly more subdued in the mouth yet still intent on busting out the smoke, earth, merde, leather and wild game flavors. No lack of ripeness in the cherry, blackberry, plum fruit but, as in the nose, the other aspects cloud much of the fruit over and here the tannins act to also impede the flow. Past the mid-palate a white grapefruit to lemon citrus bite pleasantly develops. Kind of overkill on some elements but on the whole an interesting drop. Unspecified percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz. 87

### **AUSTRALIA RED**

Torbreck  
South Australia, Barossa Valley, Cuvée Juveniles  
Blend  
2006, \$21.99, 14.5%

Consistent ruby-violet throughout, fairly light in color and clear, bit more red-magenta at the rims, which remain full. Fresh raspberry, red cherry pie nose, caramel and baked brown sugar keep it sweet, some smokiness, however, the nose is light enough that this doesn't coalesce. Medium-bodied, most of its weight is upfront, leans heavily on the sugariness in the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit. Because after that its more sour and herbal, even as the leather and smoke try to lend it gravity and length. Not especially tannic nor acidic, both aspects lack clear phrasing. Some sweeter baking spices but lacks the non-fruit sweet elements to mask inherent weaknesses. 60% Grenache, 20% Mataro, 20% Shiraz. [Screwcap] 84

### **ARGENTINA RED**

Peral, Finca El  
Mendoza, Tupungato  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2005, \$12.99, 14.4%

The dark purple core comes with a healthy shine, hardly moves at all into red crimson to violet rims, well-hued

throughout. There's a roasted smokiness that recalls wood smoked meats but just as likely a combination of oak toast with mineral earth, holds off the lighter florality and sweet red cherry, raspberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, very sweet and almost prunish plum, currant, cherry fruit, sticky and glues itself to your tongue. Not quite devoid of tannins and acidity but close, chooses to stay fat and jolly rather than refresh or challenge. Still has those moments of flower petals, adding in mixed white citrus. The oak toast clearer here, lends vanilla and burnt butter notes to the general smokiness. Easy enough to drink but doesn't compel you to do so. 85

Vistalba, Finca y Bodega  
Mendoza, Corte C  
Blend

2004, \$15.99, 14.0%

Passes quietly into opacity, the purple core reaches through to the magenta-ruby rims, darkening their natural glow. Smoky glazed ham, molasses, orange spice and floral musk attempt to distract you from the alcoholic fumes in the nose, the cherry, black raspberry fruit strikes you as deep but never quite catches. Medium-bodied, spreads itself evenly across the palate, not knit together enough to be seamlessly balanced but smooth approach. Something shortens the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, maybe the tannins, maybe, uhh, the fruit. Mild sweetness in the lemon zest, not enough to stretch out. Some dull oak toast and leather, nothing with clear contours. Loses your interest fairly swiftly. 85% Malbec, 15% Merlot. 84

NQN, Bodega  
Patagonia, Neuquén, Malma  
Malbec

2005, \$11.99, 14.0%

Pure black purple core, impeccably opaque, the razor thin ruby rims hum with warmth when visible. Candied cherry, plum fruit in the nose, cotton candy too, hint of scented nail polish, carob and coffee rinds, the nose hits you with a violent blast that only softens so much. Medium-bodied, smoother in the mouth but mostly due to its uni-dimensional character, overly dependent on the plum, blackberry, black cherry fruit. Some vague acidity to be had, brings out a little lemony bite. Powdered chocolate and wet cedar chips come on through the mid-palate yet its not really capable of breadth. Truncated finish, not entirely unwelcome. 83

## ARGENTINA WHITE

Portillo, Bodega El  
Mendoza, Valle de Uco, Finca El Portillo  
Sauvignon Blanc

2006, \$7.99, 13.0%

Very transparent, the white hay hue barely registers, aided by green tinge at certain angles, no color left at the rims. The nose never quite turns herbaceous, continually succumbs to a pink grapefruit, lime, lemon citrus medley, touch of flowers and a curious vanilla creaminess which smoothes out any potential bumps in the road. Light-bodied, stays fresh, juicy and bouncy rather even make a stab at spine or "seriousness." The pink grapefruit, orange, lemon citrus sweet unto soft drink status and there's minimal acidity draw out any latent bite. Gregariously forward in the peach, apricot, apple fruit department, not super juicy yet gives you all its got. That vanilla creaminess trumps any mineral water or stone components there may be. As in the nose, avoids the pitfall of greenness and

allows you to consume it without paying too much attention. (Screwcap) 85