

The Hanes Wine Review, October 2017 Edition

Lots of catching up on wines purchased through winery direct offerings. Got to drink what's already paid for. So not that diverse of a selection to peruse this time, Hanes is trying to stay away from retail purchases and keep the drinking queue lean and mean. Though hopefully not the same for the wines themselves. Given the prices of the wines Hanes buys through these mailing lists chances are higher that retail purchases will be less expensive to bring total wine expenditures down to where they need to be.

On a related topic it seems that the big wholesalers are once more throwing their clout behind restricting retail purchases of alcohol across state lines. They are squeezing FedEx and UPS to better enforce existing laws as well as institute new restrictive laws. So, wine buyers who think of the whole USA as available to them are in for some headaches. If you would like ensure that not only wineries can ship freely but so can fine wine retailers, get political and write your local politicians. Also consider supporting the National Association of Wine Retailers (<https://nawr.org/>). Otherwise wherever you get wine advice beyond your local shop, you likely won't be able to take action and get the wines which seem worth the chase.

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This month's big winners... Hanes has never sampled any wines made by Brendan Tracey in the Loire, was pleased to try the 2015 Pineau d'Aunis, a clean rendition of the grape and Hanes will seek out the producer in the future. This cost about \$27. Once & Future's (Ravenswood founder Joel Peterson's new winery) first few vintages are out of the gate with a bang. Their 2015 Mourvèdre from the Oakley Road Vineyard in Contra Costa County is quite nice and thankfully the most "reasonably" priced of their offerings at \$35. Pretty sure most of these wines are sold directly through their mailing list but you might be able to find some at retail or auction. From Peterson Jr. at Bedrock, their 2015 Gibson Ranch Heritage blend massages your pleasure nodes and was one of their better offerings this vintage, clocking in at \$38 or so. Had no problem quaffing the Vincent Wine Company's 2015 Pinot Noir from the Armstrong Vineyard in Oregon. \$39 is a bit steep but that's what they cost, you want to play you gotta pay. Tried both the normale and the riserva from Produttori di Nebbiolo di Carema and their Alto Piemonte Nebbiolo wines. For Hanes's money, the riserva is worth the upcharge from \$22 to \$29. But they are both credible and worth a chug. Now that there's enough history to the winery, for Hanes's tastes Sandlands' Carignane wines are the most consistently enjoyable. Their 2015 "California" blend Carignane captures the essence of the grape and its semi-rustic appeal. Their straight-up 2015 Contra Costa County Carignane is just a shade or two behind.

The best \$20 and under picks... It's almost a shocker but Hanes did try a few \$20 or less wines this time around. Sampled a new vintage of Guillaume Clusel's Rhône Gamay called "Traboules" and it is on par with the delicious previous vintage. A solid buy at about \$18. Hanes historically is tepid on Baudry's Chinon called "Les Granges" (having most favored the 2002 vintage) but the 2015 was pretty decent. Maybe because it seemed riper than past years, which may make it less appealing to those who favor this bottling. \$18 to pass the velvet ropes. Hanes has plugged them before but will do so again here as Borell-Diehl from Germany's Pfalz region just deserve the props. The 2016 Müller-Thurgau for \$13 in a one liter bottle is a steal and an easy party or everyday wine to stock. Similarly, while mentioned in years past, Cederberg's Bukettraube grape wine from South Africa is a unique and lively drop and it remains competitively priced at about \$14 (if not that easy to find). Had been awhile since buying this producer so Hanes snagged the 2015 Château d'Epiré Savennières and it delivered just what you want from an entry level bottle of Chenin Blanc. \$16 is well worth it.

And the disappointments... There were weather problems, especially hail, in 2016 for Beaujolais, particularly Fleurie. So not surprised that the bottled wines are uneven and a step back from the two preceding vintages. Tried two wines from the Domaine de la Grand'Cour — the Fleurie "Tous Ensemble Cuvée Vieilles Vignes" (basically a blend of what normally are multiple separate bottlings) and the Brouilly "Cuvée Vieilles Vignes" — and both came out disappointing based on the high bar this producer sets. Nature will do what it will. Same can be said for Lapierre's 2016 basic Morgon bottling, about \$26. Sucks because Hanes typically buys a good bit of Beaujolais as the prices remain more affordable vis-à-vis the quality you get. Was not that crazy about the 2015 Turley Zinfandel from the Kirschenmann Vineyard (this vineyard is owned by the Turley winemaker who also owns the winery Sandlands). Kind of too much makeup on a pig for \$35. Looking back, seems there's mixed results on the wines from this vineyard, albeit the 2014 Turley Zinfandel Kirschenmann was gosh darn good. Harrington's 2015 Zinfandel from Zeni Ranch in Mendocino was uneven and while well fruited lacked harmony,

cost about \$30. Hanes returns now and then to Dolcetto in search of cheaper everyday wines. This time Hanes struck out with Sandrone's 2016 Dolcetto d'Alba which for a modest \$17 was too dry and lacking in friendliness. Usually just more openly fun, something about Bedrock's 2015 white blend from the Compagni Portis Vineyard fell short for Hanes. Fairly priced at \$26, Hanes has one more bottle stashed away so perhaps time will be kind. Hanes periodically ventures to the Canary Islands to see what's up, this edition it's the basic "Tinto" from the Listán Negro grape as produced by Bodegas Viñatigo. Price was fine at \$15 yet too raw and lacking in fruit to really appeal to anyone besides the stone suckers among us. It's heresy and already wine board chatter but Hanes has come down on the side of "ehh" as regards the 2016 Muscadet wines from Pépière. Both the regular "La Pépie" and the higher end "Clos des Briords" were found lacking in verve and panache. None going into the Hanes cellar although prices remain great, \$12 for the regular and \$19 for Briords. Have had "Pipeño" wines from other Chilean producers so took a chance on the 2016 Viña Maitia version. It was nice enough, disappointing more so because it is \$12 and one keeps hoping to find a wine which heroically outperforms its price. But not really that bad per se.

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Unlike *those other* professional reviews, Hanes only will share what he likes if it is *currently available* in stores for immediate purchase. If these wines are not to be found in some of your local stores, they suck and that's not Hanes's fault.

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on the *older (or non-imported) wines* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/oldervintages2016.html>

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on *beer* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/beer.html>

Here's the order in which Hanes humbly provides the wine review information:

Winery/Producer Name

Region of Origin, Appellation, Brand Name/Wine Style, Single Vineyard (if any applicable)

Grape Type

Vintage Year, Price Hanes Paid (if available), Alcohol Percentage (if available)

Tasting Notes, Hanes's Numeric Score (on the traditional, yet inane, 100 point scale (which for Hanes truly begins at around 80 points and more or less ends around 94 points)

And here's Hanes's wine reviews for October!

CALIFORNIA RED

Once & Future

Contra Costa County, Oakley Road Vineyard

Mourvèdre

2015, \$35.00, 14.0%

Clear purple core yields easily to scarlet red and blood red shades, these full to the outer rims. While there's some wet wool and leather notes to the nose, potpourri and pomegranate, cranberry to blueberry scents lead the way, mixed in are orange peel, anise and caraway seed, it's blockish and chunky in terms of presence but should gain focus as it matures. Medium-bodied, here it's silky smooth although it does not

leave an impression of being unstructured. More of that sweet/sour orange to lemon citrus, pressed flowers and menthol to licorice tones. Lower degree of wooliness, much more fresh cherry, raspberry to cranberry fruit, even green apple, sappy yet brightly "red" in character. Length is very good plus it manages a pleasing mouth perfume. At a minimum should be a medium term ager but very tasty today. 91

Sandlands

Regional Blend, California

Carignane

2015, \$28.00, 13.4%

Dark purple core pushes into opacity, equally dark ruby to purple bruise hued rims, vivid to the outermost limits. There's a zesty sandy, mineral quality to the

nose, trace of peanut shells, direct and bright blueberry, raspberry, cranberry fruit scents, meadow grasses, while it can slug you hard on the whole it stays openly knit if not quite breezy. Medium-bodied, a tannic pucker frames the attack while the acidity tightens things down past the mid-palate. Juicy blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit has a sour bounce that keeps it active throughout. Some white grapefruit, flowers and incense notes. Most of the pleasure comes from the abundant fruit, which benefits greatly from the structure. Should age medium term but can't say it would improve. Grapes sourced 50% Lodi, 50% Contra Costa County. 91

Bedrock Wine Co.

McDowell Valley, Gibson Ranch, Gibson Ranch Heritage

Blend

2015, \$38.00, 14.3%

Deep purple bruise colored core which pushes into opacity, the rims a more dull crimson to red clay hue. Freshly floral nose, richly perfumed, tangerine to lime zest, cocoa and roasted coffee, damp brown dirt and a steady core of plum, black cherry to blackberry fruit scents, not that complex yet knows the right buttons to push. Medium-bodied, more smoothly fluid than dense or layered, has both sufficient tannin and acidity to give it shape and restrain any inclination towards sugariness. Caramel, toffee, mint and dewy flowers do though push for a sugar high. Likewise, plenty of ripeness, if not chewiness, in the redder raspberry, strawberry, blueberry fruit array. Has that "old vine feel" and it does trail off slightly at the end, allowing for a bit of alcoholic burn. Otherwise, a gulpable joy. Unspecified percentages of Syrah, Petite Sirah, Peloursin, Trousseau Noir, Grenache. 90

Harrington Wines

El Dorado County, Sumu Kaw Vineyard

Syrah

2015, \$25.00, 12.9%

Remarkably clear and shiny, while the violet core just escapes transparency while the more brick red to crimson rims do not. The nose is brisk and racy yet anchored by matted wet straw, damp barn earth and horsehide notes, still not that sauvage and no real volatility to it, herbaceous with some brine and grapefruit zest to it, mute mixed red fruit scents. Medium-bodied, high-toned with plenty of acidic zip and a wiry tannic skeleton in support. Races through the mouth and here there's more oomph in the cranberry, red cherry to red currant fruit. Very citrusy, this balanced by leather, tar and muddy grass. If given time to open puts on weight, however, the lack of follow-through at the finish at the moment prevents greater impact. Has the structure to go far. 90

Once & Future

Sonoma Valley, Bedrock Vineyard

Zinfandel

2015, \$42.00, 14.7%

The brilliant surface shine in many ways masks the black impenetrability of the core, the broad crimson rims exude a warm glow. The nose is closed off and inexpressive, pressed flowers, licorice, vanilla bean and quiet black cherry to blackberry fruit, while lands bluntly at first there is some lift before it all dissolves. Medium-bodied yet the strong tannic skeleton gives it gravitas on the palate and a feeling bigger than it is in total. Quite smoky with molasses, grill fat and charred cedar plank notes. The oak is restrained and the vanilla, cocoa notes add minimal sweetness. In turn the raspberry, blueberry, red cherry fruit stays tart and brisk. Orange to lemon zest, pine and mint release through the finish. Leaves an impression of a wine already shutting down. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Napa Valley, Carneros, Hudson Vineyard South, T'n'S Blocks

Syrah

2014, \$42.00, 14.4%

The core is as dark as purple gets before turning black, the heavysset brick red rims draw your eyes towards them, seems clean but too dark to really tell. There's a coffee roast, caramel to grill fat aspect to the nose, still not overly oaky if otherwise marred by some alcoholic fumes, licorice and pressed flowers, the red currant, blackberry fruit scents don't quite get their bearing. Full-bodied, plush with a velvety texture, the acidity is adequate and tannin comes off as massaged so as to maximize the blueberry, blackberry to black cherry fruit presence, certainly sugary enough. Mint, anise then toffee, butterscotch. There's something vaguely plastic-like about it at the end, loses flow. The oak is not so extreme that it wouldn't knit in over time. Yet, no real window into what tertiary elements it may offer down the road. 89

Sandlands

Contra Costa County

Carignane

2015, \$28.00, 12.9%

Purple to red magenta core, excellent clarity, just a hint of pinker shades at the outer rims, saturated in a subdued manner. Juicy cranberry, red cherry scents perk up the nose, traces of flatulence partially canceled out by florality, sandy sort of dustiness pervades rather than minerality, brawny yet not ill-mannered. Medium-bodied, strong acidity with wiry tannin in support, the structure dominant right now. More of that brightly sour blueberry, cranberry to cherry fruit. White grapefruit zest pushes things even

further and the pulverized stone, sand element adds dryness rather than a salve. Not a lot of florality but likewise a noticeable drop in the background funk. Suspect it will need some time to soften, fruit seems to be able to last until then. 89

Turley

Napa Valley, Turley Estate

Zinfandel

2015, \$40.00, 15.4%

It's not murky per se but there's something vaguely "dirty" about the core, like the purple got smudged by dirt, the rims likewise are a deep brick red, heavysset with no glow. Candied nose of strawberry jam, crushed blueberries and raspberries, exceedingly ripe, at first the oak takes no prisoners with caramel, butterscotch to cedar notes but with some air it recedes some, licorice and a little eucalyptus but this one is all about fruit and oak. Full-bodied, coming at you in velvety waves of gobby raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit, very red in complexion. Here the butterscotch, caramel to vanilla fudge oak never releases its grip. Spearmint, licorice and a bit of grill smoke at the end. Hard to imagine this developing interesting tertiary flavors so best to take advantage of the full throttle fruit in the near term. 89

Harrington Wines

Central Valley, Mokelumne River, Somers Vineyard,

Old Vine Carbonic

Mission

2016, \$25.00, 13.2%

A light filminess deepens the glow of the orange to ruby hued liquid, more translucent than transparent, maintains intensity well enough into the rims. While there's a textural thickness to the nose it also comes off as high-toned with a white grapefruit to minerally edge, otherwise it's rife with strawberry, rhubarb to watermelon fruit scents of a decided sugary nature, vague herbaceousness otherwise clean without complications. Light-bodied if sticky, here very little could edge in front of the strawberry, raspberry, peach fruit. Earthier here but less grassy. The white grapefruit to lemon citrus gives it pep once the palate acclimates to the sugar. Not soft, perceptible acidity seems good plus. More sour through the finish. Very commendable effort. 89

Harrington Wines

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Pelletiere

Vineyard and Luna Matta Vineyard

Nebbiolo

2014, \$30.00, 13.5%

Semi-murky opacity to the purple core, more of a burnt red to orange as it progresses towards the rims, fully hued throughout. There's some alcoholic turbulence in

the nose in spite of the relatively low alcohol, very ripe raspberry to strawberry fruit scents, floral with orange blossom, cedar, licorice to animal hide scents, pretty while grounded in the earth, a bit too scattered to expect ultimate harmony. Medium to full-bodied, soft and expansive, you can feel it pushing outwards against your cheeks. The tannin is there but exhausted by the mid-palate and the acidity not quite able to take the baton. Still, dry and pugnacious, sucks the juice out of the orange to grapefruit citrus. Too much leather, leaves, twigs to avoid an "earthy" feel, while more balanced for it still does not achieve an old school character. Ends with floral and oak cream notes. Should present positive development in 3-4 years but beyond that is anyone's guess. 89

Harrington Wines

San Benito County, Wheeler Vineyard

Cabernet Sauvignon

2015, \$28.00, 13.5%

Basic ruby-violet color, good clarity, more bright rust red at the rims, pleasant without anything standing out at the extreme, pro or con. Very sugary and concentrated nose of molasses, honey, baked ham then salt lick, dried meadow grasses, animal hide and a touch of brine, finishes with a waft of buttered popcorn, on the whole comes off as entirely unevolved, a puppy. Medium-bodied, satiny smoothness to it with a subtle tannic tingle. Here the creamy oak is more evident as vanilla, butterscotch and that buttered popcorn again. Snuck somewhere in there is a wedge of bell pepper. The plum, cherry, blackberry fruit pushes the envelope of ripeness into dried fruit territory. It's very drinkable and while more or less simple today there is something about it which suggests it is capable of aged complexity. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Napa Valley, Oakville, Oakville Farmhouse

Blend

2015, \$60.00, 14.5%

Sleekly impenetrable black purple core, warmly glowing crimson red rims, massive presence in the glass. There's a certain wet fluffiness to the feel in the nose, loaded with potpourri and incense, then whipped cream, caramel, and mint pave the way for plum, black cherry, blackberry scents, the parts too glued together to achieve individual clarity. Full-bodied, drying tannin impedes flow across the palate. There's a sour leanness to the fruit which translates into Italian plum, cherry, green apple, cranberry flavors. Less floral here, more rough and tumble earth and field stone. Dulls the tongue the more you sip, everything about it yells "big" and thus it's hard to get past the din. Unspecified percentages of Negrette, Zinfandel, Mondeuse, Petite Sirah, Carignane, Ruby Cabernet, etc. 88

Sandlands

San Benito County, Lime Kiln Valley, Enz Vineyard
Mourvèdre

2015, \$35.00, 14.1%

Immaculate liquid, provides a sense of clarity even in the reddish black core, further out there's more purple mixed in with the red, close to plum flesh. The nose has the texture of wet cotton balls, no room for much movement, meadowy with tree bark and fallen leaves, touch of tar as well as damp wool, orange zest so-so in trying to pretty it up, the cherry, plum, dark berry fruit comes across as muffled. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with plenty of tannic punch through the attack. A certain underripe astringency persists thereafter although there's no faulting the general ripeness of the cranberry, currant to cherry fruit flavors. Some bite appears in the form of grapefruit to orange citrus, Tar, leather and then mint to licorice fill it out. Tightly wound, gonna take a lot to get it to unclench. 88

Turley

Central Valley, Lodi, Kirschenmann Vineyard
Zinfandel

2015, \$35.00, 15.4%

Red rust and brick hues permeate the otherwise simple violet core, no luminescence nor glow, however, the rims are a clean and full red. Violets and licorice dance in the nose which is otherwise marred some by alcoholic fumes, the red cherry, strawberry fruit scents are on the lean side, ends with a burst of menthol and white grapefruit zest. Medium-bodied, compact and never spreads out, remains drying on the palate. Butterscotch, coconut milk, mesquite grill smoke and dried garden herbs set the stage, the blueberry, cranberry, rhubarb fruit sour even if it does extend into the finish. There's a sense of phenolic underripeness and the inability to soften and soak in creates an uneven experience. 87

Harrington Wines

Mendocino County, Mendocino Ridge, Zeni Ranch,
Old Vine Mixed Blacks
Zinfandel

2015, \$30.00, 13.8%

Clean reddish black core with dense crimson to brick red rims, alive with color, looks like it's about to go medieval on you. The nose comprised of honey, maraschino cherry, blueberry syrup, fig and date fruit, even green apple, kind of all over the map, musky potpourri, sandalwood, spiced orange pekoe tea, overall smells like an older wine. Medium-bodied, has a treacly texture that can make it seem heavier than it really is. It can at moments be high-toned and there's an underlying volatility to it which disturbs its ability to peacefully layer on the tongue. Full bore raspberry, strawberry, blueberry and fig, date fruit. Outside of that

vague nail polish edge, you get molasses and grill smoke, mint and some pine. The ripeness not enough to forgive the turbulence. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Sandlands

Amador County

Chenin Blanc

2015, \$24.00, 12.2%

Nicely demure shine to it, brings life to the solid gold color, rims moderately full. Butterscotch and whipped cream bubble up in the nose, zesty tangerine to lime citrus, the apricot, peach fruit can veer into kumquat or star fruit, has a steady underlying smokiness to it which is quite attractive in the moments it gains the upper hand. Medium-bodied with muscular acidity which imbues it with a somewhat squat mouth feel, even if too dry to really soak in and put pressure on the palate. Broad array of lemon, lime to blood orange citrus, more pith here and less juicy. More sandstone and quartz here than smoky, semi-metallic feel. The apple, peach, pear fruit loses its footing before the finish. Mint to licorice freshness at the very end. 89

Bedrock Wine Co.

Sonoma Valley, Compagni Portis Vineyard
Blend

2015, \$26.00, 14.2%

Rich golden color with light amber touches, pulls dully into the glass to form a solid brick look, little change around the rims. Heavysset nose of whipped cream, mint, orange sherbet, litchee nut and semi-poached peach, apricot, pear fruit, as it warms it starts to seem like walking through the perfume department at Macys. Full-bodied, fleshy and jolly, honey, molasses, spiced oranges, cinnamon, more litchee nut. The acidity falls flat so it has to depend on the weight for forward momentum. More lemony and minty at the end, shows a bit more verve if not bite. Pear, yellow apple to apricot fruit here concentrated with the same poached character. Has a hedonistic element, falls short though of previous vintages. Unspecified percentages of Gewürztraminer, Trousseau Gris, Riesling, Roter Veltliner, Chardonnay, other. 88

Bedrock Wine Co.

San Benito County, Cienega Valley, Wirz Vineyard
Riesling

2016, \$20.00, 13.5%

Nice greenish gold hue, pleasing in its unadorned presentation, moderate shine and seems to shimmer well. Crisp nose yet with some give, focus on green apple, pear, peach pit scents and a taut floral breeze, if you can let it warm there's whipped cream and cinnamon to be had alongside an anchor of wet stone,

compact without seeming to lack for it. Medium-bodied, super firm and muscular, the acidity has a strong grip. More resonant citrus here, lemon to white grapefruit, and a lot less floral. Some licorice or sweet garden herbs. That apple, pear, apricot to melon fruit lacks a center which holds, more an accent to the whole than a feature act. It lacks the stripped down clarity of purpose that you find in many German trocken wines. Ends up like the drunk guy who doesn't know he pushed the risqué joke too far. 88

OREGON RED

Vincent Wine Company
Willamette Valley, Ribbon Ridge, Armstrong Vineyard
Pinot Noir
2015, \$39.00, 13.1%

Very clear if dark crimson red in hue, full to the rims, no luminescence or glow. There's an earthy, meadowy quality to the nose which slightly diminishes the otherwise perfectly ripe red cherry, raspberry fruit scents, there's a menthol like edge to it as well as baling spices but it's mainly the neutral earthiness. In the mouth it's full-bodied with a plush feel. Has sufficient tannin but it releases quickly and it feels like the acidity is on the low side. Sugary strawberry, raspberry to blueberry fruit, pie filling consistency. Blends in sweet orange to grapefruit citrus here. Ginger and cinnamon fill it out further. While vaguely stony, does an about face from the nose in emphasizing the fruit. Quite pleasant and easy drinking. 89

FRANCE RED

Bachelet, Domaine Denis
Burgundy, Côte de Nuits-Villages
Pinot Noir
2014, \$55.99, 12.5%

Mild purple core segues to wide crimson red hue, full through to the outermost rims, decent clarity throughout. There's a pleasing herbaceous snap to the nose which enlivens the peppery on its own red cherry, strawberry to cranberry scents, gentle potpourri, ginger to incense notes waft in and out, overall though its formidable pungency masks the individual scents. Medium-bodied, plenty of traction with ripe tannin in support as well as an underlying briny to grassy cornerstone. Some mixed citrus and baking spices, clean profile and the more sips you take the more the round and sweet raspberry, strawberry to cherry fruit takes over. Can't say it is sloppy but its youthful exuberance will need some time to harmonize. But all the elements are there. 90

Aupilhac, Domaine d'
Languedoc/Roussillon, Les Cocalières
Blend
2014, \$24.99, 13.0%

The clarity and shine saps some strength out of the violet core, more crimson to then cranberry red as it progresses outward, nice vivacity. Boisterously smoky nose filled with animal fur and hide yet nowhere near feral, pungent white grapefruit and peppercorns add breadth, cherry, currant fruit has some trouble getting heard. Medium-bodied, firm acidity keeps it level from start to finish. The leather, iodine and beef blood persist steadily while the white grapefruit jumps off the charts. Has a sour red fruit profile of cherry, raspberry to cranberry fruit, much more ripe than sweet. Stony poor dirt add to a generally dry texture. Crackles with energy and has sufficient fruit to reward aging from 6-8 years. 40% Syrah, 30% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache. 90

Tracey, Brendan
Loire, Vin de France
Pineau d'Aunis
2015, \$26.99, 12.5%

Hazy sunset red to burnt orange hues, closer to watermelon red at the rims. The nose is chock full of white pepper, barnyard funk and sparkly lemon juice, the pungency of the strawberry to raspberry fruit anchors it firmly in the nostrils, at times comes up with a touch of milk chocolate. Full-bodied and sappy unto gluey, provides sufficient acidity to avoid turning soft and amorphous in the mouth. Super ripe and juicy strawberry, rhubarb to raspberry fruit, it's up to the pepper and pickle brine elements to create any kind of sweet/savory balance. Cleaner and less funky than in the nose. But still grassy with nods to sage or dill. Interesting wine and manages to stay lively in spite of that sappy texture. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 90

Grand'Cour (Jean-Louis Dutraive), Domaine de La Beaujolais, Fleurie, Tous Ensemble Cuvée Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir
2016, \$39.99, 13.0%

Shiny cranberry red core that hints at a more orange cast at the rims, fully transparent without seeming watery. Dusty pulverized stone led nose, violets, red cherry to raspberry fruit, mint and incense, while not quite delicate it does tend to separate and drift off a bit before expected. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with ample give in the mid-palate and sticky texture. Here the green apple, strawberry, red cherry fruit stays both bright and syrupy. The acidity is just above average and helps to smooth out the finish. Some caramel and sugar notes, like caramel or candied apples. Savory garden herbs, tar and licorice adorn the denouement.

Something about it feels hollowed out, otherwise most of the pieces are in place. 89

Clusel, Guillaume
Rhône, Coteaux du Lyonnais, Traboules
Gamay Noir
2016, \$17.99, 13.0%

Plum pulp red to purple in color, touch more red magenta at the rims yet without any saturated glow, clear but the darkness tends to win out. Meadowy feel to the nose with hay and straw grasses before plump cherry, blackberry scents rise up, pressed flowers and earthen stone stabilize it further, more viscerally pleasing than compelling. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with solid sappiness, clings to your pores. Okay acidity but not going to zing you, modest grapefruit to lemon citrus and the stoniness comes of as neutral. Nicely perfumed cherry, blackberry, apple to raspberry fruit, if there's any bite to it it's here. Well-integrated and seamless, glides through the finish. Hard not to like. 89

Dutraive, Justin
Beaujolais, Beaujolais Villages, Les Tours
Gamay Noir
2016, \$25.99, 13.5%

Very bright cranberry red to magenta in hue with a hazy glow underneath, consistent core to rims, visually leaps out of the glass at you. Sour and close to high-toned nose of lemon, white grapefruit zest, stone and flint notes, meadow grasses, free of funk so the cherry, mixed berry fruit can express itself clearly, albeit without a great deal of length. Medium-bodied, savory and dusty from the first sip with powdered stone, sand to mineral dust accents alongside garden herbs and pickle brine. Again, the white grapefruit citrus rushes to the head of the line with any strawberry, watermelon, cherry fruit having to play catch-up. The acidity is credible and doesn't get in the way of a sweeter crest in the mid-palate. Cruises at a steady, measured pace. 89

Grand'Cour (Jean-Louis Dutraive), Domaine de La
Beaujolais, Brouilly, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir
2016, \$32.99, 12.5%

The ruby red color is so bright and pure it's hard to say if any violet gets into the core, full consistent to the rims. There's a certain dusty minerality to the nose which itches the nostrils and then there's also a bubblegum element which favors overall juiciness and the strawberry, red cherry fruit scents, sweet tea leaf and orange peel round it out, not horribly complex but the basic parts are there. Medium to light-bodied, the acidity is stronger than the general weight should have to handle and the tannin stomps on the finish, hints of

greenness. More emphasis here on white citrus to sour orange citrus. Substantial tart pucker in the cranberry, strawberry, raspberry fruit, so playful sugariness. Leather and damp earth broaden through the finish. Not sure when, if ever, the harmony will come. 88

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon
Gamay Noir
2016, \$25.99, 13.0%

Ruby red to garnet in color, hardly deepens into purple, very clear with a mild pinkish cast around the rims. Sappy raspberry, strawberry scents stick to your nostrils, pretty floral musk with sweet baking spices and a smidgeon of orange peel, while heavy there's a youthful freshness and simplicity to it. Medium-bodied, starts out more concentrated and loses grip as it progresses to the finish. More sour cranberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit here. Seems as tannic as acidic, here the white grapefruit to orange citrus takes more ground. Almost peppery or grassy, loses most of the florality. Drying texture at the end. Feels like a bunch of parts glued together rather than a seamless whole. Yet, still displays pedigree. 88

Baudry, Domaine Bernard
Loire, Chinon, Les Granges
Cabernet Franc
2015, \$17.99, 12.0%

Warm gauziness throughout, dark purple core shifts to a washed out red ruby at the rims. The nose has a soft thickness to it, powerful blast of bell pepper and then it's mostly plum, black cherry fruit, dried grass, stony earth and horsehide quietly fill in some blanks. Full-bodied, the ripe tannin keeps it approachable while also ensuring a steady grip. Here there is more equality among the parts, the cherry, black currant fruit leads for a bit before it's time for the tar, twigs, tea leaf and poor dirt. The bell pepper lends bite and vibrancy nearing the finish line. At the end it's mildly floral with an increasingly pungent citrus element. More tactful than blockbuster, perhaps riper than usual and genially diffuse as a result. 88

Quenard, André & Michel
Savoie, Vin de Savoie Chignin, Vieilles Vignes
Mondeuse
2014, \$27.99, 12.0%

There's a certain gauziness to it which deepens the opacity of the purple core, framed by dark red magenta rims, visually fills the glass completely. Brawny nose that is hesitant to unwind, plum to black cherry fruit, very light touches of flowers, cocoa, and sweet baking spices, basically nothing else no matter how much you wait. Full-bodied, mouth presence

amplified by stern tannin. The chewiness does not prevent that same plum, cherry fruit from lasting well, however, minimal sense of palate progression. More white grapefruit and stone here to complement the florality. May be the case that it is still in relative infancy but today, while well made, it's like talking to a wall. (Composite Cork: Diam10) 88

Somail, Domaine du
Languedoc/Roussillon, Minervois, Le Vin de Plume
Blend

2015, \$11.99, 14.0%

Not quite opaque but certainly dark purple core, equally heavysset crimson red rims. There's a twiggy, grassy quality to the nose which makes it more bracing and angular than perhaps need be, woolly as expected, the fruit tends towards tart red of cranberry, sour cherry and raspberry, some alcoholic fumes, otherwise straightforward and without funk. Medium-bodied, here it switches up gears to focus on violets and white grapefruit citrus, any earthy or woolly attributes work to find their voice. More acidic than tannic, creates a semi-rough palate texture. More stony in the final analysis. Italian plum, cherry and cranberry fruit, a bit darker than the nose but also more puckering. The florality keeps it just pretty enough at the end yet still gosh darn rough around the edges. 80% Mourvèdre, 20% Syrah. (Composite Cork) 87

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Vin de France, Raisins Gaulois
Gamay Noir

2016, \$14.99, 12.5%

Clean ruby-violet color, on the light side and fully transparent, consistent through the rims. A little sulfur-like funk to the nose, comes off as rugged, the floral dimension does not fully open which leaves more territory to the stony earth, the cherry to red berry fruit scents simple and pleasant enough. Medium-bodied with good volume throughout, no dips in palate presence. Seems mildly tannic or at least not joyfully fruity, albeit no lack of strawberry, red cherry to raspberry fruit. Some lemony zest helps it lift towards the finish. No real sustained florality. All the basic elements are there but it still feels lacking, like its joyfulness is muffled. That said, still remains one of the better value wines out there. (Screwcap) 87

FRANCE WHITE

Epiré, Château d'
Loire, Savennières
Chenin Blanc

2015, \$15.99, 13.0%

The golden color is dark but has sufficient surface shine to brighten the overall look and keep the glass full and dancing. Lanolin, mint, fried lemon peel and wet sauna stones percolate in the nose, there's a pleasingly tense leanness to the apple, pear, apricot fruit scents, lower dose of rose water, lengthens some as it warms but does not necessarily fatten up. Medium-bodied, sweet attack of honey and borderline caramel, however, the acidity has a keen edge and swiftly slices that away. More tropical here with sour pineapple, papaya mixed in with nectarine, green apple fruit flavors. Mint, licorice and lemon to blood orange abound but at the end there's a pervasive herbaceousness to give it spine. Tingly finish with lots of citrus and chalkiness, textures shift as much as the flavors. 90

Baumard, Domaine des
Loire, Savennières
Chenin Blanc

2015, \$18.99, 13.5%

Nicely layered green-gold hue, not dull but not especially shiny either. Waxy nose punctured by mint notes before glued back by vanilla and ripe, contoured apricot, apple, peach fruit scents, too chubby to display much smokiness or minerality, releases well as it dissolves and avoids heaviness in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, has a nice firm mouth feel with what seems more or less average acidity. The white grapefruit citrus so sour it verges on not only lime citrus but some jalapeño juice as well. The pear remains in the range of pineapple, green apple, pear, no extra juiciness. The vanilla to whipped cream element relegated to echoes through the finish. Light rubber to gas fumes also fill the end. Good plus not great, potential to improve. (Screwcap: Stelvin Lux+) 89

Aupilhac, Domaine d'
Languedoc/Roussillon, Les Cocalières
Blend

2015, \$26.99, 13.0%

There's surface shine to it but dull underneath, a copperish orange hue throughout with some diminishment at the rims. The nose feels like someone stuffed a rubber Spalden ball in there, dense and round, it offers apple juice, orange pulp and mint components with a dollop of whipped cream, fills it out with cinnamon and nutmeg accents, you have to let it warm to tease out a meaningful amount. Full-bodied, more toast and vanilla, baking spice here, dominates the attack. The apple, pear, melon fruit has a super relaxed feel, close to nodding off on you. The tangerine, orange citrus more sweet than sour. Nothing remarkable about the acidity, just what you'd expect, moderate pep at best but not wimpy. Sweeter

as it warms, good match for white cream sauce dishes. 30% Roussanne, 30% Vermentino, 20% Marsanne, 20% Grenache Blanc. 88

Pépière, Domaine de la Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, La Pépie Melon de Bourgogne 2016, \$11.99, 11.5%

Faintly glowing white straw to green hue, solid appearance, in keeping with expectations. Generous nose of powdered sugar, pear, melon, apple fruit, cinnamon spice and lemon custard, as it warms you get a modicum of chalky, dusty sparkle but soft overall. Full-bodied and equally round and pliant in the mouth, below average perceptible acidity and no real zing to it. That said, loaded with cellar ripened yellow and red apples, pears and peaches. A vague floral dew settles on it and also minty. Orange, lemon citrus also on the sweet side. Has plenty of momentum and length through the finish and certainly hits most pleasure nodes. Hard to imagine it making old bones though. (Composite Cork: Diam1) 88

Pépière, La Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Clos des Briords, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes Melon de Bourgogne 2016, \$18.99, 12.0%

Simple gold color, suggests a green tint, clear but more translucent than purely transparent. Soft nose of powdered sugar, flowers and whipped cream, suggests a ripe and sweet ripe but the pear, apricot fruit scents do not coalesce in support of this thesis, touch of saline but no substantial smokiness nor chalkiness. In the mouth it's full-bodied, big and round and the acidity comes off as slight and on the lazy side. Some sea salt and crushed seashells but the bite comes mainly from lemon to blood orange citrus tones. Here the ripeness of the green melon, yellow apple, apricot fruit comes to the fore, about as sweet as you'd ever want it. Easy drinking today, could be wrong but hard to imagine it making compelling old bones. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Aupilhac, Domaine d' Languedoc/Roussillon, Cuvée Aupilhac Blend 2015, \$14.99, 12.5%

Dark enough in hue to pass as an "orange wine" if not altogether amber, flat on the whole but does have a consistent soft glow. Cumin, ginger spice and orange zest frame the nose, floral before turning towards something like diesel fumes and tar, underneath bubbles up poached apricots and peaches, more pleasant than this may sound. Full-bodied, really fills it up from cheek to cheek. Same spiciness with more

breadth in the apricot, peach, green apple to pear fruit as well as a deemphasis on the mixed citrus. The acidity is flat footed which contributes to its slow motion progress. Minty finish, does manage to seem fresher even if not shedding any weight. 35% Grenache Blanc, 35% Clairette, 20% Ugni Blanc, 10% Vermentino. 87

ITALY RED

Produttori di Nebbiolo di Carema, Cantina Piedmont, Carema, Riserva Nebbiolo

2013, \$28.99, 13.0%

Dilute and fully transparent, brick red to orange rust water in hue, good surface shine though and sparkles well in the glass. There's some wet herbaceous matter in the nose that can verge on vegetal, has a sandy sort of earthiness to it, the tart white citrus notes outscore the red cherry, blackberry fruit scents, light mountain pine breeziness to it too. Medium-bodied, slick and smooth mouth feel which still has grip. The acidity tightens things up but even now seems gregarious. Sweet maraschino cherry opens the door for strawberry, green apple to green grape fruit flavors as well as licorice. More pure stone and poor dirt nuances here and loses most of its grassiness. The white grapefruit led citrus more noticeable through the finish. Very pure today, however, shows some promise for medium term aging. 89

Maccario Dringenberg Liguria, Rossese di Dolceacqua Superiore, Posaú Rossese

2015, \$28.99, 14.0%

Brick to rust red in color with an orange aura, clear but able to pool well into the glass and fill it out. The nose is crisp and has punch as well as a little funk to it, sandy with flint notes as well as a cocoa underpinning to the rhubarb, bing cherry fruit scents, while not a lot of diversity does release well so what's there swirls around. Medium-bodied, weight stays consistent start to finish. On the tart side with credible framing acidity which plays up the sourness of the cherry, raspberry to apple fruit. Retains that cocoa powder element while balancing it with orange to white grapefruit citrus. Stony with moments of tarriness. In no way rough yet not quite polished either, leaves an aftertaste of black tea leaf and fallen leaves. 89

Sandrone, Luciano Piedmont, Dolcetto d'Alba Dolcetto

2016, \$16.99, 13.0%

Darkly glowing purple core with equally luminescent magenta rims, explosively saturated throughout. Fruity

nose of crushed berries to plums, a touch earthy and at times seems reductive, meager trace of flower petals, overall feels inert in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, acidic for sure but feels more tannic, dry and anchored in place here too. No faulting the ripeness, that plum, blackberry fruit gives all it has to show well. Big splash made via white grapefruit to lemon citrus and notably less earthy. Instead it comes off mildly leathery. Like its broad shoulders and non-wimpiness but the arch dryness prevents steady basic enjoyment. Not entirely sure it would soften over 2-3 years to change its character much. (Composite Cork: Diam5) 88

Produttori di Nebbiolo di Carema, Cantina
Piedmont, Carema
Nebbiolo

2013, \$21.99, 13.0%

Extremely light brick red hue with orange rust rims, completely transparent and has a great lustrous shine to it. Dusty, parched earth driven nose yet with a noticeable core of candied cherry fruit, white grapefruit zest gives it a little lift and there's also a vague hint of dried rose petals, otherwise sticks to a few words. In the mouth it tends to light-bodied with a very dry texture, tannic with a powdery film accruing on the palate. Smoky and leathery more than earthy. Even that white grapefruit comes off as a dried husk. Still, that candied cherry does try its best to add some depth and succeeds through the mid-palate along with some watermelon, cherry accents. Old fashioned coarseness to it, refreshing and invigorating but not easy on the palate. 88

Cornelissen, Azienda Agricola Frank
Sicilia, Susucaru
Blend

2016, \$27.99, 12.5%

Mild filmy glow to the ruby red watermelon color, the rims are orange tinged and watery. Some fart, wet horsehide, fur to the nose, takes awhile to release the strawberry, raspberry fruit scents as well as lemon zest, there's turbulent presence in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, uneven texture here too with some volatility in the acidity. Cinnamon, ginger spice helps frame the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit, tart and biting. Blends in wet leather and wool, damp earth and grasses too. In the end stays drinkable and pleasant enough but one mostly for the fans of the winery. Unspecified percentages of Malvasia, Moscadella, Insolia, Nerello Mascalese. (Synthetic Cork: Ardeaseal) 88

GERMANY RED

Enderle & Moll
Baden, Basis
Pinot Noir

2015, \$26.99, 13.0%

Brightly glowing sunset red with a touch of orange at the rims, gentle haziness throughout. Smoky, minerally nose with taut and tangy cherry to red berry fruit scents, fresher summertime forest floor matter accents, however, clean on the whole. Medium-bodied, broad shoulders with both acidity and tannin pushing to the fore. Ample white grapefruit to lemon citrus component, when paired with that campfire smokiness creates a certain acrid pungency inside the mouth. Manages to temper the inclination towards turbulence, partially due to the sappy solidity of the cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit. Still, it is best that you enjoy a more rugged style of Pinot Noir for this to make the most favorable impression. 88

GERMANY WHITE

Borell-Diehl, Weingut
Pfalz, QbA Trocken AP #17
Müller-Thurgau

2016, \$12.99, 12.5%

Brilliant white-green hue, fully transparent and clean. Zesty nose of lime and white grapefruit citrus leavened by a pinch of powdered sugar, has some pleasing herbaceous bite and snap peas, somewhat lean apricot, peach scents, not at all fruity. Medium-bodied, firm profile with strong supporting acidity. Yet it definitely has its sweeter side with that same sugariness and perfect ripeness in the apricot, pear, melon fruit. There's a soft drink quality to the lime, pink grapefruit citrus. Ends with a minerally, stony touch. Lively and clean, a great hot summer day quaffer. 1 liter bottle. (Screwcap) 90

SPAIN RED

Viñatigo, Bodegas
Canary Islands, Tinto
Listán Negro

2015, \$14.99, 13.5%

The perfect clarity masks some of the depth of the ruby red coloration, consistent core to the rims, attractive surface shine. Taut nose, seriously peppery and herbaceous, notes of dried mud and earth, pulped lemons, so dominant that the strawberry, red cherry fruit scents work hard to even get on the stage. Medium-bodied, while it feels dry at times it generally has a clingy sappiness which provides added presence. The peppery falls back to allow the strawberry, raspberry, apple fruit to move freely.

Nuances of tar and rubber edge ahead of the more basic earthiness. The citrus more white grapefruit here. In the end the “rawness” wins out and it comes off more primal than polished. (Composite Cork) 88

Terroir al Límit Soc. Lda.

Priorat, Històric

Blend

2016, \$23.99, 13.5%

Deep rub to violet core, spotless clarity, pure ruby to scarlet rims, something about it looks semi-matured right out of the chute. Earthy nose with more of a meadow feel than barnyard, the dense cherry, blackberry fruit has a compote character, some lemon or cumin spice but not that much going on scent-wise. Medium-bodied and closer to light, there's a softly rubbery consistency which boosts palate presence. Nice framing acidity, puts some sparkle in the strawberry, red cherry to apple fruit flavors. Again mixed white citrus along with some spices and garden herbs. No greenness and the hard candy sweetness outpoints any structural dryness. Nice wine that may develop a few nuances over a 4-6 year horizon. Unspecified percentages of Garnacha, Cariñena. (Composite Cork) 88

Hornillos Ballesteros

Ribera del Duero, Mibal

Tempranillo

2015, \$16.99, 14.0%

The core is more black than purple, at the rims segues to a scarlet to fresh brick red coloration, spotless throughout. Little bit of peanut shell and muddy earth to the nose but on the main it's leather, floral perfume, damp earth and a mentholated lift, the red cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit comes off as angular and fidgety. Medium-bodied, leverages its weight fully to layer on the palate and extend presence through a prolonged finish. The acidity helps prevent heaviness but by the same token does add turbulence. Ginger spice, sour orange peel, toasted oak and dill slowly accommodate themselves to each other. A swollen center of sour cherry, raspberry to blackberry fruit anchors it yet at the same time lashes out. Intriguing mouth feel and it never settles in nor shows interest in such. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 87

SPAIN WHITE

Maetierra, Bodega

Regional Blend, Spanish White Guerrilla

Riesling

2016, \$13.99, 12.0%

Warm glowing gold color of good depth, minimal loss at the rims, close to blockish in appearance. Ripe

apple, pear, peach fruit scents, honey with a mild smokiness, vague echo of florality, spiced orange, has good length. Full-bodied, layered and rich mouth feel in spite of the more sour orange, tangerine, pink grapefruit citrus. Has some acidity but on the whole has a dull, flat feel, sort of waxy. Tightly wound peach, apricot, nectarine fruit flavors. Minimal stoniness. Touch of molasses and mint. Flavorless dry extract remains through the finish. More aimless power than finesse. (Composite Cork: Diam1) 87

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Cederberg

Cederberg

Buketraube

2016, \$13.99, 13.5%

Bright and glassy green-gold color, pleasing simplicity, looks like a print ad version of a glass of white wine. Crisp nose with a steady lift to it, lime zest, minerals and chalk dust, flowers, tropical guava, papaya to pineapple fruit scents, while not heavy there's a confident authority to its few words which gives it presence. Full-bodied, here it is more intent on layering itself onto the tongue and underscoring its heft. Sugary attack quickly turns sour via lemon/lime citrus to green apple, melon, nectarine, mango fruit. The acidity is probably measurably stronger than what it feels like under those layers. Probably could have stood to be picked with a little less ripeness. That said, once you adjust to the sourness there's ample enjoyment to be had. (Screwcap) 89

CHILE RED

Maitia, Viña

Maule Valley, Aupa Pipeño

Blend

2016, \$11.99, 12.9%

Light ruby-violet, closer to a very dark rose than red wine. Clear throughout with a fresh glow. Upon opening there's a distinct barnyard to animal hide funk, never really blows off, matted grasses, sweet red berries mashed together, more turbulent than long lasting nostril presence. Light-bodied, leathery with a distinct peppery bite, once that subsides it herbaceous as well with white citrus sourness. There's a candied, sugary character to the strawberry, raspberry fruit, helps this swell in the mid-palate but eventually succumbs to the pepperiness. Throughout there is a surprisingly high level of tannic dryness, it needs that candied fruit to retain balance. Not quite fluid enough for a full-on “glug, glug” experience but if you keep it chilled or at least below room temperature that would help. 80% Pais (Mission), 20% Carignan. (Composite Cork) 87