

***The Hanes Wine Review, November 2009 Edition***

Well, I have not posted a new wine review since August. At this point I feel like *The Onion's* Jim Anchower with his standard opening line, "I know it's been a long time since I rapped at ya, but I've had a lot of stuff goin' down."

Right now I am trying to stay employed with my main job as the business struggles mightily through the piss poor economy. When not logging my 30+ hours the re, I am working at my primary part-time job. When not doing that, if so blessed, I am working at my third part-time job doing freelance technical writing (which has considerably dried up). Add to this trying to keep my ragingly alcoholic aunt financially solvent as she spends money like a madwoman and that's another part-time to full-time job. I may honestly try to get another job for my days off from my man job if someone needs help on Sundays and Mondays. Meow-Meow's cat food must be acquired somehow.

Soooooo, there really isn't much time for *The Hanes Wine Review* these days. Or for anything beyond trying to stay one half step ahead of the financial grim reaper. Writing the review requires a good deal of time and I just don't have it, particularly for the beginning article section. Moreover, I don't have much cash to buy wine and no wine equals no wines reviewed equals lame *THWR*. Beer is cheaper. I still leave the rockgut vodka to my aunt.

I remain unsure when I will be able to return the review to a monthly (or close to it) basis. Given current macroeconomic conditions, I don't anticipate much change in my circumstances during 2010. Hence, any wine-based output will be sporadic, haphazard as well as full of many disingenuous lies, slander and factual errors.

Thank you.

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**This month's big winners...** In how many states can one find the wines of Kalin being discounted? Well, North Carolina is one, seems no one knows this is one of the most unique producers in California. Anyway, the 1994 "Cuvée W" Chardonnay is delish (and still their current release of this wine) and worth the \$32 paid. Hanes had never previously encountered the Minervois winery Château Massiac but so tasty was their 2007 bottling that he has a hankering for more. An excellent value at around \$18. Good luck with new wineries struck once more with the 2005 Chinon "Cuvée des Tireaux" from Domaine Olek-Mery. Why drink Cabernet Sauvignon when you can drink Cabernet Franc? Continuing this theme Hanes tried two different bottlings from previously unknown Château Haut-Monplaisir of Cahors, both 100% Malbec, and both quite good, the "Prestige" ageworthy as well. Can you tell that Hanes is a Francophile yet? But let's not ignore Italy, for the Gaierhof 2007 Moscato Giallo Dolce is a beautiful floral breeze of a wine. Fairly priced at \$22.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** The name is daunting but the wines of Domaine Les Aphillanthes are good. Witness their 2007 red blend from the Vin de Pays de Vaucluse, a strong showing for about \$13. Kudos go as well to Sasha Lichine for his 2007 Vin de Pays d'Oc red blend "Le Coq Rouge" for \$13, another value from Southern France. Known more for their Picpoul de Pinet, La Cave Les Costières de Pomerols also has produced in 2008 a likeable Sauvignon Blanc called "Beauvignac." An easy buy for \$12. It is getting harder and harder to find credible inexpensive Valpolicella. This is sad. But you can get happy with the 2007 Tenuta Sant'Antonio "Nanfrè" bottling which is just what the doctor ordered for around \$14. Steininger dropped the "Leicht und Fruchtig" tag from their "Young" bottling but it remains apt, their 2008 white blend from Kamptal, Austria a satisfying value for around \$11. Savvy fans of Tuscan wines know the name Rodáno for their value during these troubled times. Their 2007 Sangiovese-based blend "Poggjalupi" is an easy buy for \$15. Nothing tastier than a hill of wolves. Cheap and in the "crowd pleaser" mode we find the 2008 Pinot Grigio from Cielo, a \$10 wine that would be hard to dislike. Hanes usually hates on the wines from importer Eric Solomon but you have to call it like you see it. The 2007 Monastrell from Casa Castillo of Jumilla, Spain is friendly, accessible juice for \$13.

**And the disappointments...** The Silver Palm Cab is a big mover where Hanes works. When you taste it, though, you can't help but ask why. There's nothing about it that isn't offered by many wines \$6 to \$7 less. That's the way the world is sometimes. You can "ditto" that for the 2006 Eola Hills basic Chardonnay from Oregon, about as pedestrian as such wines get but the rubes, they luv it. At least it's a little cheaper at \$15. Hanes doesn't drink anywhere near the amount of German wines he used to (can't get the wines from importers Terry Theise or Rudi Wiest in Charlotte). So, he was pretty psyched to try the 2008 Oppenheimer Kabinett from Weingut Dr. Heyden. Until he tasted it. This is an unhappy wine. Someone please stop Hanes is he tries to purchase another wine made by the Domaine de la Mordorée. Their 2008 Côtes-du-Rhône "La Dame Rousse" is a straight-up nasty, misshapen mess. Insult to injury, it costs like \$19. Rockbrook Cellars is one of the many Bronco Wine Company cheapie labels floating around out there. Even for \$5.99 their 2007 Merlot blows. Much love Hanes has for the wines of Alsatian Albert Mann. However, their 2007 Pinot Auxerrois is flat-footed and a disappointment. Luckily, the 2008 wines are here and in the queue. While fairly priced at \$12, the Chilean Pinot Noir called "Pinot Black" from Viña Valles de Chile is an overwrought mess. It was poured during a store tasting and, naturally, people liked it. Calgon, take me away.

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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/oldervintages2009.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 November!

### CALIFORNIA RED

Turley  
Regional Blend, Old Vines  
Zinfandel  
2007, \$25.00, 15.9%  
The deep purple core lightened some by a ruby-magenta tinge, in turn the rims darkened by the purple which doesn't want to fade away, fairly spotless although dense enough you have to strain to note such. Juicy blackberry, blueberry, raspberry moistness permeates the nose, sufficiently direct to push to the sides the caramel, molasses, grapefruit/lemon citrus, eucalyptus accents, a touch more herbal than expected, has the sinewy build to keep the total message on point and abbreviated. Medium-bodied, opens broadly through the attack and then tightens up as it moves forward. While the blackberry, black cherry, blueberry fruit remains the core of the message, it's in no way goopy nor overdone, steps lively across the palate. Ginger and clove pair with pine and eucalyptus to add to the erect carriage. The orange, white grapefruit citrus pitches in on this score too. Menthol contributes to the lift, mild sweet tobacco and tea leaf there. Really, a delicious drinking Zin right now. 91

Turley  
Contra Costa County, Duarte Vineyard  
Zinfandel  
2007, \$32.00, 16.0%  
Rich, yet vivid, purple hued core, slowly fades into a scarlet and then ruby coloration, only a thin circle of pink at the outer edge, spotless and not suspiciously opaque, just fat. Super-juicy nose of boysenberry, blueberry, raspberry fruit scents, supplemented by coconut flakes, butterscotch and mint leaf accents, more fresh and open than dense, lighter eucalyptus nuance, doesn't come up with much else, pleases for both its direct simplicity and lack of alcoholic fumes. Medium-bodied and, as in the nose, more fluid and giving than might be expected. So, while not a bruiser, this is not to say that it lacks in explosive flavor. Oodles of raspberry, blackberry, blueberry, boysenberry and black cherry fruit, all bright juiciness which wets the palate. Creamy butterscotch, caramel oak flavors, less toast and coconut but no sense in trying to avoid the oak, it's fully knit into the fabric. The mint and eucalyptus find dance

partners in orange peel and flower water. Even without much tannin or acidity it's good pacing and overall smoothness keeps it focused. Controlled finish, longlasting without seeming forced. 91

Turley  
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Dusi Vineyard  
Zinfandel  
2007, \$42.00, 16.4%  
More transparent than expected ruby-purple core, the ruby takes on a reddish cast further out, verging on garnet and scarlet, very clean throughout. Mint and floral perfume lifts the nose, mild raisin and prune touch to the cherry, blackberry, blueberry scents, add in milk chocolate, butterscotch and eucalyptus and it's all about giving you a deep backrub, only when the alcohol peeks through is the friendliness disturbed. Medium-bodied, super-juicy and even wet attack, the blueberry, blackberry, raspberry fruit sloshes sunnily throughout, nary a sign of tannin nor acidity to upset the lovefest. Menthol, eucalyptus, candied oranges supplement this, at the same time it has a solid degree of earthiness and outdoorsy scrub brush to lend counterpoint. Loses some weight and concentration towards the finish, yet its sheer good naturedness can't help but make you forgive any blemishes. 90

Carina Cellars  
Regional Blend, Central Coast, Clairvoyant  
Blend  
2007, \$14.99, 14.7%  
Spotlessly clear full blend of ruby and violet, gets a shade closer to brick red and crimson at the rims, still has good hue density. Sugary sweet and perfumed raspberry, strawberry, cranberry, red cherry scents in the nose, spritz of white grapefruit zest, splash of caramel, not much greenness, keeps it simple and focused on delivering the fruit. Medium-bodied with a soft touch, slightly more sourness here in the cranberry, raspberry, cherry, pomegranate fruit while still not lacking sweet juiciness. Lemonade-like feel to the white grapefruit citrus, indeed some lemon too. Both the tannins and acidity muted if not absent. Because of its plushness the alcohol is contrasted more and thus evident. Somewhat floral, more like meadow scrub, nothing too pungent. Likewise, sweetness of the attack makes the finish seem drier. A decent Californian Rhône blend, priced where it should be. 55% Syrah, 33% Grenache, 12% Mourvèdre. 87

Gupé  
Regional Blend, Central Coast  
Syrah  
2007, \$21.99, 13.5%

Presents a ruby-purple hued core of average depth, has a good deal of clarity but likely more interested in you paying attention to the more vibrant red magenta rims, attractive enough, hard to expect more visually. There's some alcoholic heat to the nose, even at its relatively low alcohol level, beyond that there's ripened cherry, plum, blackberry fruit scents devoid of extra juiciness, unobtrusive notes of cinnamon, orange blossom, fresh leather and a lifting burst of eucalyptus. Medium-bodied, soaks into the mouth enough that it can carry more weight and momentum as you take sips. The acidity is pretty good, not spectacular but separates it from the goop and puts some air under its wings. White grapefruit citrus leads the orange flavors, looking to increase the pucker factor. You get a little more verve out of the red cherry, raspberry fruit next to the blackberry, currant fruit, nothing here dense and chewy. There is an herbal component which lingers. It comes together OK in the end, a reasonable nod towards French Syrah to get thrown in with the horde of unstructured fruit-driven Cali Syrah out there at this price and below. 98% Syrah, 2% Grenache. Grapes sourced 67% Santa Barbara County, 33% San Luis Obispo County. 87

Turley  
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Dragon Vineyard  
Zinfandel  
2007, \$45.00, 16.3%

The purple core eases into opacity, doesn't seem too intent on impressing, more crimson to blood red around the rims with a touch of ruby, adequate surface shine. The nose is heavy but not explosive, dumps a bushel of blueberry, raspberry, blackberry fruit in there, thick floral musk, candied oranges and then warm caramel and butterscotch add to the general density, no real brambly or mountain-esque notes, but the alcoholic fumes do come through which kind of sucks. Full-bodied, for its weight smoothed out decently with minimal burn and only a grainy sort tannic underbelly. Plenty of black cherry, blackberry, boysenberry, blueberry fruit, that said, more texturally concentrated than sweet. Really, were it not for the oak-inspired notes of butterscotch, caramel and toffee you'd not think it sweet at all. Pine, cut grass and a swipe of eucalyptus about all else you get. It's a good wine, overall, but you can't help but see it as a disappointment of sorts at the same time. 87

3 Loose Screws (Don Sebastiani & Sons)  
Napa Valley, Aquinas  
Merlot  
2005, \$18.99, 13.5%

Dark purple core with the utmost cleanliness, takes on a rust red to brick red coloration as it nears the rims, were it not for the perfect clarity you'd think it was an older wine. Extremely smoky nose of burnt kindling, mesquite grill fat, oak toast with fried butter and butterscotch accompaniment, lighter breeze of mint and menthol, the red currant, cherry scents possess as much snap as sap and don't over-depend on juiciness. Medium-bodied, definitely sweet yet, as in the nose, doesn't overplay it, just squeezes the blackberry, black cherry, blueberry fruit in there without much ado. The oakiness remains crisp and toasty, charred wood and here dill weed and then caramel and butterscotch. Has a floral and minty side as well. Whether it's wood tannin or not, has more tannic spine

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than expected, for the good. The smokiness creates some lift through the finish. If you have to drink Napa Merlot, you could do worse at the price. (Synthetic Cork: Neocork) 87

3 Loose Screws (Don Sebastiani & Sons)  
Central Valley, Clarksburg, Wilson Vineyard, The Crusher  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2007, \$16.99, 13.5%

Clear scarlet-purple core, spotlessness more evident around the crimson to red magenta rims, while fully hued doesn't seem unduly saturated. Caramel and mesquite barbecue sauce provide bottom and richness to the cherry, blackberry scents, not too sweet, thick slabs of lemon and orange pulp, the floral side starts and stutters, touch of leather and tobacco, pretty straightforward. Medium-bodied, on the sleek side and slowly sheds weight due to the fast pacing. Tannins light, yet the acidity fairly perceptible. This brings more of a "red" character to the fruit, red cherry, raspberry and red currant flavors. The lemon, orange citrus persists, fits well with the fruit. Not a lot of oak toast on it, toffee, vanilla bean and sweet smoke, nothing here out of the ordinary. Some might say the finish is weak but others might appreciate its reluctance to show off unnecessarily. (Synthetic Cork: Neocork) 87

Four Vines  
Regional Blend, Old Vine Cuvee  
Zinfandel  
2006, \$14.99, 14.6%

Red ruby mixes with violet in the core, spotless enough that there's little to change the overall transparent inclination, the rims take on a garnet to deeper scarlet hue, while not overwrought the coloration matches expectations. Minor disturbance in the nose from alcoholic fumes, that said, no lack of vanilla, cream custard and menthol, mint scents to smooth things out, minimal chocolate or caramel so the thrust of the raspberry, blackberry, cherry, cranberry scents has to do most of the heavy lifting, good length based on accrued momentum. Medium to full-bodied, not chewy but gains points for holding onto what body it has through to the finish. The butterscotch, vanilla, toast and toffee oak provides a sugary framework for the unfolding of the semi-tart orange, grapefruit citrus. Has a mesquite smoke edge, this does not do much to tease out gamey or animal-like pats. Cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit flavors, stay sour even though obvious that the fruit is supposed to be more impressive. This noted, might best be served as a lighter styled Zin intended for complementary table consumption. Finish would certainly benefit from food. Grapes sourced from Mendocino, Amador, Sonoma, Paso Robles, Lodi. (Screwcap) 86

Goyette, Robert  
Napa Valley  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2007, \$20.99, 13.9%

Black darkens the purple core, pushing the ruby influences towards the rims where more scarlet red deepens things yet more, with all of this keeps its clarity if not always transparency. Popcorn, caramel and butterscotch unleashed immediately in the nose, you know this is a fastball right down the middle from the very start, blackberry, cherry fruit all dolled up with flowers and orange zest but, in the end, the nose lacks for complexity beyond the fruit and oak. Medium-bodied with good polish, the tannin present while burred down to an acceptable level. There's not enough heft to prevent an alcoholic

astriogeneity from appearing. The oak once more the major factor, expected to paper over any flaws with toffee, butterscotch, popcorn and mint accents. The raspberry, blackberry, cherry fruit starts off with credible depth but dives off near the finish. It's recognizable as Cabernet Sauvignon but, beyond that, offers a meager array of typical non-fruit flavors. Should be about five bucks cheaper. 86

Silver Palm  
Regional Blend, North Coast  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2006, \$16.99, 13.9%

Violet to cough syrup, medicinal red at the core, more pure crimson around the rims, curiously transparent, shiny surface though. Floral perfume deepens the already substantial plum, cassis, cherry scents, the oak toast and vanilla cream comes on strong too, pinch of orange zest, mainly sticks to the fruit for effect. Medium-bodied, while the lemon/orange citrus tang noticeable from the start this is quickly run down from behind by the toast, vanilla fudge, butterscotch, coffee notes. Not overly tannic, however, it dries up substantially by the finish. The takes some of the oomph out of the plum, black currant, black cherry fruit, also making the finish oakier. The first half is sweet enough that as long as you take repeated short sips it tastes better. It's credible at the price point but not the best among its peers either. 89% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Merlot, 3% Syrah, 3% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petite Sirah. 86

Artisan Winery  
Regional Blend, California  
Merlot  
2006, \$9.99, 13.6%

As much scarlet red in the core as purple, crystal clear and squeaky clean, the rims even more brick red, scarlet and close to orange. Thick toastiness to the nose, burnt coffee, caramel, butterscotch, curiously doesn't last long and turns into a more sour dill and pickle juice aspect, the plum, cherry fruit uncomplicated and of average depth, gets a lift from citrus blossom accents, has average staying power/length as well. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with soft, broken-in tannins that retain enough buoyancy to avoid the whole starting to slouch. The plum, cherry fruit sugary, as if partially on the way to pruniness. The coffee, burnt toast, toffee flavors soak into the palate and actually shaves off some of the sweetness. Beyond this have some orange peel and light grassiness, not much else. It's funny, it doesn't even taste like Merlot. Which may kind of be what Merlot tastes like. 85

Stonewood Cellars  
Regional Blend, California  
Merlot  
NV, \$7.99, 13.5%

There's a burnt red, brick red infusion throughout the otherwise purple core, even stronger crimson edge to the rims, at times suggesting burnt orange, average clarity to it. No lack of juiciness to the cherry, raspberry, blackberry, apple fruit scents, the nose fairly clean and avoids grassiness, supplements the dominant fruit with orange zest and very light toastiness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with credible fluidity and smoothness. It isn't until near the end that herbaceous notes percolate and even then the blackberry, black cherry fruit and orange, lemon citrus covers up most of it. Not acidic nor woody per se, yet a grainy, drying bitterness is there at the end. The oak

toast is at the level the price would suggest and without applying too much makeup. Credible cheap red wine. 84

Rockbrook Cellars  
Regional Blend  
California  
Merlot

2007, \$5.99, 12.5%

Basic ruby-purple color, light enough for full transparency throughout, the rims take on a ruby to dark magenta feel. The nose swiftly shows its herbaceousness, verging on bell pepper with alcohol peeking out as well, a strong hard candy character to the cherry, raspberry scents, displays little oak presence, does have a floral side. Medium-bodied with the weight declining as it moves forward. Even more than in the nose it pushes the sweet raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit to the fore as swiftly as possible in hopes of forestalling the herbaceousness. Succeeds for a few ticks, then not. The tannin seems forced, like wood chips or underripe phenolics, don't dry as much as staunch. Yet, again, that that oaky, maybe some cocoa powder or charred wood. Light sour orange notes. One assumes this is what people expect at the price. 83

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Kalin Cellars  
Livermore Valley, Cuvée W  
Chardonnay  
1994, \$31.99, 13.5%

It has visibly aged into a worn gold to amber hue, still not that dark per se, a slight luminescent glow helps it keep presence, only moderate loss around the rims. Pungent nose, offers some sour pickle notes but most of the time it's mint, baking spices, raw cookie dough, poached apricots and pears, has some smoky toastiness yet the oak all but fully knit into the whole. Full-bodied, contrast of textures between a dry, bready, semi-maderized feel and the scrubbing sensations of the lively acidity, which brings with it notes of tangerine and lemon citrus. Clove and ginger spice, mint, anise, keep it alternating too. Here, you could perhaps argue that the apricot, peach, pear, yellow apple fruit has faded some. Soft caramel, toffee tones. But, if you know the producer, you realize this is part of the overall tradeoff to get the interesting tertiary developments. Muscular rise into the mouth, not so much inner mouth perfume as pregnant rain cloud. Does have the typical oxidative notes but who gives a shit. 90

Tangent  
Edna Valley, Paragon Vineyard  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2007, \$14.99, 13.5%

Pale luminescent yellow glow, able to just fill the glass visually and keep it simply transparent and not as empty as water. There's good penetration to the nose, in most part attributable to a light pickled edge, sour grapefruit and orange citrus notes and pineapple, papaya fruit next to more relaxed peach, apricot scents, you also get mint and a white pebble kind of stoniness, nothing roughly hewn about this aspect, as it warms there's a stickiness which is welcome for its added nostril texture. Medium-bodied, the ducks more in a row here, the grapefruit, orange, lemon citrus alternates well between sour and sweet, the grassiness under control, perhaps in part to more solid stoniness. While tangy, the fruit here isn't striving for tropicality, the pineapple knit into nectarine, peach, Fuji apple, pear flavors. The mint leaf still present, a nice touch,

doesn't hit you with that pickle, jalapeño shit going down in the nose. If you have the time, it'll grow on you, if not, it's serviceable in the moment. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 87

Bad Dog Ranch  
Regional Blend, California  
Chardonnay  
2007, \$10.99, 12.5%

Very pale, like old worn gold, average shine or sparkle, very little hue left by the rims. Lots of juicy green and red apple in the nose, blends in some apricot and pear too but not overly dependent on fruit, the citrus displays a orange sherbet like texture in your nostrils, any oak treatment is light, soft toast that could at times almost pass for minerality. Medium-bodied, has heft as well as softness that appears derived more from malolactic fermentation or time on lees than oak. Notes of pineapple come through here alongside the apple, apricot and pear. Stays within the range of orange to tangerine citrus. The acidity mild, cannot claim it's absent but does not add much cleansing character. Still, finishes dry enough without much slop or outstaying its welcome. You get some floral retronasal action. Credible juice within its category. 86

## OREGON WHITE

Eola Hills  
Regional Blend, Oregon  
Chardonnay  
2006, \$14.99, 12.6%

Palpable green influence through the white to yellow gold base, very credible surface shine, does lose some color intensity around the rims. The nose has both crisp toastiness and creaminess, butterscotch and vanilla fudge notes, drips with lime juice, round and firm peach, apricot, red apple fruit scents, has enough of a floral perfume to swirl and not get too heavy in the nostrils. Full-bodied, fleshy and here uses its weight to soak into the palate. The lime to lemon citrus steals the spotlight initially, creates a wet feel which dampens the oaky toast. Still, the oak a major component and equal in power to the peach, pear, apricot fruit. Whereas the acidity is about what you'd expect and nothing zippy, overall the wine never slouches or gets sloppy. This is what the masses want, yup. 86

## FRANCE RED

Massiac, Château  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Minervois  
Blend  
2007, \$17.99, 13.0%

The purple hued core possesses both warmth and clarity, steadily yields to lighter ruby and magenta shades as it moves towards the rims where there's even more glow. Animal fur, wet leather and tar frame the nose, wonderfully savage and not for the brett-averse, floral notes and orange peel interspersed with cranberry, red cherry, boysenberry fruit scents, metallic minerals and iron shards, blood, quite alive and forceful. Medium-bodied, slight dip in the middle otherwise consistent and clear message throughout. That being more of the wet fur, rawhide, tar, black mineral earth and olive pits. Resonant red cherry, red currant, cranberry, pomegranate fruit made all the snappier by the rambunctious acidity. Stone, metal and quinine swerve on through. Lots of shit going on here for under twenty bucks. 75% Syrah, 25% Carignan. 91

Olek-Mery, Domaine  
Loire, Chinon, Cuvée des Tireaux  
Cabernet Franc  
2005, \$27.99, 12.5%

Fat warmth permeates the dark purple core, opaque without getting close to blackness, pushes far out before segueing to dark ruby and red-magenta, fills the glass with color, nothing dull about it. The nose offers an abundance of layered plum, black cherry, currant fruit, pierced by cigar ash, dried cut grass and stone quarry dust, these elements caking the nostrils and heightening a dry complexion, slight white grapefruit pith, any bell pepper subdued, you get more cocoa powder instead to smooth the dissolve. Full-bodied and close to sappy in texture, there's no doubting the ripeness in the currant, cherry, plum fruit, however, it is expertly balanced out by tobacco ash, tar, bell pepper, black tea leaves. While it does not come across as particularly acidic nor tannic, also does not feel gelatinous. The white grapefruit to orange citrus brightens the mid-palate on. Its richness and slow pace extend the finish inch by inch. Remarkably still in "baby fat" stage, this may or may not be a good thing for longer term aging. Quite tasty now. 90

Texier, Eric  
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Brézème, L707 [Lot]  
Syrah  
2007, \$20.99, 12.0%

The red-purple core fades to a ruby cast around the rims, despite its unblemished clarity there's a visual flatness to the bulk of the liquid, not to detract from the surface reflectivity. Merde and peanut shells make a swift impression in the nose, turns wooly with some dried game notes, solid floral core, some mint now and then, a wealth of cherry, currant fruit prowls around your nostrils, stony at times, without any substantial herbal notes. Medium-bodied, plenty of polish and swift pacing, there is a drying influence, however, nothing about the acidity or tannin seems overbearing or too eager. Floral with an abundance of juicy white grapefruit and orange citrus. With each sip the minerals and stones gain prominence. The currant, cherry fruit moves effortlessly towards the finish, steady, no highs nor lows. Has as much black pepper as green pepper. Very pleasing. 90

Haut-Monplaisir, Château  
Southwest France, Cahors, Prestige  
Malbec  
2005, \$24.99, 14.0%

As black as the core is, it still glows, further out you get the dense purple coloration and then very thin luminescent magenta rims. The nose features fully ripened plum, cherry scents which verge on grapey, sweetened further by cinnamon and allspice, anise seed and mandarin oranges, clean and without much oak influence, its youthful plumpness keeping any cedar, earth or stone in the background, right now satisfying in a primary way. Full-bodied, close to syrupy in texture were it not for the tannins to suavely smooth things out and punctuate the dry finish. Orange and white grapefruit pulp lend a pleasing sour pucker. The currant, cherry, plum fruit possesses verve and does not rely too much on juiciness, more so flavor intensity. Cedar, sandalwood, floral musk, the supplementary flavors knit into the whole nicely. Drinks exceedingly well now but the best rewards are likely to come. 90

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Granger, Domaine Pascal  
Beaujolais, Juliéna  
Gamay Noir  
2007, \$21.99, 13.0%

Very clear ruby-violet color, trades darkness for complete consistency core to rims, stays more ruby than lighter magenta further out. Crushed raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit in the nose with a pit, skin touch, floral with a hint of caramel, not earthy but there's sufficient open meadow, gravel type stuff to suspect it to come out more once the fruit has knit in, strong orange peel element, even at low ABV, some alcoholic fumes present. Medium-bodied, large tannic/acidic skeleton makes it feel broader than sheer palate weight might suggest. Blacker complexion to the fruit here, blackberry and plum alongside cherry and raspberry. The orange and lemon citrus too here makes a big splash. Overall, there's a concentrated sweetness to it but it is held admirably in check by the structure. No grassiness, some pebble, stone accents. Comes up with a nice tang at the end too. Wildflowers and that caramel to butterscotch thing rounds things out. Delivers the goods now but seems like it will need a few more years to provide optimal clarity and integration. 89

Clark, Domaine David  
Burgundy, Bourgogne Grand Ordinaire, En BOLLery  
Pinot Noir  
2006, \$29.99, 13.0%

Squeaky clean ruby-violet in color, consistent throughout with equal clarity core to rims, slightly more garnet red around the rims, could see some orange coming out with age. The nose is light of touch with strawberry, watermelon, red cherry scents and lemon water, this slightly upset by a waft of alcoholic fumes, otherwise pleasing mixture of meadow grasses, loose stones and dried topsoil, nothing overtly betrays an oak presence. Medium-bodied, sinewy acidity wraps around your tongue, turning the mouth feel mildly dusty. The attack features that juicy raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit, no dark fruit notes, teams up adroitly with the white grapefruit to lemon citrus zip. Here there's an uptick in mushroom, forest floor flavors, not exactly mineral nor stony but there's more than just fruit going on. You sort of clench on the sips as it fights you, this holds your interest well. Strong through the finish, fruit holds on and, while never elegant, it draws you back in for more sipping. Which is more than most. 89

Haut-Monplaisir, Château  
Southwest France, Cahors, Tradition  
Malbec  
2006, \$17.99, 13.0%

Immaculate throughout, shines from the vivid purple core through to the violet-tinged red magenta rims, seamless appearance in the glass. Pleasing minerally, stony edge to the nose, lots of nip in the white grapefruit pith, bright red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, as if the first harvest of the season, some horsehide notes but its high altitude cruise keeps more denser scents from coalescing. Medium-bodied, it has a wiry tannic and acidic frame, nothing wimpy or half-assed about how it wants to reveal its structure. At the same time in no way under-fruited, rapier thrust to the red cherry, red currant fruit. The white grapefruit and cut grass accents add to the high wattage. The stoniness here less metallic and more earthen and dry. This also brings out more tanned leather and dried cow pattie notes. Dried flowers there at times. A very

honest wine, wins you over as much for this as for any few spectacular qualities. 88

Aphillanthes, Domaine Les  
Rhône, Vin de Pays de Vaucluse  
Blend  
2007, \$12.99, 14.0%

Strong reddish cast to the purple core, such that it lessens the shift to the rims, the ruby-magenta wants to get out from under the crimson red but barely does so at the outermost edge. Even with a crinkly minerality to it, the nose is full of ripe and juicy black cherry, strawberry, red currant fruit, this able to cloak the underlying merde and muddy barn earth scents, mixes in softer pine and white citrus nuances. Medium-bodied, there's a pleasing graininess to the tannins which keeps it steadied throughout. The orange to white grapefruit pith evident, brings out a garrigues styled floral side too. The merde and funky out earth lower here but it retains a little "country wine" roughness to it. The blend seems to keep it going in odd directions at once, satisfying yet not all focused in a single direction. Good stuff, needs bread, cheese and a sunny afternoon. 40% Merlot, 30% Syrah, 30% Grenache. 88

Petit, James  
Loire, Bourgueil, Cuvée des Galluches Tradition  
Cabernet Franc  
2007, \$19.99, 12.5%

Just about more red ruby in the core than violet, very clear and pure, about as transparent as you can imagine such a wine could be, more straight-up ruby to magenta at the rims, light in hue and benefits from a sparkling surface sheen. While there's no denying the ripe, hard candy appeal of the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit scents in the nose, it has more than sufficient counter weight in the tobacco ash, bell pepper and parched brown earth elements, close to dusty in texture even with the candied feel, the lemon peel has a sour bite and with time more minerality becomes apparent. Light to medium-bodied, buoyant on the tongue with excellent fluidity. The tannins might be a tad rough for the overall weight but give it credibility all the same. The stone and mineral dust beat the bell pepper to the punch, but the latter owns the back half. The tobacco ash adds to the dryness. The fruit remains in the red spectrum, raspberry, cherry and strawberry, fades a few steps before the finish. Tasty and without guile, not going to make old bones. 88

Lichine, Sasha  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Oc, Le Coq Rouge  
Blend  
2007, \$12.99, 14.0%

Dark purple core with an equally dark crimson cast a touch further out, more straight blood red at the rims with a hint of ruby, very clean and vibrant throughout. Rawhide and animal fur break through initially in the nose, smoky with fatty grill drippings, follows with succulent cherry and blackberry scents and then orange blossom and various flowers, not overly complex but certainly grabs your attention. Medium-bodied, the juicy exuberance of the cherry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit scores a decisive victory here in the mouth. Tannins and acidity both soft without being absent, sponge up things decently. Again, a floral swipe is present as well as orange citrus. The leather and grill smoke aspect not here so much, simply adds to the slow drying quality through the back half. Merest touch of chocolate and vanilla oak, this too dry. Very good wine

which stays within itself and likes to please. 46% Merlot, 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Grenache. [Screwcap] 88

Baudry, Domaine Bernard  
Loire, Chinon, Les Granges  
Cabernet Franc  
2007, \$17.99, 12.5%

Clear, bright violet core with a magenta outer rim, where it's also highly transparent and gleaming. The nose streams mineral dust, bell pepper, crushed stone, orange peel, dried potpourri, at first makes it difficult to get at the wet and juicy cherry, black currant fruit scents, does a good job of filling the nostrils in a quiet, unobtrusive nature. Medium-bodied, noticeably smooth with the tannins standing in the back row. Flowers, orange pulp, sweet tea leaves here allow more room for the cherry, blackberry, currant fruit. Ash, stone, chalk and mineral dust can't dry things out all that much, even the bell pepper stays juicy. All in all, it seems like it could continue to smooth out without losing its fruit for a good 3-5 year horizon. 88

Bonnelière, Château de La  
Loire, Chinon, Rive Gauche  
Cabernet Franc  
2007, \$18.99, 13.0%

Deep purple core displays a warm glow in addition to opacity, fat red magenta to ruby rims hum along as well, sleek surface. Minerals and broken stone in the nose create a sturdy backdrop for compact black cherry, blackberry fruit scents, equal dollops of caramel/chocolate and flowers, not herbaceous, spritz of grapefruit zest. Medium-bodied, firm grip and not shy about letting the tannins out to play. That said, there's sinewy strength in the black currant, cherry, plum fruit, dry yet tenacious. Derives most of its "get up and go" from the minerality, iron flecks and white grapefruit pith. Big time retronasal floral burst, welcome relief from the otherwise good-naturedly taciturn manner. Sinewy, old school style, no makeup and not a lot of "give," you have to take it on its terms. Which is a very good thing. 88

Clos La Coutale  
Southwest France, Cahors  
Blend  
2007, \$16.99, 13.0%

There's a warmth to the purple core, dark but not overly saturated, the glowing garnet to red magenta rims penetrate into the center well, sleek surface as well. Somewhat tight nose of meadow underbrush, wildflowers and orange spice, little earth or leather comes through, the currant, cherry fruit scents have nice shape and last until the end, which in itself is not short, simply a matter of few words having to come to an end. It's medium-bodied and seems sort of unintegrated in that the tannins are strong, if not at times green, whereas the fruit mostly remains in the plum, currant, cherry territory but does verge into raisin, prune notes. Which suggests trouble balancing sugars with phenolics. That shit does happen you know. Most of the flavor, then, occurs as inner mouth perfume and whatever gets stuck to the mouth roof, the tongue dried out by the mid-palate. Dried flowers, orange peels, something like pine, garden herbs, kindling wood, no real oak presence nor sense of boosting it up into something it ain't. Nice enough. One misses Tannat in Cahors. Sigh. 80% Malbec, 20% Merlot. 86

Jamelles, Les  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays de l'Aude  
Pinot Noir  
2008, \$12.99, 12.5%

Slight murk to the purple core lends it strong opacity, the rims nod towards ruby and then shift into bright magenta, impressive in the glass. Equal bursts of cinnamon and other sweet spices and then cut grass in the nose, while the cherry, raspberry fruit scents have a natural affinity for the former, it's the latter which lasts longer, in part absorbed by a pretty floral musk. In the mouth it's medium to full-bodied, spreads its weight across the palate and verges on becoming bottom heavy. More density than juicy ripeness per se in the blackberry, cherry fruit, here has a darker complexion. The acidity and tannin about average and in line with expectations. The sweet spices get a leg up from orange citrus. Far less herbaceousness here. Retains a sweet profile through the end, while not obviously Pinot it's easy to see more than a few people digging it. [Synthetic Cork] 86

Mordorée, Domaine de la  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, La Dame Rousse  
Blend  
2008, \$18.99, 14.0%

Deep ruby-purple core, hallmarks are the cleanliness and the warm glow through to the pink magenta rims. The nose is angular and more grassy, stemmy than desired, sour raspberry, cherry, cranberry scents, any florality or orange citrus accents not able to settle things down, borders on becoming surly. Medium-bodied, archly dry and tannic, surprising lack of depth and vibrancy of flavors. The herbaceousness and stemminess even higher here, wrings any juice out of your tongue. Tenuous cherry, raspberry, apple fruit struggles to get to the finish. White grapefruit, lemon and orange citrus more active but no less desiccated. Barnyard earthiness, nudges up against merde notes. Really wish there was something more positive to say but this just tastes like overcropped, cheap plonk. 50% Grenache, 40% Syrah, 10% Cinsault. 84

## FRANCE WHITE

Cave Les Costières de Pomerols, La  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Oc, Beauvignac  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2008, \$11.99, 12.5%

Flat, pale yellow, as if the color was washed off over the years, as a result can't lose much around the rims, not much to look at. The nose is a big old bucket of lime, orange, pink grapefruit citrus, sweet and sugary, displays pineapple, green apple, nectarine, guava scents which have the tang to balance out the citrus, touch of bell pepper yet overall more minerally and metallic than herbaceous. Medium-bodied, stays solid from start to finish, the acidity can arch its back at times but mostly just lends light tingle. There's an underlying creaminess to the texture which takes some sting out of the herbaceousness, higher here. The lime, tangerine, pink grapefruit soup remains a major component. The pepper much chili than green here. Consistent presentation throughout, more floral lift at the finish. The peach, nectarine, pineapple, kiwi, guava fruit tropical in flavor, not feel, not a lot of zing. Stony but not so minerally. Friendly in style but without more resonance in the fruit probably loses the basic customer while without more minerality and cut loses the old school geek. [Synthetic Cork: Nomacorç] 87

Puycastaing, Château  
Bordeaux, Graves  
Blend

2007, \$14.99, 13.0%

Deep golden color, while flat, gives it the look of an older wine, could see it developing a bronzed cast with more time, decent strength of hue at the rims. Nice minerally, stony smokiness to the nose with a curious amount of chili pepper notes given the blend, teases out pineapple and passion fruit alongside the nectarine and peach scents, mint and herbs, lacks the waxy, lanolin edge you'd expect, its sheer fullness more impressive than the array of scents. Full-bodied, dense and somewhat immobile, no lack of acidity yet can't stop it from feeling blockish, just dries things some. Very lemony with equal support white grapefruit versus orange. Light grassiness wafts in and out. Clay and earth more up and in there than metallic minerality. That chili-like spiciness hits you more than any honey or wax accents. Good stuff. 70% Sémillon, 30% Sauvignon Blanc. [Composite Cork] 87

Petit Chambord (François Cazin), Le  
Loire, Cour-Cheverny, Vendanges Manuelles  
Romorantin

2007, \$18.99, 12.0%

Full transparency does not effect the glowing green tint among the bleached straw base color, looks solid in the glass given that transparency. Green apple and lemon make for a fresh lift in the nose, floral with a minty edge, at warmer temperatures apricot skin fuzz becomes present. Medium-bodied, the acidity is close to withering, lays a dusty coating cheek to cheek. Naturally this brings out a good deal of underlying minerality to pair with the taut, perhaps underripe, green apple, pear, apricot fruit. The lemon citrus is mouth puckering, hint of lime as well. In the middle the telltale honeyed notes come through, a light waxiness as well. More fullness and depth found at room temperature. Still, a little more length wouldn't hurt nobody. 87

Mann, Domaine Albert  
Alsace, Vieilles Vignes L. 41  
Pinot Auxerrois

2007, \$17.99, 12.5%

Full, glassy yellow gold color, provides both rich layers as well as a sleek surface, a fair degree of hue loss at the rims otherwise sits impressively in the glass. There's a smoky, sauna stone steam dimension to the nose which forestalls the arrival of the peach, apricot and then more biting pineapple, guava fruit scents, mixed citrus there, not that floral, you almost get a banana or leesy element as it warms, on the clumsy side overall. Medium-bodied, broad-shouldered if not that muscular, you get a larger amount of lilac, violet notes which pretties up the attack. The lemon to orange citrus clearer here and sweeter as well. Apricot, peach, mango, passion fruit flavors more than perky enough. The acidity slouches too much to command respect. A little hollow in the center. More mineral than stone, metallic edge present now and then. You expect more integration and sense of purpose from this bottling. [Screwcap: Stelvin+] 86

## ITALY RED

Sant'Antonio, Azienda Agricola Tenuta  
Veneto, Valpolicella, Nanfrè  
Blend

2007, \$13.99, 12.5%

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Immaculately clear and resplendent, light flickers across the surface, the violet core comes with a scarlet infusion which shades imperceptibly into brick red around the rims. There's an earthen stone strewn field touch to the nose, light animal funk, this does not impair the spreading forth of sweet red cherry and raspberry fruit scents as well as a juicy lemon zest, pleasing complexity without being pushy about it. Light to medium-bodied, the acidity very present and cleansing from the attack through the finish. Overall the texture is smooth yet it also displays a strong grip, if not at times sappy stickiness. The fruit deepens here from cherry and raspberry to blackberry. And along with the lemon citrus there's pine and dried flower accents. The funkiness less perceptible here, not sure this is a good or a bad thing. Pockets of stony earth appear randomly sip to sip. Stays consistent until the bottle is finished, an honest representation, especially at the price. 70% Corvina, 30% Rondinella. 89

Rodáno, Fattoria di  
Tuscany, Poggialupi  
Blend

2007, \$14.99, 13.0%

Unblemished richness in the purple core, deft shift to crimson, blood red hues, you'd almost expect it to stain the glass. The nose benefits from a palpable floral lift, pine and menthol notes pitch in too, restrained fullness in the cherry, blackberry fruit, gingerbread as well, marked by its good-natured persistence. Medium-bodied, the acidity tightens the fabric while the tannin grounds it in the tongue. The Cab and Merlot come through and add bottom weight while darkening the fruit complexion towards black cherry, blackberry and boysenberry. The floral dimension fluffy like a perfumed cotton ball, absorbs what sourness may exist in the white grapefruit to lemon citrus. The mint, anise spice heighten prettiness. Does benefit from air time, allows for more separation among the elements. Good stuff that should get better over the near-term horizon. 90% Sangiovese, 10% Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. 89

Grosjean Frères  
Valle d'Aosta, Vallee d'Aoste, Torrette  
Blend

2007, \$25.99, 12.5%

Clean ruby-violet hued core, very subtle move into ruby and pink magenta along the rims, hard to see any decisive separation point, clarity draws your gaze further into the glass. Openly knit nose with a steady lift to it, more sour with sweet moments, a mix of cranberry, strawberry, watermelon, pomegranate, the floral dimension is thick in a subtle manner, doesn't add much movement, suggestions of lemon peel and stream stones, although there's not overt complexity here it satisfies nonetheless. Medium-bodied with a very consistent weight, palate presence throughout. The density tempers the sourness here and the tannins deaden the tongue against it even further. The lemon zest and floral musk is elevated, you also get more brown earth with the stones and pebbles. The fruit profile stays with cranberry, pomegranate, red cherry and green apple, little "black fruit" about it. Over time you start to parse out the acidity from the tannins and the former no weakling. Has a rough and tumble demeanor while not being uncouth. Suspect there would be more to add on "Day 2" but not gonna let it last that long. 80% Petit Rouge, remainder unspecified percentages of Vien de Nus, Doucet, Fumin, Mayolet. [Synthetic Cork: Korked Pro] 88



Colterenzio, Cantina Produttori  
Alto Adige/Südtirol  
Lagrein

2006, \$16.99, 13.0%

Simple dark purple core, opaque there, shifts into wide brick red to blood red hues, good clarity around the rims as well. Heavy, dewy nose of cinnamon spice, dried potpourri, orange to white grapefruit citrus, dense plum and black cherry fruit scents, not especially earthy, you get something more like wet bundled hay. In the mouth it's full-bodied with a tendency to squat on the tongue like a peeved child, you have to agitate the liquid to get it moving towards the gullet. Firm tannins without being too drying, allows the natural juiciness of the plum, currant, cherry fruit to be expressed. Has the same sweet baking spices and orange citrus here, more leathery with animal hide notes. The heaviness of the wine inhibits what florality there may be. After a glass or so, your palate feels like it just a workout at the gym, gets tiring to drink. 85

## ITALY WHITE

Gaierhof, Azienda Vinicola  
Trentino, Moscato Giallo Dolce  
Moscato

2007, \$21.99, 9.5%

Soft glow to the yellow gold color, its relative lightness of hue helps it extend through the rims seamlessly, average surface shine. Light and flighty nose, feels as delicate as cotton candy, sweeping floral breeze of lilacs and honeysuckle, lime and orange spritz, fresh and fuzzy apricot and peach scents, some green grape and green melon as well, no obvious stoniness yet stays clean and its openly knit nature prevents it from appearing too sweet. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, firmer than expected with a very credible acidic spine. The key lime pie, lemon meringue blend in effect, with orange blossom notes has lift as well as density. Both ripeness and contour in the apricot, pear, yellow apple, melon, nectarine fruit, spoonful of honey on top. The floral dimension heavier here, more thick musk than swirling breeze. In any event, it never loses its winsome smile and every glass goes down quickly. Imagine it would be very good with a variety of foods too. But does anyone eat food anymore? 89

Felluga, Marco  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Collio, Mongris  
Pinot Gris

2007, \$18.99, 13.0%

The slight dullness to the liquid lends it a layered look, sits deeply and impassively in the glass, has that worn old gold ring look, almost weather beaten, rims hold onto the translucency and thus don't seem that weak. Nice metallic, smoky edge to the nose, borders on aggressive as it angles into your nostrils, the green apple, pear and peach scents all business and team up with the lemon zest to make sure you cough up your lunch money, you do get a rose petal led floral water element with which to rinse off the blood. Medium-bodied with the wiry, muscular skeleton of a wing in rugby, looks small at first until it knocks you on your ass. Plenty of lemon to be had, at times even hints at white grapefruit. The floral side knit into the lean fabric, coaxes out more peach, pear, apple fruit than might be the case otherwise. The white smokiness lingers and the cut of the herbaceous element is so fine that you have to work to get at it. As it warms you get a little breadiness and honey, which is actually welcome. Most Americans will not like this. 88

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Nistri  
Umbria, Orvieto, Altarupe  
Blend

2007, \$13.99, 12.0%

Filmsy gold straw in color, transparent with minimal shine, diminished rims, not a whole lot to look at. Noticeable honeyed dimension to the nose, lilacs and orange blossom, add in the peach and apricot fuzz and pear skin and it's gosh darned pretty, at the same time offers mineral dust and chalk to lend a dry crinkling effect now and then, lingers well, more apt to cling than lift. Medium-bodied, firm in a fatty way, takes up a lot of space yet gives if you truly poke it. The acidity is hitting on all cylinders so the flesh doesn't hang over the belt, both shape and flavor in the apricot, pear, apple fruit. The orange and white grapefruit citrus strikes a pleasing sweet and sour alternation. The honey notes hold off until near the end and as retronasal residue. Retains its weight through the end as well. 88

Ferrando, Azienda Vitivinicola Luigi  
Piedmont, Erbaluce di Caluso, La Torrazza  
Erbaluce

2007, \$22.99, 13.5%

Deep golden hue, treacherously close to developing a light amber tint, while quite clear also faintly dull, the depth holds through the rims with ease. Lemon-honey driven nose, slight meringue edge, anise-infused liqueur and orange blossom and rose notes appear subsequently, surprisingly the apricot and peach fruit subdued, their lack of contribution does, though, allow some stone dust and pebble accents through before it all drifts off. Full-bodied, a bit bottom heavy and clings to the tongue rather than develop lift. More oomph in the apricot, peach, red apple fruit, juicy and with tang. The honeyed qualities met here by a certain nutty bitterness along with the stone aspect, contributes to a drying effect passing through the mid-palate. By the time you swallow the acidity has asserted itself and thus there's not much sweet residue left. With that sour touch, the lemon and orange citrus at times smacks of white grapefruit. Fig flavors also develop as it warms. Good wine but nothing to go crazy about. 88

Cielo  
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Delle Venezie  
Pinot Grigio

2008, \$9.99, 12.0%

Resplendent in the glass, bright brown to white hay in color, transparent yet capable of bending light to create depth in the glass. The nose has a steady herbaceousness to it, never annoying yet never absent, the orange to grapefruit citrus direct, if lacking in zesty bite, light stoniness, apricot and apple scents perfunctory. Medium-bodied, the acidity is somewhat broad, there but not keenly edged. The orange citrus at times gets enveloped in an overall creamier texture like an orange creamsicle. Has that same grass, hay cornerstone, would be less noticeable were there more minerality on hand. In spite of the softer texture ends up quite dry. Minor floral side, at times more of a licorice or mint brush. What fruit there is tastes like peach, yellow apple and pear. It's a perfectly acceptable middle of the road Pinot Grigio and, honestly, there's little doubt that this was the goal from the outset, don't rock the boat and keep smiling. (Screwcap) 86

## GERMANY WHITE

Fitz-Ritter, Weingut K.  
Pfalz, Spätlese AP #31  
Gewürztraminer  
2007, \$21.99, 10.0%

Deep golden hay in color, clear enough, however, your vision bends deeper into the glass, drops off some around the edges, looks fat. Sweet nose of fresh honey, floral musk, litchee nut, tangerine juice and apricot, pear, mango fruit scents, you can find some stony smokiness but nothing to greatly interfere with the general plump sweetness. Medium-bodied, not as heavy as the nose might suggest, fleshy not flabby. Decent acidity, brings out more tropical pineapple, guava notes along the apricot, pear, nectarine base. Juicy in that the litchee, violets, orange to tangerine juice keep remoistening the palate, conversely it does keep getting drier. Doesn't lift, more like it hops across. More of that musky florality. Lasts well after you've swallowed, fragrant and flavorful with heft. More clarity in the elements and it would be stellar. As is, no sense pouring it into the glass, chug from the bottle. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

Meißner, Weinhaus  
Pfalz, Halbtrocken QbA AP #10  
Riesling  
2008, \$16.99, 11.5%

Green-white hay in color, some fizz visible upon the pour, brilliant reflections across the surface, the transparency doesn't lessen what color is there. Stone, dust and chalk-driven lift in the nose, rose petals, orange and lemon pith, the peach, apricot, nectarine, pineapple scents dry and wiry, blows away easily like tumbleweed. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity sharp like a butcher's cleaver meant to cut into slabs instead of thin slices. Minerals, chalk and wet slate fill the first few moments, followed by sweet and sour tangerine, lemon, white grapefruit citrus. While strong, the floral water aspect cannot find a sustained voice. The additional cut and bite to the pineapple, nectarine, papaya, apricot fruit tends to reduce the length through the finish. Bonus points for the big bottle. One liter bottle. (Synthetic Cork) 87

Stolleis, Weingut Peter  
Pfalz, Haardter, Herzog, Kabinett Trocken AP #12  
Riesling  
2007, \$21.99, 12.0%

Although the richness of the golden color is not in question, the overall dullness of the liquid and lack of surface sheen makes it not so much fun to look at. The nose at first offers hard rubber and dough notes which make you think it possesses an oxidative edge, however, the crispness of the apple, peach, pear fruit scents cuts through this, shows a good deal of metallic mineral flecks as well, lemon and orange zest in turn combat the underlying inclination towards creaminess. Medium-bodied, the acidity isn't screwing around and shoots the scene like it's a snuff flick. The dryness stifles much of the juiciness in the pineapple, papaya, nectarine, pear, green apple fruit, turns angular and evasive. As grassy as it is floral, the bitterness of the white grapefruit, lemon citrus is clear. Any rubber or tar notes recede as the minerality stays level. Should have more decisive cut to it and transparency of purpose. (Glass Stopper) 86

Heyden, Weingut Dr.  
Rheinhessen, Oppenheimer, Kabinett AP #8  
Riesling  
2008, \$14.99, 12.0%

Light but bright golden color, displays a slight fizz throughout after the pour, slight diminishing around the rims, distorts light and vision sufficiently to skirt full transparency. Semi-desiccated nose, lean but not ungingiv, just not much there, tightly wound apricot/peach scents, plenty of dry mineral dust, smoky burn, dried grass, touch of jalapeño, never acrid yet takes no measures to soften you up. Medium-bodied, here you can blame the jagged, raw acidity for throwing things off-balance. Mouth-puckeringly dry, a virtual one-two punch of sour lemon/white grapefruit citrus and sharp minerals/metallic flecks. The pineapple, papaya, apricot, nectarine fruit shorn of all juiciness, all thrust. Retains that jalapeño to pickle juice edge. This is just not a wine in a happy place right now, the only hope is that it's still too early in bottle to render a more definitive assessment. (Screwcap) 85

## AUSTRIA RED

Hillinger, Weingut Leo  
Burgenland, Small Hill  
Blend  
2007, \$13.99, 13.0%

From a distance the core is more purple, up closer there's more ruby and it's clearer, fitting together with the solidly red-ruby rims, nothing really that unusual about it. The nose possesses a mentholated edge which puts some movement in the otherwise lazy plum, black cherry scents, a touch of dried fallen leaves and yesterday's orange peels, no herbaceousness nor anything offputting, put together for innocuousness. Medium-bodied, smooth and close to sleek in texture, has just enough tannin to create grip and stiffen it into a wine with a spine. Focuses on the red cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit from start to finish, in some respects a sign that there's not much else to hold your interest. More depth in the orange citrus, bolstered by caramel shades and brown sugar. Easy enough to drink but nothing unique about that would draw the masses from their usual drop. 50% Merlot, 25% Pinot Noir, 25% Sankt Laurent. (Screwcap) 86

## AUSTRIA WHITE

Steininger, Weingut  
Kamptal, Young  
Blend  
2008, \$10.99, 12.0%

In spite of the paleness of the golden color, has a light luminescence which increases visual presence, washes out further around the rims. While dewy and wet, the nose has lift and good movement, very floral in a spring breeze manner, lemon and lime sorbet, fresh peach and apricot fuzz, at times just about minty, lighter touch of stream water and pebbles. Medium-bodied, the acidity possesses both cut and a dry, powdery coating ability. The citrus in turn has more bite, lime and white grapefruit more than lemon. The florality broad, here tempered by an herbaceous undertone. The pear, apple, apricot fruit steps it up some and lasts fully through the finish. At the end the minerality appears most potent, serves as most of the residue. Good amount of stuffing here, without necessarily sacrificing prettiness. 70% Grüner Veltliner, 20% Sauvignon Blanc, 10% Muskateller. (Screwcap) 88

## SPAIN RED

Castillo, Casa  
Jumilla

Monastrell  
2007, \$12.99, 14.0%

Dark enough to keep the core mostly purple and push the red-ruby further out towards the rims, there it brightens into pink magenta as much as ruby, about average surface reflectivity. There's a few peanut shell reductive notes at first in the nose, then banana, finally settles into dense red cherry, currant, plum scents, dry with both a wooly and leathery aspect, solid dose of caramel, floral as well with a mixed white citrus zest, starts to get grassy but pulls back in favor of general geniality. Medium-bodied, close to heavy for its weight but instead kind of anchored onto the palate. White grapefruit bite distinguishable here, the herbaceousness in turn ratchets it up a level, both help to keep the wine alert in the mouth. Less floral, still earthy, it slowly grinds forward and it's almost just until the finish you get to fully register the semi-sour cherry, raspberry, red currant fruit. Dry and slightly over-structured for what it's supposed to be, still, should find friends if popped open during a party and left sitting there among all the bottles. 88

Tares, Viñedos y Bodegas Dominio de  
Bierzo, Baltos  
Mencia

2006, \$19.99, 14.0%

The purple core more lively than dark, admits of some red-ruby and further out you can start to see through the liquid, violet darkens the red magenta, richly saturated, surface has plenty of luster. The nose billows up out of the glass, peanut shells, cocoa powder, wet leather and fur, yup, reductive, still, this offset by a rich core of black cherry, currant, plum scents, throws in some dried orange pulp and anise seed, the alcohol is present. In the mouth it's full-bodied, dense and reluctant to move, inches into there and stops immobile. Doesn't seem particularly acidic nor tannic, dry, sure, but to register acidity or tannin you need contrast, flow, something. Currant, plum, black cherry fruit thick, juicy without sweetness. Tobacco leaf, leather, orange peel, pine cone, old potpourri, there are indeed things lurking around in there, but they shift and hide. As you'd expect, there's a long, punishing finish. After all, if it's not going anywhere, why stop? Or start? Or something like that. 88

Martin, Bodegas Esteban  
Cariñena, Campos de Luz Old Vine  
Garnacha

2008, \$10.99, 13.5%

The light purple core comes with a strong red streak, this even more obvious when the rims look like bright freshly spilt blood, transparent even as it glows radioactively. Pure juicy freshness in the nose, strawberry, raspberry, red cherry scents snappy and alive, beneath there's a kind of ashy earthiness with a black minerality, more tarry than smoky, has a solid dose of mixed citrus and close to no herbaceousness. Medium-bodied, takes on additional weight as it opens, this while retaining the aforementioned cleanliness and overall fluidity. Most of the powdered sugar sweetness in the raspberry, strawberry, watermelon, red cherry fruit comes through the attack, gently falls of as the acidity gets out of bed and lends dryness. The white grapefruit and orange citrus have a beneficial tang and create a pleasing puckering at the end.

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Again, marked by an admirable lack of herbaceous notes as well as underripe phenolics. Saline accents accompany the minerality, fit nicely with the citrus. Very credible if you're not looking for a fruit fest. (Screwcap) 88

Murcia, Bodegas y Viñedos de  
Yecla, Altos del Cuco

Blend  
2007, \$13.99, 13.5%

Vivid purple core, brightened by a burnt crimson streak, up close you can see that it's actually quite transparent, the rims play up brick red and crimson. Smoky nose, kind of like burnt bacon and barbecue wood chips, then no lack of molasses and caramelized brown sugar, decent depth and persistence to the raspberry, red cherry fruit scents, not herbaceousness, more bits of hay and twigs, semi-mentholated lift before it dissolves. Medium to full-bodied, would present more sheer weight were it not for the acidity shaving off a few pounds. Comes up with a white grapefruit to lemon citrus element, nowhere hinted at by the nose. The molasses, caramel then drips all over that, however, not quite enough to remove all the sour bite out of the cherry, raspberry fruit, as much damson plum as strawberry. Maybe it's the citrus but also seems more floral here too. At the same time, dries out on the tongue enough by the end to create a deeper impression of grassiness. Remains more a mosaic of parts than woven cloth but not displeasing for it. 40% Monastrell, 30% Syrah, 30% Tempranillo. (Synthetic Cork) 87

Borsao, Bodegas  
Campo de Borja, Borsao  
Blend

2008, \$7.99, 14.0%

Super-vibrant violet to ruby colored core, the saturation fest continues through to the magenta to dark pink rims, spotless throughout, semi-opaque. The mild sourness in the raspberry, cranberry, strawberry fruit scents offset by soft chocolate milkiness, the orange juiciness also settles things down, finds space to fit in twigs, bark, brown earth and wildflowers. Light to medium-bodied, as in the nose presents good posture for the price and keeps a high energy level throughout. The flavor depth of the cherry, raspberry fruit is moderate but does have a liqueur-like consistency. The white grapefruit, orange citrus takes up chunks of territory. The acidity provides more of a grinding churn than lasered smoothness. That herbal, twiggy component sticks around as well. Luckily, the milk chocolate a credible bandage on any scratches or scrapes. In the end, nothing truly compelling for or against it. Just seems like an honest quaff. 75% Garnacha, 25% Tempranillo. (Synthetic Cork: ExcellentCork) 87

Nekeas, Bodegas  
Navarra, Vega Sindoa Tempranillo-Merlot

Blend  
2007, \$9.99, 13.5%

Basic clean purple core with equal parts ruby and brick red, further out the ruby takes more hold, mostly transparent, fairly standard visual profile. The nose has leather, merde and an outdoorsy funk to it, not to forestall the juice in the plum, cherry scents, some mixed white citrus zest, takes up a lot of space in your nostrils, it's pleasing in a straightforward, LCD manner but the average consumer has to get past the herbaceousness which may be asking a lot. Medium-bodied, smooth and fluid enough with the same herbal characters that makes it a very good \$6.99 wine and not a good \$9.99 wine. The

plum, cherry, currant fruit still juicy but not enough so to keep that aforementioned out of the picture. The citrus has more of a sour white grapefruit nature here. Anise seed, basil and other sweet herbs present. Nothing here deeply annoys it just expresses itself as what it is, a cheap wine that is honest about said fact and merits only a certain price point. 70% Tempranillo, 30% Merlot. (Synthetic Cork) 85

Enguera

Valencia, Pelta

Blend

2008, \$10.99, 13.5%

Curiously dark violet core, very clean, however, the darkness continues through the scarlet red to magenta rims. There's an earthy barnyard quality to the nose, like mud-caked grass and animal hide, not Brett-like but all the same manages to mask a good portion of the blackberry, cherry scents and muffle any rise into an airy perfume. Medium-bodied, firm and somewhat unyielding, not that it can't move, more that it just don't wanna. The tannin and acidity, while not gangbusters, still seem in opposition to general bonhomie. Bottom heavy plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit possesses sufficient juice to avoid being labeled attenuated. Hay, meadow grasses and wildflowers aren't exactly "green" in feel but aren't banishing the thought from your mind either. You get a sour twist out of the orange, lemon citrus. Dries out a good deal at the end, just too gruff. 80% Tempranillo, 20% Monastrell. (Synthetic Cork) 85

## SPAIN WHITE

Gran Vinum, Adegas

Rias Baixas, Nessa

Albariño

2008, \$15.99, 12.5%

Consistent light yellow straw color, not much change core to rims (that's what consistent means), transparent with mild gauzy shimmer, some fizz visible after the pour, not a wine to place much emphasis on visual aesthetics. Zesty citrus presence in the nose of lime, white grapefruit, sugary enough to deserve the coquettish label, the florality lifts in a brawny fashion, licorice introduces the apricot, pear, spiced apple fruit, cinnamon and clove sneak in there frequently. Medium-bodied, broad-shouldered and wants to both insinuate itself into your good graces and develop a piquant bite. It's actually fuller than many Albariños and may lose some of that clarity which makes it an ideal raw shellfish companion. The lemon, lime citrus shows no qualms about barreling ahead, circumspection be damned, It acts like it is still collecting market research to determine the proper path forward. Tight, if expressive, pear, apricot fruit. Without affixing the pejorative label of LCD, there's plenty of room for this to make a mark as an "introductory" version of the grape. 87

Martin, Bodegas Esteban

Cariñena, Campos de Luz Chardonnay Viura & Muscat

Blend

2008, \$10.99, 13.5%

Pale golden straw color, transparent but only as if you were just blinded by the sun and need to adjust, the rims dilute as one would expect. In the nose you get enough stone and mineral dust to set the tone as a wine of lithe muscularity, pineapple, green apple, peach fruit scents stay on message, meager floral patina as well as orange to tangerine zest, has more punch than breadth. Medium-

bodied, puts firmness and palate presence over flava, as in the nose the apricot, apple, pear, pineapple fruit keeps its own counsel and won't start the conversation. The acidity is blunt yet not lacking smack down power. Needs to warm to show its friendlier [sic] side, where you get brown sugar and caramel accents. The lemon, orange citrus also then takes on a pan-fried, reduced caramelization. It's an odd wine in that you like it despite it's not trying to make it so. But only so much. 50% Chardonnay, 40% Viura, 10% Muscat. (Screwcap) 86

No Time

Navarra, Viura/Chardonnay

Blend

2008, \$13.99, 12.5%

Pale, faintly glowing yellow hay color, loses most of what's there by the rims, about average surface shine. Lemony nose yet somehow leesy or with custard notes, not that it's sweet just more space filling than one might expect, lilacs, some honeysuckle, dried honey alongside pear, red apple, peach scents, not a lot to hang your hat on here and it tends to fold in on itself. Medium-bodied, definitely gets the "bottom" and heft desired from the Chardonnay, while maintaining the sharper edges from the inherent acidity and green herbal bite. The lemon citrus happy to bare its fangs, follow-up notes of white grapefruit too. Minerally, superseded by that herbal kick. Angular, evasive feel continues through to the finish. The apple, pear, peach fruit by no means clenched, however, does not unfold either. Not flawed but after a glass or so starts to get annoying. 80% Viura, 20% Chardonnay. (Screwcap) 85

## SPAIN SPARKLING

Conde de Subirats

Penedès, Cava, Brut Rosé

Blend

NV, \$14.99, 11.5%

Deep luminescent glow to the red magenta coloration, looks like a glass of Kool-Aid, albeit with a torrent of hyperactive bubbles throughout, crystal clear and spotless as well. Surprisingly muscular nose of raspberry, strawberry, apple fruit, bursts right through, in and out, unobtrusively blends in orange peel, wildflowers and a touch of stone dust, not complex more about sheer presence. Medium-bodied with a good deal of firmness, in a curious manner the pétillance in the mouth almost reinforces the density rather than break it up. Dry, there's a hard candy sweetness to the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit without the mastication to release the sugar. Same might be said for the lemon to orange citrus, more dry zest or pith than juice. The acidity level seems pretty good and, again, given its density isn't heavy and can move forward. Indistinct floral dimension adds some makeup to the base, At the end of the day, too chewy to be really refreshing but not bad. 90% Trepát, 10% Pinot Noir. 86

## AUSTRALIA RED

Pretty Sally

Victoria, Single Vineyard Estate

Shiraz

2004, \$20.99, 14.8%

The liquid is squeaky clean and unblemished, however, the core is close to pitch black and the purple shades only appear en route to the thin ruby-magenta rims, nice surface shine. Mint, eucalyptus, toffee crisp and mesquite smoke in the nose add to the already focused cherry,

currant fruit, the white grapefruit to orange citrus fits in quite well, more stone and pebbly earth than animal or leather accents. Medium-bodied, highly active acidity binds the whole tightly together, really highlights that sour white grapefruit zest. Black pepper, metal flecks and bell pepper heighten the angularity of the first half. The oak as much dill and cedar as any sweet toffee or cream. Pucker in the cherry, blueberry, blackberry fruit, no lack of juice, simply not a gusher. The eucalyptus and mint present. Flavor-wise a tad short but not on the presence/vibrancy scale. Makes you consider the forbidden comparison. You know what that is. (Composite Cork: Diam) 88

Pretty Sally  
Victoria, Cabernet Shiraz Estate  
Blend

2005, \$18.99, 14.7%  
Fully opaque black-purple core, crimson and lighter ruby fight it out for who will own the sliver allowed for rims, very fat and solid appearance. Thick and close to paste-like cherry, blackberry fruit scents with a little apple and apricot thrown in for good measure, pine and eucalyptus, grill fat and mesquite chips as well as cedar, doesn't come across as excessively oaky, still, not a poster child for unvarnished fruit either. Full-bodied, finds its center in the, duh, center, starts off a bit thinner and ends the same. The blueberry, boysenberry, blackberry fruit has some cherry in it, otherwise it's dark in complexion and light in terms of density and sweetness. That said, no lack of sweetness in the orange, lemon, grapefruit citrus. Equal tannin and acidity, both do most things, not everything. Eucalyptus and mint, sure, fairly easy to ascertain that Cab makes up most of the blend. Were it not for the structure, more people would diddle their skiddle about it (cf. Peaches). 63% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Shiraz. (Composite Cork: Diam) 87

## AUSTRALIA WHITE

Darby & Joan  
South Australia  
Chardonnay  
2008, \$9.99, 14.0%

Flat, lightly gauzy appearance in the glass, basic golden color, dimmed rims, however, decent surface reflectivity. The nose comes across as curiously dry, the lemon to lime citrus dried pith, peach pit with mildly juicier apricot, pear and apple scents, something akin to mineral dust but not overtly so, rose-led floral lift helps it stay on your good side. Medium-bodied, the acidity seems a tad unmanaged which leads more to a rough texture than to focus and pacing. Starts off with lemon, lime and a bit of white grapefruit citrus. Moves into tenuous peach, nectarine, pineapple and red apple fruit flavors. Presents more grassiness than minerality or stoniness. Given its dryness, one could say that the longer you drink it the more bitter it appears. OK, you could drink it in a tight pinch. (Screwcap) 85

## NEW ZEALAND WHITE

Provincial Vineyards  
Marlborough, Ponga  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2008, \$10.99, 12.5%

Light yellow, like the inside of a lemon peel, not washed out just naturally light, stays consistent through the rims, about average surface shine. Loosely knit nose, lots of open spaces, neither a lot of juice nor a lot of bite in the

grapefruit, orange, lemon scents, more nip in the minerality as well as mild pickle juice, fights off being herbaceous as much as possible, any apricot, apple, peach scents drift off like a runaway balloon. Light to medium-bodied, carries itself confidently, not necessarily an issue of dilution nor lack of concentration in the primary material. Stream water, white pebbles and mineral powder frame the attack with a swift switch to dried white grapefruit and lemon pith, even with a certain blunt nature to the acidity quite dry and tends to dampen the expression of any inherent sweetness. Pineapple, peach, nectarine, papaya fruit all have a dried, but not "dried fruit," feel. Chalky feel tends to accrue on the tongue by the finish which might shorten it a bit. Serviceable in a nondescript manner. (Screwcap) 86

3 Brooms  
Marlborough  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2008, \$13.99, 13.0%

Perfectly clear white hay in color, a touch glassy, bends light sufficiently to achieve greater presence in the glass. High-toned nose of freshly mown green grass, metal flecks, jalapeños and pickle juice, no faulting the cut in the papaya, guava, pineapple, nectarine scents, the grapefruit more white than pink, for all of its penetrating power, softens at the end rather than push its advantage. Medium-bodied, front-loaded and dependent on that chili pepper and bell pepper kick to make the initial impression. More floral here yet can't take much angularity out of the white grapefruit, lemon zest. Given the emphasis on certain flavors, the acidity is actually a touch on the tame side. The gooseberry, nectarine, papaya, guava fruit loses its grip by the end, creating an empty feeling. More mineral water than minerality or stoniness. Has the attitude, just needs the muscle to back it up. (Screwcap) 85

## CHILE RED

Haras de Pirque, Viña  
Maipo Valley, Haras Estate  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
2007, \$12.99, 14.8%

Black core shaded by a very dark purple tinge, pushes out widely resulting in thin crimson to dark brick red hues at the rims, imposing presence in the glass. You get a little peanut shell in the nose when first opened, then a pine-driven forest earthiness, terse muscularity in the plum, black cherry fruit scents, hardly relieved by the gossamer floral notes underneath, appears to require some time to unwind. Full-bodied and dry, tannic right off the bat. Spicier here, the oak keenly edged and full of toast. The cherry, currant flavors manage a steadiness which was probably not easy to do. Pine, orange citrus and a touch of leather lend some dimension, Chocolate dust, cocoa and dried coconut flakes most obvious sign of oak, however, does not come across as oaky per se. It's a compact and straightforward Cabernet, actually needs some time in the bottle to soften. 87

Valles de Chile, Viña  
Limarí Valley, El Molle Vineyard, Pinot Black  
Pinot Noir  
2007, \$11.99, 14.0%

As close to brick red as to ruby, darkens the purple core, however, it's easy to discern that the liquid has perfect clarity, the rims fully brick red to crimson in hue. Alcoholic

nose with overripe plum, cherry scents, perfumed to be point of dripping, stemmy and herbal at times, sour lemon and white grapefruit accents, trace of baking spices but few signs of oak. Full-bodied, suffers from the same overripeness, here adding in tomato and metallic notes along with the stemmy herbaceousness. Bitter tannins perhaps a sign of lack of phenolic ripeness. The thick stewiness of the plum, prune, cherry, blackberry fruit renders it more "red wine" than Pinot Noir. You get pinches of clove, grapefruit pith and dried wildflowers. Wears you out some after 3-4 sips. Impressive only if you want fruit at the sake of all else. 83

## **CHILE WHITE**

Santa Ema, Viños  
Maipo Valley  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2008, \$9.99, 13.0%

Transparent green color, much more white than anything near yellow, attractive surface sparkle holds your gaze. Very pretty nose, bursting with floral perfume, orange blossom, sweet lime zest, fine powdered sugar, apricot, peach, kiwi fruit scents, no trace of herbaceousness, for that matter, no trace of minerality either, just all that florality. Medium-bodied, the acidity remains in the background on the whole, there is, however, a light powdery texture to it. Strong emphasis on that lemon, lime, orange citrus, pink grapefruit too at moments. Any grassiness or herbal qualities quashed fairly completely. Soft profile to peach, apricot, kiwi fruit, mixes in pineapple and passion fruit notes for tang. Comes up with a growing smokiness through the finish. While not especially thirst quenching nor refreshing, about as user friendly as they get. (Screwcap) 88

## **ARGENTINA RED**

Foster, Bodega Enrique  
Mendoza, lque  
Malbec  
2008, \$11.99, 14.0%

Vivid purple core with ruby influences which become more apparent towards the saturated rims, there the ruby more red than lighter magenta. Dry nose with a sour edge, peanut shells and merde not good signs, powdered sugar touch to the raspberry, red cherry fruit scents, dried grass and poor earth, rough sandpaper texture in the nostrils, not a lot here to like, thankfully brief experience. Medium-bodied, somewhat volatile presence in the mouth, the tannins grainy and arch and in no way supportive of the presentation as a whole. Undistinguished plum, cherry, dark berry fruit barely gets past the mid-palate. The oak is even sour, like you ate a pickle and toasted bread at once. Smartly layers itself densely on the tongue in hopes of deadening your senses. Empty finish but, again, by then you're desensitized to the fact. 83