

The Hanes Wine Review, August 2010 Edition

Not much going on. Business at work during July was DEAD. Things looking a little better now. Hot summers suck. Duke Energy is getting too much money which should be spent on wine or beer. Keep plugging away at drinking older bottles from the Hanes cellar. Haven't had time to work on a new music review, been stuck on listening to Milosh for like a month. Luckily, the music is good but need to plow forward. Stray kitten showed up weeks ago, no sign of mama cat or siblings. Trying to get him into The Humane Society, right now losing sleep due to 6:00 AM attacks on feet and arms. Nothing worth saying about the world of wine, everyone from supplier to wholesaler to retailer to end customer is waiting for the other parties to yell "uncle." Hasn't happened yet so the waiting game continues.

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This month's big winners... Huet finally makes it to North Carolina so Hanes greedily buys some to chug. The 2007 "Le Mont" sec bottling is simply brilliant stuff and if you are a Chenin Blanc fan it is well worth the \$35 if you can still find some around. Sant'Evasio has produced in 2008 one of the nicer Gavi wines Hanes can remember slurping. Lively and energetic and fairly priced at \$18 or so. Clos Roche Blanche has always been known to wine geeks for making excellent wines at bargain prices. They continue to be known for making excellent wines, such as the 2009 Gamay Noir bottling. Fruity, structured with some minerality as well, brings it all to the table for about \$20. Pounding as much rosé as possible, not that easy to do as selection locally is somewhat slight and/or asking prices just can't be justified. Copain managed to keep their Pinot Noir rosé from Anderson Valley under \$20 and although \$18 is not cheap, this is one flavorful wine that merits the price. Had been awhile since Hanes had any Tin Barn wine, another of the zillion little wineries that have their moment of hype and then fall back into the mass of "Hey, I remember that winery! They make good stuff." But you then realize it's been five years since you bought any of their product. Anyway, the 2007 Russian River Valley Zinfandel is quite nice and not badly priced at around \$25. More proof that the RRV can be an excellent source for Zinfandel. Not that there's much competition but Eric Texier owns the title for the best producer of wines from the village of Brézème in the Rhône. 100% Syrah, their 2008 punches above its weight class and is drinking very well right now for like \$24 or so. Never been blown away by the wines of de Moor as other geeks but, in the interest of fairness, popped a bottle of their 2008 Chablis "Bel Air et Clardy." More pleasurable than past experiences with the producer, if not exactly what Hanes would consider "textbook" Chablis. \$33 is definitely pushing it though. Niedermayr? Dead! Ahh, except for the life in their 2009 Müller-Thurgau from Alto Adige in Italy. You get tropicality and firmness for under \$20, a highly enjoyable rendition of the grape. This edition Hanes had his first shot with a wine made from the Prieto Picudo grape from Spain. This being Silvera's 2007 "Tinto Preto" bottling which was a nice little surprise and evidence that not every wine from Spain is spoofed these days. Very easy to recommend although \$23 is not cheap.

The best \$15 and under picks... Banyan appears to be one of those "too much juice in the pipeline" labels but, who cares if they can put out a tasty Gewürztraminer for about \$13? Beats a lot of the stuff from Oregon or France at the same price, Monterey seems to be a good spot for the grape. For the first time ever Hanes reviews two vintages of the same wine in the same edition. It's the Domaine du Cros "Lo Sang del País" from Marcillac, France, the 2008 and 2009 vintages. Much preferred the 2008 but the 2009 may simply be too young and snarly as of yet. Always one of the better under \$15 values. For \$15 you can do a hell of a lot worse for Loire Sauvignon Blanc that Jean Mérieau's 2009 "Les Hexagonales" bottling. Great citrus notes and refreshing, as it should be. Curiously, not everyone drinks wines made from the Pecorino grape on a regular basis. But if they tried Vallevo's 2008 "Costa dei Traducchi" they might change their tune. Admirable textures with sufficient flavor to please, and only \$14.

And the disappointments... More than willing to blame Hanes's piss poor palate but vintage after vintage there's a lack of excitement when drinking Baudry's "Les Granges" bottling of Cabernet Franc from Chinon. This is the domaine's "entry level" bottling and lots of people love it but it always just seems "satisfactory" to Hanes and not more. Oh, well, saves him about \$19 or so. If he stops buying it already. Nigl is one of Hanes's favorite Austrian wineries but he just did not connect with their 2009 Grüner Veltliner "Freiheit" bottling. Not horrible but not up to the producer's rep and it would be easy to find cheaper alternatives which deliver as much if not more. Château d'Oupia is one of Minervois's best producers and their luxury bottling "Memoire d'André" is an homage to the passed André Iché who ran the domaine for so very long. For \$38 the 2007 version is kinda spoofy and nothing like what was expected, first time with this cuvée. Weird. Will try to revisit on someone else's dime. In Beaujolais Jean-Paul Brun's Terres Dorées domaine earns their accolades. That said, the 2008 Moulin-à-Vent was not much fun to drink and as the price hits \$26 or so, this is one to pass over during this vintage and wait for better things with the next. While by no stretch "bad" just wish that Quinta da Aveleda's 2009 Vinho Verde "Fonte" would have turned out to be a true "steal" for \$11 which could be recommended heartily to customers. But it is more run-of-the-mill, alas the available alternatives were pushing the price barrier peeps would pay for Vinho Verde here. Shazbot.

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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/oldervintages2010.html>

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

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

Winery/Producer Name
Region of Origin, Appellation, Brand Name/Wine Style, Single Vineyard (if any applicable)
Grape Type
Vintage Year, Price Hanes Paid (if available), Alcohol Percentage (if available)
Tasting Notes, Hanes's Numeric Score (on the traditional, yet inane, 100 point scale (which for Hanes truly begins at around 80 points and more or less ends around 94 points))

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

CALIFORNIA RED

Tin Barn
Russian River Valley, Gilsson Vineyard
Zinfandel
2007, \$24.99, 15.5%

The opaque purple core is squeaky clean, softest of reddish tint, subtle segue to clearer scarlet and red-magenta hues at the rims, quite sleek and reflective surface. The vanillin oak notes add to the eucalyptus, pine lift in the nose, has that forest trail earthiness, not leafy nor deeply earthy, just a mix of both in constant flux, unusually demure black currant, cherry scents, no lack of fruit but fully woven in, moderate orange citrus infused chocolate, just pleasant to sniff and leaves you in control. Medium-bodied, wiry and muscular enough that you sense no shift in weight throughout. Sweet blackberry, raspberry, cherry flavors but not sugary and lightly sour. Sweeter orange to lime citrus, nice supplementary role. The vanilla cream subtle itself, gets pep from cocoa powder and coconut flakes, again the oak treatment stays well within acceptable bounds. Above average shock of acidity and the tannin able to supplement in good part. The finish is not "punishingly long" but that's a good thing. Harmonious, thinking person's Zin. 90

Victory Vineyards
Regional Blend, California, Parcel Thirty One
Zinfandel
2007, \$15.99, 13.9%

Very light violet hued core, tempted to call it mostly red-ruby, more garnet and close to orange further towards the rims, squeaky clean with uncommon transparency. Glimmers of pine and eucalyptus in the nose but mostly candied raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit and a more tart mix of orange and lemon citrus scents, vague outdoorsy funk, overall light presence with the concentration of hard candy. Light-bodied, this allows some stemminess to show at times, yet, can't deny the relentlessness of that candied cherry, raspberry fruit. Rosemary, thyme accents stand next to the pine, the white grapefruit adds to the sourness factor. Trails off prematurely near the finish line, hard to do as there wasn't that much heft to start with. Grapes sourced from three unspecified appellations. (Composite Cork) 86

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Banyan
Monterey County
Gewürztraminer
2009, \$12.99, 12.7%

Transparent white straw color with a hint of green, does have decent shine to the surface but, overall, there's not much visually to hang your hat on. The nose is all about sweet lemon pie and lime pie with honey and a deep pool of floral water, mint, black licorice, the apricot, pear, red apple fruit has a youthful, semi-fuzzy nature to it, streamwater freshness, while sweetness is evident, never too thick of cloying but has credible staying power. Medium-bodied, again goes for freshness and liveliness over extraction and weight, sleek lime, tangerine, lemon citrus with more floral lift than musk. Honey, cane sugar notes with some of that licorice as well. Ripe but only semi-sweet apricot, peach, pear, guava fruit, a component rather than trying to be the whole. The acidity is just about right to suit the total profile and not as wimpy as many other versions of the grape, especially at the price point. Loses some flavor at the end but that's a mere quibble. Pour me a glass and watch it disappear. (Composite Cork) 89

CALIFORNIA ROSE

Copain
Anderson Valley, Tous Ensemble Rosé
Pinot Noir
2009, \$17.99, 13.1%

Salmon pink coloration, about as much orange in there as ruby, strong metallic cast, clear with a fair degree of translucency, loses it around the rims. Leaps into your nostrils, the nose is jam packed with red apple, strawberry, pear fruit scents, orange citrus pulp, in and out florality, stays very primary and it's more about in your face fun than linear coolness. Full-bodied, if it was served to you while blindfolded you would be very hard pressed to peg it as rosé. Cane sugar sweetens the raspberry, strawberry, pear, apple fruit in addition to the orange, tangerine citrus. Acidity is on the low side, curiously it is the tannin which keeps it most buoyant and erect. Never gets herbal, not sweet per se, more so takes pains to be friendly. Actually has a light mineral water component. This is very easy to drink and an excellent "split the difference" rosé sure to please most peeps. (Composite Cork) 89

OREGON WHITE

Montinore Estate
Willamette Valley
Gewürztraminer
2007, \$16.99, 12.5%

Despite a kind of day-glo look to the yellow coloration, comes off flat, density helps visual appeal more than any sparkle, not much loss around the rims but not much richness to start with. Lean and surprisingly tart nose of orange, lemon pith, raw nuts, dried honey, not a lot of plicancy either in the apricot, pear, red apple scents, glance of pebbles and streamwater, best attribute might be its sheer heaviness, sinks like an anchor in your nostrils. Full-bodied, again the massive density strikes you first, alas it tends to act as a blanket on the flow of flavors. The acidity appears higher than most of its peer group, something which should help release flavor but doesn't. The brightest aspect remains the orange, tangerine citrus, lively but not that much staying power. The nuttiness does not accrete well, focuses more on minerality and a green streak. The nectarine, pineapple, peach, green apple fruit does have length but not much friendliness. All in all, it's not like there's glaring flaws or anything more like you just expect a more approachable wine than what you get. (Synthetic Cork) 85

FRANCE RED

Clos Roche Blanche
Loire, Touraine, Cuvée Gamay
Gamay Noir
2009, \$19.99, 12.5%

Crystal clear, vivid ruby-violet in color, consistent throughout until a mild brightening to magenta along the rims, utterly pretty. The nose deftly mixes sweet and sour strawberry, raspberry, watermelon, red cherry fruit with dried meadow grasses, dusty stone bits and orange peels, made more attractive by dashes of honey and mint, thickens appreciably with air time. Medium-bodied, has firm acidity but appears more to be structured by tannin. While ripe, sourness wins the day here with cranberry, bing cherry and rhubarb fruit flavors. Lemon and white grapefruit citrus add to the punch but the whole stops short of mouth puckering. Minimal grassiness, just what you'd expect to find as part of the mix. Retains a portion of that honey to molasses coating. Conversely, there's a good snappy minerality to the finish. Pretty gosh darn complete now but would be interesting to see where it goes down the road. 91

Cros, Domaine du
Southwest France, Marcillac, Lo Sang del País
Fer Servadou
2008, \$13.99, 12.0%

Clean crimson-purple core, very broad and clear, more scarlet to darker magenta rims, fully unblemished, unassuming saturation throughout. The nose a cacophony of leather, animal fur, bell pepper, grass, dried orange peels, brown dirt and red clay, green olives, a huge floral lift sweeps through and spotlights the taut raspberry, red cherry, lighter blackberry scents, keeps swirling at a steady pace to keep you interested. Medium-bodied, the acidity is up and down, careens around, some sips more relaxed than others. The standard leather, animal fur, forest floor matter, tree bark appears, very green and herbaceous. The sour cranberry, strawberry, raspberry, pomegranate fruit gives the tongue a nice twist. Aided in

this by lemon and orange zest. Electric mouth presence that throws you back on your heels. (Synthetic Cork) 90

Clos du Tue-Bœuf, Le
Loire, Cheverny
Blend
2009, \$19.99, 12.0%

Slight gauzy quality to the ruby-violet color, minor shift towards the outer edges with more magenta and a slight pink cast there, overall dense appearance in the glass. Equally layered nose bursting with floral dew, orange juice, close to overripe raspberry, red cherry, strawberry scents, sweet garden herbs come close to masking the fairly necessary grassiness, thankfully there is a slowly accelerating barnyard funk to prevent fruit bombishness. Medium-bodied, given the presentation of the nose, more a tannic and then acidic framework than expected. Very grippy, you can feel it sink into your mouth pores. Voluptuous cherry, raspberry, strawberry rhubarb fruit, the dryness of the structure heads off jamminess. The orange citrus has a splash of white grapefruit and lemon to it. Leather and tar make more of an impression than basic earthiness, both grassiness and florality lack clarity found in the nose. Nevertheless, never seems unbalanced or too dependent on any one component. Served blindly it might surprise more than a few. Although even if they like it they wouldn't spend twenty bucks on it. Unspecified percentages of Gamay Noir, Pinot Noir. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 90

Texier, Eric
Rhône, Côtes du Rhône Brézème
Syrah
2008, \$23.99, 11.5%

As black as purple in the core, ruby rims possess a deepening garnet edge, attractive, semi-brooding quality. Keenly edged white grapefruit in the nose, dry animal fur, leather, minerals with a crisp oak burst, presents red currant, red cherry, cranberry sour scents, great penetrating power, grass dust, olive pits, stays with you for some time. Medium-bodied, linear but not quite lean, lots of sour white grapefruit and lemon, white minerals and stone. The acidity keeps the cranberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit fresh and carves out a clear path forward, start to finish. The tannin low but steady. Sweetens in a generalized way past the mid-palate. Wet florality adds to the pungency of the mouth perfume along with a few notes of caramel or toffee. There's a sense that it knits more into a whole than a collection of distinctive elements, choosing harmony over flash. Active and holds your attention very well. Drinking well now and may have some upside for development too. 90

Texier, Eric
Rhône
Côtes du Rhône Villages Rasteau
Grenache
2007, \$23.99, 13.5%

Consistent violet to red-ruby color, noticeable clarity with the rims trying to pull it into ruby but more so a crimson cast. The stiffness of the nose strikes you right off, dried flowers, white grapefruit to orange citrus, stones and parched earth, the florality causes a weird moment of relaxation, sweet herbs and orange pekoe and chamomile tea, lifts slowly and about as broadly as possible. Full-bodied, could be considered bottom heavy were it not for the acidity which shaves off not only excess flesh but some muscle as well. Lemon, white grapefruit zips in there with

an acidic greasing, even the green qualities seem in place. In a funny way the stones and minerals get lost in the shuffle, as the sour cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit joins the citrus and grass to come close to withering the tongue. The earthiness acts as a dampening blanket to "ground" things. Twiggy, barky, leafy end allows you to frame the sweeter fruit aspects. Very much an intellectual experience. 89

Clos Roche Blanche
Loire, Touraine, Cuvée Côt
Malbec
2007, \$23.99, 12.0%

Deep ruby-red to violet hued core, the red there turns to a lighter pinkish cast around the rims, pure and clean and fully transparent, almost throughout. Minerally nose with cowhide, bell pepper, damp barnyard earth, tar, broadening floral dimension, the red cherry, raspberry fruit scents steady but never the star of the show, it's the outdoorsy breeze. Medium-bodied, very tannic, to the point where the first glass starts off fine but the second half of the bottle is a wine in a rush to shut down. Cut grass, iron flecks, white grapefruit, white pepper, tar and merde have a house party in your mouth. Slightly darker complexion to the fruit, black cherry, blackberry as well as raspberry, a touch sweeter too. Acidity ain't no slouch either, elevates that grapefruit through the finish enormously. Green, herbaceous ending though, huge pucker factor. Hard to judge decisively given its change in demeanor from first to final sip. 88

Cros, Domaine du
Southwest France, Marcillac
Lo Sang del País
Fer Servadou
2009, \$13.99, 12.5%

The sleek, reflective surface can hide the depth of the purple bruise colored core, the clarity of the liquid becomes apparent at the ruby-magenta rims, replete with a pinkish glow. Sour white grapefruit, metallic dust and then even more minerally crinkle makes sure your nostrils are wide awake all day and night long, once you start to adjust there's a thick floral cloud to be enjoyed and not insufficient cranberry, raspberry, pomegranate red fruit scents, in an odd way the barnyard funk actually softens and deepens the nostril feel. Medium-bodied, does a good job of layering itself on the tongue given the acidic punch it packs. The florality stays with you and holds its own as the white grapefruit and lemon accelerate skywards. Tree bark, brown earth, tanned animal hide, tar have their parts to play. The red cherry, red currant, cranberry fruit slashes into the mouth, puffs out its chest and then slashes its way out again. There's a lot of room for this to fill out over the next 6-12 months. Right now, you pretty like it rough. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

Baudry, Domaine Bernard
Loire, Chinon, Les Granges
Cabernet Franc
2008, \$18.99, 12.0%

Deep, if clean, purple core with a good deal of transparency, fat red-magenta rims extend inwards into the glass. Crinkly nose of mineral dust, ash, charcoal, stone, dried orange peels, red cherry to red plum with a distinct pit fruit aspect, the bell pepper is there but not dramatically so, comes across as too young and closed up. Light to medium-bodied, the acidity leaps right out at you, bright wattage and with a big shotgun of tannin to back it

up. Once all the moisture is gone from your mouth, it delivers strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit as a bandage. All of the mineral to stone dust, white grapefruit to lemon zest big factors. More powdery, dried grass here than wet bell pepper. Lots of "tough love" but not impossible to warm up to and extended air time does help a lot to soften things. 88

Raffault, Jean-Maurice
Loire, Chinon, Les Galuches
Cabernet Franc
2008, \$17.99, 12.5%

Fat purple core, shifts down into dark ruby easily with the rims showing more scarlet red, saturated throughout. Crushed leaves, twigs and bark team up in the nose with leather, tea leaves, bell pepper, orange peel for a damn youthfully aggressive nose, super zesty red currant, red cherry fruit scents, not a lot of sweetness to go around but energy to spare. Medium-bodied, while the acidity steers the ship at the start, by the finish it is the tannin which covers the tongue like a woolen blanket. White grapefruit takes over here with orange and lemon in reserve. Sharp edge to the red cherry, red currant, cranberry fruit, angular and without much softness or give, not to say at all that it suffers from underripeness. Minerals and stone take precedence over the forest herbaceousness, tea leaves and twiggy, close to zero oak presence. As relentless in the mouth as in the nose, comes close to wearing you out, even after a decant and subsequent air time. Still, it's a good workout. Probably best to revisit in at least six months from now. 88

Ondines, Domaine les
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, La Buissonnade
Blend
2008, \$11.99, 13.0%

Clear and close to fully transparent, the ruby-purple core just deep enough to block your vision, purer red-ruby towards the rims with minimal hue loss. Bright sourness to the nose, very good penetrating power to the cranberry, rhubarb, raspberry fruit scents, broad florality, a splash of orange citrus, pinch of cocoa powder and then not much else, lean and pure. Medium-bodied, similar composition here with first emphasis on the raspberry, red cherry, cranberry fruit and flowers. Not much tannin, the acidity sufficient with an occasional slouch. Maybe a little garden herbs but nothing green, no earthiness or stoniness either. The orange to lemon citrus sweet and juicy. Keeps its weight completely through the finish and the fruit lasts well too. Solid but uninspiring. Unspecified percentages of Grenache, Syrah. 87

Oupia, Château d'
Languedoc/Roussillon, Minervois, Memoire d'André
Blend
2007, \$37.99, 13.5%

Pure deep purple core, perfectly opaque, extends almost fully through the rims where a dark ruby-magenta finds some room to show, clarity allows some middling transparency. Thick, close to sticky, nose with some reductive qualities, merde, peanut shells and wet black earth, then roasted coffee, butterscotch and caramel go on the attack, heavy plum, cassis, black cherry scents semi-leaden, the pungent florality stifled a good bit, more punch in the orange zest, seems overdone. Full-bodied, dense and layered close to immobility, the acidity is quite good but has its mouth taped and been thrown in the trunk. The plum, cherry, cassis, blackberry fruit shoveled

onto your tongue, sufficiently so to push back the coffee, cocoa, mocha toast. Dewy wetness gives depth to the florality, matches the orange/lemon citrus. Bulls its way through an extended, tangy finish. Certainly tasty but begs the question of what it really meant to achieve? 34% Syrah, 33% Carignan, 33% Grenache. 87

Haut-Monplaisir, Château
Southwest France, Cahors, Tradition
Malbec

2007, \$17.99, 13.0%

Full saturated and opaque purple core, the sleek, shiny surface draws your eyes out to the heavy, if thin, magenta rims. There's too much density to the nose, no movement despite having a good deal of florality in there, orange citrus too, hard to shave aroma off the blockish plum, black cherry, blackberry scents, so bound up can't seem to even eke out some earthiness, stoniness, air time doesn't seem to help much. Full-bodied, more "give" here but hard for this not to be the case, the tannin and acidity noticeable without getting to be a drag. The orange, grapefruit citrus breaks ahead of the pack to set the tone. Here more stone shards strewn across the road but still no earthiness nor leatheriness. The black cherry, black currant fruit satisfactory through the attack but has been "disappeared" by the finish. The florality in turn struggles to break the surface. Hard to say with assurance but want to say it's showing a youthfully taciturn nature rather than lacking in stuffing. 87

Terres Dorées (Jean-Paul Brun), Domaine des
Beaujolais, Moulin-à-Vent
Gamay Noir

2008, \$25.99, 12.0%

Sparkling and clear in the glass, like freshly cleaned windows, consistent ruby-violet throughout, mild pinkish cast at the rims, highly reflective surface. The nose squeezes every iota of minerality, stoniness out of itself, even manages to add a fruit pit/skin quality to the otherwise candied red cherry, raspberry scents, no overt herbaceousness, pinch of mixed white citrus, taut and lean enough that it contracts fairly swiftly. Medium-bodied, the strength of the acidity and tannins obvious from the second it's in your mouth, it's a fair fight to get at that raspberry, strawberry, red cherry, watermelon fruit, the latter not weak just outmatched. More delineation to the lemon, white grapefruit citrus, sour and lively. Dusty sort of florality, the minerality recedes back into the whole here. All the parts are there for a more enjoyable drinking experience, it would help if it would just unclench. 87

Bahourat, Domaine
Rhône, Costières de Nîmes
Blend

2008, \$11.99, 14.0%

Light tinge of ruby-red to the otherwise dark purple core, retains clarity, if not transparency, throughout, the rims a dark ruby to scarlet red in hue. The nose at first shows some reductive merde, fart, barnyard stuff but this eventually blows off in favor of deep plum, blackberry, cassis fruit with a good floral musk, squeezed orange pulp and rinds, powdered chocolate, too bottom heavy for lift, at moments the alcoholic heat peeks through, cinnamon and clove help pretty things up. Full-bodied, puts on more weight with air time and gets close to sluggish. Lots of milk chocolate and cocoa. The orange, white grapefruit citrus has flavor but neither sweet nor sour. As in the nose the plum, black cherry, blackberry fruit has sufficient stickiness

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to impair forward momentum. In this instance the appearance of some grassiness helps put some spring in its step. Neither the tannin nor acidity comes off as strong but, by the same token, not absent. It's a solid offering, if monochrome, and especially if the initial funk can be surmounted. Can't fault the price these days. 80% Syrah, 20% Grenache. [Synthetic Cork] 87

Mas de Félines
Languedoc/Roussillon, Vin de Pays d'Oc
Merlot

2007, \$13.99, 13.0%

Straightforward purple core which steadily segues to deep ruby and then crimson red furthest out, opaque for the most part. Earthy nose, muddy with notes of merde, not herbaceous but does offer a meadow breeze component, with air time rich black cherry, blackberry fruit scents come out to balance things, some stoniness and close to zero oak traces, nice lift without having to be perfumed per se. Medium-bodied, tougher in the mouth with a solid tannic underpinning which impedes forward momentum. The mild orange zest touch helps support the red currant, red cherry, mixed berry fruit flavors. Less earthy, more grassy but the scales not entirely tilted in the wrong direction. Subliminal dash of cocoa powder. [Synthetic Cork: Inter] 86

Caravinsérail
Rhône, Côtes du Ventoux, In Fine
Blend

2007, \$12.99, 14.0%

Simple ruby-violet core, clear with appealing vibrancy and without striving for an oversaturated appeal, the rims much more red than pink, surprisingly dark given the core and general cépage. Floral nose, yet with a dry and powdery presence, orange peel, mint, touch of dried garden herbs, nothing distinct, has lift but not enough to really spread the raspberry, red cherry scents broadly, simple but pleasant enough. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, presents a soft and accessible array of blackberry, raspberry, cherry fruit, no complications. The orange to lemon citrus on the sweet side, balanced some by a few cow pattie and barnyard accents as well as a stronger "inoffensive" earthiness. The floral side blended into the whole, less dominant. Acidity average, actually it's the tannins which appear to dry out the finish a tad prematurely. Right there in the middle of the pack. 90% Grenache, 10% Syrah. [Screwcap] 86

FRANCE WHITE

Huet, Domaine
Loire, Vouvray, Le Mont, Sec
Chenin Blanc

2007, \$34.99, 13.0%

Pure, bright gold color, transparent without being empty, moderate solidity at the core, rims are diminished. Firm and sinewy nose of orange, lemon, tangerine citrus, electric nectarine, pineapple, peach, passion fruit, slight touch of lanolin, lemon wax, some mint and lilacs, the minerality has more power than it is letting onto right now, digs deep into your nostrils but doesn't trigger the bomb. Medium-bodied, the acidity squats on your tongue as if to defy you to move it off, honey, lime and orange marmalade lead off, on deck there's pineapple, nectarine, papaya, kiwi fruit, peach flavors to drive in the runner on second with authority. It actually needs to relax some before you can fully register the seashell, chalk and powdered white

minerals. There's a tight beam of grassiness and snap peas, but nothing that would have you talking about an herbaceous streak. This keeps blinking like the hotel neon sign two feet outside your window when they don't even give you curtains. Golden honey and molasses imbue it with a touch more sweetness. This is more like a good-natured high wattage bulb blaring in the mouth than an aggressive shrapnel bomb. It just keeps your spine in alignment as you drink it. 92

Pépière, Domaine de la
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie, Clos des
Briords, Cuvée Vieilles Vignes
Melon de Bourgogne
2008, \$17.99, 12.0%
Somewhat dull yellow straw color, has some inner glow though, holds on well around the rims. Muscularly ripped nose, however, still flexing rather than relaxing, lots of salinity, crushed seashells, metallic powder, little space ceded to the lilac flowers, lemon peel, zesty pear, green apple, apricot scents, even closer to room temperature halfway closed, probably popped the cork too late after release. Medium-bodied but very broad, covers the entire palate. Noticeably dry, the acidity has the texture of ground glass. Much more activity in the orange, lemon, white grapefruit citrus, blindingly bright. The florality manages to survive, an achievement. Less so the apricot, peach, pear, apple fruit, more echo than primary presence. Slight fizz in the mouth feel helps lift, churns up the seashell, salt, mineral elements. Relentless, tracks down your mouth pores like a hound smelling coon blood. At this juncture, needs a few years to settle into itself. 89

Pépière, Domaine de la
Loire, Muscadet de Sèvre-et-Maine Sur Lie
Melon de Bourgogne
2009, \$14.99, 12.0%
Strong yellow straw color, transparent with a light layered effect, helps diminish the loss of hue around the rims. Slowly expansive nose featuring floral dew, lemon and some lime citrus, seashells and powdered white minerals, green apple, pear and peach scents, warms into a honeyed aspect, manages to combine delicacy with power adroitly. Medium-bodied, the acidity has kick but, really, it's not the cause of any withering dryness and content to "frame" the whole rather than force it in any certain direction. This allows for that floral side to spread as well as add a pinch more sweetness to the lemon, white grapefruit citrus. Conversely, there is a light green streak, mostly subsumed in the mineral, stone element. The pear, peach, apricot, red apple fruit comes with a skin/pit character. Its best attribute is how it remains energetic at the end while still handling your palate with soft gloves. (Synthetic Cork: Nomaticorc) 89

Moor, Domaine Alice et Olivier De
Burgundy, Chablis, Bel Air et Clardy
Chardonnay
2008, \$32.99, 12.7%
While somewhat on the dull side, the gold color is indeed deep and with some amber in there too, transparent if not crystal clear, some loss at the rims. The nose is well layered with orange, lemon citrus, mint, minerals and oil smoke, apricot, pear and peach fruit, it displays noticeable heft in your nostrils, at warmer temperatures you get a creamy, sort of milk-dipped-in-bread oxidative note, however, inoffensive as such. Medium-bodied, again, shows better at cooler temps. No lack of seashell, shale, crushed

white stone notes, smoky to fried touch to the lemon, orange citrus as well. The acidity not blunt per se but more a machete than a precision cutting instrument. Some fuzz and pit character to the peach, nectarine, apricot, pear flavors. While it fashions a dry and succinct finish, there's still no escaping that honeyed, doughy element, unsure if there's any intention behind it. Quite the enjoyable drop but, personally, one might best be counseled to drink it young. 89

Huet, Domaine
Loire, Vouvray, Le Haut-Lieu, Demi-Sec
Chenin Blanc
2007, \$39.99, 13.0%
Deep, clean straight-up gold color, average shine across the surface, below there's a steady translucent bending of light and vision, holds on well through the rims. The nose is a pleasing, relaxed display of beeswax, orange marmalade, lemon pie, quince, pear and apricot fruit, never gets to the tropical level, in part perhaps due to the slightly dusty minerality, no real smokiness, some floral water, more or less just smooth sailing on calm waters. Medium-bodied, the acidity does a good job of framing the whole but is not a powerful driving force behind the wine. Balanced, with honey, lemon glaze and candied orange peels, this aspect brings it closer to a smokiness than does any stoniness or minerality. As much sweet herbs as flowers. Nectarine, pineapple, apricot, pear, guava fruit of decent depth, lacks sour bite. Towards the end you get a vanillin softness, like pudding in texture. A quietly interesting wine which can please a broad variety of palates. That said, leaves you thinking it won't likely make old bones. 89

Mérieau, Jean
Loire, Touraine, Les Hexagonales
Sauvignon Blanc
2009, \$14.99, 12.5%
Flat brownish yellow straw in color, can't say it's dull, nothing to really fade from, core to rims. The nose is pliable after a fashion, has give, while at the same time offers ample smoky powdery stone, chalk and minerals alongside lemon, grapefruit zest, pleasing depth to the peach, apricot, nectarine scents, lilacs, only a slight and welcome bitter twist at the end before it all drifts off. Medium-bodied, the acidity puts a good charge into it, however, does play sweet and sour off each other well. White grapefruit, lemon, mandarin orange lead the show, the herbaceousness stays within acceptable limits, as much bite from the minerals. Verges on tropical fruit but not, lacks the juiciness so you get pineapple, papaya, nectarine, peach with more initial thrust than length. As in the nose, the floral side buffers things at the end. This is a very nice everyday Loire Sauvignon, best served with a solid chill to it. (Synthetic Cork) 87

FRANCE ROSE

Oupia, Château d'
Languedoc/Roussillon, Minervois, Rosé
Blend
2009, \$13.99, 13.0%
Luminescent pink salmon color, more orange tint than red, transparent with a noticeable dropoff in hue around the rims. Right amount of sweetness to the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry scents in the nose, lemon juice, rose hips, soft stone powder and more meadow grasses than herbaceousness, achieves both fullness and a desired sour bite. Medium-bodied, you get full mouth coverage with

subtle acidity and lower tannin to sponge up after the sweeter lemon and orange citrus as well as red cherry, strawberry, rhubarb, watermelon fruit. While these are the dominant aspects it doesn't come across as "fruity" and the minerality lends light percolation while that meadow grass, hay stuff gives you the ability to hold it erect in the mouth or let it keep flowing. Dusting of cocoa powder adds breadth. No incredible blast of complexity but just satisfies on many levels. 52% Syrah, 24% Grenache, 24% Cinsault. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 90

Baudry, Domaine Bernard
Loire, Chinon, Rosé
Cabernet Franc
2009, \$16.99, 13.0%

While the salmon pink color is quite light, it also possesses a metallic sheen which imbues it with a good deal of vibrancy, transparent but not watery, there's some bending to the light, given where it starts from, credible hue in the rims. Fresh strawberry and raspberry comprise most of the nose while the lemon to orange citrus as much blossom as spritzzy zest, chalky and dusty texture in spite of this, more minerals than anything approaching herbaceousness, while the scents are not especially resonant it's ability to squat in your nostrils is impressive. Medium-bodied, much better with just a slight chill, vastly increases the expressivity of the red cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit as well as floral water component. The lemon to almost lime citrus tighter here, more focused precision. This may be in good part due to the chunky acidity, takes a hammer to your tongue more than slices it. There is a considerable minerally, stony dustiness, however, it allows you to choose whether or not to focus on it. This is a thinking person's rosé which may be its undoing in large part. (Composite Cork) 89

Clos Roche Blanche
Loire, Touraine, Rosé
Pineau d'Aunis
2009, \$19.99, 12.5%

Washed out pink color, yet with that semi-erie metallic veneer, scattered bubbles within betray the coming soft pétillance, not clear which helps it extend through the rims. Needs to warm some before the prettiness of the strawberry, red raspberry fruit shows more fully as well as soften the lemon citrus component, mineral dust prefers not to lessen its breadth and controlling aspect. Again, warmer has a somewhat unexpected floral lift. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a good deal of acidity to frame the attack and make sure you know this is a lean, mean fighting machine. Strawberry, pomegranate, rhubarb fruit keeps you guessing while the lemon to white grapefruit citrus provides a good anchor. More mineral water and stoniness than true metallic minerally bite. No herbaceousness, suggestions of hay or straw. The acidity ensures a lengthy finish, you are still puckering after all the flavor is gone. Enjoyable on its own terms, which, these days, are likely not your terms. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

Janasse, Domaine de la
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône, Rosé
Blend
2009, \$16.99, 14.5%

Crazy glo-in-the-dark character to the salmon pink, ruby base color, along with the vibrancy of color comes perfect clarity and a good deal of surface shine, formidable appearance in the glass. The nose is fairly broad, chooses

power over finesse, well-packed raspberry, red cherry and then strawberry scents jowl-to-jowl with lemon oil, violets and a slightly bracing jolt of grassiness, the latter adds life where it might otherwise turn repetitive, some stoniness along with spring water notes, not too sweet but what's there has a kinda cane sugar innocence, average plus length. Full-bodied, here it slows down unnecessarily in places, like plagued by sticky glue. Off the cuff, seems more tannic than acidic. Presses down on the tongue like it's afraid to look up, you get lemon, orange peel, black licorice, mixed flowers and a sort of mixed assemblage of peach, apricot, strawberry, red raspberry fruit. Its persistence remains its best trait, never can you not notice it being there. Not subtle, a pleasure seeker's rosé, probably best just busted out on its own than tried to pair with food. 50% Grenache, 30% Syrah, 20% Cinsault. 87

ITALY RED

Occhipinti, Azienda Agricola Arianna
Sicilia, SP68
Blend

2008, \$28.99, 12.5%

Very bright scarlet red to violet hued core, takes on a pinkish cast to the base red-ruby, clear and unblemished, if not innocent. Candied raspberry fruit, maraschino cherry, strawberry nose, very expressive, if jammy, spiced oranges, molasses, cinnamon, lilacs, achieves some lift without yielding any nostril weight, touch of stone dust, otherwise stays primary. Medium to full-bodied, a lot depends on the temperature served. Great acidity frames the raspberry, cranberry, strawberry fruit, the "redness" of the fruit again depends on serving temp. Somewhat grassy, lots of lemon and sour white grapefruit. The minerality comes at you like it wants to take out your knees. The herbaceousness and minerality gains, virtually until it is like chewing on glass. There is great depth to the fruit which, in the end, carries the day, this is a wine for someone who wants both immediate, visceral pleasure as well as having their teeth rattled. Both of which are attainable. Unspecified percentages of Nero d'Avola, Frappato. 89

ITALY WHITE

Sant'Evasio, Cantina
Piedmont, Gavi di Gavi
Cortese

2008, \$17.99, 12.5%

Flat yellow-green color, transparent yet manages to stay relatively strong through the rims. Flowers, mineral powder, sweet lemon and lime citrus infuse the nose and recede to allow for relaxed and poised apple, pear, peach fruit, steadily strong lift gives it a very clean character and length. Full-bodied, spicy and minerally, crisp and lively throughout. The racy apple, pear, peach, apricot fruit hits the right note in both snap and flavor. Same can be said for the tangerine, orange, lime citrus, bouncy. This is a great summery mouth cleanser that will leave your palate totally refreshed. 90

Vallevò
Abruzzi, Terre di Chieti, Costa dei Traducchi
Pecorino

2008, \$13.99, 13.0%

Solid golden color, lends it some density even as it is mostly transparent and does fade along the rims. Honey splashed sweet and sour orange citrus dominates the

nose, pleasing dusty mineral component as well, pear, green apple, pineapple scents keep things lean and trim, the floral dimension never too dewy, not shy but keeps it simple and easy to appreciate. Medium-bodied, very viscous mouth feel has it clinging tenaciously to your mouth pores but it's not heavy per se. The acidity displays plenty of savage fury and it's a good thing the viscosity is there. Pineapple, papaya, nectarine, green apple fruit amped up, the orange and lemon citrus edged out some here. More herbaceous than minerally, that said, when the lights are on so brightly, hard to tell. Long finish, keeps scrubbing away. Preferable with more chill to it. (Composite Cork) 89

Niedermayr, Josef
Alto Adige/Südtirol, Müller-Thurgau dell'Alto Adige
Müller-Thurgau
2009, \$18.99, 12.5%
Pale yellow gold hue, not washed out, more like gently brushed, deep translucent shake and bake, enough so to ignore any hue loss around the rims. Thick, pregnant cloud of a nose, doesn't lift as much as raise upwards like bread in the oven, generous honey and lemon custard notes, fresh pear, red apple, melon scents, brioche, uses its sweetness to best effect without turning sweet per se, enjoyable counterpoint in the snap pea and lemon grass nuances, uncomplicated complexity. Full-bodied with good viscosity, slathers itself on the tongue. Lemon, white grapefruit retains a pulp character while as sour as sweet, light grassiness might favor the former. Stream water and pebbles, shale come through, nothing really minerally. Papaya, pineapple flavors add a tropical touch to the base nectarine, peach, apricot, pear. Honeyed, yes, but the acidity earns its keep and plows over many parts which might tilt things too much towards dulcetville. Truly, for this ever-so-humble grape, this shit rocks. (Synthetic Cork) 89

Vallevò
Abruzzi, Terre di Chieti
Cococciola
2009, \$10.99, 13.0%
Unblemished yellow gold color, translucent shimmer from a distance with greater clarity up close, in spite of lighter hue sits solidly in the glass. Firm nose, lemony with licorice and flower petals, buttressed by pebbles and country back road dust, light and lively but not at all simple, sauna smoke lifts the apricot, yellow apple, peach fruit scents, given firmness does suggest a honeyed or dried fruit concentration at times. Medium-bodied, the acidity muscular and the overall deciding factor in creating a lean, mean fighting machine. Semi-sour mineola orange, lemon, white grapefruit citrus a loose electrical wire, stays stony without getting minerally in a strong manner, same for the grassiness, suggests more snap pea and green veggies than out-and-out herbaceousness. Again, concentrated, but not necessarily sweet, apricot, nectarine, pear, pineapple fruit, macho pucker without getting unfriendly about it. Weight held completely through finish, a plus, particularly as a food wine. Very good value. (Synthetic Cork: Korked Pro) 88

Massone, Azienda Agricola Stefano
Piedmont, Gavi, Masera
Cortese
2008, \$13.99, 12.0%
Basic gold with a deepening orange rust tinge, translucent but unblemished, with the standard diminishing along the rims. The nose comes across as slightly oxidative,

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honeybuns, brioche, croissant notes before juicy orange, lemon citrus appears, the green apple, pear, peach fruit defanged for the most part, scents of stone or mineral all but absent. Full-bodied, kind of fat except that the acidity and the slight underripeness of the flavors reduces the blubber factor greatly. Sour grapefruit, orange, lemon citrus which here can evoke shades of quinine or mineral water. Overall dryness truncates the length of the pear, green apple, peach, nectarine fruit. Yeasty, doughy, honeyed past the mid-palate, yet, not enough to soften the shortcomings of the aforementioned. As wine per se it's kinda ok but there's this lingering plastic generic quality that it can't shake. (Composite Cork) 84

ITALY ROSE

Leverano, Cantina Sociale Cooperativa di
Puglia/Apulia, Leverano, Rosato
Blend
2009, \$8.99, 12.5%
Vibrant, shiny watermelon pink color, squeaky clean and fully transparent, slight drop to a lighter pinkish cast at the rims. Youthfully innocent nose of strawberry, raspberry, watermelon, red apple fruit scents, lemon pulp, flowers and then a sprig of mint, suggestion of cocoa, quiet stoniness, overall drier rather than sweeter, helps it keep shape and forward momentum in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, does a good job of spreading cheek-to-cheek, never too heavy yet you feel its presence at all times. Lemon and a touch of orange citrus help add zip, also not without an herbaceous kick. That said, keeps that cocoa veneer and achieves sweetness when needed. In this vein, the acidity level is refreshing and not wimpy while also allowing the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit to move unimpeded. Ends with both retention of weight and flavor as well as no appearance of hidden flaws. For the price, quite the achievement. 80% Negroamaro, 20% Malvasia Nera. (Composite Cork: Diam) 87

GERMANY WHITE

Zimmer, Fritz
Pfalz, Maestro QbA AP #14
Riesling
2009, \$12.99, 10.0%
Pale luminescence in the yellow straw hue, translucent layering, no color at the rims but still distorts your vision. Sweet mash of tangerine, lime, pink grapefruit citrus in the nose, even blending in juicy, honeyed red apple, apricot, nectarine, peach scents retains an erect posture, sufficient chalk, white mineral and saline accents to keep its street cred, achieves a good floral lift at the end. Medium-bodied, the acidity clamps down right through the attack, yet, honey, brown sugar shades have no problem breaking through. Indeed, given the relatively high alcohol content it could have been a sugar bomb as there's still ripeness to spare in the pineapple, nectarine, papaya, peach fruit as well as that same tangerine, lime, pink grapefruit citrus. Chalk, streamwater fresher here, less of that salty edge. As in the nose, you need the rest to settle into their groove before the flowers bloom. Gotta say, has the presentation order nailed down according to wishes. This is one for the "sophisticated" sweet Riesling devotee. (Screwcap) 87

AUSTRIA WHITE

Nigl, Weingut
Kremstal, Freiheit
Grüner Veltliner
2009, \$22.99, 11.5%

Light golden straw color, easy enough to see through but not watery, the rims devoid of hue. Rose water, licorice and orange blossom help lift the nose, some snap pea and lemongrass, the pear, peach, apple fruit is adequate to the task, more pretty than complex with moderate length. Medium-bodied, leans towards the sweet side of things with pink grapefruit, lime citrus in addition to deep florality and mint, anise and other sweeter herbs. The acidity is there but comes off as wishy-washy and doesn't do much to lengthen the experience. Simple peach, apricot, pear, red apple fruit with a twinge of pineapple. At times you might get a hint of jalapeño pepper. A very nice wine that can be drunken with relish (or sauerkraut) but, alas, nothing that could not be found for almost ten bucks less. (Screwcap) 87

AUSTRIA ROSE

Michlits, Weingut
Burgenland, Frizzante Rosé
Pinot Noir
2009, \$15.99, 10.5%

Being frizzante definitely shows through the pour, albeit most of the bubbles gone immediately thereafter, very light with a softly glowing salmon pink color, mild orange tinge, transparent without seeming watery. There's an initial deep sourness to the nose which does blow off soon after opening, lemon and white grapefruit beat to the punch the strawberry, watermelon, cranberry, red cherry scents, however, the latter help themselves when they get there, gains grounding from white pebbles, sand element, no herbaceousness and just allows itself to unfurl and drift off easily. In the mouth it's medium-bodied and the fizz helps to relieve any potential excess weight and get it jogging across the palate. The lemon, orange, lime citrus takes on a more subdued tone and draws out more sweetness from the raspberry, watermelon, red cherry fruit flavors. Taking this into consideration, an underlying tartness pervades throughout. Not herbaceous but there's an earthiness which incorporates green matter into it. Achieves a certain measure of complexity and then stops there, isn't striving to set the bar any higher. Nothing wrong with being a "fun" wine per se. 88

Hillinger, Weingut Leo
Burgenland, Secco rosé [L 1209]
Pinot Noir
NV, \$15.99, 12.0%

Frizzante style, sure, put foams up an inch or so during the pour before dissolving off. Orange tinged pinkish color with a metallic sheen, while transparent asserts its presence, throws in a couple of bubble beads for good measure. In the nose the edge of matted grasses and mineral chunks hits you first creating a smokiness, this tends to sap some sweetness out of the strawberry, red cherry, watermelon fruit scents, almost earthy for its type, very good fullness without giving up too much on the fun scale. Full-bodied, the fizz is generous and lasts well after the bottle is opened. Here the watermelon, strawberry, pear, red cherry fruit stronger and more dominant. Floral with lemon, orange citrus juiciness. Still, not lacking for stone or

mineral nuances, just more in the background. Smooth, yet buoyant, finish, enjoyable quaffing going on here. 88

SPAIN RED

Silvera, Bodegas y Viñedos
Vino de La Tierra de León, Tinto Preto
Prieto Picudo
2007, \$23.99, 13.5%

Unblemished violet core, just rich enough to achieve opacity, plenty of saturation left in the red-ruby to violet rims, deeply hued. There's a reductive side to the nose that only partially blows off, peanut shells, merde and general flatulence, all not to deny the presence of floral perfumed black currant, black cherry fruit scents a mixture of white citrus, roasted cocoa beans, has a slow and powerful nostril penetration, nothing to casually sniff. Full-bodied, here has the acidity to at least carve it into thick slabs rather than one big block. More of a general "barnyard funk" in the mouth and more muted, clearer white grapefruit to sour lemon citrus to lead the way. With time a rougher minerality comes to the surface, adds to its rustic character. Mix of red and black fruits, neither gains the decisive position, cherry, currant, raspberry, blueberry. The florality recedes back a few paces. Crazy amount of sediment in the bottle, even at this point in its youth. Interesting wine, wish more direct comparisons were available. 88

Eguren, Dominio de
Toro, Vino de la Tierra de Castilla, Codice
Tempranillo
2007, \$11.99, 13.5%

The purple core just crosses into opacity, unblemished and clean, barely shifts into deep ruby and red magenta saturation no issue whatsoever. The nose follows the playbook play by play, user friendly butterscotch, warmed caramel, brown sugar and honey, once this initial blast is finished it dries up appreciably, there's predictable plum/prune, blueberry, blackberry scents, then pine oil, lemon oil, milk chocolate, so much energy expended at first that you don't notice it hollowing out or developing any scents evocative of the Tempranillo grape. Full-bodied, at least at first before shedding weight like a pot dealer flushing as the cops knock at the front door. Coconut, butterscotch, caramel, toffee, buttered popcorn take up most of the experience. OK, maybe some burnt coffee too. Simple plum, blackberry, black cherry fruit lends more weight than flavor to things through the mid-palate. No real tannin nor acidity to speak up, sluggish mouth feel. Lemon and then maybe lemongrass. What is has in its favor is lowest common denominator accessibility and fruit and oak. Believe me, that's enough. (Synthetic Cork: Supremecork) 83

SPAIN WHITE

Amesguren
Getariako Txakolina, Ameztoi Txakoli
Hondarribi Zuri
2009, \$19.99, 10.5%

Fully transparent white to brownish straw in color, visible fizz within the glass, super-tiny bubbles, great sparkle in the glass. Dense lemon peel in the nose with sidereal accents of lime and white grapefruit, slate and sand, crisp and biting without looking for blood, green apple, pear skin, the floral dimension is ground to a fine powder for your snorting pleasure, very good staying power. In the mouth

it's medium-bodied, the acidity imbues it with a keen edge, yet, once more refrains from being as dry as you suspect it could be. Tacky lemon and orange zest adheres to your tongue as if its life depended on it. The flowers just strong enough to lift off the tongue, not much more. Pear, apricot, green apple, white grape fruit rides a laser beam into and out of your mouth. Firmly structured throughout, can stand up to all kinds of cuisine although makes one pine for oysters on the half shell or lightly sautéed scallops. 90% Hondarribi Zuri, 10% Hondarribi Beltza. [Synthetic Cork: Supremecorq] 88

SPAIN DESSERT

Lustau, Emilio
Jerez-Xérès-Sherry, East India Solera Sherry
Blend
NV, \$28.99, 20.0%

Bright brown color of good clarity, mixes in a tinge of orange until reaching the vivid yellow rims. Nutty nose filled with almonds, brazil nuts, cashews and then ginger spice, orange zest and further golden raisin, fig, date scents, nothing here is overblown or exaggerated, suggestion of mint and wildflowers keep it on that even keel. Medium-bodied, nice fluidity and smoothness, there's no doubt from the first sip that it is a "dessert wine" but by the same token is not dependent on sweetness to make that point. Brown sugar, honey and ginger, cinnamon spice deepen the flavors. Not a lot of acidity or other structuring elements. That said, keeps an erect bearing as it unfolds the almond led nuts and candied orange peel aspects. The same date, fig, raisin fruit appears with some fresher apricot, peach notes. Becomes more chocolaty at the end. Just a tactful, well-organized moderate dessert wine, the sort which deserves better recognition. Unspecified percentages of Palomino Fino, Pedro Ximénez. L 9148. 90

PORTUGAL WHITE

Aveleda, Quinta da
Vinho Verde, Fonte
Blend
2009, \$10.99, 10.0%

Pale yellow to white straw in hue, plenty of the tell tale fizz, soft luminescence makes up some for absent coloration. Fresh nose with round contours and weight in the peach, apricot, apple fuzz fruit scents, downy florality, bush of stone powder and dust, nothing near a match for the honey accents, vanillin creaminess, seems to be taking pains to stay as accessible as possible. Medium-bodied with a thick bottom, in spite of the fizz it stays pretty low to the ground. The vanilla gives the lime and orange citrus a sherbet feel. The acidity, to its credit, manages to add zip beneath the ample undercarriage. Especially as it warms you get full apricot, peach, yellow apple, pear fruit, albeit a more pretty package colder. The stone and mineral water a better matchup with the honey here. Weight outlasts most of the flavor, could probably use more zing but pretty good easy quaffer. Unspecified percentages of Trajadura, Loureiro, Arinto, Azal. 87

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Fleur du Cap
Western Cape
Chardonnay
2008, \$11.99, 13.5%

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Layered, semi-translucent gold color, the pleasing surface shine helps extend the hue through the otherwise diminished rims. The nose hits you with a hammer of buttery, toasty oak, caramelized brown sugar, tangerine and lime citrus, cinnamon, ginger snaps, there's very little subtle or nuanced here, the apricot, peach, pineapple fruit massaged into a maximally juicy state, no real point of contrast. Full-bodied, spicy with a close to jalapeño edge, grassy with bell pepper, mineral black earth and tar as well. Thankfully, most of this will go unnoticed given the acidity driven thrust of the white grapefruit, tangerine citrus plus the severe oak toast, here the creaminess takes a clear back seat to roasty, toasty fun. Pineapple, papaya, star fruit and nectarine flavors keep things on the razor's edge. The oak so firmly in charge that you really don't catch on how misshapen it can be at times, no fluidity nor sense of progression. And this is said eminently to its credit. 84

AUSTRALIA RED

90+ Cellars
South Australia, McLaren Vale, Shiraz Viognier Lot 4
Blend
2007, \$19.99, 14.0%

Black purple core of full opacity, towards the rims there's more crimson and brick red than ruby, deeply hued. Straightforward nose of eucalyptus, mint, caramel and orange peel, gratifyingly rich blackberry, black cherry, blueberry fruit with moments of prune, maintains a consistent sense of movement within the nostrils, neither too sweet nor too oaky. Full-bodied without a sense of heaviness, has sufficient tannic structure to match the chewiness of the black cherry, black currant, blackberry fruit. The orange, lemon citrus plays a larger role here, pairs well with the eucalyptus, in turn the caramel, butterscotch oak flavors remain in good proportion to the whole. In this basic family, though, you get molasses coated pork notes. Not as floral as expected given the percentage of Viognier. Covers most of the bases very well and doesn't take the simple path to the lowest common denominator. 92% Shiraz, 8% Viognier. [Screwcap] 89

NEW ZEALAND WHITE

90+ Cellars
Marlborough, Lot 2
Sauvignon Blanc
2009, \$14.99, 12.5%

Bleached straw, as white as yellow, no green tinge though, while fully clear it does bend the light slightly to achieve more presence in the glass. Plenty of snap, crackle and pop to the nose, bags of mineral dust, sour white grapefruit to lemon pith, summer green grass, no lack of bite to the nectarine, papaya, pineapple fruit scents, however, doesn't have the juiciness to be called "tropical," sheer vibrancy has it rolling around your nostrils for some time despite the overall chalky texture. Light to medium-bodied, comes at you with a keen edge, some sweetness in the pink grapefruit, mandarin orange citrus, not just sour puss. The acidity aggressive enough to throw it off balance a bit. More meat on the bones of the apricot, nectarine, green apple, pineapple fruit, lasts close to the finish. Minerals and stone powder abundant throughout, stops short of activating chili pepper notes. Much friendlier nearing room temperature. [Screwcap] 87