

## *The Hanes Wine Review, October 2007 Edition*

Having collected wine now for close to a decade Hanes is now reaping the rewards of his wine collection, pulling bottles to drink with considerable age on them. Factor in being around many other collectors who own older wines and Hanes gets to consume a wide variety of older bottles of fermented grape juice. Which, more and more, raises the question in Hanes's mind: Why do we even age wine?

The easy and obvious answer is because older wines taste differently than the same wines when younger and we like these flavor developments. While the vast majority of wine produced worldwide does not improve with aging, a small and select few do. And, naturally, Hanes is an elitist and only wants to discuss those few. These "few" are indeed many thousand different bottlings produced each year, however, that's a drop in the spitbucket when compared to the seas of bulk wine made every year. Over the course of history, these thousands of wines have proven time and again that patience will reward with a more complex and complete drinking experience than could have been provided by the wine in its infancy. These wines may be from Bordeaux, Rioja, Napa Valley, the Rheingau, Piedmont, the Douro or other hundreds of fine wine growing areas. Wherever the vines dig deep, generations have witnessed firsthand the improvements to the finished wine sparked by years sleeping in the bottle.

The sad thing, though, is this doesn't always bear out. It's normally the case that aging wine can be a crapshoot and many factors play a hand, vintage weather conditions, general vine health and age, a host of winemaking decisions in the winery, and then how the individual bottle you open and drink has been treated during the years of aging. Hence, the old saw "there's no great wines, only great bottles of wine." Two bottles of the same wine 20 years down the road may taste so differently you'd swear they couldn't be siblings. Nevertheless, we keep plugging away and aging wines in the hope that the liquid's transformation will translate into an equally transformational experience for our senses. Not always to be. It's a treacherous "science" to determine the optimal time to open an aging wine — at 5 years, 10 years, 15 years or more? — and errors get made every day by seasoned drinkers, bottles pulled too early or pulled too late.

None of this is incredibly groundbreaking news, wine appreciators take all the foregoing as part of the price of admission. Mistakes were made. But what remains a fairly new phenomenon and one not often explored in the world of wine is how winemaking practices, as well as the global environment, are changing the standard set of expectations for a well-aged wine. Wine is a unique creature in its ability to mutate into something better. While certainly the personality of the appreciator can change over time and effect the act of appreciation, a painting is not inherently better 10 years after it was painted than when the paint was drying on the canvas. The words in a novel don't change for the better as the years tick by. And we don't save a meal from a five star restaurant cooked in 1997 expecting it to be even more delicious in 2007.

Another manner of approaching the topic is to differentiate the *collector* from the *drinker*. As with anything collectible, the thrill of acquiring may equal or exceed the enjoyment of that collected. So, there's no guarantee the collector even has an opinion of the relative merits of aging wine. Didn't care to taste it young, don't care to taste it old. Just want to collect it. Some people own so much wine they will never taste but the merest fraction of that possessed. Conversely, one could maintain that the drinker primarily dabbles in wine because she enjoys the scents, flavors and textures of wine in their immediacy. Herein comes the twist — for the true drinker of wine, would she consume the wine young if it possessed all the qualities of the aged wine? Is there any inherent value in the act of aging wine itself?

This will only become a more pressing question as the nature of winegrowing and winemaking changes at a rate perhaps never seen before. There are many goals in the aging of wine. With red wines, one goal is to allow the tannins to soften and integrate. However, with increased hang time of the grapes and thus ripeness, tannins are often less evident than in the past. Assuming the grapes achieve good phenological ripeness too, and the tannins are not too hard nor "green," anything in the tannins which might prevent early enjoyment of the wine can be handled through a variety of emerging winemaking techniques. Having to wait a decade or more for the tannins to cease excessive drying of the mouth and such can fairly simply be made a thing of the past. So, in many instances, that is one inherent value of aging wine that is now on shaky ground.

Development of mature, "tertiary" aromas and flavors remains a primary objective in aging wine. Thus, the question then becomes whether or not contemporary viticultural and vinicultural techniques can achieve these aromas and flavors sooner rather than later, obviating the need for aging. For some winemakers, a lot of the flavors are there in a wine's youth but are masked by tannins, strong acidity or other "structural" elements of a wine. As a result, reducing the level of tannin or acidity can bring the wine closer to being all it can be in a shorter timeframe. It goes without saying that there are numerous chemical reactions which contribute over the years to a perfectly matured wine. No one as of yet understands fully how these individual chemical processes combine together to create a whole greater than the sum of its parts. But the efforts to understand are being made. And, the proponents of such research might suggest that this represents true advancement — if you can get the outcome you want now, why be stubborn and wait 15 years? After all, we don't all have 15 years to wait!

If the chemistry of wine does become clear enough to intentionally induce these chemical changes it is not beyond the realm of possibility that wine drinkers could enjoy the aspects of a well aged Barolo or Bordeaux within a year or so of bottling. A period of experimentation would be required, fiddling further with aspects like grape hang times, or cold soaking the fruit and juice, or types of oak treatments, etc. But once this is more or less done, voila, no need to wait for years.

If time itself does not play an integral role and the chemical processes can be compressed from years to months or even weeks, why not? There really would be no inherent value in aging wine. Instead, you could have different cuvées of the same wine, one all fruity and (what we call today) youthful and another with more faded fruit and increased tertiary elements. Both born on the same day and the same chronological age. Dude, that would be sweet. Everyone's a winner! Some might aver that there goes even more of the "romance" of wine, of watching a wine evolve over the years as you drink up the bottles from the same case. True dat. But, on the other hand, there would be much practical gain in terms of avoiding the potential for heat damage or other deleterious effects on the bottle over the years of storage. If you drink a bottle three days after you buy it and it's corked you can usually take it back for a swap or credit. If you drink a bottle 10 years after you buy it, even if you keep the receipt, not too many wine stores are going to give you a store credit or even have the same wine to swap. If they're still in business.

For now, we're stuck in the sweeping course of the tides of history. Which blows because Hanes ain't getting any younger. Plus, as a wine drinker who ages wine Hanes is paying for the false starts or missteps of the experimental process. All that deliciously bold fruit in that young Californian Syrah? Thought it might become more restrained and better integrate with latent notes of grilled meats, olive pits and all the rocky terroir noted in the winery's sales pitch letters? Uhh, no, because the manipulations that got that fruit all ablaze when young create a bumpy wine lacking in balance even 6-8 years later. Only part of the equation has been gotten down so far, it's been shown that winemakers can craft explosively powerful, why even decadent, wines when young but once a few years pass the slip starts showing.

Because Hanes does believe we live in a very transitional time for wine appreciation he's taking two steps to avoid wasting his time and what few pesos he can comb together. First, drink a lot more wine young. It's what "they" want us to do so why fight city hall? Enjoy it for what it is and see if someone else saves a bottle for a decade later. Second, severely curtail the wines purchased to age down to a very short list of explicitly traditional wine producers with proven track records. No more fifty dollars and a dream for Hanes — if ageability cannot be empirically demonstrated via extant examples, it's a pass. Hell, even that's not enough as many formerly traditional producers change their ways to more modern approaches. It's better to drink a lot of wine from a few producers than a wider range of potential duds. No shoes, no shirt, no dice. Read it, learn it, live it.

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**This month's big winners...** It's easy to note great red Burgundies when they cost \$\$\$\$. This is especially true with the very high quality 2005 vintage. It looks like bottom-feeders are going to have to set the financial bar at \$30 to \$35 to get something truly excellent. Oh, well. In this range, for \$28 Voillot's old vine Bourgogne rouge delivers a true Burgundian experience. Pernot and Lafouge are always good value plays for Burgundy too and Pernot's 2005 Santenay "Biebeau" and Lafouge's Auxey-Duresses remain values in the grand scheme of things, priced in the mid \$30's. It is fair to say that Tement's Sauvignon Blanc from the Grassnitzberg vineyard in Austria's Steiermark region is a world-class representation of the grape. So, consider it said. Worth the roughly \$37 price for the 2006 vintage edition. While Hanes doesn't have a whole wealth of experience with another Austrian producer, Holzappel, their 2006 Federspiel-level Grüner Veltliner from the Wachau's Achleiten vineyard is a might fine drink for about \$24. More Holzappel for the masses, please. Haven't tried many wines from Loire red producer Yannick Amirault but the 2005 "La Coudraye" from Bourgueil, made from Cabernet Franc, is worth the low \$20's price. Too bad Evan snatched the other bottle away from Hanes's greedy hands before he could scribble down a note on it. Bastid.

**The best \$15 and under picks...** As with most Portuguese wineries, it's hard to determine from the label the producer and the brand. So, look for the name "Tinto da Anfora" on the label and ignore the producer name and you'll get a 2005 Portuguese red that's tasty for \$12. Dry ("sec") white wines from France's Jurançon region remain well-priced for the quality they deliver. For \$13 or so, Castera's wine, made from 100% Gros Manseng, is quite nice and easily recommended. While no greatness achieved, it's kind of nice to know that Ravenswood's basic "Vintner's Blend" Zinfandel remains a credible, predictable wine that doesn't overreach. The 2005 was satisfactory, been a few vintages since Hanes had tried this offering. With the prices of Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé getting stoopid it's harder to find an honest Loire Sauvignon Blanc for a good bit under \$20. The 2006 Charmoise from the Touraine area represents what you're gonna get, solid without flash. Few drink wines from the Piediroso grape on a regular basis but the 2006 "Campi Flegrei" from Campania's La Sibilla should be in anyone's drinking rotation, a fair \$15.

**And the disappointments...** Hanes used to always like Dr. Konstantin Frank's wine made from the Rkatsiteli grape but the last couple of vintages, including the 2006 here, just haven't done it. And \$25 is way too much for the wine. Maybe global warming has yet to get to the Finger Lakes. At first Hanes appreciated the wines of German producer Merkelbach for prices very fair vis-à-vis their immediate competition. But, even as the prices remain fair year after year, the product just isn't delivering the past few vintages. \$17 can be better spent than on their 2006 Riesling Spätlese from the Ürziger Würzgarten vineyard. As far as three figure red Burgundy goes Hanes continues to be baffled by Bertagna, a producer which can't tickle the Hanes fancy as hoped. The 2005 "Clos de la Perrière" bottling is nice and all but not a \$100 wine. Sigh, once more a wine by De Moor leaves Hanes wanting, here the 2005 Chablis "Bel Air et Clardy." Hanes tried two wines from a new producer named Richard Leroy from the Anjou area of the Loire and he came away thinking this guy and the De Moors were probably separated at birth. And since basically the same group of wine geeks blow a nut over both De Moor and Leroy just gotta chalk it up to different strokes for different folks. More for them.

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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/oldervintages2007.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 October!

### CALIFORNIA RED

Turley  
Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Dragon Vineyard  
Zinfandel  
2005, \$45.00, 15.3%  
Straightforward ruby-purple color, no deviation from the norm, while somewhat dark its clarity is more obvious, little change towards the rims where ruby-magenta rules. The nose has the textured fullness you'd expect yet this cut down to size by white grapefruit, white mineral, moth ball accents, has a mountain air freshness that creates and full range of motion feel in the cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit scents, very peppery as it dissolves. Medium-bodied, nice fluidity and pacing, slowed down when necessary by the tannins. There's a spritz of whipped cream on top of the red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit. That said, not oaky at all, the dill and French toast notes about it. By adding in eucalyptus, pepper, grapefruit to orange citrus possesses more individual character than many siblings. Its compact finish in keeping with general demeanor. 91

Nalle  
Russian River Valley, Hopkins Ranch  
Pinot Noir  
2005, \$34.99, 13.5%  
Light, why, almost watery ruby color, could pass for a rosé, immaculately clean, has a perceptible fade at the rims. Airy, breezy nose which allows the vanilla creaminess to come strongly to the fore, bringing with it clove spice and lemon peel, the herbaceous notes canceled out by stony earth, maybe ends up too airy for the mixed red fruit scents to register completely. Light-bodied, easygoing and inoffensive, a wine that wants to make friends for sure. Easily plumbed red cherry, raspberry, strawberry, watermelon fruit flits along the tongue, not sinking in, not evaporating. The lemon peel kick sneaks in before the softer caramel, toffee notes, the latter pulling things deeper into the tongue. Can't fault the acidity in any manner, tries hard to wring out extra fresh juice. Here the grassiness breaks free of the pack, to the better, brightens the finish. Accessible to just about anyone. 89

Breggo Cellars  
Mendocino County, Anderson Valley  
Pinot Noir  
2005, \$39.99, 14.5%  
Orange to purple tinged red core, quite medicinal in appearance, no difference in hue at the rims just a slight diminution in concentration. Toffee patina to the candied cherry, raspberry fruited nose, cola and lemon zest, ginger root, steadily seductive without ostentation. Medium-bodied, starts soaking in immediately, smooth and generously ripe, not a rough spot to be found. The cola bigger here, the oak appears lower than it arguably is because it's all soft vanilla, caramel notes. Sweet spices, light herbaceous qualities, the raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit candied and accelerates through your mouth. Rolls through to a lengthy finish. Processed beats, nothing out of place. Again, not a non-showy wine hard to imagine it making a bigger entrance into the room. 89

Saisons des Vins  
Anderson Valley, l'Automne  
Pinot Noir  
2006, \$22.99, 13.6%  
Very clear and shiny ruby-violet color, turns to a pinkish magenta at the rims, wonderful visual texture. Light and surprisingly nimble nose of spice, raspberry, strawberry, watermelon, cola, almond, grass, orange peel, not complex in quantity of scents but keeps the pot stirring. Medium-bodied, spicy here too, milk chocolate, smooth in a velvety way, keeps flowing with momentarily pauses to think. The caramel, toffee element restricted, just adds more flesh to the strawberry, raspberry fruit. The tannins dig in nicely, much more so than the acidity. Very homogenous in a good way, finds a groove and sticks with it. There's a few more dips during the finish, though. [Synthetic cork: Diam] 88

Holdredge  
Russian River Valley, Bucher Vineyard  
Pinot Noir  
2006, \$44.99, 13.9%  
The base garnet color cannot shake the orange tinge which beats out any purple shades, just cloudy enough to deepen without becoming murky nor mess with the surface shine. The scents angle into the nose like they are trying to slip by a closing door, given its desire to sneak by there's lots of herbal matter mixed with tilled earth,

hothouse fumes, dried lemon peels, cleansing witchhazel, most of the cherry, raspberry scents of retronasal origin. Close to full-bodied, just around the mid-palate the acidity shaves off a good portion to make fighting weight before the weigh-in. The caramel starts off ahead and gets run down by the orange to lemon citrus, like the subway race on the scoreboard at Yankee Stadium. Clove, nutmeg spice hard to avoid, though, cola shown too. The acidity level is nothing to sneeze at and it is in no way sloppy. Just gets you thinking more and more about terroir, maybe this is what it means to be from northern California. So, while this is a glass of wine easily drained and refilled, god bless those dead dinosaurs and such in France. 88

Ant Hill Farms

Mendocino County, Anderson Valley, Demuth Vineyard  
Pinot Noir

2004, \$49.99, 14.4%

Faint cloud in the red ruby to scarlet hue, very integrated from core to rims with a mild fade at the outermost reaches. Ginger and cinnamon slightly activate the nose, blends in orange zest and cola nut while supplying well-contoured raspberry, red cherry, watermelon scents, overall full presence but more outer pressure than center. Medium-bodied, the tannins have a very light sandpaper grit, the acidity a steady pulse throughout. Fluffy texture, like it has been whipped up, lemon peel, mild toffee and flan type notes with the same cola, cocoa dashes too.

Straightforward raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit. Turns blunter and denser as it progresses, not a short finish but freezes in place. 88

Neal Family Vineyards

Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon

2004, \$59.99, 14.8%

Impenetrably black purple core that seems opaque via trickery, thin scarlet rims come out of nowhere, two entirely distinct color aspects, credible surface shine. The nose isn't giving up much, tiny allotments of cedar, dried flowers, wet oak and freshly harvested tobacco, the plum, currant fruit lacks clarity of voice and length. Medium-bodied, savory and smooth, the tannins sandpapered down to a fine grain, no outrageous oakiness, just vanilla toast, caramel and molasses, all of which have mostly dissipated by the finish. If anything, conspicuous for its lack of verve, the cherry, plum, blackberry fruit lays there and needs a good kick in the butt. With soft-spoken cedar, orange pekoe tea and grass you have to like it for its lack of flash but, by the same token, gimme something here already. Very collected finish. Teases you enough with its indecision that you almost want it to make a decisive misstep. 87

McPrice Myers Wine Company

Arroyo Grande Valley, Les Galets Vineyard

Syrah

2005, \$36.00, 15.4%

Jet black core, fully impenetrable, comes also with a highly reflective surface, the razor thin rims of ruby-magenta hum with warmth. The nose drips with blueberry and maple syrup, molasses and pie dough, like an iHop at 9:00 AM, minor nuances of salt and flower petals surface at moments, you get blackberry, boysenberry and black cherry fruit scents too, the alcoholic fumes come on during the dissolve. Full-bodied, quite creamy in texture, the oak provides 40% toast and spice, 60% vanilla, molasses, brown sugar, caramel and marshmallows. More herbal than meaty, albeit neither especially strong, you get an

elevation in the orange citrus and pressed flowers during the back half. No lack of blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit but too concentrated and slow of foot to be out-and-out juicy. Hard to say what it might look like once the fat is gone. 87

Holdredge

Russian River Valley, Lovers Lane Vineyard

Syrah

2005, \$34.99, 14.3%

Way past dusk darkness in the black-purple core, youthful ruby-magenta rims not wide but hum vibrantly. The nose is somewhat awkward, not sure how to handle the richness of the plum, currant fruit when the hot toffee and orange spice gets laid on top, hints at a cleansing meadowy grassiness but doesn't follow through, touch of toffee but really no oak to speak of, succeeds or fails on its own inherent merits. Full-bodied but not dense, a lot of the weight comes strictly from the skeletal structure, acidity more than the tannins, subterranean earthiness as well. Has some floral nuances but these get swallowed into the burnt molasses and vanilla crisp flavors. This is not to say it's oaky per se, but what is there can swallow other things. Actually tighter than most, helps the length immensely, but the tragic flaws remain. Flattens out too much through the finish. 87

Ravenswood

Regional Blend, California, Vintner's Blend

Zinfandel

2005, \$12.99, 13.5%

Brilliant ruby-purple color, dark and admits of not a blemish across the surface, the rims completely full and bright garnet red in hue. Light, breezy nose of vanilla, caramel swirls, sugary raspberry, strawberry, watermelon fruit, tangerine juice, has a floral side too, over time there's traces of tobacco ash, cut dried grass, menthol but don't look for complexity to develop in the nose. Full-bodied in a satiny mode, each shift gets the sheets to billow and settle slowly again. Offers finespun sugary sweetness and naught else, moderate zip in the white grapefruit, orange citrus and then waves of soft cherry, raspberry, cranberry, pomegranate fruit. No alcoholic heat, smooth enough start to finish, seems to strive for less and thus achieve more. 76% Zinfandel, 9% Carignane, 8% Petite Sirah, 7% unspecified other. 86

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Nalle

Russian River Valley, Hopkins Ranch

Sauvignon Blanc

2006, \$23.99, 12.6%

The resplendent green-white straw color catches the light excellently, can't even judge its depth given how light bounces off the surface, not much hue to lose at the rims. The nose consciously pares things down to cut grass, oil smoke, twigs, old kindling wood and a brief burst of molasses, the apple, pear fruit shy and can easily slip by without your notice. Medium-bodied, very acidic, makes your cheeks hurt. With severely bitter lemon/lime citrus and metallic minerality this one goes to war in full battle gear. Highly herbaceous with a clear foundation of stoniness too, evokes actual bitters too. By the mid-palate your tongue is so desiccated that registering the pear, apple, peach fruit may be an exercise in futility. That said, there is a floral sigh at the end and it's not at all mean-

spirited, just has tenacious focus. If you love them hyper-crisp, do it. 88

Porter Creek  
Russian River Valley, George's Hill Vineyard  
Chardonnay  
2005, \$29.99, 13.3%

Basic gold color, catches a more amber density around the rims at certain angles, that said, does clear out around the rims. The nose shows promise, not for what it is, but for what future generations may be, this wine is all whipped cream, cinnamon, orange spice, semi-poached peach, apricot, pear scents, all-in-all curiously innocuous, just wants to let the palate speak. Medium-bodied, the weight does not persist beyond the mid-palate, there is a decided watery turn. It is almost like someone sought to lean on a foundation of terroir that turned out to not be there and by that point, the game was already played. The suave lemon to orange citrus pairs up with the pear, red apple, apricot fruit but to no great advantage. OK acidity, not enough to demand respect and channel the direction. The lesson is, lack of excess does not necessarily equate to surfeit of naturally produced flavors. 86

Kendall-Jackson  
Regional Blend, California, Jackson Estates Grown  
Vintner's Reserve  
Chardonnay  
2005, \$10.99, 13.5%  
There's enough glow in the yellow gold color to distract you from the relative lightness of hue, semi-flat surface, minimal luster. In the nose the oak is soft and heavy like a wet sponge, rife with popcorn, freshly whipped cream, mint, orange sherbet, there's a fruit cocktail quality in the pear, apricot, peach, cherry scents. Medium-bodied, has a fuzzy kind of texture, neither polished nor structured. The acidity is OK, sure it was measured precisely, but move verve comes from the spiciness, oak toast and crème brûlée flavors. Sweet lemonade/limeade appears more powdery than wet on the tongue. Every sip is exactly the same. 45% Monterey County, 33% Santa Barbara County, 19% Mendocino County, 3% other. (Synthetic cork) 84

## NEW YORK WHITE

Frank, Dr. Konstantin  
Finger Lakes  
Rkatsiteli  
2006, \$24.99, 12.0%  
Pale white gold color, the surface shine dwarfed by the translucent shimmer beneath, bends light at will. In the nose the lemon to lime citrus fuses completely with the pear, peach, yellow apple fruit scents, floral at first before smoky minerality takes over, interesting assemblage of elements, keeps shifting on you. Full-bodied, the lemon has a custard feel without being too sweet, that and floral perfume adorn the mouth entry. Stony at first but this gets run down by a measure of grassiness by the mid-palate. Spicy as well, the acidity unobtrusive yet not necessarily a weakling. If there's a weak spot, though, it's the peach, pear, apple fruit which peters out before the finish. 86

## FRANCE RED

Lambrays, Domaine des  
Burgundy, Morey-Saint-Denis, Clos des Lambrays  
Pinot Noir  
2005, \$169.99, 13.5%

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Vivid ruby-violet in color with nary a blemish in sight, its hue completely consistent throughout, downright flirtatious. There's a princely bearing to the nose, easily clasps hands but no hugs, the ripe and clearly contoured red cherry, strawberry, raspberry scents replete with a touch of barnyard funk, the floral perfume, lemon citrus and cinnamon spice measured perfectly, not yet truly complex but possessed of blue blood heritage. Medium-bodied, smooth is as smooth does, glides effortlessly across the palate, the tannins finely grained and supportive of the raw beauty of the cherry, red raspberry, strawberry fruit. Hint of brown sugar or toffee but close to zero discernible oakiness. Lemon pie notes but no dough crust. The acidity finally hits during the back half and, if possible, smoothes it out further. Has utmost tact but this will not be apparent to all, that kind of a wine, you need to know the hidden cues. 92

Voillot, Domaine Joseph  
Burgundy, Bourgogne, Vieilles Vignes  
Pinot Noir  
2005, \$27.99, 12.5%  
Remarkably transparent and spotless ruby-violet color, the violet is as much suggestion as reality, completely consistent through to the rims. There's a hothouse flower pungency to the nose, making things too warm and thus indistinct, pine, cedar and pleasant mothball scents give it a swirling, open character but does leave your nostrils over cleansed and unable to fully register the strawberry, raspberry fruit scents. Medium-bodied, the tannins are not super hard but do keep a regimented feel, nothing underripe about them and fit well with the underlying grassiness, earthiness as well as the vigorous red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit flavors. The lemon citrus extra sour and keeps your eyes wide open. Broad shouldered finish with complete possession of fruit flavors, no real oak presence and cleans up after itself well. 90

Vissoix, Domaine du  
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Les Garants  
Gamay Noir  
2006, \$25.99, 13.0%  
Sure, anyone can call it ruby-violet, but what's the point? Shall we mention the heavier garnet tones around the rims. Are you reading this? Well, dammit, it's clear and beautiful. If you don't like it, go suck an egg. The nose suggests a slight paste-like feel to the cranberry, raspberry, red cherry scents. minimal grass or earth tones, more by way of lemon peel, anise seed and other sweet herbs, reclines in your nostrils like they've always been there. Medium-bodied, satiny smooth without ever becoming too so, leans into you enough to know it's there without impeding flow. Probably more acidity than tannins but neither particularly dominant, just stays within bounds as if second nature. Orange to white grapefruit citrus lends zing, trumps any minor toffee notes, the meadowy florality persists from start to finish. Red currant, cherry, blackberry fruit gets tugged towards redder fruit but has the depth to resist. As rugged as it is pretty, which do you prefer today? 90

Vissoix, Domaine du  
Beaujolais, Fleurie, Poncié  
Gamay Noir  
2005, \$17.99, 12.5%  
Completely unblemished ruby-violet color which remains perfectly consistent from the core through to the rims, highly reflective surface too. Leather, horse hair and damp

meadow earth control the nose, even diminishing the minerality and smoke, lemon zest and cherry, raspberry fruit bright and lively but in the background now. Full-bodied, cement like foundation with enough acidity and tannin to freeze things in place. Luckily, it also bursts forth with fresh florality and sugary sweet raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit flavors to get your tongue moving. Orange and lemon citrus too remain on the sweet side while retaining bite. The leather, barnyard type aspects muted here, presents more grassiness. Long, long finish, full of fruit while always contained by the structure. 90

Pernot et ses Fils, Paul  
Burgundy, Santenay, Biebeau  
Pinot Noir

2005, \$32.99, 12.8%

Truly amazingly light red-ruby color, only hints at violet, runs completely through to the rims, spotless and plenty reflective surface. The nose possesses enough tartly ripe red cherry, raspberry scents to absorb any excessive herbal/mentholated notes or dried cow patties, pungent billowing texturally, keeps coming at you, almost gamey, the earthiness extends like you're hosing it down. Medium-bodied, candied nature to the cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit which helps it hide from the tannins and acidity all the way through the mid-palate. Then there's more sourness as the acidity sharpens things and brings the lemon citrus to the fore. The tannins are kind of middling and it's a good thing, this gives room to the floral oil, cola and twigs and earth. Curiously, the oak caramel and vanilla ice cream wait until the finish to spread out. Wet, juicy finish. Yeah. You know. 90

Lafouge, Domaine Jean et Gilles  
Burgundy, Auxey-Duresses  
Pinot Noir

2005, \$30.99, 13.0%

Youthfully crisp and clean violet core, integrates easily into the expansive ruby rims, darn good looking wine. The undercurrent of stone dust, ash and minerals cannot match the exuberance of the red cherry, raspberry fruit in the nose, particularly as the pungent florality favors the latter, no green nor earthy notes at all. Medium-bodied, lots of soft caresses in the ripe strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit. As in the nose, the flowers and lemon citrus add to the overall prettiness. Has tannins and to a lesser degree acidity, however, these elements not in the forefront, they might become more noticeable down the road. The stone, mineral water notes hold off until the finish to coalesce. Big and bold, has some precision but not always interested in the fact. 90

Drouhin, Domaine Joseph  
Burgundy, Beaune, Grèves  
Pinot Noir

2005, \$52.99, 13.0%

Vivid ruby-violet coloration, clean and without any sign of blemishes, the rims change only slightly with a more magenta touch. The nose offers a seductive burst of cinnamon spice and caramel without appearing overtly oaky, leans heavily on the youthful raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit scents, no trace of herbaceousness, by the same token too unfocused now to reveal much earthiness, contrast provided by way of lemon peel and dewy florality. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the attack a cornucopia of cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit although by the mid-palate the tannins dig in their heels and show you who's

boss. Lemony, touch grassier here but welcome for the focus it brings. The cinnamon, nutmeg spice and sharper toast notes suggest judicious oak use and only of used barrels. Very well knit together but not by that token monochrome. Tightens up as it sits in the glass, a good sign for aging. No reason to not take it seriously. 90

Clos de Gamot  
Southwest France, Cahors, Cuvée des Vignes Centenaires  
Malbec

2000, \$32.99, 12.5%

Soft glow warms the dark purple core, close to opaque, plenty of youthful ruby left in the rims, little red as of yet. There's a good deal of dustiness to the nose, almost sandy, the ripe cherry, blackberry scents currently hold sway over any leather, wild scrub/flowers and orange peel although what's there fits damn seamlessly now and leaves one suspecting greater dimension down the road. Medium-bodied, grainy tannins, does a nice job of tickling the tongue and leaving its pores open to receive the big cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit as well as orange citrus and sweet garden herbs. Loam, forest matter, earth and hints of cedar and rawhide give it depth but the more air time it gets, the more it turns closed suggesting it's in need of more sleep. Maintains a good deal of general activity through the finish without the depth of flavor found during the attack, should be served with food right now for best effect. 90

Amirault, Yannick  
Loire, Bourgueil, La Coudraye  
Cabernet Franc

2005, \$22.99, 13.0%

The opaque purple core doesn't come across as manufactured given the relative lightness of the ruby-red rims, pools well across the surface without attracting undue attention. There's some bell pepper, tobacco and black pepper spice infusing the nose, however, this is but one element next to the more gregarious florality and plum, currant, blackberry fruit scents, strikes a very even balance between primary fruit and secondary elements. Medium-bodied, has a broad enough skeletal structure and shoulders to appear bigger but thin of waist, cinches the belt without effort. The tannins and acidity in near perfect harmony with the black currant, black cherry fruit, room for the latter without crowding the leather, tobacco, tar, bell pepper flavors. The savory orange citrus gets you to relax through the finish and look back fondly on the flavors which have come before. Young but wise, revisit in a few years please. 90

Vissoux, Domaine du  
Beaujolais, Cuvée Traditionnelle Vieilles Vignes  
Gamay Noir

2006, \$17.99, 12.5%

Garnet red is the word here, if you want to see purple, see it, but core to rim this is one monochromatic mofo, comes without a trace of blemish and its surface coast has been well combed and massaged into high luster. The nose has that cool quietness, borderline aloof but then once you ask it a question there's a splash of red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit followed on by lemon juice and tree leaves, almost hinting at menthol, piques your curiosity for its ability to appear familiar and exotic at once. There's richness in the mouth that starts off more medium-bodied and builds from there, gains an appreciable amount of weight through the finish. Pleasingly floral with kicks from the lemon peel and pebble aspects, nothing here wants to

stand out from the pack. The acidity is what frames it most throughout but by the finish it's the tannins that prod it that last few yards. You can talk about the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit all you want but this is the sort of wine which has to be taken as a whole or not at all. Will only get better with added time in bottle. 89

Maréchal, Catherine et Claude  
Burgundy, Savigny-Les-Beaune, Les Lavières  
Pinot Noir

2005, \$49.99, 13.0%

Warm glow adds a light gauziness to the equally ruby and purple colored core, the rims full of ruby to brighter pink magenta hues. Sweet juicy nose of strawberry, cherry, watermelon fruit, almost candied in nature, freshly cut flowers, clove, immensely primary with nary a suggestion of what scents might develop henceforth. Med-bodied with good thickness rather than heaviness, dulcet unto cloying, albeit showing a pleasing net of tannin. Strawberry, cherry, raspberry and lemon peel bum rush the show, also furnishes a high level of sweet spices and florality unusual for the producer. More stoniness here than in the nose, a good sign. With extended aeration the tannins also catch better and allow for a well-framed ending. A pleasing wine which should improve over a 5-8 year horizon at least. 89

Joguet, Domaine Charles  
Loire, Chinon, La Varenne du Grand Clos, Franc de Pied  
Cabernet Franc

2004, \$30.99, 12.5%

The youthful purple in the core gets close to opacity but gets drawn into the wide ruby-garnet rims instead, bright and full coloration throughout. There's a taciturn sleekness to the nose, full of grainy minerals, ash, dried tobacco and charcoal with minimal orange peel, glazed meats and cherry, red currant fruit scents, noticeable lack of herbaceousness as well. Full-bodied, possesses above average clarity which allows you to intensely experience the battle between the sinewy and drying tannins and the sweeter red cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit. The latter gets support from sweet tea leaves, orange peel and a measure of wildflowers. However, while the latter wins the battle during the attack, the former wins the war at the finish line. No bell pepper notes but grassier, by the mid-palate the stone rubble, mineral chunks and clumps of caked earth form a helluva pile. While has a natural flow now should gain even more with a few years of absorbing the tannins. 89

Clos Saint-Jean  
Rhône, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Vieilles Vignes  
Blend

2005, \$82.99, 14.5%

Entirely unblemished and clear violet core, starts showing ruby-red there which grows successively stronger towards the rims, fully hued anywhere you look. The nose slowly lifts into your nostrils, some clove and earth notes anchor the black raspberry, blackberry fruit scents, in no way herbaceous, more leathery if anything, not a lot on the table here right now. In the mouth it's full-bodied with a seductively velvety texture, rubs against the palate gently without truly sinking in. Milk chocolate, mocha, mint, vanilla, indubitably there's some oak, yet, it cleaves unto the candied cherry, raspberry, strawberry, rhubarb fruit perfectly. Adequate acidity, no tannin to really speak of. Again, not so herbaceous, with a sparse fistful of earthiness. Touch of fried lemon peels and floral oil. Easy to Hoover down now, way too plump to predict its future.

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Mainly Grenache, remainder unspecified percentages of Syrah, Mourvèdre, Cinsault. 89

Rapet Père & Fils, Domaine  
Burgundy, Savigny-Les-Beaune  
Pinot Noir

2005, \$24.99, 13.0%

Clean, unassuming red ruby to violet in color, very pleasing to view, full surface shine and zero hue loss along the rims. While there's a dense core of sweet red cherry, raspberry fruit in the nose, it's the bundles of hay and dried grass, dirt caked stones and sage which last longer, lifts well without sacrificing any fullness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, more sourness in the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit here, helps sleeken and extend the flavors. Good tannic spine, lower grade acidity, in spite of the ripe fruit starts to dry up through the mid-palate. Pronounced lemon citrus, fits well with the stone and mineral water components. On the earthy side yet not too much so. No greenness, appears built with some aging in mind. 88

Laurent, Famille  
Loire, Saint-Pourçain  
Pinot Noir

2004, \$14.99, 12.0%

Pure and very light ruby-violet color, fully consistent throughout, solid rims. Simple and straightforward nose of strawberry, raspberry fruit and powdered stone, ash, while on the whole dusty in texture has enough sweet lemon to juice up the fruit scents, not unduly herbaceous nor grassy. Medium-bodied, the tannins fine grained yet stay a strong presence from start to finish. As in the nose, possesses a palpable stone, ash and earth side but not to the detriment of expressivity in the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit. You get lemon peel here too, the grassiness higher in the mouth without upsetting overall balance. Just a smooth and easy drink. 88

Joguet, Domaine Charles  
Loire, Chinon, Les Petites Roches  
Cabernet Franc

2005, \$19.99, 13.5%

Completely unblemished while dark purple color, vast saturation extends through the vibrant pinkish-magenta rims. The nose is semi-bound up and slow to open, then displays dense cherry, plum scents, ripe but not sugary, floral oil and more stone, ash, minerals than bell pepper or grass. Medium-bodied, fluid in spite of the tenacious tannins, dryness cannot impede its motion. Peppery with more herbal bite in the mouth, still no lack of that ash, stone dust and mineral shards. The cherry, plum, blackberry fruit charts a steady course, no great heights scaled yet always there. The acidity shows more through the finish, brings out green apple notes. Needs a little more time to find itself. 88

Chenu Père & Filles, Louis  
Burgundy, Savigny-Les-Beaune, Haut-Jarrons  
Pinot Noir

2005, \$37.99, 12.5%

The ruby-violet color cut of the same cloth from core to rims, no distinction evident, pleasing reflectivity as well as depth, take a picture. The scents drive upwards into your nose like a linebacker against a tackling dummy, dried grass clumped into brown earth play against lemon peel and garden herbs, presents an "outdoorsy" character that takes precedence over the sweetly concentrated red cherry, raspberry fruit scents, wakes you up with each

sniff. Light to medium-bodied, the acidity and tannins add weight and concretize each aspect fully. As a result, more a mosaic of parts than a whole, that red cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit off to the side as the fried lemons enter here and the caked brown earth stand there. Not that herbaceous but not devoid of it either, the persistent bite more from the mineral shards. Does end with a sour twist, all the more to keep it in the forefront of your mind. As many pluses as minuses and the wise person favors the former. 88

Bertagna, Domaine  
Burgundy, Vougeot, Clos de la Perrière, Monopole  
Pinot Noir  
2005, \$109.99, 13.5%  
At the core red-ruby takes a slight lead over the violet color, the rims are full and without an appreciable change in hue, squeaky clean surface. The nose, while airy, has too much candied concentration in the cherry, raspberry scents, especially with the hot caramel sauce accents, lends it a more voluptuous bottom, remains very primary with nary a sign of what might develop. Medium-bodied, while it sinks into the mouth it also pushes outward across the palate enough to gain structure. The surprisingly active acidity ready to battle that caramel/toffee oak and, who's to say, may come out on top. Semi-candied feel to the lemon drop as well as the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, however, not excessively so. Once your palate acclimates the tannins produce a drier platform from which to whole more clear-headedly. No greenness but, again, no earthiness either. Even noting the few elements currently in play, knits together admirably on the finish, everything on the same page. 88

Laurens, Domaine  
Southwest France, Marcillac  
Fer Servadou  
2005, \$10.99, 12.5%  
Vivid dark purple core, equally dense and saturated ruby-magenta rims. Serious leather and earth in the nose, all dusty dirt, just comes across as "ancient" akin to the inside of a tomb, the tightly wound black currant, cherry scents have an abbreviated presence. Medium-bodied, while dry and moderately tannic, there is a supple roundness in the currant, plum, cherry fruit which helps it last longer. Sand, dust, leather, tobacco ash, tar, dried white grapefruit rinds, all of the flavors remain low in the register. The acidity also helps extend the end. Rustic in terms of flavors but too fluid to be considered chewy per se. 87

Grands Fers, Domaine des  
Beaujolais, Fleurie  
Gamay Noir  
2005, \$14.99, 13.0%  
Bright and shiny violet core, completely transparent, the red-magenta rims very wide, pink flecks here and there. Round, somewhat pliant nose that's well stuffed with blackberry, raspberry, black cherry scents, wet flower petals and orange juice, cinnamon spice, then crisper stoniness comes out before the dissolve. Medium-bodied, more sappy thickness than sweetness in the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit as well as in the lemon citrus. More stony with metallic earthiness here, fends off the glazed brown sugar and cocoa notes. Good length, no wimp, stays a steady course. 87

Cuilleron, Yves  
Rhône, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes  
Syrah  
2006, \$15.99, 12.5%  
Vividly saturated purple core through to the ruby-magenta rims, pinkish at the outer limits, really catches both light and your eyes. The nose presents a mildly stewed quality which adds prune notes to the plum, cherry scents, that said, displays pretty floral lift and orange citrus zest while deriving bottom from soft caramel tones, manages to pull out some baked ham scents as well. Medium-bodied, the acidity even shaves some of the weight off of it, right from the start. As a result, good freshness even as you can't ignore the caramel, butterscotch oak flavors. If you like your meat glazed, this proves a nice segue to the ham, bacon elements. The cherry, black raspberry fruit more focused than broad. More floral than herbal, the orange to lemon citrus not picking favorites there. Offers good distinctiveness for the price. 87

Bouland, Daniel  
Beaujolais, Morgon, Vieilles Vignes  
Gamay Noir  
2006, \$22.99, 13.0%  
The violet in the core nonchalantly puts up a fight against the more ruby-magenta coloration, thus both more or less look the same, presents an integrated plane across the surface which sparkles in the light and catches the eye. The nose has a deceptive nature to it, hits you first with a brawny herbaceousness before withdrawing into sweeter red cherry, raspberry scents as well as earthen mud and squeezed lemon peels, there's more going on than the untrained proboscis may uncover. Medium-bodied at best, swiftly sheds weight and starts to wiggle around like a worm who doesn't want to end up bait. Have to consider the red cherry, strawberry, cranberry, raspberry fruit more sour than sweet, pulls up during the middle as the tannins and acidity chomp down. Curious cola nut notes appear alongside the lemon peel, grass and twig notes, despite the resonant bottom as close to Pinot Noir as Gamay Noir. Flies straight ahead from mid-palate to finish like it's trying to hide the aforementioned fact. Engaging, however, not unconsciously enjoyable as there's more going on than can stupidly be assimilated. 87

Alary, Domaine Daniel et Denis  
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages Cairanne, La Font d'Estévenas  
Blend  
2005, \$29.99, 14.5%  
Not black but the purple certainly deep enough to comfortably achieve opacity, no lack of saturation in the ruby-magenta rims, fills the glass with no more than a shrug. Sweet plummy nose, cherry, blackberry fruit clings to your nostril hairs, some cocoa powder too, orange zest, more muted flowers and earth, not especially diverse and at the end some alcohol peeks through. Full-bodied, plush and sweeps into the mouth like an unstopped dam, no plan, just fill 'er up. Has a certain grassy streak but this bows its head before the richness of the plum, cherry, currant fruit, sugary yet not quite sweet. The orange and lemon citrus wrestles with the flower petals before forgetting to care who wins. Some mocha, cocoa nuances at the end but not evocative of oak, more so a natural extension of the fruit. Ends in a four-square fashion, just as it, started, not bad for it yet depends on how you looked it in the eye at the register. 60% Syrah, 40% Grenache, Counoise. 87

## FRANCE WHITE

Thomas-Labaille, Claude et Florence  
Loire, Sancerre, Les Monts Damnés  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2006, \$21.99, 12.5%

The green-gold straw color fades towards the rim even as the general translucency is retained, the surface sparkles more than expected. Lime/lemon citrus, mint and wildflowers most obvious in the nose, some chalk and stone dust, not minerally in a metallic fashion, no lack of richness in the peach, apricot, pear scents however not the main focus, dissolves with a welcome increase in herbaceous bite. Full-bodied, does a lot of moving from start to finish, pleasing contrasts. Starts with bigger apple, apricot, peach fruit as well as lemon, white grapefruit and then gains in grassiness and twiggy notes. The acidity not intense yet manages to keep coming at you with what it has. As sweet as the attack is, turns noticeably more minerally towards the end with saline and flint notes. Opens considerably with air time which suggests greater enjoyment were one to decant and stick the decanter in the fridge, even if you have to throw out the Chinese food leftovers. 90

Schoffit, Domaine  
Alsace, Rangen Clos Saint-Théobald  
Riesling  
2005, \$59.99, 13.2%

Trim, transparent yellow gold color, much more concentration in the core with dulled rims. Sweet, powdered sugar nose of lime/lemonade and mint, noticeably floral without honeyed notes, its freshness extended by white pebble and streamwater shades, very subtle pear, green apple, melon fruit scents, the windows thrown open to the breeze through the dissolve. Medium-bodied, possesses good alertness without having to sacrifice enjoyably accessible sweetness. The lemon and lime citrus well-concentrated and here in the mouth you get more honey accents. The washed pebbles, stones act as a moderating influence and along with the quite credible acidity sweep away the fat in the peach, nectarine, apricot, cantaloupe fruit. No real oily qualities, maybe a hint of rubber fumes. Quiet determination, pulls from behind to win the race by a length. 90

Pépière, Domaine de la  
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Clos des Briords, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes  
Muscadet  
2006, \$14.99, 12.0%  
Pale yellow gold in color, while flat and of average luster, there's a visual calmness to it in the glass. There's a major burst of sour lime to the nose, followed on closely by crushed seashells, stone dust and salt, the floral side has the power to stand up against the rest, the pear, apple, peach fruit kind of thrown in at the last moment, dusty wind texture overall. Medium-bodied, the acidity sucks all the moisture of your mouth from the minute it hits, tenaciously determined to bruise your cheeks. The lime citrus met with lemon here, more in alignment with the pear, peach, melon fruit and helping the latter. More thick than cutting type of stoniness, while dry not powdery per se, more stream and mineral water than minerality. Moves slowly and knows where it's going. Not necessarily for easy sipping. 90

Castera, Domaine  
Southwest France, Jurançon, Sec  
Gros Manseng  
2005, \$12.99, 14.0%

There's a thin layer of gauze so it's not perfectly clear, if transparent, green glow through the yellow color, fades out appreciably around the rims. Strong lemon-honey aspect to the nose, limeade too, bountiful florality, the green apple, pear, melon scents steady and sweet, shows lots of minerality and chalk as it dissolves. Full-bodied, it has fantastic acidity to prevent undue sweetness, the golden honey as well as lime, tangerine, lemon citrus bursts through the attack, about as lively as can be. Not a precise wine per se, crafted for maximal fun. The floral element does not rise that much, as the overall presentation is more edges than soft middle. As in the nose, the peach, apricot, pear, red apple fruit perfectly consistent and succulent. 90

Vatan, Edmond  
Loire, Sancerre, Clos La Néore  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2005, \$59.99, 12.5%

The yellow gold color fades in and out making the core/rims distinction hard to support, presents a gauzy sort of transparency throughout. Clear delineation among the elements in the nose, bagged grass over here, stone shards and hard mineral chunks there, green apple, peach, pear scents, err, elsewhere, somewhere in-between you might get lemon, mint or tree twigs but that's up to you. Medium-bodied, slowly pours itself into your mouth, not like you have a real role in how this goes down. Cascades languidly forward, has acidity but scoffs at employing it, dry, for sure, just make sure you chew hard on the pear, apricot, red apple fruit if you want to really taste it. Juicier slices of lemon and lime help fill the gaps. It finds a certain creaminess in the middle, forestalls any green notes. Anise and other sweet herbs keep the mouth clean at the end. Not exactly laconic, yet with its suave, cool approach you're not sure you are allowed to openly enjoy it. 89

Mann, Domaine Albert  
Alsace, Schlossberg, L.52  
Riesling  
2005, \$36.99, 12.0%

Greenish white in appearance, pleasing amount of shine yet not possessed of crystal clear transparency either, holds on well and fills the glass visually. Pure, finespun sugary nose of lime and lemon citrus, light oiliness which helps bring out more stone bits, so fresh that the peach, apple, pear scents can barely take hold. Light to medium-bodied, very same texture as in the nose, everything light and flitting about. The first contestant on stage is that lime, lemon, orange citrus, finds a dancing partner in the rose and orange blossom accents. Minimal honeyed notes, leaves room for the dried oil slick to show. Remains in a youthfully primary state, freshly scrubbed feel throughout the peach, red apple, apricot, nectarine fruit, not a hint of extra ripeness. Takes awhile for the stoniness to accrue into discernability, but does so by the end. Airy finish gets you ready for another glassful. 89

Schoffit, Domaine  
Alsace, Sommerberg  
Riesling  
2005, \$44.99, 12.4%

Noticeable green infusion in the yellow hay base, even given its transparency fills the glass well, moderate loss at the rims. The nose aims for a clear message of white stone, chalk and white smokiness, nothing metallic, there's something odd like chili pepper as well, this sourness in good measure cloaks the peach, apricot, apple fruit, as a result the nose closes up prematurely. Medium-bodied, squarishly broad yet at the same time has pacing and fluidity, just takes awhile to get it going. The sweet and sour lime to lemon citrus activate the palate, no quieting influence in the polished stone, the acidity does restrain, adding prickle and a perception of heat. Tart feel in the nectarine, pineapple, peach, green apple fruit, sticks around tastefully, not the last guest out the door. The floral dimension never hits on all cylinders, most active at the finish. Needs a bit more expressivity through the finish but presents no reason to not refill the glass. 88

Santenay, Château de  
Burgundy, Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes de Beaune, Clos de la  
Chaise Dieu, Monopole  
Chardonnay  
2005, \$20.99, 13.0%

Light yellow straw in color, faintly glowing, does pale around the rims. Chalky stone, stream water clean up the nose and leave room for lemon custard, mint notes, the simple peach, apricot scents open and clear, more bitter nuances as it dissolves. Medium-bodied, soft but not too sweet, produces creamy mint to licorice notes alongside cinnamon spice. The lemon and orange juice flavors feel like they've been cut with a splash of mineral water. The apricot, peach, pear fruit kind of fuzzy with a "just picked" ripeness, not too juicy. Nothing spectacular yet each element remains perfectly consistent from start to finish making it easily quaffable. 88

Reverdy, Pascal and Nicolas  
Loire, Sancerre, Cuvée Les Côtes  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2006, \$24.99, 13.0%

Plain yellow straw in color, average shine with the expected loss around the rims. The nose has cut but not quite the amount you'd prefer, herbal with a hint of chili pepper, softish lemon peel, plain and unassuming presentation to the pear, apple, peach scents, heavy on white fruit, close to no minerality, easy to understand. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the acidity a force to be reckoned with, especially given the weaker thrust by that apple, pear, peach fruit. The tradeoff is an elevation in the stoniness, if not sharper minerality, the orange/lemon citrus too able to quite a sweet 'n' sour splash. Not especially herbal, as if even this element is not fully ripened. A model of consistency, ends with everything with which it started. Seems like an early drinker, albeit an enjoyable one. 88

Leroy, Domaine Richard  
Loire, Anjou, Les Nœls de Monbenault  
Chenin Blanc  
2005, \$44.99, 13.0%

While not richly hued, it ekes out all it can from the brown straw color, translucence lends depth, rims faded out some. The nose strives for cleanliness and tries to extract as much out of the lemon peel and stone as it can before the dried apple, pear, melon fruit scents settle in, nice mintiness and cinnamon spice too, dissolves with noticeable speed. Full-bodied, more limber than this producer's other bottling from this vintage, the acidity

keeps it much fresher, channels the honey, brown sugar, cinnamon stick away from the peach, apricot, mango fruit and cleansing the latter. That said, the stoniness submerged and less evident, you have to work to get it. By the mid-palate the tangerine, lime citrus juicily bursts onto the scene, seeking the spotlight. Some powdery residue at the end does heighten the stoniness somewhat. Wears a full metal jacket as proper evening attire. 88

Latour, Domaine Louis  
Burgundy, Puligny-Montrachet, Sous Le Puits  
Chardonnay  
2005, \$49.99, 13.5%

Pale, yet the yellow to white straw color possesses enough glow to adequately fill the glass. There's a light milkiness to the nose before the lemon citrus, white mineral powder and laconic pear, red apple, peach scents come on, nothing out of the ordinary here, the oak toast strikes a nice balance against the fruit. Medium-bodied, more a sinker than a swimmer, not a lot of rise, floats with a plush couch of flowers, brown sugar and mint. The peach, apricot, pear fruit of good body, suffers not from excess sweetness. Has keen oak toast but vanilla cream as well to soften. Bright and savory tangerine, lemon, lime citrus helps moderate. In the end, just plays it too close to the script, no real personality. Kind of like a first year Wharton hire. 88

Fèvre, Domaine William  
Burgundy, Chablis, Estate  
Chardonnay  
2006, \$26.99, 12.5%

Glassy white-yellow straw color, excellent luster along the surface, the rims bend enough light to appear nicely full. Calm, relaxed nose of peach, pear, yellow apple fruit as well as a floral breeze, any stoniness on cruise control too, blends in licorice, lemon drop hard candy and mint leaves, nothing remarkable, just easy to enjoy. Full-bodied, bottom heavy, more acidity than expected, if not particularly clean. More lemon to lime citrus, elevated florality too, the minerality ground to a powder, remains more rough than fine. Not lacking in peach, pear, apple, apricot fruit, moments of pineapple too. Engaging and does not suffer for its high energy level. Traditionalists might avoid but can turn some towards the light. (Synthetic cork: Diam) 88

Daumas Gassac, Mas de  
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays de l'Hérault Haute  
Vallée du Gassac

Blend  
2006, \$39.99, 13.0%

Dull gold color with good concentration, consistent all the way through to the rims. The nose attractive for the balancing the density of the scents with an overall breeziness, mint, orange blossom, lime, violets, youthfully fresh peach, apricot, pear fruit, holds off before alluding to some stoniness. Full-bodied, in spite of the highly credible acidity it has an older, beginning to dry and shrivel in the basement character. Presents a mineral water kind of fizz which shaves off a bit of the honey and floral dew notes. No overripeness in the apricot, apple, peach, melon fruit, simply solid expression. That mint thing comes back here with some black licorice as well. Doesn't has the length of the best vintages yet remains good fun to drink. 25% Chardonnay, 25% Viognier, 25% Petit Manseng, 25% Chenin Blanc.  
88

Moor, Domaine Alice et Olivier De  
Burgundy, Chablis, Bel Air et Clardy  
Chardonnay  
2005, \$24.99, 13.0%

Block-like yellow coloration, glows like a black and white TV after the channel went off for the night, looks like an older wine than it is. Apple sauce, cinnamon, pressed flowers, rock salt, pie dough keep it veering between cut and roundness, lactose notes decide the matter and flatten out the peach, apple, pear fruit scents. Full-bodied, the acidity feels like it has been massaged into a placid state, no verve to be had. Vanilla cream and custard as well as butter the first flavors you notice, mint, clove, cinnamon appear, if blunted. The apple, pear, peach fruit feels like they were freshly picked at harvest and then kept in a super-cool basement for 3-4 months of aging. Lemon reduction to pie notes in general keeping here. Personality without clarity of expression. 87

Leroy, Domaine Richard  
Loire, Anjou, Clos des Rouliers  
Chenin Blanc  
2005, \$37.99, 13.0%

Glistens on the surface as well as layered below, bleached yellow color, mostly translucent even at the rims. The nose is concentrated into a newly dried fruit character, the apple, pear, peach fruit without the sweetness, honeyed with lemon meringue nuances, hint of lanolin and with only little stoniness, remains fat in a newly created wine manner. Medium-bodied, basically offers the nose over again in the mouth, interpolating acidity into the mix. The dried apple, pear, peach, apricot fruit is simple and guileless, sprayed by lemon zest, this more than counteracts the sweeter honey notes. Minimal herbaceousness, also minimal stoniness, comes across as slightly oxidized and thus lessened in verve. Reclines through the finish, has to consciously stretch out to get to the finish. That said, smokiness and burnt brown sugar elevate the finish a tick. Made stylistically. 87

Clos Roche Blanche  
Loire, Touraine, Sauvignon No. 2  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2006, \$12.49, 13.8%

Basic yellow gold color with green flecks, transparent but not overly so, fades in and out through to the rims, pretty enough. The nose plays it simple with apple, pear, peach fruit, a flutter of honey before crisper grass and lemon peel notes, the green apple breaks away from the fruit pack to dominate, has the level of minerals and stone you need to complete the dance card. Full-bodied, on the sweet side, with its rich bottom the acidity is kind of dropped in a sinkhole of apple, peach juice with pear and apricot accents. Strong powdered fine sugar, lemonade and limeade as first found in the nose. The mineral water, chalk elements take time to respond to the call for help. The honey thing mostly waits until the finish to lay out. Enjoyable, not necessarily for the reasons you'd think going in. Can one suggest a wine has too much "old vine" character? (Synthetic Cork: Nomatic) 87

Charmoise (Henri Marionnet), Domaine de la  
Loire, Touraine  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2006, \$14.99, 13.0%

Happily bright white to brown straw in color, not deeply hued but content with that, concentrates at the core and lets what happens happen by the rims. Light nose, mostly

a mist of flowers, sprig of mint, a mild creaminess brings out more of the apricot, peach, red apple scents, just a very relaxed experience overall. Full-bodied, especially during the attack when it positively fills the mouth. Sheds weight in layers as it progresses, gaining clarity. First there's orange citrus and flowers but, on the whole, it has more mass than treble with the stone chunks and earth winning out. The brings concentration to the peach, apricot, apple fruit, this pops up well in the middle before trailing off. Any herbaceousness holds off to the end while luckily the acidity strikes most pronouncedly there too, drying out the finish. Solid delivery. 87

Schoffit, Domaine  
Alsace, Pinot Blanc Auxerrois Vieilles Vignes  
Blend  
2005, \$19.99, 13.0%

The rich golden color affected as much by a green tinge as by more incipient amber shades, translucent until you get close where it's quite easy to see through. The nose has an initially easygoing peach, apricot fruit simplicity to it, casually floral, then stiffens into chalk and orange zest, in addition to a quick blip of motor oil, stays pretty at the dissolve as it nothing happened. Medium-bodied, floats in like an innocent railroad bum, happy to be there but got nothing to say per se. So, when the orange, lemon citrus, flowers and peach, red apple, pear fruit slides through it's no surprise nor disappointment, more like shit happens. Some licorice and stone notes, but, as with all else, who can tell if it belongs or not? Just slurp it. 50% Pinot Blanc, 50% Pinot Auxerrois. Or something like that. 86

Chapelle, Domaine de La  
Burgundy, Pouilly-Fuissé, Les Grands Climats  
Chardonnay  
2005, \$29.99, 13.5%

Somehow the yellow gold color manages to extract amber touches even given a semi-watery appearance, dilute rims in spite of good surface shine. There's just the kind of bogus flat vanilla aspect to the nose that plagues so many god damned Pouilly-Fuissé wines, what the hell is up with that? Floral and vaguely white-fruity in a pear, apple, peach way but so little going on, damn boring. Light to medium-bodied, has cinnamon to nutmeg spice and floral water to try and apply makeup to the weak primary material of apple, pear, apricot fruity. Not nearly enough acidity to even come close, everything here lays flat and tries to get by on guile. If you can get past the distractions, the finish is downright watery and short. Makes you curious of just what the intent here was. 85

## FRANCE SPARKLING

Gimmonet & Fils, Pierre  
Champagne, Cuis 1er Cru Brut Blanc de Blancs  
Chardonnay  
NV, \$32.99, 12.0%

Gentle beads throughout, active in spite of dispersal, extremely pale straw color, invisible rims. Apple, pear and to some degree peach fruited nose, clean without being too minerally, light patina of lemon and flowers, on the whole light of touch. In the mouth it's Medium-bodied, you sense it could be even fuller if not for the large sized bubbles. Not to say it's foamy per se, a side benefit is that it highlights the minerality, larger component than in the nose. The pear, apple, apricot fruit standard issue, nothing unusual nor dramatic. The lemon citrus sweeter and pairs with a spoonful of honey during the mid-palate to provide

counterpoint to the minerality. Fairly compact finish, dry with a residual dustiness on the tongue. [Disgorged 8/2/06] 88

## ITALY RED

Sibilla, La  
Campania, Campi Flegrei  
Piedirosso  
2005, \$14.99, 12.5%

Has a palpable red influence through the purple core, maybe shades a bit more towards garnet at the rims but has remarkable consistency throughout. The stones and minerals in the nose are so powdery you just about start to sneeze, aggressive grassiness with formidable white grapefruit to tangerine notes, the floral dimension about as rugged as can be. Light-bodied, has great spring to its step, shoots clove and ginger spice, white grapefruit and orange citrus at you, very dry without seeming archly so. Settles into deeper notes of leather, animal hide and fried beef during the mid-palate. Very elastic, stretches out well, the acidity hoses down your palate and cleanses fully. More minerally kick at the end. Has relentlessness but not pushiness. 88

Pecchenino, Fratelli  
Piedmont, Dogliani, Siri d'Jermu  
Dolcetto  
2005, \$23.99, 14.0%

Fully extracted black-violet core, very good width in the glowing ruby-magenta rims, lack of color not an issue here. The nose seem a little closed in on itself, like water-sealed leather and plums in plastic wrap, you know what's there more than get it directly, there's suggestions of flower petals and orange zest, you get some more mixed black fruit with extended aeration but that's it. Full-bodied, more tannic than acidic though no slouch with the latter. Armored black cherry, plum, blackberry fruit teases you with promise but your tongue loses the ability to sense it through the mid-palate. As in the nose, presents attractive flowers, orange citrus and cocoa dust notes, however, the leatheriness and earthiness more cloaked. Holds its weight fully through the lengthy finish. Comes across as heavy, sacrifices freshness for impressiveness. Thus, may need a few years to potentially show at its best. 88

## ITALY WHITE

Novacella, Abbazia di  
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Eisacktaler, Veltliner  
Grüner Veltliner  
2006, \$22.99, 13.5%

Good brightness in the gold color, kind of green copper edge to it, the mild translucency minimizes some shine. The nose unfolds at a slow, sure pace, round but not necessarily soft, lemon juice, new springtime grass and white pebble dust what you register first, then licorice and light floral dew, the peach, pear, pineapple fruit scents not keenly edged, just present. Medium-bodied, easygoing, like the guy who always has a smile and a joke for you. In that regard, not quite GrüVe like, not the bite and acidity you expect. In place of pepperiness and grassiness there's flowers, stream stones and water, lemon juice and anise. This is not to say it's lazy or such, more a product of a gregarious nature. Most of the peach, apricot, pear, pineapple fruit comes through close to the finish, helping it expand and extend its weight and general presence. Easy to like. [Synthetic cork: Vinotop] 88

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## GERMANY WHITE

Clemens Busch, Weingut  
Mosel Saar Ruwer, Vom Roten Schieffer QbA AP #6  
Riesling  
2005, \$21.49, 12.0%

Presents a very thick, translucent amber-gold color, certainly looks advanced beyond its years, moderate hue intensity loss around the rims. The nose has an airy lift, like watching them inflate the cartoon character balloons the day before the Macys Thanksgiving Day parade, vague paste-like character to the peach, apricot, pear scents, heavy floral musk, licorice, orange blossom and little else right now. In the mouth a different story, full-bodied, but much more laconic and subdued and focused on non-fruit aspects. "Red clay" is right, it's there plus stone, stream water and mud-caked grass, quiet as a summer afternoon at nap time. Behind this the tangerine, lime, lemon citrus the most active participant. The acidity comes on as more of a blanket than energizing aspect. The red apple, apricot, pear fruit not weak at all, does have a cold basement aged quality, completely there through the finish. More for thinking than drinking. 88

Merkelbach, Weingut Alfred  
Mosel Saar Ruwer  
Ürziger  
Würzgarten  
Spätlese AP #9  
Riesling  
2006, \$16.99, 9.0%

The white to yellow straw color forms a solid block, no layering, like a wine cube in your glass, excellent surface shine given this sameness below. The nose leans hard on sugary tangerine, orange juice scents and almost overripe pear, peach, apple scents, very floral as well with mint ice cream notes, not devoid of stoniness nor mineral water aspects but it's a hunt to find them. Full-bodied, give the acidity credit as it puts up its dukes and tries to fend off the creaminess and vanilla pudding, white chocolate, mint flavors as well as hardcore concentrated apricot, peach, nectarine, pear fruit, pushes dried fruit concentration levels. A glimmer of herbaceousness slightly activates the stone, stream water and rubber aspects. Based on the nose, the tangerine, pink grapefruit, lime citrus curiously holds off until near the finish. A fruit bomb willing to explode before it hits the ground. 87

## AUSTRIA RED

Markowitsch, Weingut Gerhard  
Carnuntum, Rubin  
Zweigelt  
2005, \$19.99, 13.0%

Natural blackness to the core, like an ink stain, can't fault it, you are almost sorry to see the deep ruby-magenta rims, a betrayal of all the core worked for. The nose is deceptively simple, casually throws together leather, white grapefruit, tar, floral scrub and cocoa beans, by the time you absorb the currant, cherry, boysenberry scents you forget all that set them up. Full-bodied, thickly arrayed without losing its nimble qualities, the rose and lilac flowers here really keep it dancing, buttressed by the mixed lemon/orange citrus bite. It's the acidity that has to do the major lifting here, puts in a day's work to separate out the cherry, currant, plum fruit flavors as well as the clove to ginger spices, remembers the white pepper at the last moment. While it has the girth to just squat on your

tongue, more than willing to make the effort to reach out to those who might be light on the lingo. 88

## AUSTRIA WHITE

Tement, Manfred  
Steiermark/Styria, Grassnitzberg  
Sauvignon Blanc  
2006, \$36.99, 13.0%

While clear, the green-white coloration turns mildly dim below the shiny surface, the rims fully emptied of color. The nose acts with restraint as if it could unleash more grassiness on you than it does, keen-edged lemon/lime bite and good energy in the mineral dust as well, oily at turns, brings a smokiness to the pear, apple, peach scents. Medium-bodied, very broad and savory, gets your lips smacking right off. Tingly acidity adds percolation, doesn't deaden nor particularly direct traffic either. Luckily, once wound up it stays on point, juicy tangerine to pink grapefruit citrus, just cut grass and smooth stoniness keeps the petal to the metal. There's a sleek, trimmed down feel to the peach, pear, gooseberry, kiwi fruit flavors, never tropical but could be if it wanted, muscular in a wiry way. In the end it asks to be taken as a whole and not a sum of its parts. (Glass stopper) 90

Holzappel, Weingut Karl  
Wachau, Achleiten, Federspiel  
Grüner Veltliner  
2006, \$23.99, 12.5%

Brilliant white straw color, faintest yellow at the core, really reflects light excellently. Slight creaminess to the nose, swiftly dissipated by white mineral dust and chalk powder, very finely contoured peach, apple, pear scents with lemon zest and an openly knit, if powerful, floral dissolve. Light-bodied, however spreads widely and evenly to gently coat the entire palate. Gossamer red apple, peach, nectarine, apricot fruit lets the sun shine through it, nothing heavy-handed. No bite in the minerality nor stoniness, more just a sprinkling from above. Stream water notes keep it fluid and always moving. The acidity is at a fine level for the primary material, dry but not too so. Very tactful. (Screwcap) 90

Tement, Manfred  
Steiermark/Styria, Steirische Klassik  
Gelber Muskateller  
2006, \$21.99, 11.5%

Devoid of color, white is as colored as you could call it, makes up in good part by glistening in the light like a fresh glass of water. Ripe, somewhat tropical nose of rose water, mango, papaya, apricot, green melon fruit, round and supple, light on the minerality but derives kick from underlying grassiness, exquisitely pretty. Medium-bodied, good grip, the acidity anchors it in the mouth even as all that floral perfume gets it swirling upwards. Lower key apricot, mango, papaya, pear fruit, toothsome juiciness but not as sweet as the nose might suggest. Even with the traction, flows steadily and has a full head of steam left by the finish. More stone bits and fruit pits at the end too. Succinctly states its position and doesn't argue unnecessarily. (Glass stopper) 89

Schiefer, Weinbau Uwe  
Südburgenland, Eisenberg  
Grüner Veltliner  
2006, \$18.99, 12.0%

Transparent with the lightest of yellow hay coloration, holds what hue is there nicely through to the rims, strong surface shine. The nose billows more than comes via consistent presentation, mild white pepper and grass but more so quiet stoniness and flowers in mid-bloom, swiftish dissolve. Medium-bodied, much more engaging in the mouth with vibrant pink grapefruit, tangerine, lime citrus and more savory minerality. The acidity is not biting, more a thread to knit the elements together. Even-keeled, the pear, melon, red apple fruit offers snap rather than simple juiciness while maintaining presence through to the end. Moderate florality, light of touch enough to not require lift for contrast. Compact, clean finish brings it home into a tidy package. (Screwcap) 89

Angerer, Kurt  
Kamptal, Ametzberg  
Riesling  
2006, \$29.99, 13.5%

There's a faint day-glo aspect to the yellow gold color, adds life, the moderate translucency helps fill out the rims. The initial creamy touches to the nose are deceptive for after that lemon zest, orange blossom and sweet mint leaf notes carve the fat away to a large extent, the nectarine, apricot, red apple fruit fairly erect, more pure simplicity than complexity. Medium-bodied, the floral perfume is musky enough to staunch much lift, at least through the mid-palate. The white grapefruit to lemon citrus more sour than sweet and welcome as such, for the stream water to mineral water component just wants a wedge dropped in the middle of it. The peach, apricot, pear fruit fairly gossamer and nonexistent, as soon as you focus on it, it turns sideways and is gone. The acidity waffles, unsure of itself. In the end, the floral dimension remains, left to hold the audience in the theater. 87

## PORTUGAL RED

Bacalhã Vinhos de Portugal  
Alentejano, Tinto da Ânfora  
Blend  
2005, \$11.99, 14.0%

Impenetrably opaque purple core the razor thin super-dark ruby rims, pure and even surface with a pleasing glint. Spicy nose, loaded with caramel, coconut custard, floral potpourri, settles softly into the nose, oddly the round and ripe plum, cherry, blueberry fruit scents the last to the party. Full-bodied, possesses the kind of tannic bite that makes the attack flow and lends peppery kick rather than dry things out, whereas the caramel and milk chocolate would deaden the experience too much on their own. Tarter fruit than expected, raspberry, blackberry, blueberry with orange marmalade and gingerbread shades. Comes up with a short-lived herbaceous bite on the finish. Very good fullness and length for the price point too. 50% Aragonez, 30% Touriga Nacional, 10% Trincadeira, 5% Alfrocheiro, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. 88

## AUSTRALIA RED

Kilikanoon  
South Australia, Barossa Valley, Testament  
Shiraz  
2005, \$42.99, 15.0%

Fully black and opaque core, purple only shows around the rims where it fuses with crimson and blood red hues. Molasses, honey predictably coat the blueberry, blackberry, black cherry scents in the nose, vanilla fudge

too, orange extract, mint, naught else for you to sniff, o valiant warrior. Full-bodied, big and juicy, slow moving but gets there... eventually. Oak cream, vanilla, chocolate, mint, eucalyptus, orange blossom, you feel almost worn out by clichés by the time you register the plum, black cherry, black currant fruit. To its credit, the acidity puts up one helluva fight, keeps cutting off chunks of fat here and there. Maybe shows molasses glazed ham but no real meatiness. Relentless thrust through the finish, does not lack for power. So, you damn well better like getting steamrolled by your wine. (Screwcap) 88

## AUSTRALIA WHITE

Hamilton Wines, Hugh  
South Australia, McLaren Vale, The Scallywag Unwooded  
Chardonnay

2006, \$12.99, 13.5%

Just about fully transparent, tenuous gold to white straw hue, not a lot of interference with or bending of the light. Sour nose of milk, shriveled green and yellow apples, pears, orange juice and nutmeg spice, comes off as bottom heavy and thus loses distinction among the components. Medium-bodied, same story as in the nose, maybe blend in some mint, a higher degree of florality and lemon in addition to the orange citrus. Apple, pear, peach fruit predominate, sweet spices and a take of pie dough as well, what it may lack in oak it has in malolactic fermentation and other softening techniques. Solid length, no real issue there. Manages to stay lively while also clinging to the tongue. Appear where it ought to be for the price point and all yet not necessarily shouting "I am Chardonnay, hear me roar!" 85

## NEW ZEALAND WHITE

Kahurangi Estate  
Nelson

Sauvignon Blanc

2006, \$17.99, 13.5%

Transparent in the main, the yellow gold color extends nicely to the rims, easily lost in a crowd, nothing to attract attention, you can tell how full the glass is by the level of liquid. The nose suggests more attitude than it delivers, content to stay within the realm of mild mint, lemon peel, sweet honeyed smoke and sauna stones, the green apple, pineapple, pear, apricot fruit too dry to adopt any kind of tropical edge, lifts with hesitation, doesn't want to be taken for a wimp. Medium-bodied, flows with stream water, washed mineral bits and pink and white grapefruit to tangerine citrus, as one might suspect sweet upfront and sour at the back end. The apricot, pear, melon fruit tasty and persistent, no showstopper yet never to be underestimated. The acidity acts more as a support of the flavors than a conductor, luckily the orchestra wants to play along. Understated and enjoyable, beyond an undercurrent of grassiness could be hard to peg as Sauvignon Blanc. But easy to peg as tasty wine. (Screwcap) 87