

The Hanes Wine Review, June 2013 Edition

Hanes made a hearty effort this time around to chug down as much new rosé wine as possible so that his opining on them would be available early. Whew. Sure there will be a few more guzzled in the weeks to come but on the whole, and globally speaking, 2012 seems to be a fat and fruity vintage for rosé, not finding many lean and focused wines. Maybe one needs to spend more dinero to get that experience. Hanes will leave that discussion to those who still enjoy parsing things to the finest granular level possible. You know who you are.

This month's big winners... Stop fuming and start Fumin with the 2010 Lo Triolet from the Vallée d'Aoste in Italy. Pretty, fruity with just the right amount of complexity, acceptably priced in the high \$20's. Was not familiar with Burgundy producer Domaine Chevrot but in 2011 they made a nice little Bourgogne rouge, crunchy and honest and still under \$20, in itself a marvel. Three cheers for Rolet's 2006 Arbois "Tradition" from the Jura, a lovely blend of Savagnin and Chardonnay with both structure and fruit, a joy to sip and very fairly priced at around \$21. Just when Hanes decides to stop fooling around with Albariño wines, along comes the 2011 "Granbazán Etiqueta Verde" with a good sense of terroir and acidity and more than just a flat mouth feel and acceptable fruit, \$17 or so seems quite fair for it. Having purchased their wines from the initial 1998 vintage to current releases, Hanes never tried Lagier-Meredith's rosé so that had to come to an end. The 2012 is made from Syrah, Zinfandel and Mondeuse and while sweet it is quite fun to drink. It costs \$20, which seems to be the going price these days for smaller winery rosé wines from California. Finding relatively inexpensive Northern Rhône Syrah has become a major achievement. So, kudos to Domaine Johann Michel for their 2011 "Cuvée Grain Noir" for providing both fruit and funk for around \$16, a true find. A lot of folks focus deservedly on the winery's higher end bottlings but the 2005 López de Heredia Rioja "Viña Cubillo Crianza" is serious juice for under \$25, traditional but not stodgy and with energy to spare.

The best \$15 and under picks... A perennial favorite that delivers once more, it's the 2012 "Il Mimo" rosé from Piedmont, Italy producer Cantalupo, for about \$12 leave the glass on the table and just drink it straight from the bottle. The 2010 Madiran wine from Pierre Laplace (as labeled by Château d'Aydie) is a ripe expression of Tannat with a healthy dollop of Cabernet Sauvignon likely reinforcing this. A very good deal for \$11 or so, one expects the vintage to turn very soon, unsure how the 2011 will compare. Maybe we'll all find out one day. Likewise expecting the vintage to move forward but the 2011 Domaine San de Guilhem blend of Colombard, Gros Manseng and Ugni Blanc from the Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne is a steal for \$8, zippy, refreshing and a perfect summer white wine. Hard to find Chinon rosé that doesn't break the bank but the Chais St. Laurent "La Vigne en Véron" for \$10 is very representative and easy to quaff as well. Don't drink much Negro Amaro but the 2009 Flaio from Salento, Italy is nice for not being overripe to the detriment of structure and freshness, can't complain at around \$8.

And the disappointments... Hard to really call an under \$10 wine without true glaring flaws a huge disappointment but given how much of the product Hanes sees moving off the shelves, the 2011 Crosby "California" Cabernet Sauvignon leaves one scratching one's head as to just what "normal people" see as acceptable if not worthy of numerous repeat purchases. More evidence of Hanes's estrangement from reality. While in general a fan of Languedoc, France producer Mas de Daumas Gassac, their 2011 entry level red blend "Moulin de Gassac Guilhem" is an average wine and decent for the \$9 it costs but not really the "wow" you hope it should be, given the winery's respectable track record. The non-vintage Californian white blend called Shebang! from Bedrock Wine Co. (Cuvée II) is priced fairly enough at under \$15 but lacks a coherent guiding principle and as a result wears you down after awhile. After sitting down with a full bottle for a little mano-a-mano session, was a bit underwhelmed by the 2011 Nigl Grüner Veltliner "Senftenberger Piri." Not bad by any means but you can get a similar experience for a lot less than the \$22 this bottle costs. This is one of Hanes's favorite Austrian wineries so the disappointment is just that more acute. Once more, selling a lot of a wine is not necessarily a sign of quality, regardless of price. So it is with the 2012 Chilean Sauvignon Blanc called "Manta" – boring and awkward and why people spend more money for a quality mask for their alcoholism.

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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/oldervintages2013.html>

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on *beer* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/beer.html>

Here's the order in which Hanes humbly provides the wine review information:

- Winery/Producer Name
- Region of Origin, Appellation, Brand Name/Wine Style, Single Vineyard (if any applicable)
- Grape Type
- Vintage Year, Price Hanes Paid (if available), Alcohol Percentage (if available)
- Tasting Notes, Hanes's Numeric Score (on the traditional, yet inane, 100 point scale (which for Hanes truly begins at around 80 points and more or less ends around 94 points)

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Cowan Cellars
 Bennett Valley, Moaveni Vineyard
 Syrah
 2010, \$26.00, 13.2%
 Bright yet deep purple color, its cleanliness comes through despite its relative opacity, pinkish red ruby rims, the clarity extends there as well without losing hue intensity. The nose is streamlined, like wearing a girdle, flowers, olive pits, stone and black earth, very pure and primary and not quite yet "sauvage," few items on the menu but all prepared well. Light to medium-bodied, attractive acidity, overall it's close to savory, herbs and straw, stones, earth, mesquite smoke, some dried vanilla bean. Tight plum, blackberry, currant fruit, no great crest but very consistent. Good ripeness and obviously no heat. A little sour pucker at the end. Shows its Californian origins while at the same time aspiring to the best historical heights the grape can achieve. 90

Bedrock Wine Co.
 Napa Valley, Carneros, Hudson Vineyard South, T'n'S Blocks
 Syrah
 2011, \$39.00, 14.2%
 Glowingly saturated purple core, fully opaque, the rims an effulgent pink magenta, quite big and visually impressive. Heavy floral musk to the nose, plum,

boysenberry, black cherry fruit scents, some orange citrus, very low oak presence, only a bit of vanilla or light cinnamon and spice, on the muted side. Full-bodied yet in its own way slim for its weight, here there's much more smoke, caramel, butterscotch, molasses which the acidity finally starts to sweep aside by the mid-palate. Stays soft, spraying violets and orange blossom on the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit. On the homogeneous side, spreads itself widely and retains that pretty perfume. No heat, good balance, maybe too agreeable, goes down smoothly and then you forget it. 88

Epoch Estate Wines
 San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Paderewski Vineyard, Veracity
 Blend
 2010, \$64.99, 15.9%
 Heavy glow to the purple core, effulgent, the rims are a real mix of magenta, pink and ruby, broad palette shines through. The nose is a jam factory of strawberry, raspberry and blueberry to cherry cobbler, fresh and fruity, also chocolate and lighter caramel, candied orange peels, strong floral musk, very openly knit, hint of green apple. Medium-bodied but flashy and fleshy, soaks into the palate totally, dense sugary raspberry, blueberry, blackberry and close to strawberry fruit. Not that oaky but you get a clear message of chocolate, cocoa and light toffee. Just fun and fruity, nothing else to say about it, simple like a puppy dog who just wants loving. 69% Grenache, 23% Mourvèdre, 4% Counoise, 4% Syrah. 88

Booker
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Ripper
Grenache

2011, \$65.00, 14.6%

Crimson red to purple core, stays even into the more ruby rims, clean with moderate surface shine. The nose is a bit dull and mute, serving up straightforward raspberry, cherry fruit, orange juice, a floral dew and a hint of animal fur, seems like it was bottled yesterday, plumply immobile. Full-bodied and heavier through the attack, no tannin nor acidity so loses a good deal of forward momentum, has to depend on weight to carry it. Artificially sweetened raspberry, strawberry, blueberry fruit, lilacs and violets, orange pulp, lemon drop and chocolate. Slightly wooly, no sense of place to it. The fruit does unravel towards the end but it still has some juiciness. Loses your attention after a few sips. 88

Crosby (Twin Cedars Vineyard)

Regional Blend, California

Cabernet Sauvignon

2011, \$7.99, 13.5%

The core gains enough depth to the purple hue to prevent seeing through it, rich saturation in the crimson red to scarlet rims, deeply colored throughout. The nose is very sweet with loads of bubblegum, chocolate and caramel, some mint and lilacs, dulcet cherry, plum, blueberry fruit, although it lacks real pep and get up and go, it pleases on the most basic primal level. Medium-bodied, not soft per se but soaks into your pores like you sink into a beanbag chair. Can't quite call it natural tannin but there is a clumpy dryness to it, the underlying sourness shunts the caramel, butterscotch out of the spotlight. No real issue with the cherry, plum, blackberry fruit, the level is fine and almost by default has to take the center stage position. Sweet in a generalized manner. What's funny is that it is not a "simple" wine and likely suffers a bit for it. (Composite Cork) 85

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Bedrock Wine Co.

Napa Valley, Abrente

Albariño

2012, \$22.00, 13.0%

The golden color achieves credible depth which holds well through the rims, not especially shiny but not flat either, somewhat block-like. There's a mineral dust in the nose covering the whipped cream element, this dissonance creates a space for the green apple, peach, green melon fruit to settle in, the flowers more musk than flighty perfume, broad and close to heavy presence in the nostrils, pregnantly ripe, more apt to make you smile than furrow your brow in curiosity.

Full-bodied, the acidity takes awhile to rev but does get the pedal to the metal eventually. The attack is savory with saline, minerals and chalk notes. At times sort of herbaceous in a nice way. Orange, lemon and then white grapefruit citrus keeps this general tip in effect. Good follow-through from the peach, apricot, melon, apple fruit, never too sweet yet flavorful. Good tang at the end, punctuated. (Screwcap) 89

Cowan Cellars

Lake County

Sauvignon Blanc

2012, \$20.00, 12.7%

Moderately clear, just not shiny, very pale yellow, the rims are mostly emptied of hue. Sweet white grapefruit infused nose, passion fruit, papaya, nectarine blended with vanilla, white pepper and green pea notes, has enough creaminess in texture to contrast with its solid penetration into your nostrils, no overt greenness. Medium-bodied, good amount of dry extract which helps it cling to the roof of your mouth while the bottom of the palate feels creamier. Has green pea and a touch of grass, light minerality, softens as it passes through the mid-palate. The fruit an array of papaya, mango, nectarine, apple, apricot, peach with tangerine to white grapefruit citrus support. Vanilla fudge again opposed by garden herb accents. The acidity level is good but overall the wine remains on the softer side. Easy to like. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Regional Blend, North Coast, Shebang! Cuvée II White Wine

Blend

NV, \$11.99, 13.7%

While the surface is quite shiny it has a block like translucency below the surface, yellow gold core, the rims close to hueless. The nose is on the confectionary side, vanilla, butterscotch, caramel, cotton candy, orange sherbet, dewy lift in the nostrils, plenty of ripeness evident in the apricot, peach, pear fruit but it's not the star of the show. Medium to full-bodied, lots of grip and volume in the mouth, a dry tackiness texturally sticks to the underlying sweetness. Powdered sugar, cotton candy, limeade, vanilla and toffee frame the attack. There's an easily perceptible level of acidity, however, it's not the thirst slaking sort. That lime and then tangerine, pink grapefruit citrus a major factor, adds tang to the sweetness. Again, the nectarine, peach, apricot, pineapple fruit slightly lost in the mix. Hyperactive and not the most flowing, integrated sipping experience. 60% Pinot Gris, 25% Muscadelle/Sémillon, 15% Sauvignon Blanc. (Screwcap) 86

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder, Rosé

Blend

2012, \$20.00, 14.1%

Resplendent watermelon pink, excellent depth of hue, does fade some along the rims but its base color is so fetching it's hard to care. Big, sassy, sweet nose of cherry, raspberry, watermelon fruit, sugary with lemon and orange citrus reduction, chocolate powder, flower water, no hard edges nor rough spots, just sheer fruity goodness. In the mouth it's full-bodied and equally intent on lasciviously throwing its weight around, the acidity remains on the soft side and doesn't impede the full-on flow of raspberry, strawberry, maraschino cherry, watermelon fruit. The lime, orange citrus likewise sweet, that chocolate to vanilla topping persists. Alright, at times it is downright confectionary but it is also sunny and fun, you could throw back a whole bottle in just a few gigantic sips. 70% Syrah, 20% Zinfandel, 10% Mondeuse. (Composite Cork) 90

Bedrock Wine Co.

Regional Blend, California, Ode to Lulu Rosé

Blend

2012, \$19.00, 12.3%

Extremely pale and more of a yellowish washed out ruby than true pink, visually you'd put it closer to "orange wine" territory, the rims are hueless and utterly transparent. The nose has an easygoing fullness to it, bubbling up orange, grapefruit pith, smoke and metal notes, marshmallow, watermelon, strawberry, rhubarb fruit scents, then develops a dusty dried grass thing which almost gets you sneezing, more than just fruitiness. In the mouth it's full-bodied and while firm as in dense, not close to angular nor chiseled, just possessed of a very layered feel. The strawberry, watermelon fruit reigns supreme here too, aided by sweet lemon and orange citrus. Some mineral, stone and salt accents, vaguely grassy, not particularly complex while at the same time not insipidly sweet and never loses its savory edge. Chuggable until the heaviness gets to be too much. Probably best with like a bunch of soft cheeses than on its own. Unspecified percentages of Mourvèdre (Bedrock Vineyard, Pagani Ranch), Carignane (Contra Costa County). (Screwcap) 88

OREGON WHITE

Montinore Estate

Willamette Valley, Borealis

Blend

2011, \$11.99, 11.5%

Pale white to yellow hay in color, transparent with a light layering shimmer to it, not a lot visually compelling about it. The nose starts off with a little mineral crinkle, softening into lime and orange sherbet, pear, yellow apple, apricot and strawberry fruit, fine spun sugar sprinkled on top, floral musk helps it casually drift off. Full-bodied, has thick bottom which anchors it on the palate, the acidity is okay but has to struggle to cut through the flesh. Pineapple, kiwi, guava and nectarine give it a tropical vibrancy, firms up the tangerine, lime, pink grapefruit citrus as well. That said, at the end produces a vanilla pudding creaminess which gets it veering back towards sweet. The florality gets muted. A little more focus needed to tighten up the whole. 38% Riesling, 24% Müller-Thurgau, 23% Pinot Gris, 15% Gewürztraminer. (Composite Cork) 88

FRANCE RED

Chevrot, Domaine

Burgundy, Bourgogne

Pinot Noir

2011, \$15.99, 12.5%

More ruby red than purple in the core, unblemished and bright, while consistent to the rims, there is a slight hint of pink at the outer edge, with age you'd expect a decent amount of red bricking. The nose has that "crunchy" texture with stone, mineral dust, dried grasses and packed brown dirt, the fruit scents are like cherry pits with some raspberry and even strawberry in the mix, juts its jaw out defiantly. In the mouth it relaxes a bit, medium-bodied, no lack at all for tannin nor acidity, but the tight sweet core of raspberry, cherry, cranberry fruit and the grapefruit citrus imbue it with a graceful gait. Still has all that stone and earth, avoids both grassiness and any signs of underripeness. As in the nose has a rugged character but not offputting, just you have to be ready for it. No guile, lays it out there, no hidden cards up its sleeve, chuggable if you like old style Burgundy. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 89

Lapierre, Marcel

Beaujolais, Vin de France, Raisins Gaulois

Gamay Noir

2012, \$9.99, 12.5%

Clear and bright violet core, while well-hued it is also transparent, the rims are garnet to magenta and full, no lack of color anywhere. Snappy nose of cranberry, red cherry, raspberry fruit, stone bits and brown earth, thick orange and grapefruit musk, puts on additional weight as it gets air time but never loses that snap, crackle and pop. Medium-bodied, at times fuller and plusher, the tannins under control but the acidity has some bark to it. Displays rhubarb, cranberry,

raspberry, cherry fruit with a sour start and sweeter finish. Stays erect via tart grapefruit, stones, pebbles and dried grasses. Broad finish, stays nimble and able to switch directions well. The kind of wine you suspect changes character over even just a few months in bottle. (Screwcap) 89

Michel, Domaine Johann
Rhône, Cuvée Grain Noir
Syrah

2011, \$15.99, 13.0%

Richly glowing purple core, opaque like you can't see anything after staring at the sun, much more general clarity as it moves towards the red magenta and then pinker ruby rims, plenty of visual dazzle. The nose has some initial funk which blows off as it opens, allows the white pepper, stone shards, wet leather and sour oranges to shine through, buoyantly ripe cherry, currant, blackberry scents, has the kind of aggressive thrust which gets you to look past the plumpness of the fruit. Full-bodied, has big round contours while moving gracefully, again, a wonderful combination of forward juiciness and latent funkiness. Violets, white grapefruit, leather, saltlick, muddy earth, you do get a little underripe stemminess through the finish. Yet, with all the cherry, blackberry, plum fruit most won't notice. Lots of character for the price. 89

Sunier, Julien
Beaujolais, Fleurie
Gamay Noir

2011, \$20.99, 12.5%

Crisply clean and straightforward ruby-violet color, transparent with fully hued rims, mild pinkish touch at the outermost edges. The nose is highly dusty, like make you sneeze quality, all ground down to a fine coating of stone and mineral inside your nostrils, after that there's ash and soot, after that there's lemon citrus, strawberry and candied red cherry fruit, fallen leaves and tree bark, favors purity over complexity. Light to medium-bodied, same basic story here in the mouth although there's more earthiness, merde and mud. The stone dust persists, however, not that tannic nor acidic so it doesn't accrete as in the nose. The raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit putters along, moments of brightness but mostly a slow, steady pulse. The white grapefruit, mandarin orange citrus takes a step back. Brings in a peppery kick. Lots to like here, genuine and neither simple nor unnecessarily complex. 89

Grand'Cour (Jean-Louis Detraive), Domaine de La
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Le Clos Cuvée Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir

2011, \$22.99, 12.5%

Thick ruby-purple core which nudges into opacity, the rims remain a youthful ruby to magenta, fully colored throughout and spotless. Jammy nose of cherry, plum, blackberry fruit, well-stuffed, wildflowers and candied orange peel, milk chocolate, ripe to the point of taking on a little pickle juice or metal, does allow for some grassiness to lend it bite. Full-bodied, obviously very ripe from the first sip yet the acidity and tannin deserve credit for fighting against the onslaught of plum, cherry, blueberry, blackberry fruit. The flowers, ginger and citrus hesitate then veer into added sweetness. Stays big through the finish where the structure does exert itself and you get its shoulders squared up against you. This is no shy wallflower. 89

Chanteleuserie, Domaine de la
Loire, Bourgueil, Cuvée Alouettes
Cabernet Franc

2011, \$12.99, 12.0%

Violet core while also ruby-magenta throughout, bright and glowing, visually full of life and verve. Chalky, minerally nose with a dusty feel, even the bell pepper feels dried, black pepper too, dried grasses and straw, thankfully the plum and blackberry scents are plump, excellent staying power. Full-bodied, more tannin present than acidity but at the same time you get green apple next to the cherry, raspberry fruit base. Humbly unadorned, modicum of flowers, lemon and orange zest, dried bell pepper, grass. The fruit has to carry it as there's no oak to sweeten things. Not quite the classic archetype but certainly a fun drop and good value. 89

Ferrandière, Domaine de La
Languedoc/Roussillon, Pays d'Oc
Malbec

2011, \$7.99, 13.0%

Lively garnet-purple in the core, has depth if not glowing saturation, draws your eyes deeper into the glass, it's more basic red around the rims, almost suave in appearance. There's an unassuming fullness to the nose, flowers, orange pulp, sweet baking spices, plush cherry, blackberry, pomegranate fruit, little bit of cocoa, excellent job of pleasing the crowd without seeming simple. Full-bodied, the heaviness creates an impression of softness but not true. The candied cherry, raspberry and light plum fruit is held in check by gluey tannins, clumped like a morning bedspread. The spicy mid-palate does not appear oak-derived, freshly moist saddle leather, slice of green apple. Holds its weight and most of the fruit well into the finish. Better than many in this price point. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 88

Laplace (Château d'Aydie), Pierre
Southwest France, Madiran
Blend

2010, \$10.99, 13.5%

While the purple core is opaque it is also quite bright and clean and the overall transparency is evident in the scarlet to red-ruby rims, seriously saturated throughout. There's a mentholated edge to the nose which gets clobbered by ripe plum, black cherry fruit scents, cocoa and orange pulp, some dried grass but overall plump and very much out to please, close to nothing rugged nor backward about it. Full-bodied, soft and round and covers the palate fully with juicy goodness, here too it is mostly plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, like a piece of Southwest France transplanted to California. The orange, tangerine citrus sweet, some backing spices and powdered chocolate thrown in too, pressed flowers as well. Some tannin yet well-massaged, not any acidity to be discerned. If you wish for it you may get some stone and earth. Or you may end up back in Kansas. Uncritically enjoyable without being simple but not the apex of Madiran either. 80% Tannat, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon. 88

Daumas Gassac, Mas de
Languedoc/Roussillon, Pays de l'Hérault, Moulin de
Gassac Guilhem
Blend

2011, \$8.99, 13.0%

Clean ruby-violet core, the rims have a well-saturated red magenta hue with pink flecks as well. Velvety texture in the nostrils, violet-led florality, glimmer of olives and leather, a touch leafy in a good way, basic red currant, cherry, blackberry scents, even lighter orange citrus presence, in fact everything seems tentative and shy. In the mouth it's more than medium-bodied yet smooth enough it's not full-bodied either. Possesses a sour edge to the plum, cherry, elderberry fruit, this accented by white grapefruit. Meandering leather, olive, muddy earth, garrigues, orange juice and lesser cocoa. Minimal tannin, slightly better acidity, not structured but not a wine which seems to need it. 40% Syrah, 25% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 15% Carignan. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Rolet Père et Fils, Domaine
Jura, Arbois, Tradition
Blend

2006, \$20.99, 13.5%

The color is deepened to the point where you get light amber hues added to the golden base, shiny and reflective, minimal diminishment at the rims, looks dapper and classy. The nose shows green apple, pear/peach skin, nuts, yeast/flor, witch hazel,

chamomile, dried lemons, the floral dimension almost brings too much airiness, it all seems to fly off over the horizon too soon. Medium-bodied, bracing mouth entry with the acidity not shy about asserting itself. As a result the nutty, yeasty qualities don't make it congeal, stays fresh and snappy. Green to yellow apple, pear, apricot, hint of pineapple, no lack of fruit flavor. Lilacs, honey, minerals, starts tightening through the finish with tangerine and lemon citrus taking hold. Best of both worlds, all that yeastiness yet has the verve to remain a meal time table wine. Wants to earn your attention with each sip. 50% Savagnin, 50% Chardonnay. 91

San de Guilhem, Domaine
Southwest France, Vin de Pays des Côtes de
Gascogne
Blend

2011, \$7.99, 11.5%

Kinda brownish yellow hue to it, about average luster, color fades towards the rims, looks just like white wine. The nose is fresh and with good cut yet without going for a full-on piercing nature, softly floral, juicy orange, tangerine, grapefruit notes, mineral powder and a minute bit of cut grass, the peach, apple, apricot fruit has more snap than give, at times the tropicality rises and brings with it a few chili pepper nuances. Medium-bodied, sufficient creaminess to the overall texture to take the sting out of the minerals, sauna stones and pineapple, papaya, nectarine, apple fruit. Clings to the palate more than lifts, loses no liveliness for this. The acidity feels natural and sets a steady pulse. Tangy grapefruit, lemon, blood orange citrus. The herbaceousness is moderately high but fits the whole. The florality pushed back into the finish, violets and lilacs. Strong finish, stays within itself with a relaxed self-assurance. 40% Colombard, 30% Gros Manseng, 30% Ugni Blanc. (Synthetic Cork) 89

Zéligé-Caravent
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Table de France, Un
Poco Agitato
Chasan

2010, \$27.99, 14.0%

Super cloudy liquid, about as opaque as white wine gets, holds the light inside well to create a glow of burnt orange and yellow, some diminishing along the rims. The nose is quite interesting, along the lines of Breton's "automatic writing," whatever comes along gets written down, here banana, apple cider, orange peel, cinnamon, uncooked bread dough, pears and peaches, salt and brine, earth, clay and limestone, dried apricots, it's "relaxed" as in whatever, dude. In the mouth it's full-bodied and soft, not devoid of acidity but more focused on natural concentration, hence the cidery and dried fruit character it has, plus the gently

steady expansiveness across the palate. Apricot, peach, pineapple, apple, pear, sweet, no sugar and no tang either. Same for the orange and lemon citrus, like freshly squeezed ripe fruit. Nutmeg, cinnamon spice, honey glaze and a touch of baked ham. Can't quite say it's earthy or minerally, bespeaks more of noninterventionist winemaking than terroir. There is a certain chalkiness to it. At a certain point you have to stop analyzing, diminishing returns kick in. Take it at face value, drink it or not. 89

FRANCE ROSE

Chais St. Laurent
Loire, Chinon, La Vigne en Véron Rosé
Cabernet Franc
2012, \$9.99, 12.5%

Bright watermelon pink in color, ever so sparkly yet duller below the surface, hue holds on decently through the rims, the metallic sheen it has keeps it lively in the glass. While the nose has a good amount of freshness you immediately feel its weight at the same time, hugs your nostrils more than swirls, strawberry, red cherry, orange zest, meadow flowers, some sharper green grass to green pea, has a certain dustiness which could make some sneeze, its weight helps it persist. Medium-bodied, more tannin than most, drying but without hurting the fun, minerals, brine, bell pepper, stone, lemon peel, at first comes off more like a red wine. After that, segues into cocoa powder, strawberry, watermelon, red cherry and raspberry fruit, that citrus breathes life into it. Holds its weight nicely through the finish, sweetness holds on too. Good mix of the grape's characteristics with the general fun of a rosé. 89

Lauverjat, Karine
Loire, Sancerre, Rosé
Pinot Noir
2012, \$16.99, 12.5%

Fat metallic glow to the orange to watermelon pink color, deep enough to not appear all that transparent, holds nicely through the rims. While the nose does offer a mix of stone and stream water notes, gently settles into orange mist, raspberry, red cherry and apricot fruit scents, very light floral nuance, just sticks to the basics, does get mildly smokier as it warms. Full-bodied, sits itself squarely in the mouth, broad and semi-drying acidity, no real bite, at times feels like there might be some tannin present. Orange and lemon citrus lends sour contrast to the strawberry, cherry, rhubarb fruit. At times you get a chocolaty influence. The stone and minerals are there but its general fatness and softness diminishes their effect. Can get clunky at times but keeps a genial demeanor, not one of those precise laser-like Sancerre rosé

wines, close to red wine character at some moments. 88

Gourgonnier, Mas de
Provence, Les Baux de Provence, Rosé
Blend
2012, \$11.99, 13.0%

Interesting visual blend of orange with pinkish ruby, has a metallic glow to it, transparent with a mild distortion of vision, most of the hue evaporates through the rims, average surface brightness. The nose has a good deal of thickness and heft to it, ripe strawberry, watermelon, red cherry scents, a distinct cocoa powder element, lemon pulp, light floral aspect, soft all the way around with no herbal qualities or such. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity is flat-footed but steady and checks the inherent sweetness. The mineral powder kicks it up a notch while the lemon to white grapefruit citrus does the same, flutter of mint and sweet garden herbs. The fruit remains cherry, strawberry, raspberry based, sweet and full, definitely goes for massaging your pleasure nodes over zipping and zinging. Retains that funny cocoa or chocolate powder touch. And enjoyable it is, kind of expect it to French kiss you on the first date. 35% Grenache, 24% Carignan, 23% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Syrah. (Composite Cork) 88

Pibarnon, Château de
Provence, Bandol, Rosé
Blend
2012, \$25.99, 13.5%

Fat metallic glow to the pinkish orange color, thins out at the rims but has above average shine to it, compensates. The nose has a sweet thickness to it, layers of sugary raspberry, watermelon, strawberry, peach fruit scents, violets, lemon drops, mint, and sweet garden herbs, any stone or mineral shades hidden under the plumpness. Full-bodied, in the mouth the acidity works hard to firm things up, to middling results. Blends in cocoa, cane sugar, flower water and orange peels to the base of ripe and juicy strawberry, cherry, watermelon fruit. Its weight holds it together as it drives forward momentum. A vague spiciness enlivens the finish, hard to peg it as minerality per se. Boisterously joyful rather than cerebral, one might prefer nuance at the price but it is not hard to drink. 65% Mourvèdre, 35% Cinsault. 88

ITALY RED

Felsina, Fattoria di
Tuscany, Chianti Classico, Berardenga
Sangiovese
2010, \$18.99, 13.5%

Squeaky clean, some purple in the otherwise garnet to brighter brick red color, already showing a little orange tint at the rims. Meadow grasses and wildflowers, menthol rub and a hint of anise infuse the nose but mostly it's plum and black cherry fruit, noticeably ripe and juicy, would not be surprised to see it with time take on a more concentrated to dried fruit character. Full-bodied, despite a powdery dustiness along the tongue it is even riper here with cherry, blackberry, plum from start to finish. Perks up with orange citrus and fresh leather notes, stony earth and dried garden herbs. The acidity works hard, the tannin is about average plus. Weaves in a nice sour twist near the finish, the citrus really shines. Quite tasty, while it has structure it is likely a medium-term ager. 90

Nuraghe (Cantina di Mogoro), Il
Sardinia/Sardegna, Cannonau di Sardegna, Vignaruja
Cannonau
2010, \$16.99, 14.0%

The core is mostly purple but also swiftly yields to broad brick red to burnt sunset red/orange hues, clear, looks older than it is even with lively richness. The nose gives you an array of prune, fig, date to plum, blackberry scents, heady and ripe, presents a side dish of grill smoke, wet leather, tar and orange spice, softens as a few chocolate notes appear, packs a lot of fruit in there for sure. Full-bodied, pours itself like ketchup onto the palate, again spotlighting the golden raisin, fig, date, prune, plum, cherry, blueberry fruit, even as here there's some tannic punch to carve at least some of the fat away. Orange citrus, ginger, cinnamon, caraway seed, has a light animal fur to wool aspect too. Creates nice floral retronasal action. Its fullness feels natural and it expands at a slow, genial pace. A genteel sweet table wine. 90

Lo Triolet
Valle d'Aosta, Vallée d'Aoste
Fumin
2010, \$27.99, 13.0%

Deep and effulgent purple core, quite saturated, the rims an equally dark cranberry red to magenta, looks like a glass of melted Crayola crayons. The nose has a shock of white grapefruit, black pepper and grass but it's mostly plum, prune fruit, violets, chocolate and sweet baking spices, fat and clingy, hangs around for some time like a pregnant rain cloud. Full-bodied, densely layered with all of that gingerbread, cinnamon, orange pekoe tea and cherry, plum, blueberry fruit. Not tannic but there's some acidity working the room quietly to keep the energy level high. The violets to lilacs give it a natural prettiness. At times you get some green apple in there too. The pepperiness is there, simply buried under the fruit. Would not expect immense tertiary development but leaves you curious

as to how it would be once it loses the baby fat and firms up. For now, gregarious and pleasing. 90% Fumin, 10% Gamaret. 90

Flaio
Puglia/Apulia, Salento
Negro Amaro
2009, \$7.99, 13.0%

The core is more black than purple, the rims more red rust than garnet, borderline brooding given its level of clarity, somewhat unique coloration does pique your curiosity. The nose has a reductive funk of peanut shells and barnyard mud but also comes up with substantial plum raisin, fig, cherry scents, well-stuffed indeed, candied lemon peel, enough meadowy grassiness for freshness, some ginger to cumin spice as well, needs some time to open but rewards when it does. Medium-bodied, the mouth entry is freshened by the acidity and that initial vibrant dryness yields to the raisin, date, fig to cherry, Italian plum flavors. Pleasing interplay of lemon and orange citrus, tart and sweet both. Some biting minerality makes sure you are awake at 2am. Returns to the dry, tacky yet round mouth feel at the end, suggesting a best showing with food. That said, more than enough fruit to enjoy good vibrations in the mouth on its own. (Synthetic Cork) 89

Aia Vecchia
Tuscany, Lagone
Blend
2010, \$11.99, 14.5%

Some depth to the purple core, ventures into opaque territory, heavysset red-orange rims, good vibrancy, looks "serious" in intent. Delivers coconut, vanilla, mint, licorice in the nose, the effort to impress continues with the maraschino cherry, raspberry liqueur, white grape scents, steadies with fennel, bay leaf, grapefruit pith notes, overall it's heavy and dense but capable of some lift, ends with a dusty grassiness. Medium-bodied, dry and tannic if not at times tough. Here the white grapefruit, minerals, tar, stone dust race to the lead with the cherry, blackberry and lighter plum bringing up the rear. While herbal and grassy you do get some caramel oak too. Confounding as it leads you to hope it can blossom into something entirely different down the road yet you have to confront what it is now in the glass. Unspecified percentages of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Sangiovese. 87

Molino a Vento
Sicilia, Nerello Mascalese
2011, \$6.99, 13.0%

Glowing magenta to violet core, clear while alive and bright, the rims are fully hued in magenta. The nose comprised of candied cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, rather straightforward, derives some velvety

richness from burnt caramel and molasses to spar with the orange to white grapefruit citrus, does have some peanut shell, flatulence going on too. Medium-bodied, densely woven for its weight, not heavy but slow to react and move. Sweet and juicy orange to grapefruit citrus while conversely there's mainly sourness in the raspberry, cranberry, cherry fruit. Touches of both of cocoa and white pepper. After awhile get a hard candy sweetness going in the fruit. Lacks structure, no tannin. Interesting if not entirely satisfying. (Composite Cork) 87

ITALY ROSE

Cantalupo, Antichi Vigneti di
Piedmont, Colline Novaresi, Il Mimo Rosé
Nebbiolo
2012, \$11.99, 13.5%

Day-glo style luminescence to the cranberry, watermelon red color, clear and really glows, does drop off a fair bit around the rims though. The nose is broad and fills your nostrils without heaviness, crushed stone and minerals and orange to lighter lemon zest, strawberry, cherry, as earthy and grassy as the type gets, remains friendly, this aided by cocoa and licorice notes. Full-bodied, fleshy and has the proverbial curves in all the right places. Lemon and orange citrus brings tartness to the attack but after that it's about the strawberry watermelon, raspberry, red cherry fruit and flowers. Has a coating of pebble, stone dust which makes sure it ends cleanly and without simple sugariness. Still has that milk chocolate powder thing. In the end, it's not like all that crazy complex, however, it literally makes you want to gulp it down. (Synthetic Cork) 90

Valentina, Fattoria La
Abruzzi, Cerasuolo d'Abruzzo
Montepulciano
2012, \$9.99, 13.0%

Quite dark watermelon pink color, verging on full-on ruby, strongly hued rims, neither especially dull nor shiny, its fatness piques your curiosity. The nose has enough dusty, powdery character to shave off the unnecessary flab from the strawberry, rhubarb, Bing cherry scents, blends in lemon pulp, dried garden herbs, stone and earth to convince you to take it seriously. Full-bodied, sets itself quickly in the mouth and has pretty decent acidic, tannic punch. Goes in a few different directions at once, saline notes, coconut flakes, licorice, lemongrass, crushed stone and volcanic soils, hints but does not deliver on getting herbaceous. Round and sweet raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit, predictably pleasurable. Not soft yet not linear and penetrating either, has the heft to fare well at the dinner table. 88

AUSTRIA WHITE

Nigl, Weingut
Kremstal, Senftenberger, Piri
Grüner Veltliner
2011, \$21.99, 12.5%

Curious semi-transparent glow to it, like an after image or something, white to green straw in color, not really that yellow, core not deep enough to notice diminishing around the rims, flat in spite of the glow. The nose is soft and expansive, slowly marches out vanilla cream, violets, orange creamsicle, peach, pear and yellow apple fruit scents, there's a very light herbal quality to it, there are moments of cocoa powder, overall couldn't imagine it being friendlier. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with some of that fizzy character which pairs up with the acidity to imbue it with good posture and ensure it never gets too sweet. That said, decidedly remains on the gregarious side with grapefruit, tangerine citrus, vanilla, butterscotch notes and ripe apricot, peach, mango fruit, sweet not sugary. Snap pea, mineral chunks and stream water clean up the finish. While enjoyable, not a stand up and take notice experience. (Screwcap) 88

SPAIN RED

López de Heredia, Bodegas R.
Rioja, Viña Cubillo Crianza
Blend
2005
\$22.99, 13.0%

While immaculately clear and transparent the core has a strong black influence to the scarlet, brick red base, still mostly a burnt red at the rims with a touch of yellow, hue intensity is decent. The nose comes across as matured with cow pattie, mud, cedar, orthodox church incense, dried meadow grasses, candied cherries and spiced oranges, pungent with a heavy musk in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, soft and uses what heft it has to create a velvety layering on the palate. This not to diminish the acceptable acidity and overall freshness and verve, does not lack for pacing and energy. The cherry, red berry fruit is sour yet with enough residual sugar to lengthen its presence. The cedar, stone, earth, dried herb components heighten that bite, same for the lemon to orange citrus spritz. While savory, that fruit is an anchor so it never gets bitter. Lots of retronasal perfume. Electric mouth presence, shows the deft hand this producer uses to craft their wines. 65% Tempranillo, 25% Garnacha, 5% Graciano, 5% Mazuelo. 90

SPAIN WHITE

Bazán, Agro de
Rías Baixas, Granbazán Etiqueta Verde
Albariño

2011, \$16.99, 12.5%

Pale golden straw in hue with some visible fizz residue clinging to the glass, more shiny than clear, the lightness of color helps it extend through the rims without noticeable change, looks peaceful in the glass. The nose does lose freshness for all its density, green apple, pear fruit, mineral water, violets, mint, orange citrus, in the end the chalky salinity wins out and it tightens well before dissolving. Full-bodied, yet active and moving enough to never really press down on the palate, the acidity is not biting but above average for what you usually get from the grape. The core of peach, apricot, apple, pear, melon fruit is not overly sweet but can get pushed into that territory by the honey, mint, flowers, tea leaf and orange to grapefruit pulp. Not minerally, more like limestone or loamy earth to clay. Has a firm handshake without being unnecessarily masculine. Very nice stuff. (Synthetic Cork: Supercap) 90

Arabako Txakolina
Txakoli de Álava, Arabako Txakolina, Xarmant
Txakolina

Hondarribi Zuri
2012, \$12.99, 11.5%

Yellow to brown straw in hue with that telltale fizz clinging to the glass sides, not especially shiny yet not dull, distorts your vision some, color holds well enough through the rims. The nose is genial, lilacs, roses, marshmallows, juicy lemon to orange citrus and a sprig of mint, here you barely register any peach, apple, pear fruit. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity is adequate, however, it does have an unusually creamy texture to it as well as vanilla and that marshmallow flavoring. Still, has both minerality and bite in the pineapple, green apple, apricot, star fruit flavors. The lemon to white grapefruit citrus stiffer and with added zip. The textural fizz is light. Finishes with increasing dryness. A kinder, gentler rendition, may not be that 100 degree thirst quencher but perhaps more likely to have broader appeal. 70% Hondarribi Zuri, 30% unspecified percentages of Hondarribi Beltza, Petit Manseng, Gros Manseng, Petit Courbu. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

SPAIN ROSE

Olivares, Bodegas
Jumilla, Rosado
Blend

2012, \$7.99, 13.0%

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Bright and effulgent watermelon red-pink in color, very impressive glow while also maintaining perfect clarity, quite beautiful. The nose is somewhat squarish, sinks in more than lifts, orange pulp, mineral chunks, the fruit scents musky cherry to blackberry, density makes it difficult to fully enjoy the flowers and chocolate embellishments. Full-bodied, here too has uncommon density and bulk, not clunky but not nimble either, particularly as the acidity is quite low, seems more tannic if anything. Same basic array of lemon, chocolate, roses and mineral dust, you get more watermelon, raspberry alongside the cherry, blackberry base. With its thickness and lack of zing, defaults to a pleasure rosé than discerning food pairing rosé. 70% Monastrell, 30% Syrah. (Screwcap) 88

PORTUGAL RED

Santa Eufemia, Casa de
Douro Valley, Perene
Blend

2010, \$8.99, 14.0%

The core is mostly blacker purple, not really opaque, there's a percentage of ruby in there and the rims turn to a more sunset red, bright and fiery. There's a dusty quality to the nose, twigs, bark, stony earth but a balancing amount of pressed flowers, orange peel and plum, blackberry and close to raisin, date fruit scents, while full never loses that dry texture. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, has good acidity and lighter supporting tannin, tightens the weave more than usual. Minimizes the fallen tree matter and general earthiness, replaced in part by baking spices and a broader range of orange to white grapefruit citrus. Too tart for any dried fruit to accrete but does okay by way of plum, cherry, blackberry to cranberry flavors. Moves forward in fits and starts, given its need for better gracefulness it never really pisses you off. Unspecified percentages of Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Barroca, Tinto Cão, Tinta Amarela, Tinta Francisca. 86

CHILE WHITE

Julia Estate, Casa
Central Valley, Manta
Sauvignon Blanc

2012, \$5.99, 13.0%

Reflective gold straw in appearance, slight distortion below the surface, pure with decent continuity through to the rims, nothing stands out about it. The nose tries hard to offer cleanliness in place of emptiness but really there's not much going on, slightly underripe white grapefruit, mineral water, meager green to yellow apple, pear and melon fruit, wafts of pineapple, as it

warms thankfully a certain florality blossoms to fill it out some. Medium-bodied, on the clunky side, allows its zest and tartness to gum up the works and impede flow and freshness. Here the pineapple, nectarine, peach fares better, juicing up the apple and pear foundation. Acidity is decent, it helps that there's a good deal of white grapefruit and sour orange going on. Fleshes out when warmer and the flavors become more vivid, however, at the same time gains additional bitterness. Acceptable. (Screwcap) 85