

The Hanes Wine Review, October 2008 Edition

Excuses, excuses. Hanes is always full of them. Since it is almost Halloween and the October edition still ain't out, time to skip the usual rant. Alas, reemployment is not so kind to Hanes's free time, when it rains it pours, scored a full-time job and now a part-time job to boot. Well, more money to buy wine! Throw in apartment searching, taking care of some family stuff, arranging for The Hanes Wine Hoard (TM) to be shipped from NYC to NC and, gosh, enough already. Enjoy the tasting notes and we'll probably have the November addition back to full garrulous strength...

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This month's big winners... Lots of swell "supermarket" buys still captured herein. Now that Hanes finally has access to the full scope of all that North Carolinian wine distributors have to offer, maybe we shall return to the usual esoterica no one can find (plus it's getting cold enough to ship wine inter-state). Anyway, in the "you should be able to find this department," Chalone's 2006 Pinot Noir from Monterey is a solid, no frills wine for around \$22, not without a sense of individual self. It saddens Hanes that quality Kabinetten are now like permanently in the \$20's but no sense crying over spilt German Riesling. Schloss Schönborn's 2007 Kabinett from the Erbacher Marcobrunn vineyard is \$25 and in these crazy times worth it, lots of citrus and doesn't come across as declassified juice from higher prädikaten (even if it is). From the beloved Loire Valley, we find the 2007 Chardonnay from Domaine de la Frutière with mucho personality for about \$16. New Chilean producer to Hanes, Viña La Playa offers up a savory 2007 Sauvignon Blanc "Limari Reserve Block No. 5" which may be priced a bit high at \$19 but is still highly potable.

The best \$15 and under picks... Never had me no wines from Apulian producer Vinosia before, yet their 2006 Primitivo "Essenza di Primitivo" was a nice mouthful for around \$15. Why, if it is the very essence of the grape, it must be good. Unless the grape is Scuppernong. Castle Rock's best Pinot Noir bottling is usually the Mendocino County one and the 2007 seems to maintain past track records. A good wine for about \$13, it must be the 20% Syrah that helps. Steady as she goes Italian producer Tiefenbrunner has made another quality Pinot Grigio in 2007, with both freshness and body for a mere \$12. There seems to be a decent amount of inexpensive "Anything But Chardonnay" bottlings from the west coast in supermarkets and local wine stores. On the whole, these are OK but won't appease the persnickety. All that said, for \$11 Husch's 2007 Mendocino Chenin Blanc and for \$9 Anderson Valley Vineyards' 2007 North Coast Gewürztraminer are decent wines. Finding killer Austrian wines under \$15 is getting harder and harder but if sucking on stones is your bag, look for Höppler's Grüner Veltliner from the Burgenland region.

And the disappointments... The supermarket shelves were not overly kind with two Spanish choices. The 2006 "Red Guitar" old vine blend from Navarra at under \$10 and the 2007 Tapeña Tempranillo from the Tierra de Castilla (also under \$10) were both semi-clunkers that seem more like they were made for supermarket shelves than for representing España. A certainty that they sell well. Not a true disappointment per se, but for some reason Hanes remembers Edmeades as being a close to top drawer producer, admittedly haven't had any for a long time. Their 2006 Zinfandel from Mendocino was OK, big on the oak and the alcohol so if that's your thing, go for it. As opposed to the statement in the above paragraph, Château Ste. Michelle's 2007 Washington State Pinot Gris, even for \$11, falls short of truly recommendable. Hard to think of more out-and-out losers this month, Hanes's expectations have been considerably lowered!

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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/oldervintages2008.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

Edmeades
Mendocino County
Zinfandel
2006, \$21.99, 15.5%

Immaculate red-ruby to violet colored hue, sleek sheen on the surface, inches closer to pure red ruby along the rims. There's enough high-toned eucalyptus in the nose to pierce the vanilla/caramel swirl, nice touch of honey glazed ham too, trim contour to the red cherry, raspberry fruit scents, not saccharine and fits well with the underlying grassiness. Medium-bodied with a heavier super-structure, doesn't show a great deal of interest in movement after a few secs. The oak cream certainly creates padding and dominates the flavor array with vanilla, butterscotch, molasses and toffee. Any alcoholic heat has been massaged out yet it packs a punch. Possesses sufficient perceptible acidity to sharpen the cherry, red currant, raspberry fruit. Low flying orange blossom, menthol, road dust notes. Good Zin if you don't mind the oak and want a quick buzz. 85.4% Zinfandel, 7.2% Petite Sirah, 3.7% Merlot, 2.7% Syrah, 1% Grenache. 88

Chalone Vineyard
Monterey County
Pinot Noir
2006, \$21.99, 13.5%

Red-purple plum color of above average depth, clean and easy to see through close up, remains consistent right through to the rims, a notch redder at outer limits. Good weight and ripeness to the black cherry, blackberry fruit in the nose without becoming leaden, only a quiet layer of caramel, more offered by way of cola, dried orange peels, grass, it's not funky per se, simply just not overly dependent on fruit to hold your attention. Medium-bodied, full bottom, sloshes genially around your tongue. The acidity has a dull, drying effect which helps anchor the rest, at times takes on a more tannic fine sandpaper feel. Lemon, orange citrus like fresh pulp, more juice than bite. Holds onto a twiggy, meadow grass side that provides great counter-balance. Some cola but you'd have to want to find oak to get any in sizeable measure. A very honest and enjoyable wine. 88

Folie à Deux
Regional Blend, California
Ménage à Trois
Blend
2006, \$10.49, 13.5%

Completely unblemished garnet-purple hue, more of a saturated red-ruby around the rims, plenty of color anywhere you look. Juicy nose made up fully of raspberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit and a big shot of oak toast and roasted coffee, there's also something almost briny lurking about but nothing to deter the forward march of that fruit. In the mouth it's full-bodied, smooth and round of texture, too big to truly be supple. Here the chocolate, coffee, caramel oak is softer with less toastiness and serves as an entry point to the thick blackberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit, quite sweet and sugary. Typing this sentence to describe any tannin or acidity an exercise in stupidity. Noticeable swipe of mixed white citrus. Suggestions of pine or wildflowers. And fruit. If you like thick fruity, sweet wine, and who doesn't, the price is right. Does grow on you the

drunker you get. Unspecified percentages of Zinfandel, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon. 87

Castle Rock
Monterey County
Pinot Noir
2007, \$12.99, 13.8%

Consistent red-violet hue throughout, slight move into deep ruby-magenta at the rims, completely spotless and of spit shined surface. Sprinkling of clove to ginger spice and dried flower petals in the nose, however, the plush plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit stops the show, verges on overripe, the flirtatious orange citrus, cedar notes don't stick around, but the merde stinkiness does. Full-bodied, fruit-driven here too and of dark nature, all plum, cherry, blackberry as well. Offers clove, cola, sweet tea leaf elements, pairs up agreeably with the sugary fruit. Held together mainly by weight and density, not acidity nor tannin. The barnyard funk less overt in the mouth. Chewy and satisfying for its sheer richness. New label is about as ugly as the former one. 80% Pinot Noir, 20% Syrah. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Partridge, Richard
Napa Valley
Chardonnay
2006, \$48.99, 14.4%

Yellow hay color with mixed green and brown flecks, glassine with a translucent shimmer which extend hue through the rims. Lime, lemon citrus and floral dew comprise a large portion of the nose, the oak cream lowkey not out to unleash a can of whoopass on its competitor scents, fresh peach, apricot, pear scents not overblown either, remains tightly woven to its benefit. Full-bodied, makes a fairly big entry into the mouth given the pared down number of components, first comes ginger spice, finely grained oak toast, vanilla bean and butterscotch before orange blossom, some lime too, the floral dimension somewhat flattened out. A shudder of minerality comes through in the mid-palate but not able to fully lend crispness. The apricot, peach, pear, yellow apple fruit loses some grip before the finish, loses the race to the overall creaminess. Perhaps needs more clarity of purpose, to "choose sides." 88

Husch
Mendocino County, La Ribera Vineyards
Chenin Blanc
2007, \$10.99, 13.6%

Pale white-green straw color, like thin cotton it distorts or allows for clarity as the breeze moves it. Green apple, pear, peach fruit scents have both snap and restraint, offers lilac perfume, orange to lemon peel, a trace of waxiness and honey, has a steady and engaging lift that doesn't draw attention to itself. Medium-bodied, the attack a touch destabilized by bitter nuts and cut grass yet swiftly finds its bearings in the lemon, lime, orange citrus and beeswax. The acidity checks the honey from getting too sweet. The apple, pear, peach, apricot fruit in turn full without suffering from overripe presentation. Texture slightly creamier towards the finish, holds every bit of body it started with. The citrus lingers most at the end, light touch. 87

Anderson Valley Vineyards
Regional Blend, North Coast, New Gewurz
Gewürztraminer
2007, \$8.49, 12.8%

Pale worn yellow gold, like your grandpa's wedding ring, blanched by the rims, flat surface. Freshness the nose's finest attribute, sparkling mineral water, lemon and lime peel, honeysuckle, freshly picked wildflowers, not a great deal of pear, apple, peach fruit scents, not underripe more like first harvest. Medium-bodied, while appealing for its light buoyancy and youthful snap, some may desire more weight and richness in the grape. In this sense more northern Italian in character than Alsatian, focus once more on the minerals, stream water, orange to lemon peel, mixed wildflowers and mildly bitter raw nuts. Stays level in the mouth, doesn't have the acidity to tighten the screws tightly. The apricot, peach, pear, green melon fruit provides a brief crest in the mid-palate. For the price, a very nice aperitif sort of wine, something to sip while waiting for friends to show up. [Screwcap] 87

WASHINGTON WHITE

Sainte Michelle, Château
Columbia Valley
Pinot Gris
2007, \$10.49, 13.5%

Meager yellow straw coloration, not a lot of shine or sparkle, actually diminishes the transparency, zero hue left at the rims. Pleasant, if not especially deep, nose of honeysuckle, orange zest, ginger and lavender, minor wave of fresh cream, no discernible stone nor mineral water parts, the pear, apple, melon fruit scents simply stated. Medium-bodied, starts off round in mouth feel but tightens up and finds a focus and pacing by the mid-palate. The tangerine, lemon citrus adds life to the attack and freshens up the otherwise tenuous melon, apple, peach, apricot fruit. Slight raw nuttiness, nothing remarkable about level of florality. The acidity too average in nature. Nearing the finish a bitterness appears which causes it to lurch some. Decent party wine. 92% Pinot Gris, 8% Viognier. 86

FRANCE RED

Andézon, Domaine d'
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône
Syrah
2006, \$12.99, 14.0%

Not filmy but there's this warm gauziness to the dark purple core, like staring into the sun, the violet extends through and darkens the red-ruby rims. Floral nose with strong supporting elements of orange citrus and milk chocolate, notes of grill smoke and glazed ham as well, the blackberry, black raspberry scents perfunctory while with some lift. Medium-bodied, round mouth feel which helps it expand outwards at a steady clip. You get more olive pit and general meatiness here, equal to the violet perfume and orange to white grapefruit zest. Not particularly tannic, the black cherry, blackberry fruit given free rein to spread its sugary love. As it opens, more earthiness appears to balance out the chocolate, coffee bean aspects. An easy quaff plus. 88

Jamelles, Les
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays de l'Aude
Pinot Noir
2007, \$10.99, 12.5%

Unblemished and bright, the violet in the core segues swiftly into red-magenta and ruby with a hint of pink at the outermost rims. Highly perfumed nose, could be sprayed from an atomizer at Bloomingdale's, softly spreading raspberry, strawberry fruit scents seem sprinkled with confectionary sugar, the grassy component barely sneaks in before it all dissolves. Light to medium-bodied, not dense but has grip and hugs the palate. Zippo tannins or acidity. Cinnamon, clove spice, candied orange peel and all that floral musk make up the bulk of the presentation, the sugary strawberry, raspberry fruit swell in the middle before swirling down the drain. Does a good job of building up a head of steam through the finish. [Synthetic Cork] 86

FRANCE WHITE

Frutière, Domaine de la
Loire, Vin de Pays de Loire-Atlantique
Chardonnay
2007, \$15.99, 12.0%

Yellow-brown in color, pleasing shine and cleanliness with good depth and holds well through the rims. Light touch of perhaps botrytis caused honey brings richness to the nose, concentrates the florality as well as the tangerine, lemon citrus, the apricot, melon, pear fruit scents balanced out nicely by minerality, persistent presence. Full-bodied, lots of weight on the palate and hard to ignore from the first sip. Spicy, peppery mouth entry which segues into washed stones, seashells and iron flecks before releasing the round and ample apricot, peach, pineapple, nectarine fruit, the latter definitely displaying bite. Firm acidity, helps things clean up through the finish. There's a lot going on here and it's more of a challenge than uncritical quaffer so prefer the former before pulling the cork. 88

Aubuisières, Domaine des
Loire, Vouvray, Cuvée de Silex
Chenin Blanc
2007, \$15.99, 13.0%

Light yellow golden straw in color, light green shade before all hue vacates at the rims. Pineapple, nectarine, papaya fruit scents have a mean streak in the nose, alongside the smokiness and sour lemongrass notes it's hard to focus on the otherwise strong honey and floral dew, more jalapeño than citrus, all over the map. Full-bodied, displays the same unfocused profile in the mouth which forces you to pay attention rather than just enjoy. The pineapple, papaya, guava, nectarine, pear fruit sharp, piquant and unfriendly. White grapefruit, lemon citrus sour yet actually helps draw you in and stabilizes. The acidity is fine, has both edge and width. Very wooly, tastes damp, regardless of textural dryness. The smokiness billows past the mid-palate and stops it from settling in. Curious experience, not sure what's going on here. Buy me a case and I'll experiment with a broader sample set. [Screwcap: Stelvin Lux+] 86

ITALY RED

Vinosia
Puglia/Apulia, Salento, Essenza di Primitivo
Primitivo
2006, \$14.99, 13.0%

Enough black in the purple core to easily achieve opacity as well as smush the red-ruby, magenta rims into a thin encircling ring. Heavy floral perfume in the nose with a solid dose of black licorice, orange zest and to a lesser extent milk chocolate, blackberry, boysenberry, blueberry scents keep things on the “dark fruit” end of the spectrum. Full-bodied, at once it wastes no time displaying its showy prune, fig notes alongside the cherry, blackberry, boysenberry fruit, yet, for all its thickness it also possesses the acidity to shorten the experience of the sugar and caramel nuances. This, in turn, unleashes some orange, grapefruit citrus, pine, licorice and sweet tea leaf elements. Levels itself out between mid-palate and finish and hence ensures compact, collected end with an extended flavor imprint. 88

Velenosi
Abruzzi, Montepulciano d’Abruzzo, Quattro Mani
Montepulciano
2007, \$11.99, 13.0%

While not especially dark, the violet color permeates throughout, as a result the ruby at the rims never fully brightens, vividness never an issue. Suitably dense nose of raisin, cherry, plum fruit replete with milk chocolate, floral perfume and to a lesser degree orange zest and black licorice, never gets pushy and dissolves when it should. Medium-bodied, once more, aims to please without getting too sloppy about it. Sufficient acidic spine and mixed citrus bite to more than counter-balance any chocolate, vanilla cream. As sweet as the cherry, plum, blueberry, raisin fruit is upfront, nicely dried out by the mid-palate. Orange, lemon citrus, wildflowers and even some tree bark and forest brush accents keep it on the straight and narrow. Fruit still all there at the finish, even as your tongue puckers some. (Synthetic Cork) 88

ITALY WHITE

Tiefenbrunner
Veneto, Delle Venezie
Pinot Grigio
2007, \$11.99, 12.5%

Pale yellow straw in color, transparent and of moderate shine, hueless rims. Agreeably open and approachable nose of floral mist, tangerine to lemon citrus, cantaloupe, apricot, pear, red apple fruit, washed stone and stream water nuances there far in the background, rather sink in than lift. In the mouth it’s medium to full-bodied with a soft, pliable texture. Turns spicier towards the mid-palate with a bit more kick in the acidity. Citrus-driven, tangerine, lime, lemon both sweet and sour. Violets and lilacs sprayed into the cleavage of the thick melon, apricot, peach, pear fruit. You might suspect that there’s stone, mineral aspects but the sweet fruit and citrus are like pop rocks going off on your tongue. Has the ripeness to taste more like Alsatian Pinot Gris. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 88

GERMANY WHITE

Schönborn, Domänenweingut Schloss
Rheingau, Erbacher, Marcobrunn, Kabinett AP #3
Riesling
2007, \$24.99, 10.0%

Mostly neutral white-green hay in color, if that, lusterless in its transparency, rims bleached of all hue. The nose is like a pregnant cloud about to explode, brimming with lilacs, lavender, orange blossom shoulder to shoulder with resonant apricot, peach, pear, mango fruit scents which skirt tropicality, has a light chalkiness but too “wet” for true stoniness to show, lingers like a hyena, there while stating out of the big cat’s range. Medium-bodied, expands outward in a rush of perfectly ripened and sweet pear, apricot, peach, nectarine fruit, as in the nose avoids over-concentration and any candied feel. Given the swift momentum it builds in the mouth, the acidity fights back with aplomb and things dry up appreciably towards the finish. The tangerine, lime, lemon citrus lends an undertone of tart bite. Small increase in stone here. True to its prädiat and should prove even more sure with 3-5 years of age. 89

AUSTRIA WHITE

Höpler, Weingut
Burgenland
Grüner Veltliner
2007, \$14.99, 11.5%

Fair depth to the white to yellow straw coloration, while perfectly clear there is a certain distortion of vision when peering at it from any distance, Mineral water, wet slate and stream pebbles dominate the nose, brush of mandarin orange to white grapefruit zest, then there’s this brief moment of honey suggesting a trace of botrytis, whatever the cause adds length to the apricot, pineapple, quince scents. Medium-bodied with sufficient extract to sit solidly on the tongue, displays attractive transparency to the minerals, stream water, chalk, pebbles, puts off the advent of the apricot, nectarine, pineapple, star fruit. Acidity commensurate to the flavor intensity, doesn’t diminish the latter. Any honeyed notes here just mildly glazes the grapefruit, tangerine, lime citrus. Allows a succinct waft of florality before the finish. If you like chewing dirt and stone, yeah, boyeee. (Synthetic Cork) 88

SPAIN RED

Faustino, Bodegas
Rioja, Faustino VII
Tempranillo
2005, \$10.49, 13.0%

Red-purple core of complete clarity, sufficiently dark to avoid transparency, barely moves into more crimson territory around the rims. In the nose the candied cherry, strawberry scents stay one step ahead of the cedar, cigar wrapper, muddy barnyard earth, the orange peel and light floral dust stay out of the fight. Light to medium-bodied, puts on weight as it opens. Engaging sweetness in the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, teams up agreeably with the orange/grapefruit citrus. The tannins noticeably reserved and the acidity runs around trying to do the work of two. Which is a way of saying this is a fruit-forward “please me now” style of wine. Never grassy but any earthiness able to tag along with the cedar, tar, tea leaf elements. At no moment overwrought. 95% Tempranillo, 5% Mazuelo. 87

Aspaldi

Rioja

Tempranillo

2005, \$11.99, 13.0%

The purple core dark enough to push the redness out into the ruby rims, more garnet red than magenta, perfectly fine cleanliness. Cedar, tar, mud, tea leaf and wet tobacco mix a good deal of funk into the nose, welcome as the fruit is an odd mixture of stewed prunes and red cherry, strawberry scents, touch of sweet baking spices and candied orange peel as well. Full-bodied, if a tad hollow in the middle, not fleet of foot, more apt to get exercise pushing the remote. Ginger, orange zest, tea leaves and cedar get a few words in before the merde and earthen mud literally bring it down to earth. Not especially refreshing yet the tannin appears able to create the appearance of erect bearing. More of that prune, date thing to the fruit, first glass shows the most strawberry, raspberry, cherry shades. Lots of flavor but less so intensity, a simple, unassuming drop. 80% Tempranillo, 20% Grenache. 86

Ada, Bodegas

Navarra, Red Guitar Old Vine

Blend

2006, \$9.49, 14.0%

Soft gauziness to the mixed red-ruby, violet color, consistent throughout, luminescent rims. Plenty of orange and white grapefruit citrus in the nose, fine accompaniment to the sweet raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit scents, the toastiness and cocoa powder accents don't fit as well, minor herbaceousness, vague floral perfume, pretty simple overall. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with the same emphasis on the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, with a little blackberry mixed in too. The orange, lemon, white grapefruit citrus kicks around credibly and here the grassiness is higher and adds some needed tone. That nagging cocoa, mocha, toasted bread thing, err, keeps nagging. Nothing about it truly annoys, though, which is kind of the whole underlying reason for wines like this. There's a lot of people who think it's cutting edge risky to spend \$10 on a wine from Navarra (where?) and made from two grapes they maybe cannot pronounce. God bless Constellation Wines. 55% Tempranillo, 45% Garnacha. 86

Tapeña

Tierra de Castilla, Vino de La Tierra de Castilla

Tempranillo

2007, \$9.49, 13.0%

Light violet to ruby hued core with very bright, pinkish ruby rims, you might guess it has a sizable percentage of Garnacha in it but actually 100% Tempranillo. Mocha powder and coffee bean stiffen the nose, little creaminess here, there's a confectionary, powdered sugar character to the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry scents yet it doesn't get overbearing, sufficient suggestion of leather, tobacco or field grasses. Medium-bodied, mild pucker on the attack, while maybe attributable to natural or wood tannin, nevertheless forestalls the sweet raspberry, strawberry, watermelon fruit. Pinches of orange zest, sage, witch hazel, pine but no real cedar and even the mocha/coffee thing toned down here. Sweetness lasts but by the finish your palate feels awful dry. Which contributes to the weight loss and drop in overall intensity. 85

SOUTH AFRICA RED

Sebeka Wines

Western Cape, Cape Blend Shiraz Pinotage

Blend

2007, \$6.99, 13.5%

The unblemished purple core dark enough you can't quite see through it, darkens the otherwise glowing ruby-magenta rims. Thick, fluffy nose of plum, prune, blackberry fruit, molasses coated bacon, caramel, ginger spice and floral perfume, enough leather and grill smoke to avoid being entirely monochrome, sticky and clings to your nostrils well. Medium-bodied, spreads widely and evenly, ultra-sweet from the first sip. The sugary plum, prune, raisin, cassis fruit gains a semi-sour twist past the mid-palate, very welcome. Not entirely devoid of tannic spine. The ginger, cinnamon spice to orange, molasses glaze element out and about, doesn't have creamy oak, more toasty. Retains some leather but the gamey or smoky qualities lessened. At the price there's no reason to complain about nothing. 58% Shiraz, 42% Pinotage. (Synthetic Cork) 86

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Cluver, Paul

Elgin

Riesling

2007, \$12.99, 12.0%

In spite of the relative lightness of the yellow-brown straw color, there's a translucent warmth to it which gives it depth and attractiveness, hue holds credibly through the rims. The nose leans on orange, lemon citrus and pressed flowers for greatest effect, trace of honey glaze or molasses, there's an underlying sourness and damp smokiness which intrigues, notes of clay or dried tar, the pineapple, peach, nectarine scents have edge but not viciousness. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, firm but not stern, more sinewy stretch than fluidity. The lemon to mandarin orange citrus makes for a tart mouth entry and frames the nectarine, pear, peach, pineapple fruit, increasing the tropicality. Again, not so much minerality as mixed earth accents. Less floral here and a tick more grassy, even if the latter never major element. The acidity not finely honed but not dull either. A good Riesling for meats and thicker dishes. (Screwcap: Savin) 88

Sebeka Wines

Western Cape

Sauvignon Blanc

2007, \$9.49, 13.0%

Basic yellow gold color, mild brownish tinge, translucency adds depth, rims semi-bleached out, nothing visually unusual. The herbaceousness and mineral crinkle in the nose are mostly there for initial show as a general creaminess quickly smoothes things out and the ripeness of the peach, nectarine, apricot, guava fruit favors solidity over brightness, very little lift. Full-bodied, again a more flavor rich and dense style than bright and energetic. Big on that nectarine, apricot, pineapple, guava fruit as well as here white grapefruit to tangerine citrus. Flat acidity but the citrus in addition to the herbal flourish helps it stay clean until the creamy texture takes over by the mid-palate. Notes of vanilla then too, suggestion of anise and sweet spices, weight persists through the finish. A friendly dog that may indeed drool on you. (Synthetic Cork) 86

AUSTRALIA RED

Hope Estate
Western Australia, The Ripper!
Shiraz
2005, \$17.99, 14.0%

The red-purple core just shy of opacity, the rims more crimson to blood red than ruby, full without steroidal saturation. The nose comes off as a tad blunt and flat, doesn't extend with ease, the maraschino cherry, raspberry liqueur scents outlast the menthol rub, vanilla pudding, orange peel, dried potpourri complements. Medium-bodied, displays decent balance and a general lack of alcoholic heat. The vanilla cream, butterscotch and toffee oak flavors present and accounted for, funnily enough has enough wood tannin to dampen the sweetness of the former. No overripeness in the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, much more dark fruit than in nose. Bleatings of orange to lemon citrus and pine sap. Nothing wrong with it, just blurry in a crowd of men in gray flannel suits. 85

NEW ZEALAND RED

Dyed-in-the-Wool
Marlborough, Unchangeable
Pinot Noir
2006, \$13.99, 12.5%

Light in hue, touch of purple anchors the core, offers much more red-garnet throughout, the rims possess an orange zinc tinge. The nose is kind of all over the map, there's a certain pickled quality about, moderately herbaceous as well, zesty red cherry, raspberry fruit a bit wound up, lacks any citrus or floral element, more of a slugger than boxer. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and finds more direction and fluidity. The added richness in the raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit helps and there's complementary cola and orange citrus shades. Average acidity and tannins, the herbaceous streak toned down as well. Some cola touches. Could say it's calling card is the absence of flaws rather than obvious positive attributes. But, at the price, that's what you want. After all, the sub-\$15 Pinot Noir landscape can be highly radioactive. [Screwcap] 87

CHILE WHITE

Playa, Viña La
Limarí Valley, Block Selection Limari Reserve Block No. 5
Sauvignon Blanc
2007, \$18.99, 13.0%

Transparent white straw to worn gold color, clear rims, attractive surface reflectivity. Jalapeños and pickle juice give the nose life, piquant herbaceousness, sauna stone smokiness, pepper, easy to skip over the more laidback apple, pear, peach, melon fruit scents. Medium-bodied, puts a lot of its thrust upfront and slowly tails off from that. That chili pepper shiznitz permeates the attack and heightens the minerality as well as herbaceousness, in many respects akin to a New Zealand version. The acidity is there yet it never loses a certain roundness to it, not out to slice and dice. Tropical nature to the papaya, nectarine, peach, guava fruit, more zingy than sweet. Pink grapefruit, tangerine, lime citrus makes itself at home. Keeps jogging through the finish until the dog's tongue starts drooping trying to keep up. [Screwcap] 88

ARGENTINA RED

Plata, Dominio del
Mendoza, Crios de Susana Balbo
Malbec
2007, \$12.99, 14.0%

Warm opacity to the dark purple core, heavily saturated violet-magenta rims, sleek surface, sure looks impressive. Any sourness to the plum, cherry scents in the nose mostly thwarted by vanilla cream, molasses and caramel oak tones, touch of florality but same for leather which then cancel each other out, lacks movement which appears to let the alcohol show more than optimal. Full-bodied, twin blast reversed here with an initial flurry of milk chocolate, molasses, honey and caramel, sugary sweetness coats the plum, cherry, black currant fruit. The tannins uneven and unable to structure decisively. Murmurs of orange peel, leather, tar but, really, it's oak and fruit from start to finish. In the best way, but still. 85% Malbec, 15% Bonarda. [Screwcap] 87

Navarro Correas, Bodega
Mendoza, Colección Privada
Malbec
2006, \$12.49, 14.0%

Basic ruby-purple color, more clarity than opacity, the rims possess a warm red ruby glow. The nose features tobacco, tree bark, mountain air, dried orange peels with only a glimmer of crisp oak toast, the blackberry, black cherry fruit scents perfumed and light without being evanescent. Light to medium-bodied, slimmed down and firmed up considerably by the clean acidic spine. The oak toast here too a side dish, brings a bright quality. The fruit has more of a "red" character, red cherry, raspberry over blackberry. Too streamlined to get past some initial grassiness into earthiness, no real leather nor tobacco notes neither. The orange peel is there as well as a bit of piney menthol stuff. Clean finish, succinct. Carries itself with dignity. 87