

The Hanes Wine Review, September 2012 Edition

Lots of cheaper wines this time around, a natural byproduct of trying to save enough money to rent a new spaceage bachelor pad. But, still, Hanes has to consume *something*. After all, if not, there would be nothing about which to write tasting notes. In passing, recent quaffs have underscored that there is a decent correlation between price and quality. You can no doubt find a “solid” wine for \$15 or less but the chances of you finding something “profound” increases over \$25. That’s life.

This month’s big winners... Barolo is good. Good Barolo even better. Moderately priced good Barolo just makes one swoon. So be sitting when you sip the 2007 Vajra Barolo “Albe” because it is simply a faithful rendition, traditional in style, and under \$40. Quivira’s 2010 Dry Creek Valley Zinfandel is quite nice as a model of restraint, comes in more or less fairly priced in the mid-\$20’s for what you get. As “rosé season” winds down (technically put, but you can wear all white after Labor Day too), the Domaine de Terrebrune Bandol rosé deserves note as a delicious and delightful drop, well worth the \$27 or so admission price and likely to last more than a few years too, please do try it. The more one drinks the wines of Northern Italian producer Grosjean Frères, the more one realizes they just rock. Some wines may be better than others but this producer is consistent and interesting at once. Pay the price and enjoy.

The best \$15 and under picks... While the names may not necessarily be familiar, it seems like there’s more inexpensive Bordeaux out there than ever. And these “petite châteaux” tend to span different vintages all at once so it’s never quite clear which is the latest offering. That said, the 2009 Château La Grave from the Médoc is a very good value for \$9 or so. Simply unsure how much is left or where the 2010 lurks. While nothing profound, the 2010 Malbec and Petite Sirah blend from Chilean producer Estampa is a credible fruity, oaky wine that is just different enough to intrigue, all for about \$9. A worthy experiment. Vinho Verde producers are catching up to Marketing 101 and getting better at noting the sub-region on their bottles. Had two 2011 Vinho Verde wines from the Monção e Melgaço sub-region and both delivered solid value, albeit the 100% Alvarinho one was a bit of a “striver” for attention. Good to see this category of wine take strides forward. Another rosé which impresses is the cooperatively produced 2011 “Les Lauzeraies” from Tavel, France, very rich and fruity but not overblown. \$11 or so is a good price for Tavel too.

And the disappointments... Was excited to try some inexpensive Cahors, get back on that horse. It seems others prefer the 2011 Georges Vigouroux “Pigmentum” more than Hanes, so be it. At least it was only \$8 to experiment. Likewise, went into it wanting to like the 2011 basic Chablis bottling from Daniel Dampit but the verdict was “ehh.” Nothing special, probably would have guessed Chablis if presented blindly but maybe not. Tastes more like Chardonnay than Chablis, the \$17 is still fair though. Have now tried the 2010 old vines bottling as well as the 2010 regular bottling and Do Ferreiro Albariño still not doing it for Hanes. Good wine, just not superlative. Future quaffs will likely be on someone else’s dime. Making an effort to become reacquainted with Kiwi Sauvignon Blanc and met with middling results this time around. The 2011 Tohu from Marlborough is too simple and sweet but, hey, for \$10 maybe this is what you should get. Not so much going to pick on any individual producer but after having swilled a few 2011 wines from Sancerre, the vintage comes across as a tad soft and lacking in bracing acidity. Maybe the more expensive bottling show more cut.

All contents of this electronic mail are copyright 2012 by Marc Hanes. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any format without written prior permission is prohibited.

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/oldervintages2012.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 September!

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley

Napa Valley, Howell Mountain, Rattlesnake Ridge
Zinfandel

2010, \$40.00, 16.1%

While deeply hued with a purple core which is spotless yet semi-opaque, dark scarlet rims, more so than ruby or magenta, overall does not look saturated for visual effect. The nose is densely layered, its thickness somehow does not compress the individual components, white grapefruit, black tea leaves, rosemary, eucalyptus all interpenetrate with the plum, blackberry, black cherry scents, the latter close to dried fruit quality. Full-bodied, it's the bottle of ketchup you have to smack to get anything out, then even as it hugs the tongue it knows when to release. Cinnamon, ginger, orange peel, chocolate and a touch of butterscotch both support and stand apart from the sugary cherry, blueberry, blackberry fruit. Not acidic nor tannic in any measurable way, however, squares its shoulders and moves forward. In the mouth you don't get that full-on mountain eucalyptus thing. What is great here is that you get the power that made the winery's rep without feeling like you got hit upside the head with a 2x4. You can choose to indulge or not. 91

Turley

Napa Valley, Atlas Peak, Mead Ranch
Zinfandel

2010, \$35.00, 15.5%

Mild gauziness to the cranberry red to violet hued core, deeply saturated ruby rims, nicely colored but not overdone. Dense and fruity nose only marred by alcoholic fumes, otherwise you get mesquite grill smoke, molasses, chocolate, menthol and orange peel rule the roost, the currant, cherry, plum fruit dark in complexion and last well without any heaviness. In the mouth it's full-bodied with more of a spicy profile, ginger, cinnamon and even cumin, balanced out by

eucalyptus and flowers. Even with chocolate, caramel, butterscotch in effect does not seem too oaky. Some sprightliness in the step of the black cherry, blackberry, boysenberry, damson plum fruit, avoids too much sugariness. But it is indeed a juicy big boy, don't think it's not. You get a pleasing sourness through the finish even. Well constructed and outside of the fumes not clumsy. 90

Turley

Regional Blend, Old Vines
Zinfandel

2010, \$25.00, 15.5%

The darkness of the purple core masks the clarity of the liquid, turns to an equally deep crimson to brick red color around the rims, well-hued without any glowing saturation. Vanilla, coconut, mint and caramel soften and sweeten the nose, right now the fruit scents mostly plum, blueberry, blackberry and black grape but comes across as if a dried fruit nature is very possible, has a floral paste element as well, efficient in its simplicity. Medium-bodied, more streamlined than you'd expect based on the nose, firm with an above average perception of acidity. As a result, mixes in some green apple, apricot and raspberry with that blackberry, blueberry, cherry base. Orange peel and flowers trump any oak created chocolate, butterscotch or vanilla custard flavors. If anything, it tends to dry out a bit prematurely, developing a pucker. On the whole, fresh and pleasing, made for consumption during its youth. 89

Quivira

Dry Creek Valley
Zinfandel

2010, \$25.99, 14.5%

Clear garnet to purple in hue, bright with deep ruby rims, the color is certainly typical even as it avoids opacity. The nose is filled with matted straw and grasses, orange to grapefruit peels, sage and rosemary, a light stoniness, barely a trace of oak, crisp snap to the cranberry, red cherry, boysenberry fruit

scents, hovers more than lifts, holds onto its pungent thickness. Medium-bodied, its fullness pared down by nicely framing acidity, as much sourness as sweetness in that grapefruit citrus, raspberry, cherry, cranberry fruit, here there is a more noticeable vanilla/caramel swirl. The dried grasses and earthen stone rises up a notch or two, not as much peppery as spicy. Creates some vibration on the palate, active and energetic. Trails off slightly at the end, otherwise a very nice, not overblown Zinfandel. (Composite Cork) 89

Caton, Ty

Sonoma Valley, Caton Vineyard

Cabernet Sauvignon

2010, \$33.99, 14.7%

Spotless while dark and mostly opaque purple core, even there the saturation is evident, equally heavy red-magenta to scarlet rims, very impressive looking. The nose features a strong chocolate/vanilla swirl, butterscotch, flowers and mint, all this grounded by sappy, ripe plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit scents, with all its fullness just does manage to avoid any gluey texture. Full-bodied, here the density really does grind it close to a halt, does not have the sort of cleansing tannin which could firm up the palate. That noted, lots of fun in all that cassis, plum, cherry, boysenberry fruit, same can be said for the caramel, butterscotch, chocolate oak, more sweetness than toastiness. Flowers and orange citrus reappear too, nothing earthy going on, stays primary throughout. Smoothly textured. Will be interesting to see how it evolves once it loses the baby fat. 89

OREGON RED

Mouton Noir

Willamette Valley

O.P.P. (Other People's Pinot)

Pinot Noir

2010, \$14.99, 13.4%

Quite clean and spotless, some violet in there but mainly garnet red, fades some around the rims but stays a deep red, nothing close to magenta or pink there. The nose has an initial funk of wet mud, merde and damp leaves before segueing into cola, close to candied cherry, raspberry and blackberry fruit as well as potpourri and orange pekoe tea, nothing unclean just outdoorsy. Medium-bodied, possesses a strong grip and hugs the tongue tenaciously. More of a tannic feel than expected, the acidity more of a slow grinder than slicer. Elevated white grapefruit and orange citrus here, drier with tea leaves, pressed flowers and only a hint of cola or mint. The concentrated raspberry, red cherry, strawberry fruit makes more of an initial splash than sustained effort. As a result it dries further towards the end, allowing more room for that earthy,

barnyard floor stuff to come through. Luckily, the last movement is the fruit resurgent alongside some caramel so finally ends on a sweeter note. (Screwcap) 88

FRANCE RED

Grave, Château La

Bordeaux, Médoc

Blend

2009, \$8.99, 13.5%

Scarlet to blood red hues infuse the purple base, dark with pleasing cleanliness, richly colored rims. The nose features lots of plum, currant fruit along with menthol notes and cocoa, oak toast and to a lesser degree cedar and sweet tea leaves, waft of bell pepper before it dissolves. Medium-bodied with fullness from start to finish, no hollow spots. Fully ripened currant, cherry, plum fruit, buoyed by moderate oak presence with vanilla, chocolate, caramel flavors and some burnt toastiness. Moments when it takes on a floral dimension. The tannins are not exactly soft but nothing there to impede immediate drinkability. That noted, has a slightly drier texture at the end, welcome to remind you it is Bordeaux. Presents very good value. 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. 88

Pont de Nyons

Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône

Syrah

2010, \$7.99, 13.5%

Trim, spotless purple core, sparkly, starts to shift towards dark red ruby at the rims, vibrantly attractive. At the very first the nose suggests some earthy funk, this gone in a second in favor of pressed flowers, orange peel and raspberry, red cherry, pomegranate fruit scents, light suggestion of cocoa, same level of dried cut grass, just pure fruit of moderate staying power. Light to medium-bodied, has sufficient tannin and acidity to avoid complaints of lack thereof, however, nothing close to dominating the light of touch raspberry, strawberry, cranberry, red cherry fruit. The orange and lesser lemon citrus smooth, same for the milk chocolate. Little here approaches grass, earth or anything resembling evidence of place of origin. Tightens through the finish, helps make you want another sip. (Screwcap) 87

Vigouroux, Georges

Southwest France, Cahors, Pigmentum

Malbec

2011, \$7.99, 13.5%

Deeply saturated purple core, zero filminess, rich ruby magenta rims, quite impressive visually, looks somewhat serious. Firm yet not deep nose, the cherry,

currant, blackberry scents are svelte and not showy, dried flowers, vague underpinning of earth, straw, mocha but nothing like minerals or finer oak toast, serene enough to flow, nothing secondary offered. Light to medium-bodied, the tannin drying but not overzealous for the general density of the material. Lemon zest, stone, poor dirt and dried leather. You get zesty spice and minerals in small doses. The red cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit never sweet yet maintains the cruising altitude it achieves. Puckering without greenness, a perfectly fine dilute version of what a good Cahors should be. (Synthetic Cork) 86

Goutère, Château La
Bordeaux, Bordeaux
Blend
2009, \$6.99, 12.5%

Clean, unblemished crimson red to purple core, hints at ruby but stays red with an orange tint around the rims. The nose is smoky with both a mineral edge as well as burnt roast to the cherry, blackberry fruit scents, actually too light for the herbaceousness to take hold, hard to find any meaningful oak presence, not much lift, however, remains free of flaws. Light to medium-bodied, here there's some sweet vanilla and chocolate notes to supplement the raspberry, red cherry fruit, more strawberry than blackberry. Offers lemon peel, minerals and stone and again without the grassiness upstaging the rest. Has sufficient tannin to dry out and shorten the finish, yet doesn't become unbalanced. Can't realistically expect more for the price. 77% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Cabernet Franc. (Composite Cork) 86

FRANCE WHITE

Buissonnes (Roger Naudet et Fils), Domaine des
Loire, Sancerre
Sauvignon Blanc
2011, \$15.99, 12.5%

Dense golden straw color, bends light and distorts vision into the glass, layers pretty well while also holding onto its density through the rims, just lacks the kind of sparkle which makes a wine "pretty." The nose starts off with apple, pear and melon fruit then quickly veers into smoky sauna stone, minerals and a touch of pepper, at the same time you can find some mint and orange blossom notes too, still not a lot of citrus, dry and pungently spicy. Medium-bodied, starts off dusty and dry, metallic flakes and chili pepper light up the mouth, stays stony and avoids grassiness. The lemon zest cruises without flash, the pear, apple, apricot fruit as much skin and pit as flesh. Acidity earns its paycheck yet still needs more cut to make your teeth rattle. Very nice entry level type Sancerre. (Composite Cork) 88

Foucher-Lebrun
Loire, Sancerre, Le Mont
Sauvignon Blanc
2011, \$13.99, 13.0%

Yellow hay color, wouldn't call it sparkingly transparent, some visual "density" and consistent core to rims. The nose brings lemon curd along with some white grapefruit, more herbaceous than mineral although no slouch in the latter department, the pear, peach, apple fruit notes succinct but not short, does take on more of a metallic aspect as it warms. Medium-bodied, the acidity covers the palate in a drying dusty manner, stops short of stinging the tongue. That noted, has good shape and a brisk pace which helps to highlight the pineapple, nectarine, peach, green apple fruit and too the white grapefruit citrus. Retains that strong herbaceousness which along with the pungent tropicality speaks of something closer to New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. Solid amount of stone dust, mineral flecks and then chili pepper. Flattens out some through the finish but perhaps it's just your tongue wearing down some. Overall, more accessible than the preceding description may make it sound. 88

Aura
Languedoc/Roussillon, Coteaux du Languedoc Picpoul
de Pinet
Picpoul
2011, \$7.99, 13.0%

Deep golden hue, really neither shiny nor dull, lasts fully through the rims, at some angles even has a light reddish cast, fairly innocuous and innocent looking. Easygoing nose of orange peel, ginger spice, lilacs, mint and ripe apple, pear, melon fruit, pinch of brown sugar, minimal stoniness yet clean given the fullness of fruit, overall creamier than brisk or penetrating. Full-bodied, here too soft and swift to settle into your tongue like it's a beanbag chair. The acidity puts up a valiant effort to create spine but it's an uphill battle. Thick floral dew, orange marmalade, mint then whipped cream and that brown sugar. Starts off with green apple and pear then opens into fatter peach, apricot, green melon, sweet but not sugary. As in the nose the stoniness tries real hard to elbow up to the bar. Very agreeable wine, just needs to lose some fat. (Screwcap) 88

Damp et Fils, Domaine Daniel
Burgundy, Chablis
Chardonnay
2011, \$16.99, 12.5%

Presents a deep orange hue, beyond basic gold, semi-flat and not clearly transparent, strength at the core makes the rims appear more dilute. Lemon and lime sherbet, stream stones and pear, peach, apricot fruit

lend fatness to the nose, neither overly fleshy nor cutting, some mint notes and lighter freshly cut flowers, ends with increasing vanilla fudge accents, especially as it warms. In the mouth it's full-bodied, lacks acidity and as a result settles in quickly and lets you feel its weight. Butterscotch and molasses trump the lemon/lime citrus although the peach, apricot, pear fruit does not come across as particularly sweet. Again minty with anise too, the orange citrus has a candied or reduced quality. Lack of minerality prevents clean finish from developing, kind of a simple sipper. 87

FRANCE ROSE

Terrebrune, Domaine de
Provence, Bandol, Rosé
Blend

2011, \$26.99, 13.5%

Utterly clear and transparent bright salmon pink color, decent hue retention at the rims, never quite starts fading to orange, high degree of reflectivity creates presence in the glass. Steady undercurrent of minerals, stream water and lemon peel ground the nose, above that strawberry, rhubarb and cherry scents merrily bounce about, mixes in milk chocolate powder, nutmeg before some earthier meadow grass nuances, for all of its nostril weight feels clean and fresh. Full-bodied, you immediately can tell this is a dense, no nonsense rosé that can play that fun, jaunty role but would prefer to be served with meaningful dinner dishes. The acidity is more of a blunt force than keen blade, hits you so you know you've been hit. Adroitly weaves lemon and white grapefruit with peach, strawberry, raspberry fruit and then cocoa and brown sugar aspects. Still, stays dry and little residual sugar through the finish. It's a big boy. 50% Mourvèdre, 25% Grenache, 25% Cinsault. 90

Tavel, Les Vignerons de
Rhône, Tavel, Les Lauzeraies Rosé
Blend

2011, \$10.99, 13.5%

Presents a deep watermelon red to magenta coloration, stays consistent enough without much pink around the rims, nice sheen to it without detracting from richness of hue, very pretty. The nose is somewhat thick, not plodding but not light and breezy either, possesses a solid burst of minerals and stone dust before shifting into raspberry, strawberry, green apple, and watermelon fruit scents, smoky enough that you don't get a clear message from the citrus or flowers. concurrently nothing grassy nor herbaceous about. Full-bodied, even as the material is obviously ripe and juicy, the mouthfeel remains on the dry side, some credit due to the above average level of acidity present. Well layered strawberry, rhubarb, raspberry,

red cherry fruit of good density, full persistence through the finish. Here some white grapefruit, orange peeks through. The lushness of the fruit masks some of the terroir based aspects. Good purity for its ripeness, never feels like it is trying too hard. Does end on a slightly saline note, welcome to help it avoid too much simplicity in its presentation. 46% Grenache, 28% Cinsault, 15% Mourvèdre, Syrah, Carignan, 6% Clairette and 5% Picpoul, Bourboulenc. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 89

ITALY RED

Vajra, G.D.
Piedmont, Barolo, Albe
Nebbiolo

2007

\$36.99, 14.5%

Clear garnet color with only a suggestion of red brick around the rims, easily transparent, might get some orange hues with some more age. Pine, rosemary, thyme in the nose, built on a solid foundation of ripe red cherry, blackberry scents, full on orange zest and licorice while the florality comes and goes, quite primary, the alcoholic fumes come through a bit too often. Full-bodied with a pleasingly gritty texture to balance the overall sweetness, the tannin is obviously there but not mean-spirited. Liqueur like quality to the raspberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, you get some white grapefruit here along that orange citrus. Has that mentholated to piney mouth perfume, no big oak presence nor any earthiness or herbal bite. Dried rose petals a minor accent. Not slack but not chunky, a pleasingly straightforward rendition with just enough challenge to it. 90

Grosjean Frères
Valle d'Aosta, Vallee d'Aoste, Gamay
Gamay Noir

2009, \$23.99, 13.0%

Bright violet to cranberry red in hue, while transparent it still has this vague gauziness to it, full ruby rims, very attractive and youthful. There is a funky smokiness and damp earthiness to the nose which throws you off at first, matted wet hay and mild animal hide, that noted the muscular raspberry to red cherry fruit a big presence and with sweet herbs and grapefruit mixed in creates a balance of fun and rigor, you never quite relax although you do unclench. Medium-bodied plus, even with a hard candy sweetness to the raspberry, strawberry, watermelon, cherry fruit it comes across as more savory with grass, earth, stone and sage, marjoram notes. The acidity is boisterous and there's more tannin than one might expect. Sour grapefruit adds more twist. At the end you sense flowers trying to

blossom but never quite materializes. The barnyard elements last man standing. 89

ITALY WHITE

Grosjean Frères

Valle d'Aosta, Vallée d'Aoste, Vigne Rovettaz

Petite Arvine

2010, \$29.99, 13.5%

Mostly clear, slightly gauzy simple yellow gold, average shine at most, hue diminishes quite a bit around the rims, touch of brown to the overall color but not in any way which suggests anything but its natural coloration. The nose slaps you with nutmeg, cinnamon, orange spice, lilacs and then solid peach, apricot, melon fruit scents, some smokiness but not deep stone nor mineral presence, very primary and undeveloped, yet with character and breeding, no irrational exuberance. Full-bodied, coats the palate in layers even as the acidity is not shy about asserting itself and planing the surface down as needed. Honey, nuts, flowers and baking spices to ginger keep it hopping, the white grapefruit to tangerine citrus strikes a good balance between sweet and sour. Nectarine and some drier pineapple mix into the peach, apricot, yellow apple base. At times will veer into dried fruit territory, at others anything but. Maybe even some litchi now and then. Interesting while at the same time immediately satisfying. Just kinda expensive. 90

Piccolo, Azienda Agricola Ernesto

Piedmont, Gavi del Comune di Gavi Rovereto

Cortese

2011, \$11.99, 13.0%

Somewhat flat golden hay color, produces some visible fizz on the pour, bends light to achieve depth into the glass, hue lasts credibly through the rims, squats squarely in the glass. The nose is pared down to simple basics, has a semi-creamy texture with vanilla and marshmallow notes before rising peach, apricot, pear fruit and some orange sherbet, this noted stays pretty much clean and without heaviness, agreeable all around, more round than soft. In the mouth it's full-bodied with moderate acidity, the visible fizz doesn't create much textural presence. here the streamwater and stones come through upfront, can't say it creates much dryness but it does forestall the juiciness of the apricot, peach, nectarine fruit to the mid-palate. Sweet mixed lime-led citrus, moments of nuttiness. When it finishes there's more of a squared shoulders driving into you than sustained flavors. Competently crafted and comes across more as a food wine than casual sipper. (Composite Cork) 87

GERMANY WHITE

Wirtemberg, Collegium

Württemberg, Rotenberger, Schloßberg

Spätlese AP #11

Riesling

2010, \$11.99, 9.0%

Yellow to brownish straw in color, transparent while also deep enough to distort your vision, decent strength through the rims. Sweet nose of lime, pink grapefruit citrus, floral dew, mint and pear, yellow apple, peach fruit, maybe a pinch of cinnamon, little to suggest terroir. Medium-bodied, even with good plus acidity stays fleshy and plump. Here you get strong vanilla to whipped cream notes to pair with the powdered sugar coated apricot, pear, melon, apple fruit. Same array of lime, tangerine and pink grapefruit, soft drink in character. More of that cinnamon and nutmeg. As it warms you do get a mild streak of rubber. Soft, lengthy finish. (Screwcap) 87

GREECE WHITE

Argyos, Estate I & M

Santorini, Atlantis

Blend

2011, \$11.99, 13.0%

Solidly layered golden color, a bit lacking in shine but certainly fills the glass, has a bit of a glowing character to it. The nose is fairly smoky and dominated by stone dust and mineral powder, plenty of lemon assisted by lime and orange, never so acrid you can't discern the peach, apricot, pear fruit, while homogeneous ends with a smattering of lilacs. Medium-bodied plus, shows acceptable acidity yet comes off as dense if not fat in a rubbery way. That mix of citrus works hard to carve away and create a cleansing, penetrating nature. Here the fatness of the apricot, nectarine, peach, pineapple fruit able to match the minerality, albeit never appears sweet nor especially juicy. Expected a bit more honeyed nuance, finishes quite dryly and with some peppery bite. Not sure what to make of it, interesting throughout while never quite follows through on any single promise. 90% Assyrtiko, 5% Aidani, 5% Athiri. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 87

SPAIN RED

Ateca, Bodegas

Calatayud, Honoro Vera

Garnacha

2011, \$6.99, 14.5%

Brightly glowing ruby-purple in color, full intensity through the rims, very clear if you care to peer closely into the glass. Plump nose full of juicy raspberry, blackberry to strawberry, watermelon fruit coated with

honey and maple syrup, the roasted meats shade drifts in and out, nothing here screams overt oak, not sure even sees oak, simple and fruity. Medium-bodied, here the fruit takes on a noticeable prune, raisin edge along with darker fruit profile of plum, blackberry, blueberry. Also elevates the cinnamon, clove spice, chocolate and molasses aspects. No discernible acidity, hard to gauge the tannin as there is a drying puckering astringency at the end, perhaps wood tannin after all. Overall, more like a baked fruit pie than confectionary, as in the nose a basic, fruit-driven quaffer, no flaws, no complexity. 86

SPAIN WHITE

Do Ferreiro
Rías Baixas
Albariño

2010, \$18.99, 13.5%

Clear yellow-brown straw in color, bends light and shimmers in layers below the surface, the distortion effect masks the lack of hue through the rims, nice how the surface can be so reflective even as it pools deeply into the glass. The nose is semi-soft and inviting, starts to open into sauna stone smoke, minerals and sea salt before relenting in favor of green apple, pear, peach fruit, touch of honey and orange blossom but no real citrus nor any “biting” element, pulls up moderately short. Full-bodied, lots of weight and downward force, the acidity is not bad, not great, never gets too sweet yet not what you’d consider refreshing either. Honey, brown sugar, orange zest, perhaps a swipe of mint. Something like washed white pebbles. The apple, peach, pear fruit also has moments of red cherry. Good length, with a conscious finish, shoulders squared and just so. Leaves you thinking it is more of a food wine than something to just enjoy sipping. 88

PORTUGAL RED

Esporão, Herdade do
Alentejano, Monte Velho
Blend

2010, \$6.49, 13.5%

Bright, shiny ruby-violet in color, spotless with red magenta rims. The nose is earthy, minor toastiness, cocoa roast, more wet leather, leafy underbrush, sour yet lengthy raspberry, cranberry, elderberry fruit, touch of white grapefruit to orange pith, no real greenness nor nasty flaws. Light-bodied, you sense some acidic pucker at first but not enough weight and heft for this to last. Mild powdered sugar aspect helps stretch out the cherry, cranberry, strawberry fruit. Basic array of orange citrus, grass, cedar, leather, brown dirt, much less toast or roast here than in the nose. Just smooth,

light and simple, dry finish. 40% Trincadeira, 40% Aragonez, 20% Castelão. 87

Eugénio de Almeida (Adega Cartuxa), Fundação
Alentejano, EA

Blend

2010, \$6.99, 14.0%

Trim, simple ruby-purple in color, okay clarity, touch redder around the rims, fills the glass warmly and without affair. The nose features plums, figs, prunes and cherries while staying fresh enough, smattering of spiced orange, ginger and dried honey with countervailing twigs and tree bark, not sure it’s oak-derived but there’s a quiet undercurrent of toastiness there too. Medium-bodied plus, again there’s that roughish toast and twiggy but most of the show involves ripe blackberry, plum, cherry fruit with a portion of prune and raisin. Here chocolate and molasses crisp intermingle with the orange citrus, while there’s nothing strong about the acidity or tannin there’s moments of something like phenolic underripeness for pucker. The tongue begins to dry out through the finish while the sweetness lingers as mouth perfume. Total absence of glaring flaws, simple to see why it’s a crowd favorite of bargain hunters. 50% Aragonez, 30% Alicante Bouschet, 20% Syrah. 86

Esporão, Herdade do

Blend, Alandra

Blend

2011, \$4.99, 13.5%

Clear garnet to crimson red in color with some deeper purple in the core, stays full through the rims, bright and shiny. The nose has a sharp smokiness to it before relaxing into raspberry, strawberry, cherry scents, at times with a liqueur like feel, otherwise a mix of field stones and grasses, high toned mixed citrus, cocoa powder and some sea salt salinity. Light-bodied, the sweet attack undermined by something akin to a huge oak toast although you can’t imagine much money being spent on oak at this price. Anyway, burnt coffee, burnt toast, fried butter notes with a splash of butterscotch. The raspberry, cherry, strawberry fruit the same as in the nose, mildly candied and overripe, if short lived. White grapefruit and a little orange lend sparkle to the mid-palate. Not much tannin which seems natural, slightly more acidity. Overall, the sourness and scorched earthiness wears you down over time, that noted, hard to argue at the price. Unspecified percentages of Moreto, Trincadeira, Castelão. (Composite Cork) 84

PORTUGAL WHITE

Mendes Vinhos, Anselmo
Vinho Verde, Monção e Melgaço, Muros Antigos
Alvarinho
2011, \$13.99, 13.0%
Simple straw color, mix of yellow and brown, no green, no that vivid but fills the glass core to rims, just visually steady. The nose is fat and doesn't move too agilely, ripe apricot, melon, peach fruit and orange peel, limeade, and then vanilla and whipped cream before finally a minerally smokiness develops, almost hints at a sour oak presence although not sure any oak used here. Full-bodied, no fizziness and the acidity comes off semi-blunt. Its density prevents it from easily releasing the green apple, pear, apricot fruit and lime, grapefruit citrus. You get a ginger to clove sort of spiciness, again conjures the possibility of oak with vanilla and molasses notes. Nothing soft about it but nothing crisp about either, more like being bludgeoned. Hint of chili pepper to grassy accents at the end. Good wine, perhaps trying to make a statement so don't treat it as typical of the category. 88

Monção, Adega Cooperativa Regional de
Vinho Verde, Monção e Melgaço, Muralhas de
Monção
Blend
2011, \$8.99, 12.5%
Moderate fizz upon the pour, yellow straw in color, as close to brown as gold, hue vanishes around the rims, average luster at best. The nose is expressively ripe with apricot, peach, melon scents and a thick floral musk, touches of vanilla and baking spices, lime to orange citrus, lowkey mineral component, basically it smells like a well made soft drink. Medium-bodied, the fizziness is low which creates a more static mouth feel, however, the acidity is quite nice and while broad also cuts to the point. The lime aspect here is overwhelming, totally runs the show. After that comes tangelo citrus and pear, apple, apricot fruit, all alongside a steady floral presence. So-so stones and minerals, maybe more of a somewhat jalapeño presence. Much larger in scale than many of its immediate peer group, not that light and flighty refresher you might expect. That noted, doesn't overdo the idiosyncratic personality too much, stays more or less recognizable as its category. 70% Alvarinho, 30% Trajadura. 88

AUSTRALIA WHITE

Frisk
Victoria, Prickly
Riesling
2011, \$7.99, 8.9%

All contents are copyright 2012 by Marc Hanes. All rights reserved.
Reproduction in any format without written prior permission is prohibited.

Definitely shows some fizz upon the pour and then with bubbles clinging inside the glass sides, light yellow straw color of average clarity and shine, what's there holds through the rims well enough. The nose is comprised of sweet soft drink quality lime, lemon, orange scents, a mix of rubber and whipped cream, then apple, pear and a slice of melon, not too sweet while at the same time nothing close to true stoniness. Medium-bodied, sets itself firmly in the mouth even as the fizziness provides scrubbing motions, the acidity is acceptable and stays with friendly parameters. Continues to emphasize lemon, lime citrus and a pleasing floral side. Hints at honey but relents, here you get slightly more stone and stream water accents. The whipped cream to vanilla persists. Pear, peach, red apple, apricot mix in with quieter pineapple. Retains fullness through the finish, an agreeable crowd pleasing sort. (Screwcap) 87

NEW ZEALAND WHITE

Soho Wine Co.
Marlborough, Stella
Sauvignon Blanc
2011, \$13.99, 13.5%
Light yellow gold in color, while it lacks luster there's no real dropoff around the rims, fair amount of translucency and bending of light through the liquid. The nose displays a good burst of minerals and chili pepper before tangerine and lime citrus and pineapple, nectarine, peach fruit take over, nothing herbaceous to be found, can't say it's texturally soft but likewise it's not crisp and zesty, average staying presence. Medium-bodied, has a sweet and ripe character that strongly emphasizes that lime, pink grapefruit, lemon citrus, the powdered sugar touch gives it a soft drink sort of feel. The peppery tang remains but is subordinate here, at the same time any minerals or stoniness takes a step back. Consistent apricot, nectarine, peach to pineapple fruit, flirts with tropicality but doesn't go for it fully. The acidity is decent, nothing that would interfere with approachability. Good retronasal lift, keeps it alive after the flavors subside. (Screwcap) 88

Tohu
Marlborough, Single Vineyard
Sauvignon Blanc
2011, \$9.99, 13.5%
More orange-brown than gold in hue, not deeply colored but layers decently and not much change towards the rims, not a lot of surface luster. The grapefruit and lemon citrus in the nose sprinkled with sugar, short-lived chili pepper and grass, much more length in the apple, apricot, nectarine, pineapple scents, however, lacks tropical bite, a few stone or

mineral swipes, has a soft and expansive pungency rather than penetrate with force. Medium-bodied, palate very similar to the nose especially in that sweet pink grapefruit, tangerine and lime citrus rule, crown prince being the nectarine, pineapple, green apple, papaya fruit, here the decent acidity able to create a more tropical, tangy profile. Smoky but not minerally, the sugars cloak any herbaceous notes. Were it not for the chili pepper you'd accept it as a gentle, sweet Sauvignon Blanc and stop analyzing. The staying power of the sugars keeps it agreeable from start to finish, do not expect to be challenged. (Screwcap) 87

CHILE RED

Estampa, Viña y Bodega
Colchagua Valley, Estampa Estate Malbec - Petite
Sirah
Blend

2010, \$8.99, 14.0%

Saturated purple core which just gets into opaque territory, the rims are a heavy red ruby that shifts between crimson and pinkish magenta moment to moment, otherwise clean and shiny throughout. The nose comes across like a perfume counter, floral musk, mint, menthol and sweet vanilla to caramel oak, all this in addition to firm yet ripe plum, black cherry, boysenberry fruit scents, outside of some grilled meat notes which are likely oak derived, nothing which bespeaks of the soil of its origin. Full-bodied, sets itself squarely in the mouth with more density than layers, that is, has a block-like lack of movement. Moderately tannic, the cherry, black currant, blackberry fruit is frontloaded as it gets successively drier through the mid-palate to finish, almost grainy in texture. The caramel, toffee, vanilla and coffee ice cream sweeten and soften but the oak also has a toasty edge which goes in the other direction. Here you get stronger orange to white grapefruit citrus and less florality. In the final analysis comes off as a wine which will seem "serious" to the novice and slightly awkward to the more experienced palate. 65% Malbec, 35% Petite Sirah. (Screwcap) 87