

The Hanes Wine Review, March 2012 Edition

Nothing earthshattering to report this edition. Staying true to the Hanes Word, not many new wines being purchased. Those that are bought of late usually represent winery direct purchases from California. Once in awhile something sneaks under the radar. Hanes is human after all. So, without any more fuss or muss, here's what we have, we'll see what else shows up in the next month or so...

This month's big winners... Many Turley wines as seems to be the case often as they remain one of the last winery direct mailing lists Hanes remains on. Personal favorite the Ueberroth Vineyard did not disappoint in 2009. Think this was the first time imbibing the Fredericks Vineyard bottling of Zinfandel and that was good too. Things with Turley tapered off from there. Been a long time fan of the wines from McPrice Myers and his 2009 Les Galets Syrah ain't bad at all, especially if you like a wine you can soak in. Great to see Lagier Meredith experiment and expand into offering the Mondeuse grape, a relative of their Syrah plantings. The 2009 is their first commercial release of the wine and it's damn tasty, \$40 may be pushing it though. The wines from Fogline are coming along and enjoyable, can't say too much without compromising the dispassionate, detached viewpoint *THWR* is known for by literally 73 people. First wine ever had from Patrick Piuze, the 2010 Petit Chablis was pretty tasty shit. But \$24 for Petit Chablis, umm, Hanes became disconnected from current reality somewhere.

The best \$15 and under picks... Hell, it's \$16 but screw convention, why not mention it here. The Mara red blend "Syrage" in 2009 is big and chewy and what a lot of people want in a red blend and priced appropriately. Almost mentioning it by default but the 2010 La Meriggia Montepulciano d'Abruzzo is gosh darn good for \$9, you'd have to be a real jerky boy to complain at that price.

And the disappointments... Not too many. The Chester's Anvil lineup is just not doing it for Hanes and probably will not result in many purchases down the road, the 2009 Zinfandel being just alright for \$38. Expected to enjoy the La Pépière Malbec from the Loire more but it was just kinda okay. Maybe it's just that Hanes doesn't taste as much "real" wine as he should. Zoinks. Tasted two 2010 Vouvray Sec bottlings from Huet and neither wowed. Good and technically correct but not spine tingling. Likewise, not much grower Champagne here in North Carolina so that increased the disappointment in the José Michel "Brut Tradition" which just lacked elegance and grace.

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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)

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Ueberroth Vineyard
Zinfandel

2009, \$48.00, 16.2%

Clear, spotless scarlet to purple core, very wide red rims, avoids gaudy saturation in favor of just being damn well striking, sparkling surface too. There's a murmur of alcoholic fumes to the nose before settles into coconut, spearmint, orange zest, tea leaf and rosemary, the raspberry, blackberry, cranberry, pomegranate fruit scents possess great thrust, not encumbered by over-concentration, the oak has a light touch, more so an airy backroads woodsiness about it. Medium-bodied while concentrated into a hard candy feel, more sweet than sugary, watermelon, raspberry, strawberry, red cherry along with orange marmalade and mint to licorice. The caramel, milk chocolate, butterscotch subdued. Even at its ABV it has a dapper quality and sense of proportion. Brings a smile to your face drinking it. 91

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Arroyo Grande Valley, Les Galets Vineyard
Syrah

2009, \$38.00, 15.2%

Outrageous saturation in the black light dark core, glowing purple surrounded by heavy red-magenta to fresh blood hued rims, very clean and would be transparent were it not so dark. The nose is seductively smooth with blueberry, boysenberry, red plum scents alongside licorice, mint, rose water, milk chocolate, croissant flakes and honeyed ham, some salt and black tea leaves but rather primary with nary a trace of earthiness or herbal notes, too much velvety fruit going on. Full-bodied, sugary mouth entry with mesquite, molasses, honey and brown sugar all piling on like a goal line stand is happening or something. Lemon sherbet, licorice, mint, menthol and a chocolate/butterscotch swirl ensure the hits keep on coming. Posture is decent, makes you think there's tannin in there somewhere doing something. Plum, cassis, cherry, blueberry, blackberry fruit all jammy, gooey and sticks to the crevices of your mouth. Given all this, the finish is a tad on the short side. Still, this is what peeps like to call the "hedonistic" style and it does pull it off with aplomb. 91

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Santa Barbara County, Atlas Viñas
Blend

2009, \$38.00, 15.8%

Serious scarlet to dark magenta intermingles with the clear, almost immobile purple core, you get some warmer hues nearer the rims, ruddy faced youthfulness. The nose has a solid bottom while also developing a slow and steady lift via the mint, coconut oil, vanilla bean, mocha and then tea leaf, orange to lemon peels and muscularly limber blackberry, boysenberry, black currant fruit scents, darker in complexion than anticipated. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, lack of motion creates heavier impression. No real in your face tannin nor acidity, on the other hand the fruit not that sweet, if ripe – blackberry, raspberry, blueberry, mixed cherry, the basics. There's some twigs, bark and brown dirt dust, stays primary. Not quite sure where it comes from, but there is a puckering clampdown at the end. Would drink over next 2-3 years. 42% Grenache, 29% Mourvèdre, 29% Syrah. 91

Turley

Sonoma Valley, Fredericks Vineyard
Zinfandel

2009, \$42.00, 15.9%

Remarkably clear, as much red ruby in the core as violet, there's a burnt red quality to the rims, the high level of transparency is unusual and curious, great shine. Sweetly candied nose of raspberry, strawberry, rhubarb and maraschino cherry, cleansing presence of pine, tangerine zest, sweet garden herbs and wildflowers, very pure and simple in its message, super powerful lift. Medium-bodied, has an ethereal sort of sugariness to it, weightless concentration, so strong hard candy nature in all that watermelon, strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit. Here the caramel, butterscotch comes as a force and elevates the sweetness even higher. Large scale florality, drips with orange and tangerine citrus, big menthol lift. Brings on milk chocolate through the silky smooth finish. Suavely supercharged. 90

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder
Mondeuse

2009, \$42.00, 14.5%

Fully opaque purple core with more glow than you'd expect, the rims hum with saturation, all heavy garnet and pomegranate red. The nose shows a little alcoholic heat, otherwise, straightforward strawberry,

rhubarb, raspberry, red cherry fruit, lemon spritz, pressed flowers and a mix of cocoa and vanilla bean, extremely primary. Full-bodied, silky smooth and fluid, glides through the mouth but knows to linger now and then and take a curve in the road more slowly. Here the white grapefruit, mandarin orange brings welcome sour tingle, a glance of grassiness too, then slathers the fruit on, raspberry, blackberry, strawberry, boysenberry, curious in that it starts out more “red” fruit and develops more “black” fruit as it opens. Really not that peppery. Nor earthy nor leathery. Some oak toast or vanilla, chocolate accents. All this said, has a quiet dignity and no mindless fruit bomb. You really want to gulp it down. 90

Fogline Vineyards

Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast

Pinot Noir

2010, \$42.00, 13.7%

The core is as much a bright cranberry red as violet, clear and transparent but in no way watery, similar coloration around the rims, some garnet red, looks unspoiled. The nose is light of touch but forceful, every point made precisely, cola, orange peel, sweet garden herbs, mild metallic touch, the rhubarb, strawberry, raspberry fruit ripe while holding its shape and distinctness of components, more of that mountainous scrub and earth feel than herbaceousness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, may appear lighter to some, viscous grip adds presence, same for the tightly woven tannin underpinning. The sourness of the cranberry, raspberry, Bing cherry fruit refreshing and brings length. This supported ably by lemon to grapefruit citrus shades. The cola persists, close to anise or licorice at times, minty too. Soaks into the palate very well, should be versatile with many foods. 90

Fogline Vineyards

Dry Creek Valley

Syrah

2010, \$38.00, 15.3%

Mild filminess deepens the purple core, the resonance of the maroon to crimson red comes through in the thick rims, squats pretty heavily in the glass. Plummy nose, big on dark fruits, cherry and blueberry too, balanced by notes of soy, saline, iodine, tree bark and fallen leaves, although not a large presence the cocoa to mocha notes have a strong roastiness to them, suggests at first that it might be plumper than it finally turns out to be. Medium-bodied, erect posture via the tannic and acidic skeleton, peppery with no lack of bite. Flowers and orange spritz introduce the blackberry, raspberry, boysenberry, here you get a nice mix of red and dark fruits. Espresso bean, dark chocolate present a bittersweet roasted quality. More

herbs and a brush of dried beef jerky. Flexes itself cautiously, linear and long. 90

Tin Barn

Russian River Valley, Gilsson Vineyard

Zinfandel

2009, \$26.99, 15.7%

The purple core isn't that thick but not quite transparent, kind of cranberry red to magenta hued rims, neither that light nor dark. The nose has a lot of coconut oil, butterscotch, floral dew and orange to lemon juice, good bit of eucalyptus and licorice too, apple and pear fruit blend nicely with the red cherry, raspberry, cranberry scents, cocoa powder dries it out some, big and boisterous while managing to avoid alcoholic burn. Full-bodied, lots of layers and traction on the palate, not heavy but wants to grind against the tongue. Ultra-sweet featuring sugary raspberry, blueberry, blackberry, pomegranate fruit coated in butterscotch, caramel, toffee, vanilla fudge. The orange to grapefruit citrus both sweet and sour, teams up with mint, licorice and violets to create a heavy dewiness inside the mouth. Hard to gauge degree of tannin or acidity, gains posture via sheer weight. Succeeds fully in the “over the top” style of Zinfandel. 90

Turley

Napa Valley, Tofanelli Vineyard

Zinfandel

2009, \$34.00, 15.2%

Gauziness quality fills in the magenta violet core, pretty much opaque, that summer sky haziness extends through the pomegranate red rims, not unduly saturated, coloration flows naturally. The nose extends a good portion of wildflowers, sweet herbs, orange peels, tea leaf, camphor and dusty milk chocolate powder, the red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit has more punch than overt ripeness, good job of grounding itself while also providing some lift. Medium-bodied, has sufficient grit to keep it slowly brushing against the palate. At times you'd almost want to call it tannic although the chemical facts may not bear this out. Twigs, leafs, stone strewn forest paths, flowers and mint to lavender, still more orange citrus here but white grapefruit too. Angular tang in the raspberry, cranberry, bing cherry fruit, no lack of ripeness nor length, simply shows no interest in pouring some sugar on me. This is probably more of a “steak” Zinfandel than a “barbecue” Zinfandel, more enjoyable for it. Chewy, have a toothpick at the ready. 89

Turley

Contra Costa County, Salvador Vineyard

Zinfandel

2009, \$38.00, 15.4%

Clear light violet to more plum red in color, almost beet red around the rims, nice surface shine, possesses lots of color without leaning on deeper saturation for visual effect. The nose has a hard candy sweetness to it as well as overall compactness, loads of strawberry, raspberry, pomegranate and green apple fruit, likewise white grapefruit to blood orange citrus, butterscotch, caramel fill in all the spaces without it feeling heavy, some pine needle and basil to oregano accents too. Medium-bodied, smooth yet lingers at a slower pace, this without unduly soaking in unto heaviness. Cane sugar, molasses and vanilla extract adorn the rhubarb, strawberry, red cherry, raspberry, peach fruit. The grapefruit citrus sweeter here, yet there's no real lack of spine nor any sense of sloppiness. Menthol rub, pine, herbs and then a light earthiness provide very good counterpoint to the fruit. The finish is savory, lasts well but does not strive for punishing length. The oak treatment is proportionate to the nature of the primary material, more creamy than toasty. Well done all around. 89

Mara

Russian River Valley, Laughlin Road Ranch

Pinot Noir

2009, \$55.00, 15.6%

Light violet in the core, mainly red ruby to orange inflected garnet, consistent through to the rims, last moment of sunset burn at the outermost edges, quite clear and spotless. The nose is deep yet can move with ease, licorice, spearmint, cola, orange peel, touch of whipped cream, juicy and free flowing raspberry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit, moves into some stony earthiness, smokiness but no herbal side at all, finishes with caramel and butterscotch nevertheless stays erect in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, seems soft but also has decent acidity and tannin, much more than would have been expected. Butterscotch, cola, vanilla bean, orange to lemon citrus, molasses, you think it's going to get way sweeter than desired than pulls back into a more compact package. In this vein you get raspberry, cranberry, blackberry, red cherry fruit with snap and a savory quality to boot. Mushroom, earth and tree bark lend it gravitas. Crowd pleasing stuff, not sure how it could develop. 89

Mara

Russian River Valley, Old Vine

Zinfandel

2007, \$55.00, 15.9%

Scarlet purple core, nice cleanliness, broad burnt orange to red rims, quite easy to see through but

doesn't seem "transparent" per se, might look advanced but this is really its natural color. The nose comes close to prune in the plum, cherry, blackberry scents, buttered popcorn, butterscotch, caramel, orange extract, pine, menthol, fresh spring forest floor matter, then you get a smoky lift which adds pungency, might be clumsy here or there but extremely good natured. Full-bodied, stays bottom-heavy, hugs the tongue and soaks into the palate like lead. Derives airiness from pine, menthol, orange to grapefruit zest, then glued down by caramel, toffee, butterscotch, molasses. Its weight is such that you even forget to look for signs of structure such as tannin or acidity, which likely isn't quite there. Prune, date, raisin with plum, blackberry, cassis, sweet with a powdered sugar aspect. Over-the-top steamroller 89

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Santa Ynez Valley, Larner Vineyard

Syrah

2009, \$38.00, 15.2%

While dark, the magenta to purple core remains transparent up close, the rims already showing blood red to crimson shades, sleek surface while pooling deeply into the glass. The nose sort of restrains itself, as if it doesn't want the exuberance of the molasses, barbecue sauce, caramel to show, quick floral lift grounds itself in cherry, plum, blueberry scents, fat eucalyptus, meanders briefly into pork rinds and bacon fat, there's lemon custard and more rose petals, then it folds back in on itself. Medium-bodied, stretches itself in such a way as to cover as much territory as possible, even if giving up some depth. Bright pop in the cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit, expends its energy in that initial burst, perhaps leaving a hollowness in the middle. Mint, violets, candied oranges, licorice fill in many of the blank spots. Decent posture but could use more tannin or acidic spine. Stays on your good side by being easy and fluid, even as the finish is on the dry side. Drinks much lower than the ABV. 88

Mara

Regional Blend, Syrage

Blend

2009, \$16.00, 14.4%

Clean and unblemished crimson to purple hued core, what it may give up in opacity it more than gains back in consistency through the blood stained rims, bright without seeming unnaturally saturated. The nose is full to the point where it may impede movement and flow, an initial blast of buttered popcorn, caramel and toast slowly cedes ground to pressed flowers, forest floor wood and bark, cracked saddle leather and then a densely layered array of red currant, plum, cherry fruit, you need to blow into a tissue to dislodge it from your

nostrils. Full-bodied, more gluey than syrupy in texture, you could bond your cheeks together with it. Spicier here with ginger, clove and cumin to pair with the orange, white grapefruit citrus to put some starch in its pants. Caramel popcorn, butterscotch, vanilla bean, mint helps it lift some, floral dimension grows from start to finish. Tightly muscular red currant, cherry, blackberry fruit that is more chewy than juicy. It's a mouthful, that's for sure. 69% Syrah, 23% Tempranillo, 8% Cabernet Franc. (Screwcap) 88

Turley

Central Valley, Lodi, Dogtown Vineyard

Zinfandel

2009, \$38.00, 15.2%

Straightforward ruby-purple core, deep and effulgent, the ruby rims full but subdued, benefits from a sunny warmth as much as any more striking characteristic. Very berry nose of strawberry, raspberry, cranberry and watermelon, the oak unusually quiet, allows a sour, pickled aspect to step forward, sour lemons too, twigs, meadow grasses and hay, develops more florality over time which does pretty it up some. Medium-bodied, on the dry side with a filmy mouth texture, can't exactly say it's from tannin but maybe. More floral here, orange pekoe tea and honey too, light touch of chocolate and vanilla, lacks concentration and complete follow through on the finish. Some pepper mixed with anise, does a decent job of mixing sweet and savory. Nothing remarkable about the raspberry, blueberry, cherry fruit. If someone handed you a glass said nothing about the winery making it, you'd think, yeah, this is an okay Zinfandel. Nothing more. 87

Chester's Anvil (A Lagier Meredith Pott Joint Venture)

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder

Zinfandel

2009, \$38.00, 14.8%

Close to opaque purple core, mixes in some crimson red, darkness persists through the rims, there a pink touch colors the magenta to ruby, unblemished throughout. Full plum, cherry, blackberry fruit in the nose which stuffs your nostrils, there is a somewhat reductive aspect but beyond that you get eucalyptus, forest brush, tree bark and fallen wood, there's a certain taciturn hardness to it, like a stubborn fella who has that hidden heart of gold. Full-bodied, lacks movement and fluid grace, tends to plop in there and congeal. Absolutely no lack of plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit, its sweetness tempered by a curious amount of tannin as well as woodiness. Iron and earth. Cocoa, licorice, spearmint, orange peel, doesn't cohere into a clear direction. Has that "mountain air" about it yet needs suplesse and give. Has plenty of stuffing, yet makes it hard to assess it, after awhile it wears you out. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Mara

Sonoma County, White Grass

Sauvignon Blanc

2010, \$16.00, 13.7%

While very pale still bright and reflective, white hay with some yellow, no real presence of green, transparent and can bend light some too. While the nose does possess some underlying creaminess, it delivers more mint, licorice, rose petals, grapefruit and orange zest, light stoniness, really needs to warm before you get much peach, pear, yellow to red apple, cantaloupe, mango fruit scents, no rough edges nor acrid qualities while keeping a firm presence which keeps it lingering. Medium-bodied, same textural counterpoint here with a creamy underbelly which evokes whipped cream, caramel and cinnamon before being swept away by the mint, floral dew, orange zest, and sweet garden herbs. The acidity is sufficiently present to shave off unnecessary flesh and bring a light pucker to the finish. Green melon, apricot, peach, nectarine and mango fruit have more shape and contour than overt sweetness. More unthreatening than thirst quenching. (Screwcap) 88

WASHINGTON RED

Isenhower Cellars

Walla Walla Valley, Last Straw

Blend

2009, \$17.99, 14.0%

The purple core is dark but not quite opaque, seamlessly shifts to more crimson and burnt red hues, looks serious yet without appearing super saturated. The nose is a bit blockish, doesn't spread or lift much, nonetheless you register ample plum, black cherry fruit and a light smokiness, also cocoa powder and some flowers and sweet tea leaf, otherwise sticks to the basics. Full-bodied and chewy in the mouth, the tannin steamrolled by oodles of plum, cherry, currant, blackberry fruit, quite sweet. Here you get more caramel, coconut and vanillin oak but this too subordinate to the fruit. Near the finish you might get some white citrus, flowers or mint. Keeps its weight fully to the end. What it lacks in complexity it delivers in force and tenacity. 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Syrah, 10% Cabernet Franc, 9% Petit Verdot, 5% Merlot. (Composite Cork) 89

FRANCE RED

Pépière, La

Loire, Vin de Pays du Val de Loire, La Pépièr Côt Malbec

2010, \$11.99, 12.0%

Bright glow to the otherwise dark ruby-purple color, clear and well-saturated red magenta rims, squeaky clean. There's a damp earthiness to the nose along with some mineral dust, brings a certain heaviness to it, more plum and black currant than blackberry, raspberry, mixes in white grapefruit pith, tobacco and herbs, seems wound up and not quick to openly express itself. Medium to full-bodied, dry and tingly with a dusty mouth texture. Tar, earth, minerals, merde, grapefruit, dried flowers, tea leaf, sage and marjoram all make for a rugged profile, here brisk acidity breathes life into red and black cherry, currant, plum fruit. While ripe, this fruit winds down by the finish. Could be a bit softer and more pliable. 87

Coupe Roses, Château

Languedoc/Roussillon, Minervois, La Bastide Blend

2010, \$14.99, 13.0%

Deep ruby tint to the clean and clear purple core, more of a pure magenta at the rims, above average saturation, attractively arrayed in the glass. There's saltlick, cracked pepper, rawhide, meadow underbrush and crushed wildflowers, has an animal fur to savage character to it, it scratches and claws at your nostrils in spite of the clearly ripe and deep plum, black cherry, blueberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, has a puckering dryness to it, kind of tannic but then not really. No green qualities, spicy though in a way which seems similar. Brush of white grapefruit pith, blood orange at times. Very floral yet this element does not soar over the damp earth, fallen forest matter and animal hide, identical to the nose, the plum, cherry, dark berry fruit completely satisfying while at the same time doesn't bob around the surface for long before being pushed back down. Offers a sense of Minervois at an entry level price while not quite expressing its true essence, too much splitting the difference. 50% Carignan, 50% Grenache, trace of Syrah. (Composite Cork) 87

FRANCE WHITE

Piuzé, Patrick

Burgundy, Petit Chablis Chardonnay

2010, \$23.99, 12.5%

While clear, its layered shimmer provides a good deal of visual depth in the core, pure golden hay colored core, the rims bleached some, however, coheres best

as a whole just gleaming in the glass. Mint, licorice and lemon peel swirl about the nose, the floral lift compensates for the lack of decisive presence in the pear, apple, apricot fruit scents, the stone, chalk to lighter mineral aspects steady while unobtrusive, perhaps exceeded by a splash of pickle juice. Medium-bodied, the acidity layers itself on the tongue so as to create added weight and downwards pressure, stops short of lacerating. Roses, spearmint, lilacs, tar and graphite, cherry pits blend with apple and pear skin, the apricot or peach flavors diminished here. Stays savory throughout without ever lacking in minimal sweetness, wills you into taking that next sip. 90

Huet, Domaine

Loire, Vouvray, Clos du Bourg, Sec Chenin Blanc

2010, \$35.99, 13.5%

Simple worn golden color, subtly distorts light, the rims lose most of their color and become fully transparent, forms a block inside the glass. The nose comes across as dense and not particularly forthcoming, lanolin, beeswax, honey, orange blossom, vanilla bean but mostly tonic water, salt and chamomile, the quince, pineapple, peach, star fruit scents laser in focus without much give, even nearer to room temperature not much suppleness. Medium-bodied, the acidity is blunt yet quite powerful, controls the presentation from start to finish. Cocoa, honey and mint soften things a smidgeon, here the orange, tangerine to white grapefruit citrus bold and upfront. Piquant, the salinity, quinine and mineral water fills the middle. Towards the end there's a brief flourish of flowers and peach, apricot, pineapple, green apple and kumquat fruit. It is not lacking in stuffing per se, however, not warm and cuddly right now. Leaves no clear impression on where it will go, however, you have to trust the historical track record. 88

Huet, Domaine

Loire, Vouvray, Le Haut-Lieu, Sec Chenin Blanc

2010, \$32.99, 12.5%

Brown tint to the basic golden color, clear with very good shine, hueless rims, doesn't say much about itself visually. Light saline quality to the nose, lots of white grapefruit to sour orange citrus, the violets and lilacs are powerful, overall has a fairly soft nostril presence with a genial demeanor, the peach, apricot, cantaloupe fruit scents steady, no highs nor lows, again leaves an impression of a delicate touch. Medium-bodied, the acidity is firm rather than cutting, you only know it's there quietly, never forces itself on you. Here too the orange to pink grapefruit dominates, equaled in large part by the floral side. Brings more salt or saline than stone. Plenty of punch in the peach,

apricot, apple, melon fruit yet still ends noticeably dry. Takes a very long time to uncoil after opening. 88

FRANCE ROSE

Gros' Noré, Domaine du
Provence, Bandol, Rosé
Blend

2010, \$40.99, 13.5%

While the salmon pink hue is light unto washed out, it still possesses an uncommon glow which helps fill the glass, a metallic orange sheen helps fill in the transparency of the rims. The nose is fruity yet heavy, the strawberry, raspberry, cherry and green apple scents move slowly, glued down by orange marmalade notes, throws in some green tea, chamomile and stream water accents, just doesn't develop a playful lift as one might prefer. Full-bodied, it's semi-flat in mouth feel at first but does unwind sufficiently to tingle the tongue with stone dust, minerals and lemon to orange zest. The acidity is above average and it comes across like there was more than usual skin contact, creating a drier mouth feel. Raspberry, watermelon and strawberry darkened by blackberry and cherry. Some incongruent cocoa accents at times. This is certainly an interesting wine but it is difficult to say with conviction that it is an easy wine to enjoy. 40% Mourvèdre, 20% Grenache, 20% Cinsault. 88

FRANCE SPARKLING

Michel & Fils, José
Champagne, Brut Tradition
Blend

NV, \$40.99, 12.0%

Thick mousse, hard to imagine fitting any more bubbles in there than already present, light golden hue but not really pale per se, holds solidly through the rims. The breadiness and flaky danish notes leap out first in the nose, stays on the sweeter side with peach, apricot, apple fruit scents, honey and a suggestion of spearmint, then comes firmer lemon peel, chalk dust and stone, stops short of being minerally, as fat of a presence as penetrating. Full-bodied, fleshy and perhaps even a touch clumsy at times. But all good-naturedly. The acidity level is good, maybe even a bit too high given the average quality of the apple, peach, apricot, cherry fruit, rather than provide sharp focus contributes to a blockish feel. The lemon to sour orange citrus lends necessary bite and some linear focus. Here you do get some ferrous minerality in addition to stone powder. The finish is so dense that you sometimes have to make an effort to swallow. There is a coarse breeding to it but it lacks grace and fluidity. 70% Pinot Meunier, 30% Chardonnay. (Composite Cork) 86

ITALY RED

Meriggia, La
Abruzzi, Montepulciano d'Abruzzo
Montepulciano

2010, \$8.99, 13.0%

Spotless ruby-purple in color, noticeably shiny with a more maroon cast along the rims, excellent transparency along with vibrancy of hue. There's a parched earth to metallic, stony component to the nose, otherwise lemon to grapefruit citrus, tree bark and leaves rule the roost, the red cherry, red currant scents as succinct as anything else. Medium-bodied, stretches out in a linear fashion, the acidity coats the tongue without quite plastering it. Lively mouth feel, generous crackle and pop in the cherry, raspberry, almost watermelon fruit, same for the semi-sour white grapefruit. Tar, leather, earth and black tea leaf next up. Its sheer energy converts you with each additional sip. However, remains best suited as a food wine and not something to just throw back over casual conversation with your parole officer. (Synthetic Cork) 88

AUSTRIA RED

Moric
Burgenland
Blaufränkisch

2009, \$28.99, 12.5%

Some cloudiness in the ruby-purple core, effulgent cranberry red rims, the surface shine is about average. Mild reductive aspect to the nose, then stone, slate and dirt with ripely sour cranberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit and a light floral lift, pinch of mint, its roundness reduces some of the heaviness, arrays itself just so, almost sort of too perfect feel in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, more loosey-goosey in the mouth, peppery and floral with a healthy orange to grapefruit dimension. Cocoa powder, milk chocolate leads the way for syrupy blackberry, plum, elderberry, blueberry fruit, clings to your mouth pores and lends weight. The tannins are okay at best, the acidity the same you don't sense much flabbiness. At times, even while more openly constructed here, you feel like it's intended to be a "serious" wine. But it can be fun if you let it be. 89