

## ***The Hanes Wine Review, March 2019 Edition***

For those of you who read the beer reviews you will note that Hanes is consuming less. Gotta cut out some calories. And make room in the second fridge for something other than beer and white wine. Also, Hanes is indeed slowing weaning himself off of some Californian winery direct lists so going forward the review should include fewer reviews of Californian wine. Still, likely to stay on 5-6 lists but it all remains to be seen.

Wine retailers are anxiously awaiting the Supreme Court's ruling on the "Tennessee Wine v. Blair" case which is expected to have an impact on interstate retail wine shipping. A lot will depend on how narrow the judges make the ruling as there are credible arguments that the case can be settled without touching on this topic. Or at least decided in a manner which alludes to how another case can be brought to approach the topic more directly. In the meanwhile more retailers as well as auction houses are curtailing the number of states they will directly ship to in order to comply with current restrictions. This is a long war of attrition between wholesalers and retailers and the former have deeper pockets. Anecdotally, Hanes has not really witnessed many domestic wineries pick a side. Although one could say that their winery direct sales are closer to a retail model than wholesale. But, of course, they don't want to piss off the wholesalers who represent their product in a variety of markets. The question of interstate retail wine shipping is not likely to be resolved anytime soon.

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**This month's big winners...** Two Californian Syrah wines lead the pack this time. Both for the vibrancy they possess and how alive they feel. First is the 2016 Arnot-Roberts "Que Syrah Vineyard" Syrah. \$70 is steep but if there's a Californian Syrah worth that price, this may be it. Que Syrah is a great vineyard for Syrah, from back when Failla-Jordan first starting making it popular. Second is Harrington's 2017 McEvoy Ranch from Marin County. 99% as good and half the price at \$35. Neither wines are made in any great quantity so finding them may be a pain in the ass. The 2017 Arnot-Roberts Que Syrah is just about to be released so that may be easier to locate. A first for *The Hanes Wine Review*, two vintages of the same wine reviewed in the same edition. These being Lapalu's 2016 and 2017 Brouilly "Cuvée des Fous." Got around to the 2016 a little late and soon thereafter saw the 2017 for sale. The preference today is for the 2016 but time will tell. Both vintages are in the high \$30's. The Catena fest continues with three bottlings sampled this month, all good but the best of the three was the 2014 red blend "Nicolas Catena Zapata." Of course, it is double/triple the price of the other two. A real steak wine with the stuff to age for some time. Hanes gravitates more to Bedrock's Syrah bottlings (being a Syrah nut if you haven't noticed), however, the 2017 Dolinsek Ranch Heritage was one of the better field blend bottlings sampled of late. \$39 or so is the going price. Not quite as good as the 2014 vintage the 2015 Cour-Cheverny "Cuvée Renaissance" Romorantin from Cazin was very good nonetheless and these days a steal at \$22 or so. In the "even more Californian Syrah" category Halcón's 2016 Estate grown Syrah called "Elevación" is damn good and decently priced at \$38 or so, may be a bit too fruit-driven for some. Hanes is not focusing on the 2017 vintage in Germany but from what he has tasted and what others say, Falkenstein did a great job with their Riesling lineup. The Krettnacher Euchariusberg Kabinett was the bomb with a broad array of flavors and lots of verve. It's probably close to the release of the 2018 but the 2017 version of Idlewild's white blend "The Bee" is just lovely, based on the exotic Muscat Canelli grape. \$25 is quite fair (and makes it one of the few affordable Idlewild wines). The 2009 Vallana Gattinara is quite good but still youthful and in need of further aging. At \$30 per bottle it's not poorly priced for what you get.

**The best \$20 and under picks...** Hanes always buys the latest vintage of the Veronese white blend "Torre del Falasco" from Cantina Valpantena. But he sits on it for months as "more exciting" wines jump the queue. Then he finally pops it open and once more is amazed at how much you get for under \$10. Great everyday wine. \$20 on the nose from the Oregon winery, Vincent Wine Company's 2017 Pinot Gris called "Noir" bears mentioning as it is a red wine made from Pinot Gris. Extra time on the skins (which do have reddish color) allows for finishing as a red wine rather than a white. As far as experiments go this was a success. Fifty wines reviewed in this edition. Two were under \$15. And seventeen between \$15 and \$25. Not a lot. Twenty-nine were between \$25 and \$50 and two were over \$50. Need to get this ship going in the other direction.

**And the disappointments...** Northern Italy Sauvignon Blanc can be awesome and Hanes tries to buy some now and then. With this in mind, picked up the 2017 San Leonardo "Vette" from the Alto Adige. \$19 is a decent price but the wine is one tough cookie. Ouch. Having wanted to like her wines, unless someone else is buying, the

2016 Fleurie “En Remont” from Julie Balagny may be it for Hanes. \$45 for cru Beaujolais is really pushing it and this producer’s style does not match the Hanes palate. While generally a fan of the offerings from Harrington Wines the 2017 Cabernet Franc was a bumpy ride to nowhere for about \$30, disappointing. Not a huge disappointment but given the desire to “trade down” in what Hanes drinks from the Northern Rhône he was hoping for more of a “sauvage” nature in the 2016 Jean-Claude Marsanne Saint-Joseph rouge. At \$35 not a bad wine but it didn’t reveal the character to make you want to age any. Hanes appreciates the fair prices of the Loire wines from Lauerjat. Nevertheless, for \$22 the 2017 Menetou-Salon was “ehh.” It’s just so hard to find a good Menetou-Salon these days.

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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/oldervintages2019.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

Arnot-Roberts  
Sonoma County, Sonoma Coast, Que Syrah Vineyard  
Syrah  
2016, \$70.00, 12.2%  
Heavy glow to the opaque purple core, the rims look like ruby darkening into red magenta and brick hues. The nose gets right down to business, forcing an avalanche of olive tapenade, cigar leaf, minerals and bell pepper right up in there, lean and sinewy game notes, so dusty that right now the blackberry, blueberry scents are ever so easy to miss even though the overall persistence is excellent. Medium-bodied, the acidity frames it very well and without stunting the myriad flavors. Huge amount of salinity, similarly to the nose offers an array of tobacco, tar, graphite, peppercorns, and meat fat doused grill smoke. The inherent greenness adds to the energy but there are

times you’d think they cut it with Cabernet Franc. Here the blueberry, raspberry, boysenberry leverages sourness to claim more space. Nice floral residue at the end. Just feels incredibly alive in the mouth, leaving you eager for the next sip. 93

Harrington Wines  
Marin County, McEvoy Ranch  
Syrah  
2017, \$35.00, 13.2%  
Not much purple to the core, more so a reddish black, while the liquid is unblemished, the core is dark enough for opacity, the rims a rich crimson hue. High-toned nose of olive paste, leather, white grapefruit pith and charred grill fat, very good cleansing sensation, the cranberry, sour red cherry, blackberry fruit scents wiry and focused, those olive notes outlast all else. Medium-bodied, has grip to the point of stickiness, however, the acidity adroitly scrubs things off the palate. Leather, tar, graphite most obvious at first, the olive notes recede some. That grapefruit heightens the

tartness of the red berry, red currant fruit. Good length but much more impressive for the retronasal perfume which lingers forever. Electric mouth presence, based on today's performance should develop resonant tertiary aspects. 92

Bedrock Wine Co.  
Russian River Valley, Dolinsek Ranch, Dolinsek Ranch Heritage  
Blend  
2017, \$39.00, 14.8%

Soft glow to the violet core, subtle segue to broad magenta rims, on the whole clear, stops short of heavy saturation. The nose explodes with berries being crushed to make jam, oozing ripe goodness from blueberry, strawberry, raspberry scents, even green apple, then nutmeg, allspice as well as pie crust, pure gregariousness. Medium-bodied, the acidity saves the day, shaving off enough sugar to maintain freshness. That said, powerful caramel, dough, mint and honey notes introduce the blueberry, boysenberry, blackberry fruit and there's never a lack of flavor. Violets, orange zest and clove meander through willy-nilly. More savory through the finish, loaded with youthful enthusiasm. Predominantly Zinfandel, remainder Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Barbera, Syrah, Black Muscat, Palomino, etc. 91

Harrington Wines  
San Benito County, La Cienega Valley, Siletto  
Vineyard  
Trousseau  
2017, \$30.00, 13.4%

Filmy, more of a plum purple core moving onto red pulp flesh, the rims a vibrant red to pink magenta. Voluptuously rich nose of rhubarb, strawberry to persimmon fruit, the sour nature tightens things a bit, violet pastille, cocoa powder, not there yet but you can envision it turning leathery with time. Full-bodied, here it delivers real sourness as a strong lemon streak develops on support of that strawberry, blueberry to red cherry fruit. Undercurrent of stoniness contrasts the fruit well. It's a big boy but the acidity accords itself well and should become even more prominent as the fruit slims down. Delivers the leathery bite at the finish which the nose only promises. Right now it's a plump fruit fest and very good at it. 91

Harrington Wines  
Santa Clara Valley, Vanni Vineyard  
Merlot  
2017, \$30.00, 13.5%

Swirl of red magenta and violet through the core, more ruby with pinkish hues at the rims, trim and clean throughout. Hard candy raspberry, strawberry fruit in the nose, more "red fruit" than expected, earth and

wildflowers, some mentholated lift, very airy, moves around a lot in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, sleek and fluid with an initial tannic bite, however, structured mainly by mouthwatering acidity, this a pleasant surprise. Retains the focus on bright, tart fruit such as strawberry, blueberry, boysenberry and green apple. Tar, tobacco accents deepen the earthiness, stays clean without greenness nor funkiness. Finishes with some licorice and pine, perfumed and puckering at once. (Composite Cork) 91

Halcón  
Mendocino County, Yorkville Highlands, Estate,  
Elevación  
Syrah  
2016, \$37.99, 13.2%

Washed out reddish purple core in spite of the squeaky clean liquid, fresh and bright red brick rims, the coloration evokes an older wine but the surface is so shiny it has to be young. Penetrating nose of black licorice, white grapefruit, Indian mukhwas, and pine, the whipped cream and vanilla custard accents seem to be fading into the background, while the blueberry, red cherry to red currant fruit scents have kick they get lost in the swirl of spices. Medium-bodied, good tautness, limber and stretches out well across the palate. Tannin seems slight but the acidity can bring it. Licorice, rose petals, pine, close to medicinal. Then the ultra-sweet maraschino cherry, raspberry syrup and strawberry fruit massages your pleasure nodes. Gamey in a mesquite grill fashion. When it looks at you from across the room you get up and sit next to it at the bar. Arguably, should age for some time too. 90

Nalle  
Dry Creek Valley, Henderlong Nalle, Estate Old Vine  
Zinfandel  
2015, \$45.00, 13.8%

Scarlet infused purple core, broad magenta rims, while clear on the whole has an unfiltered look about it. Smoky, leathery nose, grill fat and tarry earth, there's ample boysenberry, cherry to rhubarb fruit scents but they are not even close to the star of the show, likewise only minor whiffs of pine or menthol, served blindly you might have trouble pegging it as Zinfandel. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, sets itself firmly with a pleasing tannin skeleton with some acidity in reserve. Here too you really get the earthy, leathery qualities, all tarry and gamey. More grapefruit citrus plus savory garden herbs. Tangy raspberry, cranberry to blueberry fruit, highly pitched. Texturally, turns more sticky and velvety at the end. There's a quiet massiveness to it. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.  
Napa Valley, Carneros, Hudson Vineyard South, T'n'S  
Blocks  
Syrah  
2016, \$45.00, 14.4%  
Some vague filminess darkens the purple core, cranberry red to ruby rims, has a deep saturated warmth. Brief mutter of caramel and butterscotch to the nose, delicate violets led florality and mentholated lift, on the whole it's dense plum, cassis, cherry fruit scents. Full-bodied with a little hollowness in the center, perhaps a result of the tannins slowly clamping down. Cocoa, caramel and buttered toast appear at a higher level than in the nose. A jolt of mixed citrus wakes things up some, aided by grilled meat fat and leather. Generously ample plum, cherry to blackberry fruit but as alluded to before, the tannins slowly grind it down. Wish it were more forceful now, even if awkwardly, just have to hope that when the baby fat is gone it will feel more linear and with purpose. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.  
Sonoma Valley, Bedrock Vineyard, Bedrock Heritage  
Blend  
2017, \$39.00, 14.6%  
Granting its transparency, the purple is more of the blackish sort than glowing sort, more vibrancy in the wide ruby to magenta rims. There's a barnyard and grass touch to the nose but without real merde notes, there's peanut shells, something like plastic and an abundance of mixed dark berry scents, over time a more consistent floral perfume blossoms. Full-bodied, much different and prettier here with jammy raspberry, blueberry, cherry fruit with a honey topping. You can get some white grapefruit or lemon citrus without the help of any acidity. On that score, the tannin is acceptable but doesn't come off as particularly strong. Tar, maduro cigar leaf, and to a lesser extent leather. More comfortable reclining on the tongue than lifting. Its density makes it hard to figure out where it might go down the road. Approximately 50% Zinfandel, 20% Carignane, 4% Mataro, remainder unspecified percentages of Petite Sirah, Alicante Bouschet, Grand Noir de la Calmette, Tempranillo, Trousseau, Mission, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.  
Napa Valley, Spring Mountain District, York Creek,  
Tinto  
Blend  
2015, \$42.00, 14.1%  
Unspecified percentages of Touriga Nacional, Touriga Francesa, Tinta Barroca, Tinta Cao. Black core and at some angle it looks almost a dark chocolate brown as much as purple, dense crimson red rims, saturated while staying at the dark hue end of the spectrum.

Vienna roast ground coffee, mocha notes at first make the nose seem over-oaked, with time you get soaring violets and lilacs which steal the show, light mentholated touches and denser plum, cherry fruit scents round it out, plump and unevolved. Full-bodied, more of the same here with roasty mocha, chocolate and buttered toast leading the way. The tannin weighs heavily on the tongue, impeding the flow of the plum, black currant to dark cherry fruit. Above average acidity as well, can run hot at times. Lower level of florality, this supplemented by mixed white citrus. Probably has some upside in the 3-5 years out range. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.  
Santa Maria Valley, Bien Nacido Vineyard, X-Block  
Syrah  
2017, \$48.00, 12.5%  
The ruby-purple color pools deeply into the glass, clear, with mildly saturated magenta rims, topped off by a shiny surface. The nose marries heft with cut, mainly led by white grapefruit and stone notes, tobacco leaf and then filled in by a host of mixed berry scents and a dollop of caramel, persists nicely then suddenly hits a brick wall. Medium-bodied, expands well until the tannin explodes across the palate, leaving carnage in its wake and an astringent pucker at the end. Would not be surprised if the phenolic ripeness came up short. That said, no paucity of tar, black tea leaf and leather for old school street cred. That white grapefruit as active here as in the nose. Takes an herbal swipe before the cherry, raspberry to blackberry flavors quickly scamper across the stage. Demands time for the tannin to resolve and it's a gamble that the fruit will last to the point. 89

Harrington Wines  
Regional Blend, California, Tempesta  
Blend  
2017, \$25.00, 13.2%  
Filmy ruby hue with both orange and pink shades, fairly consistent throughout but it's washed out look makes the biggest impression. The nose presents some funk when first opened but this blows off in favor of friendly strawberry jam, maraschino cherry scents, cocoa powder, floral musk, and an incipient stoniness, extremely primary at the moment. Medium-bodied with a firm tannic traction, not drying but like a really strong handshake. Candied orange peel and tangerine zest make a noticeable impact. More basic ripeness than sweetness in the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit. That curious cocoa element remains yet here there's a swelling of grassiness to keep things level. Comes across like it needs another 2-3 years in bottle to find its true voice. 76% Corvina, 24% Pinot Noir. 89

## Harrington Wines

Manton Valley, Cedar Crest Vineyard  
Cabernet Franc

2017, \$30.00, 13.5%

Glowing and filmy purple core reaches opacity, broad red magenta rims, you can envision it bricking not that far off. Sharp edges to the nose, not angular per se, more like machete sharp, plenty of bell pepper to go around, taut cranberry, pomegranate, to cherry fruit scents with a mentholated coating, rugged enough that it should turn more stony and leathery with aging. Medium-bodied and without any sense of heaviness, a touch of volatility to the acidity gives it lift, if turbulent. Candied cherry, raspberry fruit anchor it well. More herbaceous per se here than bell pepper. Little bit of leather or rawhide. Starts to fold in on itself before what you'd call its natural ending point. A bit perplexing. (Composite Cork) 87

## Bedrock Wine Co.

Regional Blend, California, Old Vine  
Zinfandel

2017, \$23.99, 14.4%

Glowing ruby to violet core, clean, more pinkish magenta rims, deeply hued throughout. The nose is uneven, cocoa roast, cut grass, stone, while it is not all simple fruit by the same token you might wish for more than the lean cranberry, red cherry, blueberry scents which are available. Medium-bodied, has a smoothed out grittiness through the attack which is intelligently planned out in advance. From there sappy cranberry, raspberry, blackberry fruit carries it into the mid-palate which sour citrus and leather, cocoa dampen progression into the finish. Menthol, eucalyptus, cocoa helps it progress to the finish line. The fleshiness never quite becomes pleasurable in a mindless sense. Creamed coffee and roasted mocha drive the finish. Never just surrenders itself to hedonism, as a result tries to be something it is not. Approximately 88% Zinfandel, remainder unspecified percentages of Petite Sirah, Carignan, Alicante Bouschet, etc. Sourced from Bedrock Vineyard, Teldeschi Ranch, Sodinini Ranch, Nervo Ranch, Katushas, Evangelho, Esola, Casa Santinamaria, Story Vineyards. 87

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

### Idlewild

Regional Blend, North Coast, The Bee (Flora & Fauna White)

Blend

2017, \$25.00, 11.6%

Pretty, shiny yellow gold color, very basic coloration but glistens in the glass. Beautiful floral lift to the nose filled out further by cotton candy, spearmint and lanolin notes, the green melon, pear, apricot scents delicate

yet consistent, manages a brush of smoky minerality before it all drifts away. Light-bodied with sour, grippy acidity which imbues it with more palate presence. Jasmine, lilacs, orange blossom type of florality, musky without heaviness. Coating of powdered sugar sweetens things up enough to soften that acidity. The apple, pear, melon, white peach fruit has lively snappiness. Spicy to nutty finish with ginger root and cumin accents. Interesting wine, keeps offering something new as you sip. 50% Muscat Canelli, 47% Arneis, 3% Cortese. 91

## Fogline Vineyards

Sonoma County, Petaluma Gap, Fogline Estate  
Vineyard, Zephyr's Block

Chardonnay

2017, \$45.00, 14.2%

Dark and layered, spotless while more translucent than transparent, the rims incline towards amber. The crispness of the nose is easily felt, however, in the end the sheer weight wins out, tangerine zest, mint leaf, just ripened apricot and peach to pineapple nuances, well toasted buttered bread and coconut flakes reveal the oak presence but nothing really creamy, manages a mineral smokiness at the end. Medium-bodied, toastier here with lime, butterscotch, caramel to honey accents. Firmly ripe pear, pineapple, apricot, kumquat to persimmon fruit, more tang than sugariness. Tangerine, blood orange pucker at the end. Acidity level is good, it has clearer contours than many of its cohort. Has enough primary material to out wait the oak. 88

## OREGON RED

### Vincent Wine Company

Willamette Valley

Pinot Noir

2017, \$23.00, 12.5%

Ruby base with a deepening scarlet influence, clear but not crystal clear, captures enough light to glow. The nose folds in on itself like a pastry, things get hidden but once you bite it's all there, superb lift to the blueberry, raspberry to green apple fruit scents, thin flaky philo dough, the lemon citrus comes off as a bit dried off, kind of limestone, stream water with any minerality pushed back into the background. Medium-bodied, starts to pull back even through the attack like a geeky boy approached by a cheerleader. There's a syrupy foundation to the cherry, raspberry, blueberry fruit which allows you to commune with it as the sourness has it pull away. A floral musk rises through the finish and forgives many sins. Jaunty, the acidity keeps the pacing upbeat through the finish. Hard to not keep sipping. 90

Vincent Wine Company  
Willamette Valley, Noir  
Pinot Gris

2017, \$20.00, 12.5%

Bright pink color swerving into watermelon red, looks like there's some orange mixed into the general hue, clear on the whole but there is a light gauziness to the liquid and a day-glo luminescence. Red cherry, strawberry to peach fruit scents, the nose has ample roundness and thickness, minimal lift, underpinning of minerals and sauna smoke, can at times even seem meaty in a salty, deli meat way, really beckons you further into it. In the mouth it's medium-bodied plus, especially given how it can forcefully push down into the tongue as well as display tannic traction. Lemony touch to the strawberry, raspberry, rhubarb fruit flavors. A bit bound up in its structure but intrigues nonetheless. More than just a curiosity. 89

## OREGON WHITE

Montinore Estate  
Willamette Valley, Borealis  
Blend

NV, \$10.99, 12.3%

Deep golden color, while semi-flat fills the glass well to add presence, rims on the dilute side. The nose is firmer than expected and less ripe as well, impelled by lemon to tangerine citrus, mint, blanched nuts, sauna smoke, somehow the molasses and litchee notes aren't sugary, broad mix of peach, apricot, pear to cherry and red apple fruit scents. Full-bodied, layers itself heavily on the tongue, not absent of acidity but doesn't seem to care one way or the other, the focus is on being an ample in style aromatic white. Again, the tangerine, lemon, lime sets the table but the main course is honey dappled nectarine, peach, pineapple to apple fruit. Has a stone, mineral water aspect and, again, it's not blowsy. Nuttiness pervades the finish, which itself is muscular and prolonged. 38% Müller-Thurgau, 32% Gewürztraminer, 19% Riesling, 11% Pinot Gris. (Screwcap) 88

## FRANCE RED

Lapalu, Jean-Claude  
Beaujolais, Brouilly, Cuvée des Fous  
Gamay Noir

2016, \$39.99, 13.5%

Soft glow to the ruby-violet core, the saturation extends into the more crimson red rims, richly hued throughout. Stone dust, tar and iron shavings percolate in the nose alongside grapefruit pith and cranberry, red cherry fruit scents, a bit too dewy and moist in texture to really lift but it persists for a very long time. Medium-bodied, so sappy in feel that the excellent tannin and

supporting acidity do not register their full strength. More pulverized stone, dried tobacco, tar, marjoram and violets, a pretty sort of ruggedness. The fruit more candied than juicy, strawberry, blueberry and rhubarb. Takes a turn towards twiggy and leafy notes, not greenly herbaceous though. Then finally floral again. Seems like it may be already shutting down and getting disjointed as a result. But still fine drinking. 91

Berlioz (Domaine Partagé), Gilles  
Savoie, La... deuse...

Mondeuse

2016, \$38.99, 12.5%

Heavy glow to the dark and inky purple core, equally fat pinkish magenta rims, looks more hazy like when you look right at the sun rather than cloudy per se. Spicy and smoky nose, oozing with sour currant, cherry fruit, tar and graphite, leather, overall it comes across as cleaner than expected. Medium-bodied, the acidity rough and tumble from the start, squeezes the tongue until it bruises. Even with this the lilacs and violets explode forth and there's a good deal more of the white grapefruit which was missing from the nose. Laser focus in the tart blueberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, almost savory at first but does come up short at the end due to the overbearing structure. Should become "prettier" with time and the fruit will last, today needs a lengthy decanting. 90

Lapalu, Jean-Claude  
Beaujolais, Brouilly, La Croix des Rameaux  
Gamay Noir

2017, \$29.99, 14.5%

Even with a dark purple core, the clarity is evident, further out it's more of a crimson to blood red shade, the glass is filled completely with color. Lavender, beeswax, and cinnamon stick sparkle in the nose, short-lived as the dense plum, black cherry scents settle in, texturally you can feel the muscles under the baby fat. In the mouth it's full-bodied, extremely ripe with some astringency through the finish. Nicely floral, here there's a touch of citrus to back it up. No real sense of terroir yet, as in the nose the focus is squarely on the black cherry, mixed dark berry fruit, sweet but not syrupy as there's sufficient tannin and acidity to unstick things. Pop the cork just for pleasure now, no real cerebral experience. 90

Marsanne, Domaine Jean-Claude  
Rhône, Saint-Joseph  
Syrah

2016, \$34.99, 13.5%

Deep purple hued core with wide red-magenta to scarlet rims, both clear and well-saturated. The nose stuffed with ripe blackberry, blueberry fruit scents and a heavy floral musk, some cinnamon to ginger spice,

pretty fro all of its heaviness, no overt oakiness nor anything you'd take as "secondary" nuance. Full-bodied, the same story in the mouth as the mixed berry to cherry fruit and florality take up 99% of the space. Acidity is decent enough, tannin on the weak side but does stay consistent start to end and helps punctuate the finish. Perhaps lightly stony yet there's no sense at all of any gamey, meaty notes. Quite easy to drink and there's much immediate pleasure to be had. Still, offers no window into its future evolution. 89

Bouland, Daniel

Beaujolais, Chiroubles, Chatenay, Cuve No. 9

Gamay Noir

2017, \$22.99, 13.2%

Somewhat foreboding, as much dark crimson as violet, barely turns more ruby at the rims, fine clarity throughout. In the nose there's some girth to the cranberry, rhubarb, strawberry scents, comes off as nicely ripe, that noted there's also a minerally dustiness as well as a mild dose of dried lawn grass, the citrus scents are muffled, now and then something like cinnamon stick. Medium-bodied, round and expansive, more than enough tannin and to a lesser extent acidity to keep it within limits. As in the nose there's a sappiness to the cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit but overall the texture is dry. More lemony here, supported by savory garden herbs. Very long finish. Leaves you thinking it's all bound up in itself and will show a big step forward when it eventually unwinds. 89

Lapalu, Jean-Claude

Beaujolais, Brouilly, Cuvée des Fous

Gamay Noir

2017, \$36.99, 14.5%

Glowing purple core with saturated magenta rims, oozing color while managing to stay both clean and mostly able to see through. Good amount of bubblegum to the nose, banana too, otherwise ripe cherry, raspberry fruit glide through the nose, not a lot of splash to it, floral musk and black licorice, over time a nascent herbaceousness forms which helps give it shape and contour. Medium-bodied, at this young stage comes across as more structured by tannin than acidity. This gives a healthy squeeze to the strawberry, raspberry fruit, very berry and juicy. Here the bubblegum eclipsed by the licorice as well as sweet garden herbs. Even with giving it a few hours to open, not much change, still gosh darn primary. Will need time to see what it's like without the baby fat. 89

Henriot, Pascal

Franche-Comté, Coteaux de Champlitte

Pinot Noir

2017, \$24.99, 12.5%

Bright ruby to red magenta, great shine and clarity, pinkish rims, extreme liveliness. Merde and fart in the nose, total barnyard fest, brightly sour cherry to raspberry scents, lemon peel, dusty and minerally in the best way, dirty with dignity, stony, not a lot to say but certain about what it wants to express. Medium-bodied, arch tannic skeleton with acidity that wouldn't mind kicking you in the shins. Maraschino cherry, raspberry, closer to strawberry than blueberry, more energy than sweetness. Earthy, herbal, merde, matted straw, all the good kind of funk. Honestly rugged and at times turbulent but it's legit. 89

Billon, Domaine Christophe

Rhône, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes, Les Corendies

Syrah

2016, \$24.99, 13.0%

Dark purple core, close to black, opaque, the rims a healthy and fresh brick red. Unforced red cherry, blackberry scents drift into the nose, pulverized stone dust, a late developing herbaceous bite, not much florality, it has the olfactory equivalent of the "hollow mid-palate." Medium-bodied, more than enough acidity to tighten it up, this without undue squeezing. Here you do get a pleasing swell of lilacs and roses. Stony, nothing feral nor gamey about it, however, there's a leathery aspect and you can see this developing further. Glancing blow of orange to white grapefruit citrus, remains undeveloped. Moderate sourness in the raspberry, blueberry to red cherry fruit. Natural feeling length at the end, if it trails off you don't really mind. 88

Billon, Domaine Christophe

Rhône, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes, La Bâtie Terres de Viennae

Syrah

2016, \$39.99, 12.5%

Ruby red inflected purple core, broad scarlet rims, not quite saturated magenta but close, spotless throughout. Dusty nose of pulverized stone, poor dirt and a light grassiness, close to backward in feel, the cherry to dark berry scents come across as stifled but not weak. Medium-bodied, powerfully tannic and dry, leaves the tongue raw. Much more noticeably grassy here, close to meadowy, with enlarged stoniness too. Mixes in sour white citrus tones as well. Towards the end throws beef blood and iodine into the pot. There's a layered girth to the currant, blackberry fruit which inspires hope for the day when the tannins unclench. Right now it's a tough customer and mandates a decant. 88

Gripa, Domaine Bernard  
Rhône, Saint-Joseph  
Syrah

2016, \$39.99, 14.0%

Inky purple color, looks like a real palate stainer, the rims a dense scarlet red as well. Floral nose, ginger root and clove spice, about as primary as imaginable, the plum to black cherry scents verging on grapey, offers no sense of terroir nor an hint of what future development might bring. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and polished, notes of caramel and vanilla sweeten up the already dulcet blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit flavors. There is some tangy smokiness and a nod towards a leathery element but that's about it. The tannins are mild as is the acidity, albeit the finish is dry enough to clean up well. Still, at this stage it's an unabashed fruit bomb and should be approached as such. 88

Carmarans, Nicolas  
Southwest France, Aveyron, Fer de Sang  
Fer Servadou

2017, \$39.99, 11.5%

Offers a filmy cranberry red to violet with a touch of fizz during the pour, washes out some at the rims. The nose comes right at you with two barrels of bell pepper before rolling on into horsehide, minerally earth and iron flecks, fully ripened strawberry, raspberry fruit there yet no always able to sing. Light-bodied, the fierce brunt of the tannin and acidity makes it feel hyperactive. The white grapefruit notes accelerate this feeling. Barnyardy at times with an emphasis on animal hide and sweat. The bell pepper element much more subdued here. Sour tang elevates the presence of that same strawberry, raspberry to rhubarb fruit. Length of finish is adequate, nothing more. For all the funk not as rustic as many Marcillac wines from the same grape. 88

Balagny, Julie  
Beaujolais, Fleurie, En Remont  
Gamay Noir

2016, \$44.99, 12.5%

Light violet influence to the otherwise ruby core, gauzy, washed out rims. High-toned, not quite volatile, zesty strawberry, red raspberry, cranberry scents, consistent herbaceous underpinning, medicinal, pulped lemon peels, pastille, lingers well and both sinks in and lifts, a bit briny at the end. Medium-bodied, the acidity has some volatility but not harshly. The strawberry, raspberry fruit offers a good amount of sweetness which with the violets and lilacs does take some rough edges off. That said, there is a green touch which almost conjures up bell pepper. It's a curious wine which zigs and zags on you, difficult to pin down.

Puckering finish, it's never sluggish but likewise it never relaxes. 87

## FRANCE WHITE

Petit Chambord (François Cazin), Le  
Loire, Cour-Cheverny, Cuvée Renaissance Moelleux  
Romorantin

2015, \$21.99, 13.5%

Curious interplay between the early darkening gold hue and the green straw touches, shifts with each different angle, pleasing shine to the surface as it pools well below. The nose is smoky at first before being overcome by molasses, brown sugar and candied orange peel scents, very full nostril feel, the pear, apricot, melon scents ripe but not voluptuous, manages a nice jolt of pickle brine at the end. In the mouth it's full-bodied, while the acidity level is highly credible it's not quite strong enough to keep the sweetness at bay today. Honey, maple syrup to molasses rule the roost. Here, though, the orange to pink grapefruit citrus brings tang. The stony, smoky components submerged now. The apricot, pear, golden apple fruit expands to fill out the finish. Joyful wine that should reward time to slim down and get in shape. 90

Mosse, Domaine Agnès et René, Sylvestre, Joseph  
Loire, Vin de France  
Chenin Blanc

2017, \$24.99, 12.5%

Dark golden hue with incipient bronzing, glassy surface but pooling into the glass most visually noticeable. While the nose is dappled with honey there's also this briny, pickled element which teases out sauna smoke notes, the apricot, peach fruit scents even now appear to be developing a dried fruit nature, otherwise it's fresh and free of breadiness or doughiness. Full-bodied, not quite anchored on the palate but it's not all that interested in moving about. That pickled stuff comes to the fore here, sour and spicy and not lacking in pucker factor. Its girth tends to cloak the peach, apricot, apple fruit flavors, the latter most alive through the finish and retronasally. The orange, lemon nuances there, if subtle. The acidity hurls it across the finish line. Sturdy and muscular, may benefit from a few years more in bottle. 89

Luneau-Papin, Domaine Pierre  
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, L d'Or  
Granite

Melon de Bourgogne

2017, \$22.99, 12.0%

White to yellow straw color, on the light side, minimal shift to the rims, pleasing shine across the surface. Blowy nose of mint, violets, lemon curd, black

licorice, whipped cream, floral water, easygoing apricot and peach fruit, great perfume. Medium-bodied, the acidity is strong but more blunt and cutting, much more heft than you might like, the lemon and lime brightens it to a high wattage. Credible chalkiness, but this is still not as terroir driven as fruit driven, oodles of peach, apricot, pear and apple fruit. Floral finish. Real easy to like today but leaves you unsure if there's a real long term future for it. 89

Gallety, Domaine  
Rhône, Côtes du Vivarais, Cuvée Spéciale  
Blend

2017, \$16.99, 13.0%

Flat white to yellow straw appearance, tiny yet persistent bubbles throughout, fully integrated and solid in the glass. Tangerine zest, black licorice, and minerals give the nose bounce, more minty as it warms, the apricot, pear, yellow apple fruit scents pleasing in a basic manner, more fullness than lift, might have expected more nuttiness. Full-bodied, hugs the tongue for dear life and has plus level acidity for this sort of cuvée. You get that whipped cream, leesy stuff and here some of the nuttiness. The tangerine to grapefruit citrus has more mild tang than bite. Dry and tacky as it progresses through the palate, creates a chalky impression. Floral, the mint in the nose all but absent. On the whole, stays fresh while has the body to take on heavier cuisine like ham or cream sauces. 50% Grenache Blanc, 30% Marsanne, 20% Roussanne. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 88

Lauverjat, Karine  
Loire, Menetou-Salon  
Sauvignon Blanc

2017, \$21.99, 12.5%

Pale and clear white-green hay color, no lack of shine yet it basically sits in the glass without any particular aspect to recommend it. The nose is herbaceous with a whiff of cat pee, on the short side but when it's there it's nicely crisp, rose petals, wet slate, pulped white grapefruit, succinct peach, apricot to passion fruit scents. Medium-bodied, the acidity is lackluster even as the wine has a certain spiciness to it and notes of chili pepper. Firm white grapefruit, lemon citrus yields to a licorice like element and pressed flowers. There is a chalky, lightly mineral side to it but it's halfhearted and only dries a bit. Touches most of the bases you'd want but it doesn't all coalesce into something of note. (Composite Cork) 87

## ITALY RED

Vallana, Antonio  
Piedmont, Gattinara  
Nebbiolo

2009

\$29.99, 13.0%

Reddish purple core, perfect clarity throughout, more of a sunset red to orange mix around the rims. Leather, tea leaf, tobacco and cedar imbue the nose with a maturing profile, while the cherry to raspberry scents are not gargantuan in scale, they possess a liqueur like sappiness which stretches them out well. Medium-bodied, dry and tannic from the start and close to chewy. This plays up a certain "twiggy" close to grassiness. Noting this, brightened by sour orange to grapefruit citrus notes as well as an orange pekoe tea aspect. The leather, stony earth doled out in measured portions. Remains on the youthful side and in need of softening. Should hold for a good bit and presents a solid argument for additional tertiary development. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 89

Maccario Dringenberg  
Liguria, Rossese di Dolceacqua Superiore, Luvaira  
Rossese

2017, \$32.99, 13.5%

While perfectly transparent the coloration is a dark red magenta with a slight deepening into purple at the core, full straight out to the rims. Pleasantly fruity nose of maraschino cherry, strawberry jam, lemonade, and sweet tea leaf, earthy in a tangential fashion at best, happily lacking complexity. Medium-bodied, the tannin subtly chips away at the juiciness and brings balance to the whole. More grassiness here, this brightens those lemon citrus accents and the tartness is welcome as counterpoint to the strawberry, raspberry fruit. The stoniness is slight but is there. Very relaxed and not out to impress, confident that what is has is enough. 89

## ITALY WHITE

Valpantena, Cantina  
Veneto, Bianco di Custoza, Torre del Falasco  
Blend

2017, \$7.99, 12.5%

Pale white-green straw complexion, has sufficient shine as well as pooling to create more presence than the coloration allows. Good focus to the nose, apple, pear to apricot pit scents, pressed flowers, tangerine zest, then a big burst of black licorice, lots of wiry staying power. While light in body it has immense grip and leverages the acidity to bind itself well, almost phenolic in feel. Nutty, chalky, dry without parching, again mixes in orange peel, anise, dried flowers. The

fruit here leaner with apple, pear to more of that pit fruit skin stuff. The light honeyed, waxy quality to the ending helps soften and lengthen it. Performs better with a full chill on it. Unspecified percentages of Garganega, Cortese, Trebbiano Toscano. (Composite Cork) 90

San Leonardo, Tenuta  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Vigneti delle Dolomiti, Vette di San Leonardo  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2017, \$18.99, 12.5%

The paleness of the white-green straw coloration bolstered by the bright shine, sparkles intensely in the glass. Crisp, lemony nose, limestone and chalk, mint, apple skin and apricot pit without much flesh, almost lifts before you can register much, satisfying even if ephemeral. Medium-bodied, in no way lean but the bones are set far apart without much connective tissue. The acidity shows heft and disregard for your enjoyment. As a result, you need to let it warm closer to room temperature for maximal enjoyment, then you get a solid dose of mint and anise. Energetic tangerine to lemon citrus throws a punch or two. Persimmon, star fruit, nectarine and pineapple, a dry sort of tropicality. Funnily, if it could relax for a second it would seem more herbaceous. Withering finish. It has plenty of character but its lack of generosity is a flaw. 87

## GERMANY RED

Enderle & Moll  
Baden, Basis  
Pinot Noir  
2016, \$19.99, 13.0%

Kind of pomegranate red with a strong orange influence, transparent with a soft filminess to it. The nose has a damp sous bois quality, plenty of herbaceous matter, does avoid out and out merde led funk, the strawberry to raspberry scents perfectly acceptable with no desire to hog the spotlight. Medium-bodied, there's a girder-like quality to the acidity and tannin which firmly plants things on the palate. Spicy with notes of saline and brine, this manages to outshine that herbaceousness. Quieter presence in the mixed white citrus and chalky minerality. As in the nose the red berry to cherry fruit just puts in an honest day's work without fanfare. Could use a little more integration and smoothing out but it's no stretch to expect this in 3-4 years hence. 88

## GERMANY WHITE

Falkenstein, Hofgut  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Krettnacher, Euchariusberg,  
Kabinett AP #12  
Riesling  
2017, \$23.99, 8.5%

Trim and shiny white to green straw hue, slight trace of fizz on glass sides, some translucent shimmer, looks the part, nothing unusual. Honey, cinnamon stick, and lemon peel spar in the nose with rubber, damp minerals, and slate, the apricot, melon to apple fruit scents a steady influence and impel the pacing faster. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity is like no joke and comes close to body slamming you to the floor. Smoky, notes of brown sugar and molasses come first even as a wallop of green apple clears the deck. Pink grapefruit citrus and eventually peach, apricot, green melon fruit extends things well. In its youth there is an excess of energy it's not quite sure what to do with. So, while vibrant now it's best may lie ahead. 91

Wirsching, Weingut Hans  
Franken, Iphöfer, Trocken  
Scheurebe  
2016, \$21.99, 12.5%

Gentle translucency deepens the otherwise pale white to golden straw hue, credible surface shine, checks off the basic boxes. If a nose can be airy and focused at once, this is it, white grapefruit, violets, licorice, just starting to burn rubber, the pineapple, papaya, nectarine scents come as a welcome shock, gets things going in a clear direction. Medium-bodied, the acidity is strong without unnecessary angularity or edginess, plus there's a pleasing creaminess through the finish. The peach, nectarine, pineapple, mango fruit resonates well but as a trocken wine there's not going to be much indulgence. Loads of pink grapefruit and a smidgeon of lime. Can be tarry or smoky at moments. Honest representation of Scheurebe crafted as a dry wine, nothing profound, yet satisfying across the board. (Screwcap) 88

## SPAIN RED

Envínate  
Canary Islands, Tenerife Ycoden-Daute-Isora, Benje Tinto  
Listán Prieto  
2017, \$27.99, 12.0%

Violet to bright red plum flesh to ruby at the very edge, has an eerily fuzzy glow to it which helps it remain solid in the glass. There's a lift to the nose which feels like a turning of the cheek, quite leathery with chalk, saline, cured meat accents, its taciturn ruggedness

stunts the raspberry, red cherry scents. Light-bodied, big swell in the mid-palate before drying out through the finish. The salty, meaty, leathery character endures, poor dirt but not green in any way. The lemon to white grapefruit does not fully blossom until the mid-palate, part of that swell. The strawberry, raspberry fruit consistent but won't earn the spotlight. Lots going on here, a wine for those who like to suck on stones rather than fruit. 88

Gil, Mas d'en  
Priorat, Bellmunt Vi de Vila  
Blend

2015, \$18.99, 14.5%

Splash of purple to the core, otherwise it's all rust red with a mild orange tinge at the edges, clear but not all that shiny. The nose has a smoky quality, in between charred wood and minerally earth, quietly herbaceous, liqueur quality sweetness to the raspberry, strawberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, exceedingly ripe with a spotlight on that same strawberry, blueberry to raspberry fruit, all treble and no bass. Floral like an air spray, lifted further by lemon zest. A modicum of stoniness with straw notes, no exactly metallic but something in there conjures the thought of tomato skin. More or less a simple fruit bomb and not bad at it. 70% Garnacha, 20% Cariñena, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. 87

## ARGENTINA RED

Catena, Bodega y Viñedos  
Mendoza, Nicolas Catena Zapata  
Blend

2014, \$79.99, 13.5%

Crimson-black core, hard to find any purple there, the rims a rust red color, full strength of hue. Suave cedar, menthol, maduro cigar leaf introduce the nose, restrained toffee and hard caramel candy oak notes, more Cuban coffee over time, the black currant, plum, cherry scents thick and powerful, on the monolithic side, touch of bell pepper before the final dissolve. Full-bodied, velvety plushness, the tannins burred down to a smooth finish. The plum, currant, cassis fruit the main attraction, plenty of that sweet tobacco, tea leaf and cedar in reserve. Smoky through the finish along with bitter dark chocolate. A bruiser but not uncouth, basically made to go toe-to-toe with a thickly cut steak, not meant to be plumbed for hidden subtleties. 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Malbec. 90

Catena Zapata, Bodega  
Mendoza, Agrelo, La Piramide Vineyard, D.V. Catena  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2014, \$34.99, 13.5%

Mostly opaque purple core smeared with red clay hues, the rims more scarlet to fresh brick red. The nose seems ready to deny efforts to enjoy, cedar, meadow grasses, tobacco leaf, and a steady whisper of bell pepper, creamy butterscotch dripped on top, direct and no-nonsense black currant, plum fruit scents, unwinds at a glacial pace. Medium-bodied, good volume, the tannin sturdy and ensures there's no fooling around. Spicier with sandalwood incense, ginger root to wet cedar accents, spiced orange peel as well. The caramel, toffee oak element proportionate to the whole as well as its relative youth. Streamlined currant, cherry, plum fruit. The ducks are all in a row but chances are great that the cork was pulled many years too soon. 89

Catena, Bodega y Viñedos  
Mendoza, La Consulta, Catena High Mountain Vines  
Malbec

2016, \$25.99, 13.0%

Clean and utterly transparent, flows from a small purple core through crimson red to fresh brick red at the rims. Damp leather, roasted cocoa, and barnyard mud fill up most of the nose, a few notes of sandalwood and pine, there's a roasty edge as well to the cherry, black currant scents, overall not all that smooth of an experience. Medium-bodied, the acidity strong enough to burr down the roasty, toasty oak. In the same vein a pervasive sourness lights up the red currant, cherry, blackberry fruit, even has a green apple edge. Minerally black earth, loam and leather appear, in terms of secondary flavors the high-toned nature combats bottom resonance. As you'd expect with the house, it's clear that intelligence permeates the crafting of the wine but it lacks soul. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Mendel, Bodega  
Mendoza  
Malbec

2016, \$24.99, 14.1%

Opaque and saturated purple stained core, thin and fiery crimson rims, sleek surface, looks all sinisterly medieval. At first the nose is completely dominated by caramel coated popcorn, butterscotch and vanilla fudge, with air time the oak moderates into superripe cherry, red currant fruit scents but oddly nothing else, like it is nothing but oak and fruit. Full-bodied, squats on the tongue trying to push down hard. The tannin has decent enough bite but can't turn the plum, cassis flavors from verging on prune. Maybe, just maybe, there's a touch of earth or leather here. Luckily the bodacious oak found in the nose pulls back when sipped, just some coffee bean and cocoa. It's a fat baby now and pleasurable as such, any aging would

have to be short turn in search of fruit and tannin balance. 88

## **ARGENTINA WHITE**

Catena, Bodega y Viñedos  
Mendoza, Catena Alta Historic Rows  
Chardonnay

2016, \$31.99, 13.5%

Light bronzing already to the substantial golden color, has that solid block look in the glass, albeit clean, just looks permanent rather than flighty. The nose is imbued with a hefty dose of oak, mainly vanilla cream, butterscotch and melted caramel, has a floral perfume of moderate presence, the fruit is pear, pear and more pear with apricot and peach in reserve. Medium-bodied, not flabby, however, it comes across as being structured by the oak toast and heft rather than any underlying acidity. Ginger spice, orange sherbet, whipped cream smooth it out some. More tropical character to the fruit, pineapple, guava as well as pear and apricot. Works up a sweat trying to glue itself to your mouth pores. In the end you have to think it achieved most if not all of what it set out to achieve. If that's a good thing is up to you. 88