

The Hanes Wine Review, March 2017 Edition

Hanes is meeting with moderate success in slowing down his wine purchasing. Of course, all the recent Californian winery direct offers did not help matters. But there's no reason to buy in large quantities when not only is Hanes sitting on a big collection of aging wine he also has about 8-9 cases of current release wines to get through, easy 3+ months of drinking. What Hanes spends is also clearly affected by where he shops. When Hanes goes to most New Jersey stores he finds cheaper wines but when he shops at his favored NYC boutique stores he ends up spending much more on average per bottle. The key clearly is to shop local. Even is he misses out on "must try" wines.

What's funny is how hard it often is to find specific cheaper wines. No sense spending extra coin on shipping, defeats the purpose. Once again knowledge does not guarantee success, you may know what the best cheap wines are but that does not mean they are accessible. One day soon (like next week) it is certain we will all have our personal drones who can fly to Delaware for a \$10 bottle of Malbec and bring it back home.

This month's big winners... Had two different bottlings of 2014 Syrah from Domaine Grippa in Saint-Joseph and while both are quite nice, the nod goes to the more expensive "Le Berceau" bottling. For \$60 it needs to prove its mettle over time and develop pleasing tertiary nuances. But no reason it should not. It looks like for Turley Zinfandels that the "Buck" Cobb Vineyard is establishing itself as Hanes's second favorite behind the Ueberroth Vineyard. A happy occurrence as at \$28 it is also substantially less than the price of the Ueberroth wine. This 2014 "Buck" Cobb is delicious but not for the oak averse. A little pricey at \$23 but the 2015 Château du Cèdre Cahors called "Extra Libre" is a great Malbec from Southwest France, showing that one should always try more wines from Cahors. Among the 2015 German Rieslings sampled so far, Hanes has been impressed by Falkenstein's Sonnenberg Spätlese Feinherb wine, juicy, citrusy, very energetic. And great price at \$22. From Bedrock the Weill a Way Vineyard is also establishing itself as a Hanes favorite, here the 2014 a nice mouthful with lots going on beyond the fruit, arguably well priced at \$35.

The best \$20 and under picks... Never had a wine from Saini before but their 2014 Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel was solid and juicy for about \$16 or so. Had been looking for a bottle of wine from Complices de Loire for a few years now. Hanes thinks it does not get stocked because it's distributor Winebow is not considered cool when it comes to Loire wines. Anyway, the 2014 Pinot Noir is a great value at \$12 with broad appeal (maybe that's the problem). Good luck finding it but you should try. Santa Barbara from Italy's Marche region makes a nice Verdicchio and \$9 is a great price for it, no great complexity but satisfying. And cheap. The single vineyard wines from Tensley are pricier but their basic 2015 Santa Barbara County Syrah is an attractive package for \$20. Hanes does not have much experience with Von Winning from the Pfalz, Germany. But their 2015 entry level bottling "Winnings" is a moderately complex and versatile bottling for a reasonable \$14 or so. Hanes had a lot more unmemorable cheapie wines this time around and needs once more to focus on less expensive wines.

And the disappointments... Hanes continues to have somewhat bad luck with just released wines from Piedmont's Produttori del Barbaresco. The 2015 Langhe Nebbiolo was tight and puckering, a turbulent experience. The \$17 is very fair but maybe even this entry level bottling needs a year or so before sampling. First go at a wine from Massican, in this instance the 2015 white blend from Napa Valley called "Annia." Not Hanes's cup of tea, nothing going on and not capable of falling back on fruit to impress. Yes, it needs more flavor. \$35 is a bit much to ask here. Given Hanes's respect for the wines of Jean-Claude Lapalu he had high expectations for the 2015 "Alma Mater" declassified Beaujolais (research indicates the grapes come from Croix de Rameaux), particularly for about \$48. It was decent but in the end a disappointment, one wants to withhold final judgment and see if time redeems it. While on the topic of Beaujolais, Hanes also had his first wine from producer Anne-Sophie Dubois. This the 2015 Fleurie "Les Cocottes." It was adequate but no revelation. \$24 is the going price for wines like this. Not gonna rush out for more Dubois wines but likely will try at least one more in the interest of fairness. Continuing this train of thought, maybe it's the 2015 vintage since the Yann Bertrand Fleurie "Cuvée du Chaos" likewise was ho-hum and lacking in cohesion. Costs \$38 too. Tug of conscience to call it a "disappointment" yet based on a small sample at a tasting event there were high expectations for the 2014 Claire Naudin Aligoté "Le Clou 34." Finally managed to acquire a bottle, no easy feat, and it did not cohere as well as memory had it. Maybe just a specific poor showing, hard to judge if it is generally worth the \$34 or so it costs. Never had the "Manero"

junior "Super Tuscan" wine from Fattoria del Cerro before. Even for \$8 it underwhelms which is stinky as Hanes needs to find more wines worthy of repeat purchase at this price point. Giving them one more shot, Hanes bought a bottle of Geil wine from Rheinhessen, Germany, this the 2015 Rosengarten Kabinett. Ehh is about all you can say. Tracks Hanes's history with Geil and now we can say Hanes will remain Geil-less.

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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/oldervintages2016.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

Amador County, "Buck" Cobb Vineyard

Zinfandel

2014, \$28.00, 15.3%

Not much purple in the core, it's mostly a ruby to scarlet red throughout, bright rims and it has surprisingly clarity if almost transparency. Buttered popcorn and sea salt caramel bloom in the nose but it keeps coming back to the candied raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit, pine cone, sage and marjoram spice fill it out some, at times some spiced orange peeks through. Medium-bodied, has an underlying grittiness but as in the nose eventually you get steamrolled by the hard candy-like raspberry, cherry, blueberry fruit which lasts well into the long finish. Pine, mint and pebbly mountain paths again appear as counterpoint. Towards the back half you get a major blast of that buttery popcorn. If you can deal with the oak the exuberance of the fruit is off the charts. 92

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder, Tribidrag

Zinfandel

2014, \$45.00, 15.2%

Perhaps more dull than truly cloudy, in any event it darkens the purple core and saps any brightness out of the crimson red rims, not weakly hued though. Densely layered nose of plum, prune, raisin to cherry fruit scents, ginger root and orange pekoe tea, slight eucalyptus like lift with a mountain pine breeze yet mainly it's fruit you need a knife to cut through. Full-bodied, given its size it remains fluid and graceful in its movements and doesn't betray any alcoholic burn. Here is shows a savory streak with beef jerky, iodine and salt alongside all that raisin, fig, blackberry, blueberry fruit. Feels like the acidity is higher than normal for the grape while staying buried under the fruit. Menthol and mint inflected retronasal perfume at the end. If big is better for you, step right up. 91

Bedrock Wine Co.
Sonoma Valley, Weill a Way Vineyard, Mixed Blacks Blend
2014, \$35.00, 14.8%

The clarity of the liquid trumps the blackness of the core, the rims are of a warm scarlet hue, none of that bright saturated glow you see in many wines like this. Has a nose of crushed blackberry, blueberry fruit with touches of strawberry and apple, not slacking when it comes to the caramel, coconut and butterscotch, there's also a wooly to meadowy element, like sheep grazing or something. Full-bodied with heaviness, has a pleasing grapefruit element which helps to highlight acidity and slim it down as it progresses in the mouth. Stonier than expected but then you get that chocolate, coffee, toffee to overshadow. Retains that apple edge to the strawberry, blueberry, raspberry fruit. Has a savory component which adds to its charms and should grow as it ages. Unspecified percentages of Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Grenache, Tempranillo, Mourvèdre. 90

Turley
Napa Valley, Atlas Peak, Mead Ranch
Zinfandel
2014, \$40.00, 15.9%

Sort of dusky look to the magenta red to purple coloration, more dark than bright and noticeably clearer around the rims. Mint, eucalyptus and orange blossom give the nose lift, needed with all the jammy blackberry, cherry scents, does not betray a good deal of oak presence, more so bringing a mountain air freshness. Full-bodied but certainly capable of fluid motion, that same mint to licorice apparent from the start. Here the fruit leans more towards raspberry, cherry and at times strawberry and there's good structure to help keep it from becoming overly sweet. Any citrusy notes hold off to the end. The finish is a touch hollow but otherwise it displays balance for its size. 90

Once & Future
Napa Valley, Calistoga, Palisades Vineyard
Petite Sirah
2014, \$55.00, 14.01%

Thick, borderline viscous black purple color, thin if heavily saturated crimson red rims, imposing appearance. Heavysset nose with only a trace of peanut shells or barnyard funk, impressively dense plum, cassis fruit with a short burst of white grapefruit zest, even the oak cream and butterscotch get sucked into the black hole of immobility. Full-bodied, spicy and peppery and packs some alcoholic punch. Here the oak really steps forward and coats the palate in creaminess. Oddly lower in tannin than expected, at times astringent but not super-drying. Soy and shoe

leather pitch in for breadth, but outside of the oak it's mainly plum, black cherry fruit, sweet and as juicy as possible at this level of heft. More of that spiciness reverberating through the finish. 89

Turley
Contra Costa County, Salvador Vineyard
Zinfandel
2014, \$38.00, 15.6%

It's not filmy but more so gauzy like you stared into the sun and then tried to focus, semi-opaque purple core with more transparent scarlet red rims. The nose features a lot of underbrush and savory herbs, sort of damp clay and earth tones, in no way lacking for plum, rhubarb to persimmon fruit just not sugary in a showy way. Medium-bodied, feels like it is heavier at the end than during the attack. Again, leads with dried savory herbs, stone, earth and a certain twiggy. Here there's a greater expression of sour orange to white grapefruit citrus. It holds off to the end but there is also sizable caramel, toffee notes. The plum, black cherry fruit credible, close to demure if consistently present. Finishes somewhat awkwardly. 89

Hug Cellars
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Clevenger Vineyard
Zinfandel
2014, \$35.99, 14.9%

Touch of blackish purple to the core but all throughout it's mainly a crimson to brighter brick red hue, fine level of clarity. Gets right to the point in the nose by unveiling cinnamon, ginger, vanilla and caramel scents partnered up with ripe raspberry, cherry, blueberry fruit, whisper through the pines but sticks close to the fruit and oak script, this in a fully enjoyable manner. Medium-bodied and more svelte than expected, mixes in stones, country road dirt and a little white grapefruit to break up the general sweetness. Emphasizes molasses and honey here, fits well with the array of baking spices. The blackberry, blueberry, rhubarb fruit both sugary and tangy, the whole thing manages to end with a pleasing puckering note. Probably could have been more over the top than it turned out. 89

Saini
Dry Creek Valley
Zinfandel
2014, \$15.99, 14.9%

Dark ruby-purple hue that comes close to opacity, more of a crimson cast along the rims than brighter magenta thus not all that saturated. The nose is old school overripe with plums, blueberry syrup and cherry compote scents, milk chocolate, coconut custard, butterscotch in spades too, some and woody bramble in there too, hard to get sustained presence form

anything but oak and fruit. Full-bodied, yet more compact and fluid than the nose suggests. Sure, it's got all that vanilla fudge, chocolate and butterscotch going on and there's some astringent alcoholic heat too. But that syrupy blueberry, raspberry, cherry fruit heals many wounds. More orange citrus notes here, pine to eucalyptus recedes. The finish is either clean or weak depending on your attitude about such things. Solid effort, especially for the price. 89

Tensley

Santa Barbara County

Syrah

2015, \$19.99, 14.9%

Pours an inky purple black, the rims a heavy and saturated crimson red, no cloudiness. The nose comes across as flat-footed, too dense for its own good, floral with chocolate to go with the raisin, plum/prune scents, maybe some orange pulp, shows some traces of the alcohol. In the mouth it redeems itself, full-bodied and gritty with decent tannic punch to ground the quite sweet plum, cherry, blueberry, raisin fruit. Starts off spicy then turns tart via white grapefruit, blood orange citrus. Less oak presence here but some, more toast than cream, some molasses which plays into very minor grilled meat notes. On the whole it's about the fruit and its relentless push through the palate. If you want a big, bold wine at a fair price, this ain't bad. 89

Harrington Wines

Central Valley, Lodi, Heirloom Ranch

Corvina

2015, \$25.00, 13.5%

Crystal clear if not quite watery watermelon red color, excellent shine and consistent through to the rims, pretty in its own way, darker rosé look. Lean nose, stony with dried lemon pulp and a light herbaceous snap to balance out the hard candy cherry, raspberry fruit scents, attractive enough but doesn't have all that much to say. In the mouth it's light-bodied with a solid jolt of acidity to elevate the pucker during the attack. Honeyed and lemony here as well, after that initial wincing the sweetness in the strawberry, raspberry fruit flows forth and helps fill the mid-palate. Not green but can't shake that grassy side. Tends to hollow out prematurely through the finish, leaves a peppery and spicy residue echoing. 88

Harrington Wines

El Dorado County, Sumu Kaw Vineyard, Corvo

Blend

2014, \$35.00, 13.1%

Crimson red cast to the purple core, gives it a menacing look, fresh blood red rims, very colorful, entirely unblemished and clear as well. Notes of underbrush and wildflowers fuel the nose, the mixed

berry to cherry fruit has a jammy character, Indian spices and cocoa get blended in, achieves both fullness and a sense of lift. Medium-bodied, quite tannic from the first sip, sucks the moisture out of your mouth. Relaxes a little with air time but not much. That said, there's definite sugariness in the blueberry, boysenberry, black cherry fruit. Leather, fallen branches and leaves, mild pepperiness. Tends to evoke the profile of an older wine with potpourri and nutty notes at the end. 66% Touriga Nacional, 34% Alvarelhao. (Composite Cork) 88

Harrington Wines

Central Valley, Lodi, Somers Vineyard

Mission

2015, \$25.00, 13.4%

Pale and shiny strawberry red, almost pinkish at times yet darkens into brick hues at the rims, completely transparent. The nose has some herbaceous bite but easily falls back into raspberry, strawberry to rhubarb fruit scents, sandy dirt, lemon peel, overall save for the fruit tends to be neutral. In the mouth it's light bodied with very good acidity relative to its weight, adds punch. Touch more citrusy here with greater emphasis on stones, pebbles than grassiness. Cherry, raspberry fruit, sugary concentration more than length. Manages to develop credible traction on the palate without losing flow. But, as in the nose, not much complexity and sort of stops talking mid-sentence. Not a wine to analyze too closely. 87

Turley

Central Valley, Lodi, Bechthold Vineyard

Cinsault

2015, \$24.99, 12.5%

Crystal clear watermelon red liquid, really shines in the glass, consistent to the outermost edge. Taut and lean nose of rock dust, poor brown dirt and sour cherry to cranberry scents, tart lemony blast as well, while every now and then you get a whiff of butterscotch it comes across as having no oak treatment, no complexity. Light to medium-bodied, energetic acidity plays up the tartness of the cranberry, blueberry, cherry fruit, however, it's candied ripeness pushes back just as hard. Lemon and white grapefruit citrus hold the spotlight the whole way through. Here it flirts with some greenness yet manages to just seem earthy and such. Mildly peppery finish. To call it simple is no slam because it's in the top echelon of what the grape can do bottled alone. Just don't expect profundity. 87

Paris Valley Road
Regional Blend, California
Cabernet Sauvignon
2013, \$12.99, 14.0%
Cloudy purple core, dusk red rims, fully opaque.
Easygoing, sweet nose stuffed with overripe plum,
cherry, blackberry fruit scents, mint, caramel and
butterscotch oak as well as a mild touch of leather and
dried grass. Full-bodied, equally inoffensive palate
presence, tannins managed, not drying but tend to
anchor it in the mouth. Pine, meadow breeze and
leather the main non-fruit components, leaving the
stage to all that sugary cherry, raspberry, boysenberry
fruit which verges in syrupy. No toastiness, soft
caramel, toffee, vanilla fudge oak influence. Minty as
well. There is a brief moment of bell pepper but gone
as quickly as it appears. Nothing remarkable, best
attribute is that it does not feel forced or overly
manipulated. Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, small
percentages of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec.
Grapes sourced mainly from Monterey County. 87

Stix
Alexander Valley
Cabernet Sauvignon
2014, \$16.99, 13.5%
Filmy purple core with dark ruby rims, good saturation,
plays the part. Oak cream, ginger, cinnamon, caramel
explode in the nose, the plum, cassis fruit verging on
prune, no earthiness nor leatheriness, just fruit and
oak. Full-bodied, toasty and woody with a lingering
graininess on the tongue. More caramel and toffee to
sweeten up the candied apple to poached pear laid on
top of the more basic cherry, plum, blackberry flavors,
syrupy consistency. All kinds of baking spices. No
tannin outside of that wood, smooth and velvety. Full
finish, if you like what you were getting up to that point
then the fun just continues. Well done for the price and
level of flavor. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Massican
Napa Valley, Annia
Blend
2015, \$34.99, 12.5%
Somewhat dark gold color, more full looking than
shiny. The nose has sufficient volume to feel semi-
inert, focuses mainly on lemon and sour orange citrus,
wet stone and a glimmer of rubber as well as coconut
custard, any fruit is limited to basic peach, apricot,
apple scents, lingers due to momentum more than lift.
In the mouth it's full-bodied, spicier with ginger, cumin
notes and a consistent orange citrus edge. Doesn't
some oaky but there is a vanilla, whipped cream to
yeast thing in the background. Mixes in some raw nuts

as well. The apple, pear, green melon to apricot fruit
has some snap but not especially juicy. Just too
nondescript to hold your attention for long. 45% Tocai
Friulano, 41% Ribolla Gialla, 14% Chardonnay. 87

FRANCE RED

Puffeney, Jacques
Jura, Arbois, Cuvée Les Bérangères
Trousseau
2014, \$39.99, 13.0%
Bright watermelon red color, clear and solidly hued all
the way into the rims. There's leathery, smoky and
earthy qualities to the nose but they get shunted aside
in favor of the ripe cherry, raspberry fruit, not showing
broad array of elements, avoids funkiness, has plenty
of fruit to last as it develops. In the mouth it's medium-
bodied with a strong tannic web which gives it a
sterner, heavier feel. Here too the ripeness in the
strawberry, cherry fruit is evident, however, the textural
dryness prevents unimpeded flow to the finish. Sweet
white citrus brightens the mid-palate. More stony and
mineral here than leathery, woody although there is
a touch of dried leaves and twigs. Close to complete
but just too youthfully plump to show its inherent
beauty. 90

Gripa, Domaine Bernard
Rhône, Saint-Joseph, Le Berceau
Syrah
2014, \$59.99, 13.5%
Dark purple core with a black light sort of glow to it,
broad red magenta rims of equal richness, foreboding
appearance. The nose is lean but not angular,
penetrates with white grapefruit pith, mineral dust and
leather to horsehide notes, light smokiness with beef
jerky nuances, the black cherry, blackberry fruit wastes
no words. Medium-bodied, on the soft side, satiny feel
as it glides across the tongue, does not feel
unstructured yet hard to register much tannin or
acidity. Sweetly concentrated blackberry, blueberry,
black cherry fruit holds your attention most, sweetens
even the white grapefruit citrus. Smoky here but the
minerality gets a bit lost in the shuffle. Lots of delicious
material here but needs to shed the baby fat to
approach greatness. 90

Cèdre (Le Cèdre Diffusion), Château du
Southwest France, Cahors, Extra Libre
Malbec
2015, \$22.99, 13.0%
Glowing purple core, vibrant with equally saturated
magenta rims that show a touch of pink as well.
Mineral nose with a few notes of wet clay and earth,
traces of peanut shells, a light floral mist adorns the
taut raspberry, cranberry to red cherry fruit scents, cut

cleanly through the nostrils. Medium-bodied, high acidity brings sourness to that cranberry, cherry, boysenberry fruit but this in no way detracts from its complete ripeness if sugariness. More white grapefruit here in place of florality. Tar and limestone in turn replace most of the minerality. Tannin gets assertive through the finish, creates a drying ending. Bright and snappy, puts pep in the palate. 97% Malbec, 3% Merlot. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 90

Vins Contés (Olivier Lemasson), Les
Loire, Vin de France, Le P'Tit Rouquin
Gamay Noir

2015, \$13.99, 11.0%

Cloudy ruby-purple color, washes out around the rims, traps light inside the glass and suffocates it. Funky, matchstick notes appear first in the nose then lemon and honey and playfully lighthearted strawberry, raspberry scents, does not need complexity to attract. Medium-bodied, as much for its tannic structure and follow-up acidic pinch as general weight which inclines more towards light than full. White grapefruit and lemon citrus turn up the wattage, leafy herbaceousness without a grassy bite. At turns borderline wet wool. Pebbles and earthen stone ground it some. Touch of ginger. To its credit, though, it remains that same candied strawberry, raspberry, blackberry fruit that you can't wash out of your mouth. 90

Gripa, Domaine Bernard
Rhône, Saint-Joseph
Syrah

2014, \$35.99, 13.5%

Effulgent glow in the crimson to purple core, the rims consistent with a more scarlet cast, very full with resonant saturation. Bodaciously ripe nose dripping with black cherry, plum, blackberry scents, close to grapey, potpourri musk, licorice, cinnamon, dissolves gracefully rather than push for added length. Medium-bodied, incredibly ripe and fruity with blackberry, cherry flavors and floral to orange to lemon citrus element. While primary and unevolved, it does show tar and almost wooly at times. Weaves in cinnamon to ginger spice too. It's not short yet waves and tannin and acidity ensure the exuberance of the fruit will hit the wall. Just an infant now. 89

Tissot, Domaine André et Mireille (Bénédicté & Stéphane)

Jura, Arbois, Vieilles Vignes
Poulsard

2015, \$29.99, 12.5%

Manages to be both cloudy and transparent, the latter perhaps owing to its lighter shading of strawberry red to orange hues, the rims have a worn metallic rust

sheen. Animal fur and sous bois fill the nose, fallen autumn leaves, stones, dried pulped lemons with a thin patina of cherry, red berry fruit. Medium-bodied, tannic, feels like a light punch to the jaw as you sip, more pronounced white grapefruit to lemon citrus plays up the acidity too. Lower level of funk, basic earthiness, stones and leaves but no animality. While not strong per se, this absence leaves more room for the cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit to expand. Peppery through the finish, good tingle. Not sure it has the fruit and stuff to outlast the structure over the longer haul. 88

Lapalu, Jean-Claude
Beaujolais, Vin de France, Alma Mater
Gamay Noir

2015, \$47.99, 14.0%

Dark and without any cloudiness, purple core which extends into equally dark red magenta rims, no brightness nor glow to it. There's a spiciness to the nose, however, it comes off as heavy and dull, likely due to its youth, muted floral musk and chocolate powder, raspberry jam and cherry compote, it's all a bit over the top. Full-bodied, has a drying tackiness to the mouth feel, borderline dusty. This in spite of the overripe and sugary cassis, cherry, plum fruit. The citrus more like lemonade than zest. The chocolate, cocoa touch kept to a minimum. Its huge scale defies you to tease out nuances and leaves you without much interesting to say. Check back in 8-10 years and see if the bones show through more clearly. 88

Dubois, Anne-Sophie
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Les Cocottes
Gamay Noir

2015, \$23.99, 13.6%

There's some "sunset glow" to the crimson to purple coloration, really fattens up the rims, no trace of cloudiness. The nose has a certain wet wool, damp earth quality, broken stone, pulls back every time you think it is going to give you its all, somewhat clipped red cherry, raspberry scents, brush of grassiness, not a lot of general follow through and oomph. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and sheds weight past the mid-palate. Here you get mint to anise notes and orange zest but after that initial impression it is mostly rocks and poor dirt. Mild swelling in the mid-palate of raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit with a hard candy concentration. Clearly this is intended to be a compact, no wasted words experience. 88

Complices de Loire (FX Barc)
Loire, Touraine, Les Collines Rouges
Pinot Noir

2014, \$11.99, 13.0%

Noticeably clear and clean, bright sheen to it, cough syrup red with a suggestion of orange at the rims. Burst of tart green apple amidst the sweeter strawberry, raspberry scents in the nose, some barnyard funk and sauna stone notes then gets floral, marked most by the lack of flaws. Medium-bodied, has good weight with some tannic punch during the attack before the acidity starts doing most of the work. Full ripeness in the red cherry, raspberry fruit, consistent presence from start to finish. Coal, tar and black earth blend into sour lemon pulp and flowers. Hard to not keep coming back to the juicy fruit. No greenness, however, there is a caramel dollop at the end which might compromise purity to some. (Composite Cork) 88

Basty, Château du
Beaujolais, Beaujolais Lantignié
Gamay Noir

2015, \$11.99, 12.5%

Consistent ruby red throughout, clear and bright, youthfully vivid. Zippy cranberry, red cherry fruit in the nose, wildflowers and underbrush, orange citrus pulp, openly knit and gregarious with good lift and fluffiness. Light to medium-bodied, the acidity shows well, overall profile and components closely replicate the nose. Bright cranberry, red cherry, rhubarb fruit play off of sage, basil and other sweet to savory herbs. At times it seems unnecessarily taut if not tight. Toys with herbaceousness but does not cross the line. Foursquare finish with pleasing fullness. 88

Bertrand, Yann
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Cuvée du Chaos
Gamay Noir

2015, \$37.99, 12.5%

Soft saturation to the ruby-magenta, violet coloration, quite dark rims, clear throughout though. Dense, semi-sluggish nose of plum, black cherry fruit and floral dew, odd blend of baking spices and olive tapenade, then chocolate roast and molasses, never quite gets all the ducks in a row. Full-bodied, the acidity makes a big show of itself but somehow does not take a leading role. Peanut shells, yeasty notes come out of left field, in the end it develops a fluffy mouth feel. The plum, cherry, blackberry fruit more dense than sweet, at times leads to green apple. Unobtrusively adds in cinnamon stick and nutmeg. Tends to trail off at the end, mumbling to itself. 87

Sanzay, Domaine des
Loire, Saumur-Champigny, Les Poyeux
Cabernet Franc

2014, \$19.99, 13.5%

Purple core of moderate opacity and density, reaches out to darken the crimson rims, qualifies as “brooding” in appearance. Touch of surmaturité in the plum, dark berry fruit scents, charcoal ash and tar, more woody than woody, not much bell pepper presence. In the mouth it’s full-bodied, a lot more minerally and earthy than tarry. The tannin has power to spare and this sucks up moisture from the plum, currant fruit. It likely also makes the experience duller, as there’s not much life to it, no vim nor vigor. That noted, clean and without noticeable flaws. Light white citrus accents along with kindling wood. Again, not much by way of bell pepper or herbaceousness. Credible chewiness is appealing. 87

Tour des Gendres
Bergerac, La Vigne d’Albert
Blend

2015, \$16.99, 13.0%

Opaque black-purple core, its clarity is more evident around the dark scarlet red rims, visibly saturated. There’s a light sandpapery nature to the nose, peanut shells and muddy earth next to flowers and blackberry, black cherry fruit scents, overall not especially pungent. Full-bodied, you feel the tannic skeleton from the very first sip, however, there’s ample ripeness in the blueberry, blackberry, cassis fruit and the latter lasts into the finish. That said, dry mouth feel and this may inhibit the florality, mixed white citrus from showing better. The minerally earth fares better. Attractive ruggedness, in need of a hearty stew. 40% Périgord, 20% Cabernets, 15% Merlot, 10% Abouriou, 10% Fer, 5% Malbec. (Composite Cork) 87

Dubois Gramont, Château
Bordeaux, Bordeaux
Blend

2014, \$7.99, 13.5%

Blackish purple core masked in part by its transparency, rims a vivid crimson red, shows youthful vigor while signs of ability to change into matured hues. Welcome tightness to the nose, leather, minerally earth and a transitional moment of bell pepper into the fully ripened plum, cherry fruit scents, nice juiciness before trailing off, for whatever vanillin or toasty notes it has, not oaky. Medium-bodied, gains lightness to its step via floral mist, sweet garden herbs and a fresh leather profile. Tangy bite to the cranberry, cherry, blackberry fruit, accentuated as the minerally bite accrues. As in the nose, the lack of overt dependence on any oak is appreciated and keeps it fresh. While not an uncritical quaffer, you don’t have to

exert yourself to enjoy it. Unspecified percentages of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Bindi, Nicolas Mariotti
Corsica, Vin de France, Le Blanc Mursaglia
Vermentino

2013, \$38.99, 12.2%

Dull golden color, broad from core to rims, pools well enough to fill the glass completely. The nose features rubber, lanolin, sauna stones and lemon custard, the fruit scents mainly pear and apple skin, very pungent lift, possesses as much texture as aroma. Full-bodied, smooth and rubbery in feel in addition to actual rubber flavors. Cider aspect to the apple, peat, apricot fruit flavors, in no way "fruity" but it's present throughout. Lemon sorbet, licorice then seaweed with a salty, briny component. The acidity relaxes then seems to clench, not consistent in its presentation. Gains some flavor complexity as it warms but texturally becomes more foursquare. Though it does have an interesting tingle at the finish. 89

Naudin, Claire
Burgundy, Vin de France, Le Clou 34
Aligoté

2014, \$33.99, 12.0%

Presents a cloudy deep gold to lighter amber color, relaxed presence in the glass with minimal shine. Honey, pie crust and baking dough broaden in the nose, has a smoky to saline component as well, maybe it's the overall density in the nostrils but the apple, pear fruit scents lack wings, leaving the doughiness the main factor. Full-bodied, the acidity appears to have decent strength but gets crushed under the general weight of the wine. Drying sensations keep the honey to molasses sweetness in check. Has lemon and a touch of lime citrus to brighten the center. More peach to apricot pit fruit here, some apple. Allows for some florality as it warms. If you step back from it you kinda feel the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. 89

Yvonne, Château
Loire, Saumur
Chenin Blanc
2014, \$46.99, 12.5%

The dark golden hue has an amber orange touch to it, fills out the rims well and layered enough to distort. The nose has a credible amount of smokiness to it, sort of as much tar or clay as minerality, not especially wooly but has a pleasing mintiness, the apple, pear, peach scents play it straight up and last well. Full-bodied, spicy with a strong blast of orange to lemon citrus, tangy and active on the palate. That said there

is a a doughy to whipped cream element with coconut accents there to soften the total experience. The acidity has power and should be able to carry it over the medium to long term. The apricot, peach, apple fruit has ripeness but not really close to tropicality. The structure becomes more assertive at the end and it ends a bit short. More broad than deep. 89

Pépière, Domaine de la
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine, Monnières-Saint
Fiacre

Melon de Bourgogne

2013, \$25.99, 12.0%

Dense and deep golden color, not quite dull but it manages to lack visual sparkle or bounce, strong distortion into the glass. Heavy on both the violets and licorice as well as the smoky minerality, the nose has a textural heaviness which makes parsing out scents more difficult, salted ham, pear, apple, apricot fruit scents, intriguing contrasts going on. In the mouth it's full-bodied and packed cheek-to-cheek, the acidity is not weak on an absolute scale but not freshening up the experience. Relaxed, if not quite sweet enough for dried fruit, character to the peach, apple, apricot flavors, steady persistence. Has a dry, tacky texture, like dough dust, clings to the palate. After enough sips this becomes a yeasty residue. Kind of chalky then you get slate, no biting nor metallic minerality. Feels like someone squeezed it until they could not make it any tighter. 88

FL (Fournier-Longchamps Family), Domaine
Loire, Savennières, La Croix Picot
Chenin Blanc

2012, \$17.99, 13.0%

Solid looking, has sufficient shine to fall short of blockish, it's just more youthful amber than gold, there's something very placid about how it looks. While smoky and oily in the nose not excessively so and allows ample space for the pineapple, star fruit to green apple scents, takes some time to open further and produce white grapefruit or mint notes. In the mouth it's full-bodied and marked equally here by a direct manner. First there's a momentary passing of yeasty doughiness then it's all about the stones, smoke and sour grapefruit pith. The acidity can have a mean streak and certainly puts more bite into the pineapple, nectarine, apple fruit. Hard to say it lacks the juiciness to fashion a long finish, more like it turns on its heels on you. Very clean finish nonetheless. Likely best in 3-4 years from now, calming down but not risking fruit drying out. 88

FRANCE SPARKLING

Geoffroy, René

Champagne, Expression Premier Cru Brut
Blend

NV, \$47.99, 12.5%

Big mousse on the pour, huge storm of very tiny bubbles, has a bright yellow gold color with paler rims. Sweet nose of yellow apple, pear, peach fruit, very floral, orange blossom, minty too, rich yet clean and not especially yeasty. Full-bodied, strong acidity counters the tickling from the pétillance, sets itself firmly. Minty and full of savory herbs, here you do get a fine minerality as an anchor. Peach, apricot, pear and apple fruit show breadth with moments of tartness. Bright and juicy lemon to lime citrus. Very long, lack pinpoint precision, too gregarious for that. Approximately 43% Pinot Meunier, 32% Pinot Noir, 25% Chardonnay. (Disgorged May 2014) (Composite Cork) 91

Coquillet, Stéphane

Champagne, Cuvée Diane Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs
Brut

Chardonnay

NV, \$47.99, 12.0%

Big foam on the pour then steady refreshing around the rims, extreme amount of bubbles inside the liquid, while the yellow straw hue is pale there is a nicely warm glow to it. More brioche to croissant in the nose than vanilla, lemon curd, rose petals, dollop of honey, mildly poached apricot to peach scents, excellent fullness and length. Medium-bodied, not that soft but also not as prickly as the visual pétillance suggests. Lime, lemon as sour as it is sweet, spicy and minty. The honeyed layering is constant without being overbearing. The yeasty, bread component grows in stature as it warms. More minerally than the nose suggests, arguably overshadows the apple, apricot, pear fruit at first before the latter spreads through the finish. Extremely competent. (Composite Cork) 90

ITALY RED

Cornelissen, Azienda Agricola Frank

Sicilia, Terre Siciliane Rosso, MunJebel
Nerello Mascalese

2015, \$37.99, 14.5%

Magenta to violet in hue, pronounced clarity and transparency, slightly watery rims. Ash, tar, poor dirt infuse the nose, however, cleaner than expected, gives you strawberry, raspberry scents, baking spices, licorice, direct to the point of losing breadth, generally lacking staying power. Medium-bodied, starts off with lemon peel, ginger, cinnamon, anise, rose petals and then gets even more lemony. The volcanic stone, ash

is subdued, some tar, creates a big retronasal pungency. But on the whole it is dry which keeps the strawberry, cherry, rhubarb fruit restrained. The most longlasting element is the ginger and baking spices. In the end it just does not fully weave it all together. (Synthetic Cork: Ardeaseal) 88

Pecchenino, Fratelli

Piedmont, Dolcetto di Dogliani, San Luigi
Dolcetto

2015, \$14.99, 13.5%

Dark and glowing purple core, opaque, clear red magenta rims, sits confidently in the glass. Good sourness which lifts the nose (although sourness cannot be registered by the olfactory sense), black cherry, blackberry scents, you can tell it brings heft, meadow grasses and wildflowers, violets, some orange pulp, tends to over-rely on the fruit rather offer any leather or earth stuff. Medium-bodied, soft and pliant, the acidity gives it a jolt but not enough to staunch any sugariness in the plum, cherry, blueberry fruit. More stone here but not close to earthy. The citrus turns towards grapefruit over orange. Chocolatey at turns. Has enough tannin to dry out the finish nicely. Can't call it simple but definitely geared for broad consumption and enjoyment. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Produttori del Barbaresco

Piedmont, Langhe
Nebbiolo

2015, \$16.99, 14.5%

Light and transparent pinkish ruby to violet hue, for its lightness it reaches well into the rims. Mild dustiness to the nose, stone, on the clean side but not lacking in strawberry, red cherry, raspberry fruit, at times a dollop of caramel, nothing really stands out about it. Light to medium-bodied, tannic beyond what the weight can bear, makes it more leathery and peppery and definitely herbaceous. Can leave you wondering about underripe phenolics. Still, as in the nose plenty of red cherry, raspberry fruit to go around, this helps extend what would be a brief denouement. Lemon citrus comes and goes. It might be young and unsettled, however, it does not deliver the goods based on the expectation level this producer has established. 87

Cerro, Fattoria del

Tuscany, Rosso di Toscana, Manero
Blend

2014, \$7.99, 13.0%

There's some purple in the core but it is mostly a burnt sunset red to orange hue, good clarity and has some shine to it in spite of the otherwise advanced color array. The nose is either closed or there was nothing there because sniff as you may, barely anything

registering, cut grass, damp earth, dried tobacco leaf and restrained red cherry, red berry fruit scents. Light-bodied, displaying more tannic power than expected and tends to overshadow the more playful candied cherry, raspberry fruit, not really commensurate with the wine's overall weight. Stony earth here, drier and with less overt herbaceousness. Maybe some white citrus. No glaring flaws, delivers what you'd expect for the price but no great new discovery. 80% Sangiovese, 20% Merlot. (Composite Cork) 87

ITALY WHITE

Santa Barbara, Azienda
Marche, Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi
Verdicchio
2015, \$8.99, 13.0%
Pale golden color, flat but pushes decently into the rims. Lemony nose with a floral dew and vanillin, whipped cream accents, conversely also comes with an herbaceous streak, randomly mixes in peach, apricot to pineapple scents, raw nuts, puts on weight in the nostrils as it warms. Full-bodied, sweetly honeyed with apricot, peach, apple, melon fruit which is close to poached in concentration. The acidity is soft but the wine does not feel flabby, gains density from its general weight. The nuttiness brings more sourness while the orange, tangerine, grapefruit citrus is both sweet and sour. More baking spices and dough than honey. Heavy without being clumsy, the fruit's ripeness distracts fortuitously. Packs a lot of flavor in there. (Synthetic Cork: Nomaticorc) 88

GERMANY WHITE

Falkenstein, Hofgut
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Niedermenniger, Sonnenberg,
Spätlese Feinherb AP #7
Riesling
2015, \$21.99, 9.0%
More green-white hay at the core with yellowish rims, distorts your vision below the surface, average shine with a trace amount of bubbles clinging to the glass sides. The nose is clean but more full than lean, no lack of mineral water and wet stone, however, ripe cherry, peach fruit, violets and anise steal the show, curiously shows deeper rubber accents when cold and first opened than later on. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and here the rubber stands squarely center stage. The tangerine, pink grapefruit citrus comes from nowhere to likewise dominate. Green apple, apricot and a heavy dose of red cherry fruit, very ripe but the acidity is muscular and active and more than up to the task of shaving off any excess. Reverberates for some time at the end. 91

Vollenweider, Weingut
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Wolfer, Goldgrube, Kabinett AP #1
Riesling
2015, \$25.99, 8.0%
Faint greenish gold in hue, leaves a lot of fizz behind after the pour, some distortion as you peer through it, basic looking. There's a certain fatness to the nose which does not translate to heaviness, honeyed with equal countervailing mineral and smoky oil slick notes, plenty of apple, pear to cherry fruit scents, not much citrus, gets smokier if allowed to warm. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, muscular with a great core of acidity. At times feels close to immobile, shortens the expression of the peach, apple, pear, persimmon fruit as well as any hints at pineapple. Rubber and oil to diesel take up a good deal of space and give it most of its personality. More lemon to orange than grapefruit. Mint and then more savory. Squares shoulders at the end. 89

Zilliken, Weingut Forstmeister Geltz
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Saarburger, Rausch, Kabinett AP #9
Riesling
2015, \$30.99, 7.5%
Moderate depth to the golden hay color but really nothing of note, a touch translucent, does not really lean towards amber nor green hues, just kinda there though not in a negative way. Given its density there is a regal quality to the nose, molasses and honey show restraint, rubber and a touch of diesel narrowly trump orange peel, mint, and yellow apple, peach, pineapple fruit, thankfully no whipped cream nor vanilla notes. In the mouth it's full-bodied and has the kind of heft which makes you think there's a fair bit of juice declassified from higher prädiikat. Kiwi, papaya, mango to nectarine fruit, tropical without tartness. Much sweeter in the pink grapefruit, tangelo citrus department. The acidity is okay yet struggles to match the burliness of the material. Credible amount of rubber accents. Best attribute is avoiding sugariness and retaining flavor. No reason it should not improve and tighten up its game over next 8-10 years. 89

Von Winning, Weingut
Pfalz, Winnings QbA AP #17
Riesling
2015, \$13.99, 11.5%
Good shine but otherwise pale gold to yellow-green hues, faint trace of microscopic bubbles cling to the glass sides, no color left at the rims. Very good crispness to the nose with green apple, pear, red cherry scents, hard rubber and oil slicked stone leading the way, has a gentler underbelly of whipped cream to dough flakes but transitory, has a lemon peel underpinning yet no that citrusy. In the mouth it's

medium-bodied, on the dry side with acidity which firms up things and sharpens the proverbial pencil. Greater emphasis on rubber with hints of diesel. No mineral or metallic notes but basic wet stone present. Dried pineapple and papaya here but zero juiciness, more of the green apple to pear too. It has a quiet fizziness to the texture which relieves much excess dryness. Quite well done for the price. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 89

Rebholz, Weingut Ökonomierat
Pfalz, Birkweiler, QbA Trocken AP #5
Riesling
2015, \$29.99, 12.0%

The deep golden hue reveals a glint of amber along the edges, good bit of tiny bubbles clinging to the glass sides, barely any diminishment at the rims. Quinine, mineral water and wet slate infused nose, with that a huge splash of lemon, barest hint at road oil slick, taut and less than forthcoming pineapple, nectarine, green apple fruit scents, it's an attractive sort of reticence. Medium-bodied and fairly ripped and muscular, the acidity has brawn and ill intent. Violets, lilacs make a stab at prettying it up, falls easy prey to the keen grapefruit, lemon tartness. More straight up stone, slate than zesty minerality, at times suggests clay. Here too the pineapple, papaya, guava fruit is not attenuated but is tightly wound and cutting. Air time and some warming does not change the general demeanor. Lots of aggressive energy, needs something paired with it to take off the edge. 88

Hexamer, Weingut Helmut
Nahe, Meddersheimer, Altenberg, Kabinett AP #1
Riesling
2015, \$24.99, 9.0%

Pretty yellow with enough green flecks to brighten it, a touch dull to look through but does pool well into the glass. Big time vanilla, whipped cream and yeast at first in the nose, super creamy before wet stone and clay moderate it, the kumquat, peach, apricot fruit revs it up but keeps it in neutral, kind of confounding to sniff. Full-bodied with the same level of creaminess in the mouth, less vanillin or doughy, more textural. Tightly wound apricot, peach, cherry, red apple fruit feels more cellar aged than just picked. Slightly prickly through the finish, contrasts nicely with that creaminess. Minor citrus at best, more stream or mineral water than metallic minerality and no oiliness. Levels out over time but for of its density feels busy and scattered. (Screwcap) 87

Geil, Weingut
Rheinessen, Bechtheimer, Rosengarten, Kabinett AP
#13

Riesling
2015, \$17.99, 10.0%
Basic golden straw color with good clarity and shine, noticeable hue diminishment at the rims. Honey, molasses driven nose with lemon zest, floral water and some stoniness, while there's not much going on it doesn't seem lacking, more relaxed about itself, as it opens there's more breadth in the pear, red apple, apricot scents. Full-bodied, here it much smokier with a caramelized to burnt character in the molasses, brown sugar. Close to paste-like concentration in the apricot, peach fruit, seems to vacillate between pineapple and green apple. The acidity is adequate for what it's asked to do but nothing special more broadly construed. Soft and flavorful while ending cleanly. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 87

Darting, Weingut Kurt
Pfalz, Dürkheimer, Hochbenn, Kabinett AP #24
Riesling
2015, \$17.99, 10.0%

Layered gold color, somewhat flat but not dull, sets itself solidly in the glass. Nose of apples, pears, apricots topped off with whipped cream, sweet orange juice, violets, any stoniness or rubber notes minor in comparison, in the end more fullness and outwards pressure in the nostrils than broad array of scents. Full-bodied, layered and sticky even, just glues itself to the palate and does not let go. The sweetness is close to extreme in the cherry, peach, apricot, at times pineapple fruit as well as both pink and white grapefruit citrus. The whipped cream to vanilla fudge, raw pie crust dough element nudges forward throughout. The acidity is actually okay but the amount of ripeness piled on top could thwart any attempts at structure. Extremely floral finish. So much residual sugar, at 10% alcohol can't imagine what it would have been like at a more normal 8.0%, sugar overdose. (Screwcap) 87

PORTUGAL RED

Esporão, Herdade do
Alentejano, Quatro Castas
Blend
2014, \$14.99, 14.5%

Glowingly opaque purple core, brightly saturated red magenta rims, dark overall. Touch of grapefruit to the nose, mainly chocolate and sweet spices, offers plum to mixed dark berry fruit, sudden lift at the end. Medium-bodied, very soft and pliant, no tannin nor acidity to speak of, super sweet and juicy blueberry, boysenberry, red cherry fruit which sticks to the mouth

pores. Chocolate, cola bean, vanilla, cinnamon with moments of pepperiness. On the back half you get an elevation in white grapefruit. Somehow turns drier through the finish, light brush of dried grasses. Can be at cross-purposes at times but the general sweetness is undeniable. 25% Touriga Franca, 25% Syrah, 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Alicante Bouschet. 88