

The Hanes Wine Review, January 2012 Edition

Hmmm, first wine review done since August. Lot been going on since then it seems. And perhaps in actuality. Those interested can check out the “Things Hanes Thinks About” pages in the “About Hanes” area of ye olde website. Otherwise, Hanes rarely buys current release wines anymore. Just way too many wines already purchased, in the cellar, and needing drinking ASAP. So, *The Hanes Wine Review* these days is basically an exercise in reviewing older wines. Maybe this will change over time. For now, Hanes does not want to have a cellar full of over-the-hill wines. Plus, even *having* a cellar of wine has become its own form of burden. Yeah, yeah, cry me a river. But storing wine is very expensive. This said as the former manager of a wine storage facility. Life has shown Hanes that wine collecting is a hobby best suited for the wealthy and Hanes has not ascended to that plane of existence yet.

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This month’s big winners... Not hard to enjoy the Beaujolais wines of Marcel Lapierre, their 2010 Morgon bottling is excellent, price creeping to near \$30 though. Really enjoyed the Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard Petite Sirah for not being an over-the-top monstrosity while staying true to the more rustic charms of the grape. The 2006 Proprietà Sperino from Lessona, Piedmont beats the 2005, which itself was a delicious wine. This is worth the \$72 entry fee. Staying in Piedmont, the 2009 Freisa from Cantamessa was a friendly, easy to gulp bottle, at \$18 seems fair since it appears that most Freisa wines are past \$20 these days. Elena Walch from the northern reaches of Italy in Alto Adige makes some fine Chardonnay although the attention seems to go to their other grapes. Stainless steel Chardonnay for \$17 is rarely better. Hanes can be a slut for Sherries made from the Pedro Ximénez grape, especially when they are as tasty as Alvear’s “Solera 1927” bottling. Not cheap at all but a good value nonetheless. Tis the time of year for such indulgences.

The best \$15 and under picks... The 2010 Montinore “Borealis” white blend from Oregon is good juice, mostly Müller-Thurgau and Riesling, easily worth the \$14 price tag. The 2010 Vinho Verde from Broadbent Selections is what these sort of wines should be, simply fun and refreshing without guile. \$10 too, woohoo. Haven’t had a wine from Sardinian producer Argiolas in like forever. Their 2010 Vermentino called “Costamolino” is a fine rendition of the grape and remains right there at the \$15 level. Although good just about every year, the 2010 Domaine du Cros “Lo Sang del País” bottling is exceptional and still like \$15. The Fer Servadou grape will certainly be this year’s black.

And the disappointments... Drank the 2009 Runquist kitchen sink blend “1448” just kind of because. Not to Hanes’s taste nor general liking but it does sell. Which can be important. Otherwise nothing else out-and-out sucked of late. Was surprised to not like the 2009 Domaine du Tunnel Cornas more but it is what it is. There goes \$68 coulda spent on cat food. 2009 may be an average to just below average vintage for the Lagier-Meredith Syrah from Mount Veeder, which is still better than many producer’s top years. Wanted more complexity from it, even this early in the game. Most of the Turley Zinfandels drinking well enough (Dusi not), it’s simply a matter of choice if one wants to pay the entry fee or not.

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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/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 January!

CALIFORNIA RED

Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard

San Antonio Valley, Pierce Ranch

Petite Sirah

2008, \$21.99, 14.2%

Heavily saturated black-purple core which remarkably remains squeaky clean with more transparency than might be expected through the blood red to scarlet rims, really quite beautiful as it shines in the glass. The nose is round but firm with an expansive presence, features butterscotch, caramel as well as white grapefruit and meadow grasses, the plum, black currant scents muscularly sugary, were it not packed so densely the underlying floral side would be more prominent. Full-bodied, moves with slow determination yet agile when needed and never heavy. Smoky oakiness as noticeable as caramel, butterscotch, dark chocolate or coffee, the heft of the plum, black cherry, boysenberry fruit easily puts the oak in its place. The white citrus diminished here yet present along with the flowers and sweet garden herbs. The tannin more like a coat of mail than archly drying influence. Some twig, grass, underbrush there. Searching for complexity is a fool's errand when there's so much primary stuff to enjoy. 90

Turley

Napa Valley, Atlas Peak, Mead Ranch

Zinfandel

2009, \$35.00, 16.1%

Gauzy purple core shifts it into opacity, seamless transition to wide ruby to red-magenta rims, moderate glow, doesn't look overblown and desperate to impress, stays comfortably in the middle. The nose seems floral at first before getting all about salt, sea water, leather, grill smoke, just a few oaky vanilla, caramel notes, these likely cloaked by the alcoholic burn in your nostrils, interesting mix of fruit scents from apricot, cherry, green apple, blackberry through to plum. Medium-bodied, gains immeasurably here from a tangy white grapefruit spine, sets a brisk pace and shaves off lots of excess sugar. Still, no lack of apricot,

peach, apple to cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, lots of spring in its step. The caramel, chocolate, brown sugar aspects stay well within acceptable levels. Slight suggestion of phenolic underripeness at the end, a bitter green twist. Otherwise, it's fun and you'd have to want to not like it beforehand to not like it as you're gulping it down. 89

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Pesenti

Vineyard

Zinfandel

2009, \$35.00, 16.0%

Deep, glowing purple core, pink to red magenta rims, clean on the whole, fat in the glass and totally looking like a Zinfandel. Vanilla, molasses, gingerbread, butterscotch, orange zest, eucalyptus and licorice make for a well-stuffed nose, large in scale and in your face about it too, while juicy the raspberry, pomegranate, blackberry, blueberry fruit not heavy and has a sense of proportion. Medium-bodied, very smooth and fluid, even surprisingly so, no real tannin but you sense a murmur of acidity at times. Same general profile of licorice, anise, eucalyptus, pine, orange and lemon citrus, molasses, brown sugar, vanilla fudge, sweet grill smoke. Mix of red and black fruit, blackberry, blueberry, boysenberry, cherry, rhubarb. Blends in danish crust flakes and ginger to cinnamon spice. Definitely falls into the outsized, mouth-coating Zinfandel experience side of the spectrum. 89

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder

Syrah

2009, \$48.00, 14.3%

While spotless enough to be transparent when viewed closely, the purple core is also saturated enough to deepen from further afar, the rims show a youthful magenta that already has begun to suggest a scarlet to brick red future. The nose has a pretty floral perfume to it with orange spritz and sweeter anise-led garden herbs, fairly openly knit, the cherry, blackberry,

plum scents ripe yet taut and with no wasted words, light kiss of caramel and coffee candy, as it opens more grassiness evident. Full-bodied, smooth and fluid enough yet there is, if not a heaviness, a seriousness about it that quickly makes it more than a pleasing drop. Here you get more oaky caramel and butterscotch, especially when first opened. Mixes in more sour cranberry to pomegranate with the base of blackberry, boysenberry and black cherry fruit. Given its overall muscular feel it is hard to clearly discern the acidity or tannin level, particularly as that creaminess asserts itself. Flowers, sweet orange to lemon citrus, okay pucker factor at the end. More pleasurable than compelling. 89

Goldschmidt Vineyards

Alexander Valley, Crazy Creek Vineyard, Katherine Goldschmidt

Cabernet Sauvignon

2009, \$19.99, 14.5%

Clear, if brooding, black purple to dried blood red in color, full crimson rims, sleek and shiny surface. Dusty textured nose of ground flowers, shoe leather, saddle soap, iron flecks and brown dirt, tightly concentrated red cherry, raspberry fruit with a close to apple, cranberry element, not especially long but does have presence. Medium-bodied, dry without seeming too tannic, the sweet core of cherry, raspberry fruit remains more “red” than “black” and here you get a little citrus support. Old potpourri, sage, leather, merde and earth all play a role without it seeming backward or too much like a “country wine.” A smidgeon of vanilla and caramel, oak very tame here. This is a well-structured food wine that keeps its reach within its grasp and offers fair value at the price. 88

Predator

Central Valley, Lodi, Old Vine

Zinfandel

2010, \$16.99, 15.0%

While possessing perfect clarity, darkness evident in the garnet-purple hued core, more cranberry red to ruby around the rims, quite clean and shiny. The nose is a gusher of candied raspberry, strawberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit, cinnamon spice, honey, sweet barbecue sauce, then vanilla cream, caramel and marshmallow oak accents, not especially thick or that pungent, however, the ripeness and oak can't help but steal your attention. Medium-bodied, sticks closely to the same script in the mouth, loaded with juicy, wet raspberry, red cherry, strawberry, blueberry fruit and slathered in sweet, soft oak focusing on flavors of vanilla, whipped cream, molasses, caramel and toffee, little toast but does have a smoky quality, at times evokes beef jerky. Doesn't evince any peppery nor menthol related nuances, nor anything approaching

earthiness. It's fruit and sweet oak from death 'til us part. But it does do this well. 87

Three Saints

Santa Maria Valley

Pinot Noir

2008, \$23.99, 14.3%

Dark blackish purple hue, has a certain flat murkiness, deep cherry red rims, fair degree of overall opacity. Fat nose of semi-roasted raspberry, rhubarb, cranberry, cherry fruit, cinnamon, cola and anise, mix of sour grapefruit and pickle brine livens things up some, plays the fruit card to the hilt. Full-bodied, sluggish and without much meaningful pacing, lacks acidity even if there's some vague tannic dryness. Retains that smoky, roasty edge to the cherry, raspberry, blackberry fruit, concentrated yet the sweetness exhausted by the finish. The white grapefruit to lemon citrus puckering. Light touch of caramel to vanilla applied as makeup. Becomes heavy after a glass or so and hard to keep chugging. To its credit, no alcoholic burn and not unbalanced for its size. (Screwcap: Stelvin+) 87

Turley

San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Dusi Vineyard Zinfandel

2009, \$42.00, 16.0%

Clear red-purple colored core, high degree of transparency, the rims a more pure cherry red, has good saturation even if not especially dark. The nose doesn't quite cohere in spite of having lots of ingredients to choose from, lemon juice, floral dew, caramel and vanilla swirl, blackberry, boysenberry, raspberry fruit scents, then some fallen leaves, twigs and dry back road dirt, thins out a touch prematurely. Medium to full-bodied, has a sort of hollow center, avoids alcoholic burn but perhaps the high level does detract from a more fluid smoothness. At times makes you wish that there was more richness and sweetness in the cranberry, red cherry, raspberry, blueberry fruit. Some molasses, caramel and vanilla pudding but not much. The lemon to white grapefruit citrus cuts pretty deeply, awakens the palate. Garden herbs, twigs, tea leaves add a puckering twist. Hard to say it has much acidity or tannin. Nags at you for what you think it shoulda/coulda been. 86

Runquist Wines, Jeff

Regional Blend, California, 1448

Blend

2009, \$19.99, 14.3%

Strong glow to the otherwise clear liquid, the core is a magenta to violet hue while the rims display some cranberry red with hints of pink, there quite transparent, sleek surface shine. The nose offers

substantial butterscotch, caramel coated popcorn, brown sugar and vanilla fudge, there's a dry confectionary quality to the raspberry, blueberry, cherry, pomegranate fruit which prevents smooth flow, not a lot of room left for the floral dew and citrus to sparkle, sticks close to the main message of oak and fruit. Medium-bodied, sluggish and leaden of foot, no real cleansing tannin nor acidity presence. The oak toast, caramel, butterscotch and molasses glue things up and lend a jammier feel to the raspberry, blackberry, blueberry fruit, as if meant to be a big slug to the jaw. Orange and some lemon citrus have bite, sufficient blossom qualities to bring out that floral side. This is not a nuanced wine nor is it intended to be, at the same time it arguably should be more "fun" in terms of being a behemoth fruit and oak bomb. Intended consumers will like it. 58% Petite Sirah, 16% Barbera, 10% Petit Verdot, 5% Zinfandel, 5% Syrah, 3% Carignane, 1% Souzao, 1% Cabernet France, 1% Touriga. 86

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Scholium Project, The
Central Valley, Lost Slough Vineyards, Riquewihir
Gewürztraminer
2009, \$26.99, 15.8%
Soft warm glow to it, mild green cast to the fairly dull yellow base, the rims decently full, thick presence in the glass. Lots of whipped cream, vanilla and orange to lemon sherbet in the nose, likewise cinnamon to nutmeg spice infused into the apricot, peach, apple fruit, hint of mango to pineapple, full and soft nostril presence, this richness tends to prevent noticeable lift. Medium-bodied plus, not much acidity but has a dry tannin-like feel which sets it in the mouth well. Even spicier here with clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, the whole lineup. More delicate and juicy orange, lime, lemon citrus coats the palate. This effect supplemented by that vanilla pudding, whipped cream and cocoa element. The peach, papaya, banana, apricot and nectarine fruit vivid yet dry. Booziness comes out as it warms. 500 ml bottle. 89

OREGON WHITE

Montinore Estate
Willamette Valley, Borealis
Blend
2010, \$13.99, 11.5%
Clean white to yellow straw in color, neither that shiny nor dull, just enough shimmer to bend light and distort your vision, holds its hue nicely through to the rims. Thick but not heavy nose of floral musk, almonds, baking spices and pineapple, guava, nectarine, peach and passion fruit scents, best served warming towards

room temperature to allow the pungency to really develop. Full-bodied, there's a tacky dryness which gums up the progress through the palate some otherwise its fatness rolls forward well. Spicy here too with some vanilla bean as well as kaffir lime and mandarin orange citrus. The nuttiness more raw than roasted, allows space for stoniness and a mild nuance of saline. Piquant papaya, nectarine, pineapple, apple, pear fruit, very good pucker factor while releasing to lengthen the finish. The acidity is flat-edged but effective, no slouching from start to finish. Sneaky complexity as it hits the pleasure nodes first and then challenges you afterwards. 34% Müller-Thurgau, 34% Riesling, 17% Pinot Gris, 15% Gewürztraminer. (Composite Cork) 89

FRANCE RED

Verdier-Logel
Loire, Côtes du Forez, Cuvée des Gourmets
Gamay Noir
2009, \$12.99, 12.0%
Immaculately clear while still deeply hued violet to red-magenta, the rims show some redder scarlet coloration, actually quite beautiful to look at. The nose has some cow pattie funk to it at first which slowly yields to wet straw and grasses before sourish red cherry, cranberry, raspberry scents and lemon to white grapefruit pulp, underlying stoniness helps keep it dry and semi-dusty in feel, not complex but expresses all it has with gusto. Medium-bodied, great tannic and acidic grip keeps it anchored in the mouth while the flowers, white grapefruit pith and raspberry, strawberry, cranberry fruit lift up. Something like olive pit goes with the matted grasses and earthiness, more herbaceous in a soft and enveloping way as it opens. The citrus too grows in statute with each sip. Chewy but not fat nor gristle. Very enjoyable. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 90

Lapierre, Marcel
Beaujolais, Morgon
Gamay Noir
2010, \$28.99, 13.0%
Pure cranberry red in color with a moderate deepening to violet in the core, so clean it squeaks just looking at it, brightly vivid to the outermost rims. Freshly herbal snap to the nose, tickles to scrubs, stone dust and dried pebbly earth, wildflowers, pinch of mocha dust, tart red cherry, pomegranate, pear and strawberry stride purposefully through the nostrils, subtle lemon peel nuances, proudly displays the fact that it has more power than it is unleashing on you. Medium-bodied, firm and not tight but prone to very controlled movements. Muscular tannin relaxes as needed, supported by enlivening acidity that prods more than

pokes. The lemon, orange citrus steps into the spotlight and plays up the pucker factor in the raspberry, cranberry, pomegranate fruit, nothing close to underripeness. Crushed white pebbles, minerals cake the tongue more than any earthiness. Ripe enough that it obscures the underlying herbal tones, what's there more garden herbs than grass. There's a regal aloofness to it at times, like it catches itself having fun with you and then pulls back. (Lot M10TR S 06/06/11) 90

Cros, Domaine du
Southwest France, Marcillac, Lo Sang del País
Mansois/Fer Servadou
2010, \$14.99, 12.0%
Crazy clean surface which allows full penetration into the ruby red to violet core, bright garnet rims with a suggestion of pink, just dazzles in the glass. Dusty nose sparkles with bell pepper, black pepper, cut grass and wildflowers, even with ample metallic flecks around the syrupy thickness of the raspberry, blackberry, strawberry scents comes through, some lemon in there too, so much pungency without seeming overly full or fat. Medium-bodied with a substantial amount of tannin as well as acidity for the amount of flesh, that said, never too dry. There's an odd initial burst of milk chocolate and then it's all mineral dust, white grapefruit pith, bell pepper, peppercorns and clay. Bing cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit come to a boil in your mouth, as much popping action as hugging the tongue. Incredible liveliness. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 89

Tunnel (Stéphane Robert), Domaine du
Rhône, Cornas
Syrah
2009, \$67.99, 13.5%
Deep yet clear red magenta inflected purple core of obvious saturation, glowing ruby to magenta with pink shades, sleek surface too, certainly looks impressive in the glass. The nose has a little earthy funk but really it's more tart, linear cranberry, red cherry, red currant fruit, dried flowers, iodine, and fallen leaves and twigs rather than damp dirt, tends to turn more reticent as it gets deeper into your nostrils, lifts but lacks staying power. Medium-bodied, the tannin and acidity tend to freeze it in place, not especially drying but does slow the pace down. The currant, cherry, red plum fruit not particularly long, pulls up during the mid-palate. Dried kindling, back road dirt and tree bark and twigs present, some cracked leather too. Here you do get a palpable white grapefruit citrus kick. Comes across as a wine of integrity, however, not one that is inclined to give immediate pleasure. Some fatty meat would come in handy here. 88

Vissoux, Domaine du
Beaujolais, Cuvée Traditionnelle Vieilles Vignes
Gamay Noir
2010, \$17.99, 12.0%
Squeaky clean ruby-violet in color, while consistent there is an increase in pinker shades around the rims, transparent yet in no way lacking in vibrancy. The nose is more expressive right after opening then tightens some, lots of dusty flower powder and stone dust, dried white citrus pith, suggestion of merde as well as pickle brine, plenty of snap, crackle and pop in the strawberry, raspberry, pomegranate fruit scents, steady enough for an extended dissolve. Medium-bodied, has the acidic and tannic structure to loom larger and keep its feet firmly planted on your tongue. This is not to say that it's hard in feel, here the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit stretches out well and melds into the tart bite of the lemon to grapefruit citrus to strengthen presence. Floral yet it's the saline, peppercorn and pickled aspects which soak in deepest. Not especially minerally but has stone and chalk dryness. At times it makes itself hard to enjoy but it is an extremely honest wine that all but places itself beyond reproach on this score. Best guess is drink sooner rather than later. 88

FRANCE ROSE

Ségriès, Château de
Rhône, Tavel, Rosé
Blend
2010, \$19.99, 14.0%
Incredibly bright and luminous pink to cranberry red in color, unblemished and transparent, fades a good bit around the rims, easily holds your attention. The nose displays youthful snap, crisp red cherry, strawberry, watermelon fruit scents, lemon spritz, mineral powder and then a pinch of cocoa, develops a softer textural creaminess as it warms, eschews complexity for the sake of accessibility and steadiness. Full-bodied, sometimes slows its pace close to a halt, comes across as equally structured by tannin as acidity, in either case dries through the finish with real pucker factor. More mineral and stone here, with the more mixed citrus and floral dust able to push the red cherry, watermelon, cranberry, raspberry, green apple flavors into a semi-subordinate role, not overly dependent on fruitiness to impress. While granting kudos for this, it may also contribute to a certain hollowness at the finish which in turn allows for an uptick in herbaceousness. Good juice which deserves to be paired with some grilled veggies or squid or some shit like that. 50% Grenache, 30% Cinsault, 20% Clairette and Syrah. (Synthetic Cork) 88

ITALY RED

Marchi, Società Agricola Vigneti De
Piedmont, Lessona, Proprietà Sperino
Nebbiolo

2006, \$71.99, 13.5%

Bright crimson red to burnt orange, crystal clear and transparent, sparkling surface, very pretty across the board. Soft and caressing nose of flowers, golden honey, mandarin orange and cherry to raspberry fruit scents, underpinning of dusty brown earth and crushed stone, fills the nostrils rather than stuffs them, steady presence with good lingering ability. In the mouth it's medium-bodied with a cloak of tannin and a broad and flat punch of acidity, both of which provide structure to a wine that remains coquettish nonetheless. Pleasing hard candy aspect to the cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit, even mix of sweet and sour to the orange and lemon citrus. Displays a slight sweep of caramel to honey, helps fill the mid-palate. Tightens the weave as it should through the finish, ruggedly suave. 95% Nebbiolo, 5% Vespolina. 92

Cantamessa (Azienda Agricola Cascina
Moncucchetto), Cantina Giorgio
Piedmont, Freisa d'Asti, La Freisa
Freisa

2009, \$17.99, 13.0%

Garnet red to violet hued core, clean yet dark enough to pool deeply into the glass, the red base holds through the rims where a burnt orange also comes through, quite shiny surface. Wet pebbles and stones meld in the nose with buoyant cranberry, pomegranate, red cherry scents, some lemon custard and floral dew, very full nostril presence but not soft, swerves into a drier, crinkly dustiness as it dissolves. Medium-bodied and spreads across the palate with confidence and steadiness, here the lemon to white grapefruit citrus more upfront while the stoniness is supplemented by a mild grassy bite. Conversely, you get a softer touch of caramel absent in the nose. The pomegranate, cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit more succulent than sweet, slow sour twist through the mid-palate. Although slow to activate, the acidity helps carve out freshness through the end. This is a very user friendly rendition of the grape that remains at a fair price point. you have to look for a reason not to like it. 89

Colli della Murgia
Puglia/Apulia, Mazzaro

Blend

2005

\$17.99, 14.0%

Shiny purple core brightened by a ruby accent, fresh and lively pinkish ruby rims, easygoing saturation which fills the glass. The nose tightens and expands, offering green grass and white grapefruit and then ripe cherry, plum fruit then shifting into earth, cedar and potpourri, the oak knit in and most present as spice and a ground vanilla bean aspect, does lack lift. In the mouth it benefits from a good deal of acidity and tannin to frame and shape the whole. The white grapefruit, herbs and flowers here too lead the way, displays more caramel and softer oak tones upon opening and these recede as the wine opens. Wiry but juicy raspberry, red cherry to blackberry fruit. The power of the citrus keeps the flower blossom element alive through the finish. Alternate sips soften and allow the wine to hug the contours of your palate. Challenges you just the right amount. 50% Aglianico, 50% Cabernet Sauvignon. 89

Serra, Franco
Piedmont, Barbaresco
Nebbiolo

2008, \$25.99, 13.5%

Light violet, more cranberry red in the core, the rims a solid crimson, immaculate and shiny, transparent without appearing in any way dilute. There's a semi-green, leafy quality to the nose, however, there's sufficient candied raspberry, red cherry scents to fill things up, notes of tobacco smoke, mixed sour white citrus, pressed flowers add some dimension, no real oak presence, lots of lift, maybe too much, plays it straightforward and by the book. Medium-bodied, here the tannic backbone and acidity sets the tone, dry with bite, albeit forgiving in its own manner. Leafy, tree bark, tanned leather, more white grapefruit than orange. The cherry, raspberry, strawberry fruit credible, peters out near the end. Nothing wrong here, just raises the specter of questions like is it better to consume a lower level Barbaresco or rather a top end Langhe Nebbiolo? 87

ITALY WHITE

Walch, Elena
Alto Adige/Südtirol
Chardonnay

2010, \$16.99, 13.0%

White to yellow hay in color, moderately clear but does bend light and distort your vision, helps create the appearance of fuller rims, great job of casually filling the glass and capturing your gaze. There's a mellow smokiness to the nose which good-naturedly yields to ginger and cumin spice, mandarin orange zest, way too wiry and taut to allow the floral breeze to fully develop, would rather place the spotlight on the tart pineapple, nectarine, peach, pear fruit scents, throws

in a little twig, tree leaf to field grass for good measure, every sniff grips your nostril hairs. Full-bodied, has enough extract and coverage to make your plate feel fully coated, the acidity level is “plus” but it’s the stone dust, salinity, brine that keeps you awake, again just the right touch of herbal bite. More breadth to the florality here, perhaps a byproduct of the aggressive blood orange, pink grapefruit, lime citrus. Papaya, pineapple, star fruit, apricot, peach fruit lively in its step. Energy to spare. 90

Argiolas

Sardinia/Sardegna, Costamolino

Vermentino

2010, \$14.99, 13.5%

Pale glow to the metallic yellow coloration, not quite fully transparent, the hue holds on decently at the rims. The nose offers anise seed, orange peel, some creamy vanilla notes and soft and gentle peach, melon, pear, papaya fruit scents, a fistful of wildflowers, digs deep into your nostrils before turning more leanly focused, clear purpose throughout. Medium-bodied, alternates between seeming sweet and seeming bitter, the orange to lemon citrus as well as licorice, herbs and underlying minerality set the tone before melon, pear, apple, kumquat fruit smooth out and fill out the middle. Light nuttiness helps give it posture. Loses some of its more offputting bitterness at the end. Weave isn’t that tight per se but holds together well when under scrutiny or pressure. There’s room to nitpick but no real sense to it. 90% Vermentino, 10% unspecified other. 89

Felsina, Fattoria di

Tuscany, Pepestriano

Blend

2009, \$11.99, 13.0%

The glow helps balance out the lightness of the yellow straw hue, close to fully transparent and hueless rims, nothing unattractive nor positively noticeable about it visually. The nose starts off with a billowing smokiness that then turns into violets, vanilla bean, lemon reduction and fresh peach, apricot, pear scents, as it warms there’s more saltiness and minerality yet overall could stand to be more expressive. In the mouth it is medium-bodied and its moderate crispness and acidic frame tones down the caramel, vanilla some, this from an unoaked wine. Quince and pineapple team with nectarine, peach flavors for a zippy fruit profile. The lemon citrus comes with blips of lime or pink grapefruit. As in the nose it’s somewhat short, the major flaw. Otherwise, engaging and light-hearted enough that many should enjoy it. 70% Trebbiano, 15% Chardonnay, 15% Sauvignon Blanc. 87

AUSTRIA ROSE

Michlits, Weingut

Burgenland, Frizzante Rosé

Pinot Noir

2010, \$16.99, 10.5%

Light but bright salmon pink color with a hint of orange, plenty of surface shine, some fade out along the rims but still pretty to look at, the fizz mostly visible short after the pour. The nose has a soft saline to mineral powder quality which pairs nicely with the lemon peel, balances the ripe watermelon, strawberry, raspberry fruit scents, there’s also a sort of creamy mintiness in there as it warms, pleasingly unadorned and easy to grasp. Medium-bodied with a moderate and steady fizziness which at once provides an active mouth presence while also taking some sting out of the acidity and stone to metal notes. The lemon to lime citrus sweet and sour, tempers any excess sweetness in the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry, pomegranate fruit. Mutter of jalapeño juice. Very interesting and easy enough to enjoy, but not as simple as it might seem at first. (Composite Cork) 89

SPAIN DESSERT

Alvear

Montilla-Moriles, Solera 1927

Pedro Ximénez

NV, \$76.99, 16.0%

Clear core, a mix of brown, black and some purple, the rims shift swiftly from brown to orange to broader yellow hues, at times looks like extremely clear and clean rust water or effluvia. While the alcohol is present in the nose there is no getting past the sugary richness of the fig, date, yellow apple, peach fruit scents, the vanilla bean, brown sugar, molasses, cafe con leche, candied orange peel, chestnut components stand erect in your nostrils, manages to possess enough freshness to penetrate while also effortlessly layering on the sweetness, a soft and steady massage. Full-bodied yet without any sense of heaviness, no real tannin nor acidity yet structured by its density. Molasses, brown sugar, butterscotch, honey coated nuts, vanilla and chocolate swirl, literally no dessert descriptor left untouched, blend in the date, golden raisin, fig, dried apricot fruit and it’s explosive in the mouth. Fresher green apple, pear, peach also present. Nutty with lilacs, orange blossom, licorice and a light mentholated touch. Amazingly charming, never forces itself on you, makes you ask it out on another date. 500 ml bottle. 94

PORTUGAL WHITE

Broadbent Selections

Vinho Verde

Blend

2010, \$9.99, 9.0%

Telltale fizz present, bleached white straw color, touch more golden at the core, attractive surface shine, for so little hue fills the glass well. The nose is crisp yet also has pleasing flesh and fills the nostrils, lemon to lime pith, lilac-led flowers, mineral powder, peach, apple, pear fruit, when warmer comes up with a vanilla custard aspect, not simple more so lacks any interest in guile or cunning. Medium-bodied with firmness and a solid acidic punch but no real desire to cut and slash. Stone and streamwater more obvious than metallic minerals, here you get a dry white grapefruit citrus supplemented by lemon. Nice thrust to the apple, pear, apricot, pineapple fruit, again dry but also lively. Retains enough of that florality to buffer the finish. At once easy to chug-a-lug and a versatile dinner table wine. Unspecified percentages of Trajadura, Loureiro, Pedernã (Arinto). (Screwcap) 89

AUSTRALIA RED

Inkberry

New South Wales, Central Ranges, Mountain Estate

Shiraz Cabernet

Blend

2009, \$11.99, 13.9%

Scarlet red to purple hued core, deeply colored through to the more brick red rims, clean and overall more transparent than opaque, immaculate surface. The nose comes off as somewhat mute, there is a nice foundation of cherry, blackberry, Italian plum fruit as well as mint, other sweeter garden herbs and mixed flowers, however, there's no moment of blossoming and it remains folded into itself rather than stretching out. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, on the dry side and nicely balanced, zero ostentation, has a kind of hard candy sweetness to the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit with a lemon curd edge. Moderate mint to menthol pretties it up to a point, here as in the nose the major sticking point is length and follow-through. Not that tannic, maybe a little bit astringent at times, chili pepper and jalapeño surface through the finish. Interesting wine that leaves you with the nagging suspicion that it could have been more were circumstances changed. 60% Shiraz, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 87