

The Hanes Wine Review, July 2012 Edition

This edition of ye olde *Hanes Wine Review* finds Hanes relocated to New Jersey after four years in Charlotte, NC. Still in the wine business, trying to help the innocent of humanity pick out a nice bottle of wine. Or beer. Or booze. Who knows if this shift will change the wines Hanes tends to consume or at least sample. The uncertainty creates an incredible rush of excitement.

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This month's big winners... The "Pian del Ciampolo" bottling from Tuscan producer Montevervine has its fans and detractors, the 2009 version is quite nice and you'd have to be a reactionary traditionalist to not find something to like, more or less fairly priced around \$27. Hanes is a big fan of the wines from Ty Caton and this time around note goes to the 2009 "Upper Bench" Merlot from Sonoma. It can be inserted into the conversation of top drawer Californian Merlot and merits the \$32 or so price tag. Can't really say it but Buitenverwachting from South Africa puts out an affordable and tasty Sauvignon Blanc, their 2011 full of fruit and verve and only like \$16. First experience with the Beaujolais wines from Gérard Charvet and his 2010 Moulin-à-Vent bottling was pleasingly complex and quaffable. *And* still at \$20 which is getting rarer for cru Beaujolais. Under the Quinta Cruz label the winery Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard puts out some interesting Californian renditions of Portuguese grapes, as witnessed by their 2007 red blend "Concertina" which is pretty authentic and tasty for \$21. Finished the stash of 2010 Sec bottlings from Huet in Vouvray and the Le Mont is the winner! If Hanes was still laying down wine to age a few of these would get put away for sure.

The best \$15 and under picks... Not much luck with inexpensive bottlings this edition but the 2010 "Monte Oton" Garnacha from Borsao is hard to pass by for \$8, this is winery that knows how to make cheap wine!

And the disappointments... Expected more from the 2001 Zweigelt rosé from Mittelbach (Tegernseerhof) of Austria, this is usually a great little summer rosé but not impressed this vintage, even for \$14. Not slamming it per se but the wines put out under The Dreaming Tree label have taken off pretty well, in large part owing to the Dave Matthews association. Tried one, their "Crush" red blend and \$15 is pushing it, again not a bad wine but nothing special. The 2005 Aglianico bottling "Pago dei Fusi" from Terredora di Paolo in Campania, Italy is a tiresome wine, hell bent on putting on as much makeup as its facial structure will take. Ehh, but some people are paying around \$50 for it. Thanks anyway, Sara, luv ya! Very good but all the raves for the 2010 Do Ferreiro old vine "Cepas Vellas" Albariño is *not* a \$45 wine. But much happiness to those who think it is.

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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/oldervintages2012.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)

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Caton, Ty
Sonoma Valley, Caton Vineyard, Ballfield
Syrah
2009, \$31.99, 15.1%

Clean crimson red inflected purple core, close to but short of opacity, the rims mostly scarlet with an outer edge of ruby, quite vivid and alive in the glass. The nose drips with vanilla, whipped cream, peanut shells and butterscotch, lots of creamy oak, minty too, the flower petals create lift, oddly the blackberry, blueberry, red cherry scents on the demure side, stretches out nicely without seeming like it is seeking attention in doing so. Medium to full-bodied, very sappy and soft, hugs every pore of your mouth, the downward pressure makes it easy to ignore the lack of tannin or acidity in terms of structuring context. Syrupy blueberry, boysenberry, raspberry fruit front and center here, aided by molasses, brown sugar, honey notes, the oak here mainly whipped cream and vanilla fudge. Again, good deal of florality, along with orange sherbet accents. Not complex nor displaying any sign that it might one day be, that said, fun and brings an easy smile to your face. 90

Caton, Ty
Sonoma Valley, Caton Vineyard, Upper Bench
Merlot
2009, \$31.99, 14.5%

While clear the core is a dark purple that comes close to black at times, you don't get the crimson and scarlet hues until segues to broad rims, very well saturated and vivid. At first the nose is a cornucopia of oak, all butterscotch, mint, popcorn, vanilla and chocolate swirl, as it opens this recedes and the cherry, blackberry, red currant fruit forms the core, supplemented by back road dust and dried leaves, cedar and black tea, close to full 180 degree turn. Medium-bodied, sets itself squarely in the mouth, not shy about asserting its tannin and overall structure. The currant, cherry, Italian plum fruit is ripe and juicy while flowing at a steady, muscular pace. Some pepper and then sage and marjoram spice, cedar, orange pekoe tea and kindling wood, again the oak really knits in as it opens. Cola, licorice, mint and a mentholated breeze soften its profile. Pleasing length without ostentation, immediately enjoyable while also nibbling at the edges of your consciousness to show

there's more there if you want it. 90

Turley
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Cedarman
Zinfandel
2009, \$29.00, 16.2%

The purple base to the core also brings a lot of ruby red along, curiously darkens around the rims to a scarlet and dried blood red complexion, semi-opaque yet without any sense of real saturation, just natural expression. The nose destabilized some by alcoholic fumes but past that there's raspberry, cherry, strawberry compote, milk chocolate, mint and a deep shot of mixed sour citrus, with time you sense more herbal and earthy qualities, that mountain character evident. Medium-bodied, framed nicely by moderate acidity and tannin, yet by no stretch "dry" as the raspberry, pomegranate, cherry, rhubarb fruit has concentration and bite. The chocolate and vanilla tones step to the fore here and really seem out of place with the whole. The tangerine, white grapefruit citrus keeps a steady pulse throughout. Undercurrent of pine and menthol, contributes again to that mountain air feel. Loses momentum and pacing at weird times, like it lost its train of thought. 89

Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard
San Antonio Valley, Pierce Ranch, Quinta Cruz
Concertina
Blend
2007, \$20.99, 12.8%

Some cloudiness to the violet core, the ruby comes out through the rims while also taking on a more brick like hue which lends it an aged look. The nose has a slight reductive funk to it, merde, leather, wet fallen leaves and bark, cedar, the sour cherry, raspberry fruit scents blend into tart white grapefruit, then some licorice to basil stuff, has good presence while also managing lift too. Light to medium-bodied, feels like it has lost weight and gained sourness, plenty of acidity on hand while the tannins feel pulverized in large part. Oaky with dill and vanilla notes alongside lots of cedar and sweet tobacco. Mix of tart orange to white grapefruit citrus. The cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit at once has a hard candy appeal and sour pucker. Herbal and leafy with a metallic, iron fleck edge too. Lots of energy through the finish, certainly plays the part and comes across as an authentic representation of the grapes. 74% Tinta Roriz, 19% Touriga Nacional, 4% Touriga

Franca, 3% Tinta Cão. 89

Fogline Vineyards

Russian River Valley, Floodgate Vineyard

Pinot Noir

2010, \$35.00, 14.5%

Very pretty and shiny violet to ruby-magenta in hue, given its complete transparency also manages a well-saturated appearance, fully colored through the rims, glimmering surface. The nose is compact and of few words, curious initial burst of licorice and minerals before settling into cranberry, raspberry, strawberry fruit scents, over time more grapefruit pith accrues, solid smokiness but nothing overtly oaky beyond a spoonful of warm caramel. Medium-bodied, yet with a thicker bottom, hugs the tongue closely, lack of acidity contributes to its languid pacing across the palate. Mint, basil, anise and orange to grapefruit citrus bring a swirl of sweet and sour. Much more tartness in the cranberry, rhubarb, pomegranate, cherry fruit, very red in complexion and puckering, if no doubt ripe. Hint of cola and menthol. Again, the oak is lowkey and relegated to moments of milk chocolate and caramel. Touch hollow in the middle. Still, agreeable mouth perfume carries the day. 88

Nine North Wine Company

Regional Blend, North Coast, Rock & Vine Three Ranches

Cabernet Sauvignon

2009, \$12.99, 14.1%

Brick red to purple in hue, light enough that the remains transparent as well, more of a burnt sunset red towards the rims, lively and without much saturation. Plump nose of plum, blackberry, black cherry fruit which expands in your nostrils and then just squats there, sweet vanilla, molasses and butterscotch oak with some stiffening toastiness, vague mentholated breeze, pine, that's all folks. Full-bodied, if frontloaded, sprays your mouth with creamy oak of vanilla, chocolate and butterscotch before dripping cherry, plum, blackberry juice down your throat. Starts drying out through the mid-palate, for no apparent reason as the tannins are slight, and likely mostly wood derived. Licorice, pine, violets and incense, not a lot to suggest a rugged Cabernet profile. But if you want a sweeter rendition, you can do worse. (78% Solano County, 14% Napa Valley, 8% Mendocino County) 87

Dreaming Tree, The

Regional Blend, North Coast, Crush

Blend

2009, \$14.99, 13.5%

Clear and somewhat light ruby-violet hued core, given where it starts stays consistent to the rims, touch of

magenta comes through. The nose possesses formidable molasses, butterscotch and toffee oak, while juicy and sweet the blackberry, blueberry, raspberry scents are not altogether rich, vague floral swipe, menthol too, you can enjoy it more for purity than complexity. Light to medium-bodied, tangy with a citric bite and mild herbaceous snap. Most of this smoothed over by that vanilla, caramel, butterscotch, coconut oil oak. The cherry, raspberry, blueberry fruit softly consistent, no fruit bomb but no trailing off at the end either. Smoky and sort of leathery finish. No great flaws, it's serviceable, its lighter body boosts drinkability. 67% Merlot, 33% Zinfandel. 87

Wine World Estates

Regional Blend, California, Colby Red Blend

2010, \$13.99, 13.9%

Red plum to purple hued core, while dark at the same time quite clean and unblemished, the rims segue to a bright magenta, overall bright and vivacious and easily looks like a "fun" wine to consume. The nose stuffed with caramel, hot butterscotch, milk chocolate and rich floral dew, not for any lack of orange juice, raspberry, red cherry and watermelon fruit scents, no sign of greenness nor underripeness nor anything which might smack of possible tertiary development. Light to medium-bodied, here the sugary, confectionary qualities leap forward with even greater voice, toffee, butterscotch, caramel, chocolate, vanilla and hard candy in feel strawberry, raspberry, cherry fruit, in many ways the poor man's Apothic Red. Smooth and fluid, no sign of unmanaged tannin nor acidity, there is some tartness at the end as the fruit's length gets stretched to its natural limit. The florality seems forced, as well as the orange to lemon zest, the inner mouth perfume hangs there for a prolonged period. Perhaps if it had more body you'd sense greater breadth through the finish. As is, acceptable sweetish table red unlikely to incur the ire of any but the wine geek. Unspecified percentages of Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Syrah, Petite Sirah, Merlot. (Composite Cork) 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma County, Cuvée Karatas

Blend

2010, \$30.00, 14.4%

Pooled and layered golden color, decent shine, diminishes around the rims. The nose is steady with a muscular lift featuring vanilla extract, whipped cream, honey, orange sherbet, mint, some mineral dust and then peach, yellow apple and apricot fruit, at first very oaky but dissipates some as it opens. Medium-bodied,

the acidity slugs you at first and then pulls back, fills any gaps with lemon, lime spritz, more of that vanilla and whipped cream as well as cinnamon and ginger spice. Softens as it passes through the mid-palate. With mint, lilacs, lavender, more perfumed than sweet, dryish finish. On the whole, more integrated and smooth than transparent to the individual components. 60% Sémillon, 40% Sauvignon Musque. 88

La Merika

Regional Blend, Central Coast

Chardonnay

2010, \$11.99, 14.5%

While quite shiny close to invisible with only the barest white-green straw coloration, the rims full emptied of hue. The nose is twin barrels of ripe green melon, apple, apricot, peach fruit as well as vanilla, caramel, butterscotch, maple candy oak notes, blends in dewy florality and orange zest, soft nostril presence and pains taken so that nothing interferes with the aforementioned fiesta. Medium-bodied, plush and expansive and quickly spreads from cheek to cheek. Not oaky in a toasty manner, just that vanilla bean, fudge, butterscotch, caramel all over the place, the orange citrus has a sherbet consistency. Ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg spice. No acidity to speak of, its breadth keeps you aware of it. Never shakes its confectionary character, like you bought it at the candy store. 86

FRANCE RED

Bouland, Daniel

Beaujolais, Morgon, Delys

Gamay Noir

2010, \$28.99, 13.0%

Dark red ruby to purple in hue, evidently clear regardless of darker hue, the rims don't quite lighten to the magenta range while you by the same token you never question its saturation, reflective surface. While there's minerals and stone shards in the nose, remains dominated by ripely sour blackberry, raspberry, pomegranate fruit scents as well as white grapefruit and blood orange citrus, pressed flowers and a fistful of black licorice, there's a latent herbaceousness buried under all that fruit. Crosses the line into full-bodied, more plush than dense, has good tannin but it's the acidity that creates a steady pulse and clean appeal. The raspberry, cherry, blackberry fruit has a darker complexion here, while still sour at the end. The white grapefruit present throughout, the florality draws back, allowing for a brine and salt aspect to come through. Touch of chocolate at the end smoothes the landing. Challenging stuff without any attitude. 91

Charvet, Domaine Gérard

Beaujolais, Moulin-à-Vent

Gamay Noir

2010, \$19.99, 13.0%

Unblemished and shiny garnet to violet hued, purer red around the rims, nothing profound in its appearance, just a healthy and fresh vibrancy. The nose echoes cocoa powder and lemon zest around the core of pomegranate, cranberry, raspberry, strawberry fruit scents, there's a dusty stoniness which verges on chalk, pure and without any real herbaceous or earthy elements, gains pungency from a pickle and leather aspect, the fruit swirls higher into a breezy cloud. Medium-bodied, can't say it flows as much as it ambles forward. Has very good acidity and excellent posture yet it has also evinces a more laconic nonchalance, almost reluctant to admit of what it can do. Green apple and pear blend into the base of cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit. White grapefruit and lesser blood orange both sour and sweet. Brine and sea salt, stony after a fashion. Floral residue fills the finish. What makes it a winner is that it's serious but you don't have to be serious about it. 90

Cros, Domaine du

Southwest France, Marcillac, Lo Sang del Païs

Fer Servadou

2011, \$14.99, 12.5%

While clear and transparent it presents a vivid, luminous purple core and broad ruby-magenta rims, sparkles and dances in the glass as it reflects light. The nose mixes tobacco ash, mineral dust, freshly mown grass and bell pepper along with sour cherry, raspberry scents, the initial presence of merde blows off with air time, both puts on weight and gets fruitier as it opens. Medium-bodied, dry and firm, you have to agitate it to get it moving about in the mouth. Pronounced tannin adds to the gluey effect as well as the tartness of the elderberry, cherry, strawberry fruit flavors. Quite herbaceous with that same emphasis on bell pepper. Here you get much more white grapefruit and sour orange than in the nose. The earth, minerals, green olive and matted straw create country style counterpoint to the riper fruit, were it a bit denser you'd be liable to attribute more animality to it. Taken as a whole, has a steady light turbulence which adds to its noticeability. May very well improve with additional bottle time. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 89

Vissoux, Domaine du

Beaujolais, Fleurie, Les Garants

Gamay Noir

2010, \$29.99, 12.5%

Bright cranberry red to violet in color, not much difference from core to rims, touch more pink at outermost reaches, transparency trumps the

saturation, stays sparkly. The nose offers a good deal of earth and grass as well as lemon peel, bites into your nostrils and creates a crackling tension, this in spite of the ample rhubarb, raspberry, red cherry and strawberry scents, light floral and baking spice flourish before it all disappears. Full-bodied with a strong structure, feels muscular without seeming all that tannic or acidic. Pretty darn dry, allows space for mineral powder, dusty earth and meadow grasses before all else. Vague merde presence, the lemon to white grapefruit citrus gains velocity through the mid-palate. As in the nose the fruit is steady but a definite second place finisher, mix of sweet and sour in the form of cranberry, strawberry, raspberry, watermelon flavors. Here you get a little cocoa powder too. Does open with time, might be a candidate to decant. Really needs food to shine best. 89

FRANCE WHITE

Huet, Domaine
Loire, Vouvray, Le Mont, Sec
Chenin Blanc
2010, \$35.99, 13.5%

Simple gold color, very solid and block-like presence in the glass, full through the rims, distorts your vision looking into it. The nose is firm yet giving, loads up on tangerine, lime, lemon citrus then a smattering of chalk and mineral dust, the fruit is mostly pineapple, nectarine, pear, green apple, quince, kind of angular, most smoky than honeyed, leaves a floral footprint behind. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and framed by 4x4 wooden beams, it wouldn't move in a hurricane. The acidity is strong without cutting, not out to dampen the show. More honey and sugary sweetness here teases out length in that lime, lemon citrus as well as richer peach, apricot, pineapple, nectarine fruit. The mineral water and stone recede some but it's never fruity per se nor lacking in a sense of place. It has a happy energy, shoots up like fireworks in the sky. 92

ITALY RED

Monteverdine
Tuscany, Pian del Ciampolo
Blend
2009, \$26.99, 12.5%

Light and super-transparent, shiny ruby to light purple color, more pure red around the rims, somewhat dilute, that noted sparkles in the glass and its purity captures the eye. Invigorating nose of sour red cherry, raspberry fruit, lemon pulp, dusty pebbles, dried mown grass, cracked saddle leather and pressed flowers, while no single scent dominates, as a whole its lightness of touch adds up into an effective, longlasting

presentation. Light in body yet with a very sappy grip which creates great cling to your mouth pores. Fine acidity and a little tannin too, brings pop to the red cherry, cranberry, raspberry flavors and accentuates the presence of the mixed white citrus. Leather with a bit of animality and merde as well, the florality bound up in the structure. There's a sweet garden herb aspect as well as glimmer of licorice. Perhaps a little short on the finish. Otherwise, just a happy and well-structured little wine. 90% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo, 5% Colorino. 90

Castell'in Villa
Tuscany, Chianti Classico
Sangiovese
2008, \$28.99, 14.0%

Extremely clear liquid, exquisite transparency without giving up hue, more of a cough syrup red to orange tinted crimson than purple, albeit there's some of the latter there, little drop off at the rims when allowing for overall clarity. The nose hits you with some big barnyard funk, damp earth, wet grass, fresh merde while also producing sugary candied to maraschino cherry and raspberry scents, tightens when the squeezed lemon peels and verbena, leather and tar hit the set, you have to give the fruit credit for shining through this muck. Close to full-bodied, more concentration than weight, like a black star or something. The acidity is full bore, ragged and raging but not unnecessarily violent. This likely helps balance the plum to prune notes with higher toned cherry, raspberry accents. Fairly herbal, lots of that lemon, here you sense an undercurrent of wildflowers, anise and pine. Has kind of an oily mouth texture at times. This just bristles with muscular energy, a lion reclined and yawning that with barely a thought could get up and snap you in two. 89

Vajra, G.D.
Piedmont, Langhe Rosso
Blend
2009, \$15.99, 13.0%

Vivid ruby-violet core, decent clarity, takes on a touch of magenta near the rims, fairly sleek surface too. You get licorice, rose, violets in the nose, plenty of juicy blueberry, boysenberry, cherry scents, some milk chocolate, even vaguer minerality with better faring smokiness, steady lift which holds, not diffused easily. Medium-bodied, the acidity helps it become quite tangy, brings out pomegranate, raspberry, cranberry and strawberry alongside the red cherry, blackberry base. The florality spreads broadly here, passing lemon to white grapefruit citrus. Presents a rosemary to anise type of sweet herbs. Finishes with expanding stoniness even as the fruitiness remains consistent. Not easy drinking per se but entirely pleasurable.

Unspecified percentages of Dolcetto, Nebbiolo, Barbera, Pinot Noir, Freisa. 89

Masi & Co., Renzo
Tuscany, Chianti
Sangiovese
2010, \$10.99, 13.0%

Brick red to purple core with a faint duskiness, coloration stays the same through the rims simply with a diminishment of richness, appealing enough visually. The nose produces rose petals, brown sugar, licorice and red cherry, raspberry fruit, straightforward and fruity, maybe a subtle moment of woodiness, ends perfunctorily just as it might otherwise turn herbal. Light to medium-bodied with relaxed acidity and tannin, dry enough for good posture and beyond that strives to lean on the smooth, juicy cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit. The anise, flowers and to lesser degree tar and leather create a possible impression of Sangiovese, really it's a sweet and sour red wine per se. Some mixed grapefruit to orange zing at the end supported by a curious spoonful of honey moment. Ripe and accessible, another in a litany of acceptable wines without glaring flaws. 92% Sangiovese, 5% Canaiolo, 3% Colorino. (Composite Cork) 87

Terredora di Paolo
Campania, Taurasi, Pago dei Fusi
Aglianico
2005, \$48.99, 13.5%

Deep glowing purple color, crimson to light brick red rims, does not appear particularly youthful nor mature, so-so opacity, semi-brooding. Big creamy, toasty oak in the nose with merde, peanut shells next to plum, currant and black cherry scents, deep floral musk, not much complexity just blunt brute force. Full-bodied, tannic and dull, on the heavy side, really down into the palate. Occasional moments of orange citrus, flowers, cocoa powder, it has an herbaceous streak too. Delivers flavors of coconut, vanilla custard, butterscotch, the oak here neither creamy nor toasty, albeit more the former. Tart cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit with more of that floral dusting. Dry, tacky mouth feel. Grinds to a halt at the finish, wear you down after a couple of glasses. 87

Thomain, Danilo
Valle d'Aosta, Enfer d'Arvier
Petit Rouge
2008, \$32.99, 13.5%

Moderately clear, has a glow like staring into the sun, red clay and dirt tinted purple core, a flat brick red around the rim with some general diminishment of hue. Smoky nose of kindling wood, campfire ash, earth and cowhide, behind all the barnyard like pungency is a tight core of raspberry, red cherry fruit, okay depth

and length, chooses to repeat the core scents rather than develop with air time. Light to medium-bodied, soft in how it resembles a mouth full of cotton while, on the other hand, there's no lack of acidity and bigger tannin than the weight normally finds. Minor mixed white citrus comes along with that woodiness and woody qualities, earth, cut grass and stones. Cranberry, strawberry, cherry fruit fresh with equal tartness to sweetness. Were it not as fruity you'd likely call it "rustic," as is it demands food to temper its rougher moments. 87

AUSTRIA ROSE

Mittelbach (Tegernseerhof), Weingut Familie Franz
Südburgenland, Rosé
Zweigelt
2011, \$13.99, 12.0%

Pale pink in color, what's there fades away by the rims, vaguest of orange tints, displays some light fizz clinging to the glass sides, while transparent not overly shiny. At first smells like tonic water with a stone to mineral base, lemon peel and dried flowers, gentle strawberry and red cherry fruit scents, there's a subtle stiffness to it, more rise than breadth, does not linger much. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, retains sufficient acidity and tannin for palate weight in the face of so-so raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit. The lemon citrus admits of accents of lime. At times something like cocoa powder comes through. The minerality is not defining yet maintains presence. Kind of caught in the middle, not especially fruit-driven nor refreshing and lively. Its lack of dimension is not annoying, however, nothing really holds your attention. Perfectly acceptable while not the strongest vintage of the wine. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 87

ITALY WHITE

Pavese, Ermes
Valle d'Aosta, Blanc de Morgex et de La Salle
Prié Blanc
2009, \$30.99, 12.0%

Pale yellow hay in color, close to transparent but there's some gauziness in there, surface shine slightly below average, loses its hue around the rims. Honey, cane sugar and floral dew pretty up the nose initially, the pear, green apple, apricot scents in turn express themselves before minerals and sauna stone smokiness take over, characterized by a herbaceousness not unlike asparagus, brightens through the efforts of white grapefruit to blood orange zest. Medium-bodied and has a full, sort of rubber ball, texture which creates continuity from cheek to cheek. Slight pickled, briny character plays up the metallic mineral side of things too. Herbal and a touch of

fallen forest wood. The acidity squares its shoulders and pushes into you, few delicate razor cuts. Presents a core of peach, apricot, pear fruit which fills out the mid-palate well. The orange, lemon citrus more an embellishment here than primary focus, comes with a dappling of golden honey. This is a wine that in many ways will impress as much based on your mood as the food it may be paired with, like a neutral empty vessel you fill with your needs. 89

SPAIN RED

Borsao, Bodegas
Campo de Borja, Monte Oton
Garnacha
2010, \$7.99, 14.5%

Bright ruby-violet in color, clear and sparkly, turns to a magenta hue at the rims with a mild pinkish glow. The nose is sweet with orange peel, chocolate, cinnamon spice and jammy plum, cherry, blackberry scents most obvious, has a semi-mentholated lift, no real herbaceous presence and lasts credibly long. Medium-bodied, there's an initial sour pucker during the mouth entry before turning sugary and letting the juiciness in the raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit through, loses its dark fruit complexion here. The citrus more white grapefruit and lemon, more cocoa powder than milk chocolate, the moderate acidity creates space for a grassy zippiness to freshen the back half. Ripe and fruity and without noticeable flaws, very good value if you just want a simple sipper on the cheap. (Synthetic Cork: ExcellentCork) 88

SPAIN WHITE

Do Ferreiro
Rías Baixas, Cepas Vellas
Albariño
2010, \$44.99, 13.5%

Super clean white gold color, entirely empty and hueless rims with a vague green tint to it. You get mint and licorice in the nose, orange zest, chalk and a briny salinity, green apple, pear fruit notes with pit fruit nuances, some mild baking spices, steady and muscular lift, its fullness does not interfere with its more dapper and clean demeanor. Medium-bodied, brawny acidity gives a good twist to the overall presentation, loaded with lemon, lime, tangerine citrus, chalk and stone powder, the pear, apple, peach fruit not overly juicy but highly expressive in its own way, benefits from the mint and spice accompaniment. Does not lose an ounce of intensity from start to finish, sparkly. A very good wine, however, not sure it is truly worth the up charge. 90

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Cederberg
Cederberg
Bukettraube
2011, \$15.99, 13.5%

Possessed of average luster, however, holds light and glows well with a deep golden hue and a mild green tint, drops off into near full transparency around the rims. Ripe and tangy nose of pineapple, kiwi, papaya, green apple, nectarine and melon, tangerine and pink grapefruit too, both of these tend to overpower the flowers, mint and lighter stoniness, very primary. Full-bodied, sweet and sappy, the acidity is a touch weak to handle the bodaciously rich pineapple, nectarine, peach, guava fruit, a sip of the tropics. Honey and floral dew keep in sinking in, likewise not much zest in the grapefruit citrus, just more juiciness. Again, the minerality is likely to be stronger than what is obvious, submerged under all the fruit. Does create a scrubbed sensation at the end, nothing sloppy here. Still, needs more contour to fully impress. (Screwcap: Savin) 89

Buitenverwachting
Constantia
Sauvignon Blanc
2011, \$15.99, 13.0%

Golden straw color with a slight brownish cast, transparent enough with a mild distortion of vision, stays full through the rims. Initially the nose seems sharp, offering pepper, white grapefruit, green grass and minerals, burst of jalapeño before softening some into apricot, peach and apple fruit scents, suggestion of vanilla and mint, very good pungency as well as complexity. Medium to full-bodied, as in the nose has good side-to-side coverage and powerful acidity to keep it pushing forward rather than congealing in place. Smoky and metallic at times, pushes the grapefruit and lemon citrus right up into the spotlight. Still has the vanilla pudding accent to sweeten the otherwise tart pineapple, papaya, peach, apricot fruit. Consistent pickle to jalapeño presence. Tangy and zesty, stays lively from start to finish. Well-priced for what you get. (Composite Cork) 89

CHILE WHITE

Emiliana, Viñedos
Valle del Bio-Bio, Eco Balance
Sauvignon Blanc
2010, \$8.99, 12.5%

Clean white gold, highly reflective, a few specks of green, fully transparent, what hue resides in the core does a good job of holding through the rims. While the nose will present accents of cut grass and bell to chili pepper, there's equal amounts of powdered sugar and

pressed flowers while the peach, apricot, yellow apple scents cruise at a full level, lean and wiry but not piercing, there's give and a willingness to soak in, meets you halfway. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with buoyant acidity yet nothing close to mouthwatering crispness nor dryness. The herbal component and chili heat elevate a little here while remaining unthreatening. Some pineapple, guava tang mixed into the nectarine, peach, apricot base. During a few moments seems like it might get floral but then relents. Mixes in a lot of different citrus, tangerine, lime, grapefruit to create some zing through the finish. No sense quibbling at the price. (Screwcap) 86

ARGENTINA RED

Caluna

Mendoza, Luján de Cuyo Agrelo

Blend

2009, \$26.99, 14.8%

Moderately clear, at some angles dusky, ruby purple core, lots of red to orange clay hues further out, good saturation with all the ponderous opacity. The nose is slightly tightly wound but finds open spaces for cocoa powder, potpourri, orange pekoe tea, pine cone, some density to the plum, cherry, black currant and then vanilla fudge, over time you get a smoky lift, caramel, spreads out without getting heavy. Full-bodied, velvety texture, grips while slowly moving forward, lays on the creamy oak which creates sink in, molasses, maple syrup, vanilla, chocolate, pine all over the place. Ripe and robust plum, cherry, boysenberry fruit, turns drier by the finish. Tannin is light if present. Hints at licorice, cedar, incense and sweet herbs. Firms up through the finish without losing the juiciness. Aims to please. 48% Malbec, 42% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot. 89

Diseño (Blends of Mendoza S.A.)

Mendoza, Old Vine

Malbec

2011, \$10.99, 13.5%

Lots of scarlet red in the otherwise purple core, nowhere near opaque, displays wide crimson red rims and a clear and reflective surface. The nose is quiet, slowly unfolds plum and black cherry scents, a pinch of cinnamon, ginger and other baking spices, besides a floral perfume, not a lot to mention, minimal oak presence, nothing stemmy nor underripe either. Full-bodied and maybe even heavy in the mouth, the tannins are subdued, not sweet but certainly ripe in the plum, cherry, currant fruit department. The orange citrus has some tangerine as well as a citrus blossom character and brings pucker to the finish. No earthiness but mild smokiness and some saddle soap. The more you sip the more frustrated you get that there's so little there to pick apart and discern. But, in

the end, taken at face value it is a somewhat chewy, fruity Malbec which serves well as a crowd pleaser. 88

Huarpe Wines

Mendoza, Luján de Cuyo Agrelo, Taymente

Malbec

2010, \$20.99, 14.5%

Scarlet to purple core of vague opacity, too clear to want to call it translucent, the broad blood red rims display its cleanliness, looks serious. The nose hits you with crisp, toasty oak, burnt kindling, vanilla, buttered toast, hard butterscotch candy and then mint, menthol and then cherry, blackberry fruit, very good lift, which helps compensate for the lack of being grounded in earthiness. Full-bodied, layers itself clearly on the palate, almost seems to consciously aim at keeping the constitutive parts clear rather than becoming a seamless whole. Here that blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit rises up to equal the charred wood, fried butter, caramel and cocoa oak tones although the smokiness of the latter lasts longest. Mint, flowers and licorice keep the makeup applied throughout. The tannin clumps up in places, creating dry patches here and there. It's the kind of wine that wants to leap out at you and talk swiftly and loudly so you can't really get a word into the conversation. That said, it is put together well for its assumed goal. 87

Valle Escondido, Bodegas y Viñedos

Mendoza, Valle Escondido, Gouguenheim

Cabernet Sauvignon

2010, \$9.99, 13.5%

Transparent brick red to purple in color, while very shiny looks a tad dilute, more of a basic sunset red around the rims, on the whole basic and unremarkable in appearance. Compact and direct nose of cherry, blackberry fruit, mild damp earthiness, close to no oak presence, maybe some chocolate, remarkably unadorned unto naked, at least you can say there's nothing to complain about. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, dry if not so tannic, perhaps gives you more acidity than might be the norm. Smooth and moves forward with steady paces, passing the mid-palate does get twiggy with tree bark and fallen leaf notes. The cherry, blackberry, red currant fruit vibrant and zippy, helped by an undercurrent of spiciness. Comes up with burnt cocoa and breakfast toast to rep the oak, nothing major. Guileless, no complexity, on the drier side falling short of being chewy. Shows well in its peer group, has nothing to be ashamed of. 87

Huarpe Wines

Mendoza, Luján de Cuyo Agrelo, Taymente

Cabernet Sauvignon

2009, \$20.99, 14.5%

Bright, immaculate light purple to garnet red hued core, more of a sunset to rust red towards the rims, crystal clear, richly colored throughout, does not need saturation to impress. The nose lacks a guiding principle, as a result the alcohol creates burn and the cherry, blackberry fruit, menthol, pine, potpourri and vanilla, chocolate oak swirl never quite dispels it, that said its sheer fatness and depth carry it fairly far. Full-bodied, sappy and at times even gluey, latches onto the palate like a lamprey. Huge oak presence of caramel, molasses, butterscotch, vanilla fudge, milk chocolate, you name it. Candied orange peel, menthol rub, ginger snaps and some black tea leaf. Not a lot that suggests Cabernet outside of the tannin, wood tannin included, and darker fruit. In no way herbaceous nor green, no underripeness. The sticking point is that it is quite difficult to assess the primary material and its potential underneath all that oak. Will impress the newbies for sure. 86