

## ***The Hanes Wine Review, July 2015 Edition***

You have to go back to 2013 to find the most recent “back-to-back” monthly editions of *The Hanes Wine Review*. Actually, that happened in the June and July months as well, indeed, it was a May, June, July trifecta. But here we are in July 2015, pounding rosé like crazy to get the review out for **you** even as the ink dries on the June edition. As always, it is about the reader and her needs. Maybe August will be “beer catch up” month chez Hanes.

One thing which was striking was the vast amount of wine consumed which was priced \$19.99 retail or \$20.00 winery direct. This made the monthly “value” section swell quite a bit. It is also becoming clearer that it is high time for Hanes to go back to drinking more white wine. Man does not live by Syrah and Cabernet Franc alone. (Scary thought.) If you see Hanes, open white wine for him please.

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**This month’s big winners...** So far, the best wine Hanes has sampled from Briceland Vineyards, their 2013 Arneis from Mendocino was quite tasty and true in spirit to the wines made from this grape in Piedmont, Italy. Given the prices of the Italian versions, the \$21 for the Californian version seems fair. Unlikely to see any wines from Jacques Lemenicier soon as importing into the USA may not be happening anymore, but his 2012 Cornas as quite nice, a sort of structured delicacy and very clean. And only \$37 which was a great price for what you got. That’s life, maybe Hanes will rediscover this producer down the road.

**The best \$20 and under picks....** Pretty much the best rosé so far of the 2015 summer, may Hanes present the 2014 Thomas-Labaille Sancerre rosé labeled as “l’Authentique.” Zippy fruit, fresh acidity, a total package and excellent value at about \$20. Due to jumps in prices Hanes rarely (if ever) buys current release Chablis these days. Ahh, but when he does he remembers the “good old days.” Young Chablis is indeed Hanes’s cup of tea. Could not resist pulling the trigger on Patrick Piuze’s 2014 entry level wine “Terroir de Chablis” and the \$20 price tag was the clincher. Great wine, kind of playing in the middle ground but satisfying in the end and the “entry drug” it is supposed to be for the region’s wines. Delivering once more, it is the 2014 edition of Amesguren’s white wine Txakoli from Spain’s Basque region labeled as “Ameztoi.” Twenty bucks, low alcohol, stony, citrusy, thirst quenching summer wine. Bravo. A sort of “blind spot” for Hanes has been the wines of Olga Raffault from Chinon in France’s Loire Valley. Always enjoy them but always seem to grab a different bottle while shopping. The proverbial seventh bottle when you promise yourself you are only buying six. But their 2010 “Les Picasses” rouge is wonderful wine, great now with plenty of life ahead. And, as is usually the case with this producer, a fantastic value at around \$19. Never heard of the producer Corsa before, pretty sure it is a co-op or something like that but the 2011 Teroldego labeled as “Sella Ronda Rosso” hits you with all you want from this grape and keeps it soundly in the value range at \$17. Big bruiser and proud of it. Since it clocks in winery direct at \$20, we shall place the joyful 2014 rosé from Lagier Meredith in the value section. A blend of Syrah, Mondeuse, Zinfandel, Malbec, it is rich and fruity and more for sunset sipping than fetishizing what food pairings would be optimal. It is not often one samples Gamay from the Rhône but Domaine Les Alexandrins makes one called “Intuition” and their 2013 is a sturdy wine, good overall tension and does a credible job of expressing both the grape and the place. Rounding out the rosé recommendations is a perennially favored wine among wine geeks, the Chinon rosé from Bernard Baudry. The 2014 version a brawny little fella, kind of needs food to soften its edges. Well priced around \$17.

**And the disappointments...** Was not crazy about the 2014 Sandlands rosé labeled as a “blush” wine, which itself sounded kind of precious. Just didn’t come across as an especially fun wine to drink. Likely fairly priced at \$20. Being a sucker for a good value, Hanes has *really* tried to like Domaine Guion’s wines from Bourgueil, particularly their “Cuvée Prestige” Cabernet Franc as the prices are totally rock bottom. But it’s just not working. Even at \$14 or so, can’t get excited. Dag. Had some high hopes for a producer never sampled previously, yet the 2014 Dolcetto labeled “Dosset” from Ferdinando Principiano was light in body, puckering, and more or less lacking for savor. Not horrible but did not make you chuckle gleefully to yourself for the discovery. About \$17 a bottle.

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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/oldervintages2015.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 July!

## CALIFORNIA RED

Bedrock Wine Co.

Russian River Valley, Papera Ranch, Papera Ranch  
Heritage

Blend

2013, \$38.00, 14.5%

Dark glow in the opaque purple core, equally dark magenta rims, full saturation, youthful vigor. Light cocoa, mocha mixed in with the floral musk in the nose, spicy aspect to the plum, blueberry, cherry fruit scents, there's a weird rubber note which stunts the mixed citrus element. Full-bodied, has a semi-zesty feel due to the higher perceptibility of the acidity as well as from the grapefruit to lemon citrus. You also find an elevated sourness in the blueberry, cranberry, raspberry fruit. Minor touches of caramel, milk chocolate, the oak is not a major factor. You get pine and flowers in moderate doses. It does not feel fruit driven yet that still remains the major draw. Dries out and clenches some at the end otherwise smooth enough. Approximately 60% Zinfandel, 40% Carignane. 89

Harrington Wines

Regional Blend, California, Subrosa

Blend

2013, \$25.00, 14.1%

Beet red to violet in color, high level of saturation does not impair clarity, pure ruby rims. The nose leaps out

at you with juicy raspberry, strawberry, rhubarb fruit scents, some wood smoke behind that as well as wool to leather notes, then spiced orange peel, lavender round things out. Medium-bodied, for its weight it is noticeably smooth, flows effortlessly through the mouth. The acidity brings slight prickle to the attack and provides general contours. Orange, lemon citrus plus mint, more lavender and then thyme, all add pretty nuances. Any "animal" elements diminished here, smidgeon of leather and that's really it. Towards the end you get a lingering dose of milk chocolate. As in the nose, the star is the cherry, strawberry, blueberry fruit, fully ripened until it drips down your chin. Unspecified percentages of Cinsault (Nova Vineyard, Yolo County), Counoise (Nova Vineyard, Yolo County), Grenache (Rio San Benito Vineyard, Gavilan Mountains). 89

Broc Cellars

Alexander Valley

Carignane

2013, \$26.99, 12.8%

Sleek violet to plum red in color, entirely spotless with a super sleek surface, more bright cranberry red rims, powerfully hued. Floral nose with a mist of blood orange and tangerine, sweet molasses grill smoke layered on the cherry, strawberry fruit scents, given the aforementioned you'd think it would be all delicate and nuanced but instead it's a bit blunt and tight, ends with a snap of green grass. Medium-bodied, a mix of lighter weight but sticky texture. Has just enough acidity to push the grapefruit, sour orange citrus into

the front of the line. This in turn leads to a puckering cherry, cranberry, strawberry flavoring, not underripe but in no way “sugary.” Feels like it could have gone more sauvage and developed the underlying leather tones. But went for an undistinguished stone and poor dirt instead. Good consistency of mouthfeel from attack to finish. Plays in the higher register with sizzle and pop. Definitely grows on you. 89

Sandler Wine Co.

Santa Maria Valley, Bien Nacido Vineyard

Pinot Noir

2013, \$36.00, 14.1%

Light ruby-purple color with a gentle filminess, the hue fades ever so slightly towards the rims. The nose is basically raspberry, cherry syrup or liqueur, cola, milk chocolate and a swipe of white grapefruit, more meadowy than herbaceous, overall it is not that expressive if texturally full. Medium to full-bodied, very round and supple, really can't register the acidity. Noticeably sweet, has juicy and syrupy raspberry, strawberry, cherry, blackberry flavors with a heavy floral musk and smidgeon of green apple. Equal dulcet quality to the caramel, vanilla ice cream, butterscotch as well as ginger to clove spice. Mix of orange and lemon sherbet too, everything here is sugary. Odd pickle to the feel at the end. Well made in an extremely friendly and straightforward sense. (Composite cork) 88

Briceland Vineyards

Humboldt County

Pinot Noir

2013, \$31.00, 13.6%

Softly filmy, more ruby to a light rust red than violet in color, looks warm and relaxed in the glass. Wildflowers, cola, pulped oranges and elderberry to blackberry fruit comprise the majority of the nose, there is a strong leafy, earthy funk to it, making for a very thick musk. Full-bodied, heavily layered to the point where the acidity gets submerged. Vanilla, whipped cream and caramel along with that cola create a fountain soda character. It then segues to a peppery bite and then that wet, leafy herbaceousness, which mind you in no way has a green, bitter bite. That said, plenty of sourness in the cherry, cranberry, strawberry fruit. Spiking licorice at the end, spiced orange peel too. Tangy and rich, not that much finer nuance. 87

## CALIFORNIA WHITE

Briceland Vineyards

Mendocino County, Spirit Canyon Vineyard

Arneis

2013, \$21.00, 13.6%

A mild gauziness holds it steady in the glass, strong greenish tint to an otherwise yellow straw base, transparent rims. Quite nutty nose, bodaciously lemony notes, crisp and crackling pear, green skin fruit plus peach skin, a few moments of cinnamon, has a mineral water element which continues to refreshen things as needed. Full-bodied, clings to the mouth pores, sappy. The acidity pleasantly props it up now and then but not a major factor. The nuttiness retains its primary position here, more raw nuts than grilled. Grapefruit blends into the lemon which increases sourness. However, an underlying layer of whipped cream evens things out. Apricot, pear, green melon flavors consistent throughout, good erectness. Shows better pacing when chilled. (Composite Cork) 89

Cowan Cellars

Regional Blend, North Coast

Bel

Blend

2013, \$22.00, 12.0%

Glowing golden color, gauzy like staring into the sun, layers well into the glass which in turn firms up the rims. Mint, pressed flowers, orange blossom and then vanilla fudge most prominent in the nose, there's a mineral smokiness which distracts you from registering the peach, nectarine, star fruit scents, perhaps more oily as it warms. Full-bodied, the extract anchors it in the palate and also makes it a bit heavier than may be desired. Here the pineapple, nectarine, apple, papaya flavors jog to the fore, the oily qualities trump any leaner minerality. The acidity does not seem absent, however, likewise it does not seem all that active. Lemon and orange citrus spread out through the mid-palate and tease out some flower petals at the end. Weird note of butterscotch. Could easily take on dishes served with thicker cream sauces or general density. 75% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% skin fermented Ribolla Gialla. 87

## CALIFORNIA ROSE

Lagier Meredith

Napa Valley, Mount Veeder, Rosé

Blend

2014, \$20.00, 14.1%

Extremely dark for a rosé wine, magenta to watermelon red in hue, strong all the way through the rims, good+ surface shine. The nose has uncommon thickness yet moves nimbly for its size, red cherry, watermelon, strawberry and apple fruit scents juicy and persistent, honey, dusting of cocoa powder, if you are looking for terroir don't look here. Full-bodied, the acidity is like a blunt hammer, bends you to its will rather than slice and dice. Checks the excesses of the fruit while still letting the juicy goodness of that cherry,

raspberry, strawberry fruit run free. Retains a fraction of that cocoa to chocolate thing plus cinnamon spice, however, compensates with more sour lemonade notes. While all this may sound like a wine lacking fine breeding, who cares, it has fun factor in spades. Unspecified percentages of Syrah, Mondeuse, Zinfandel, Malbec. (Composite Cork) 90

Bedrock Wine Co.

Regional Blend, California, Ode to Lulu Old Vine Rosé Blend

2014, \$19.00, 12.3%

Faintly luminous salmon pink hue, easy to see through it, at some angles takes on a metallic orange tint, good brightness. The nose is somewhat neutral, onion skin and cut grass mingle with tightly wound cherry, raspberry, yellow apple scents, minimal citrus presence, light stoniness, it is simply “there.” Full-bodied, good roundness and generally soft and pliant in feel. Acidity is present yet not desirous of the limelight. The focus then goes to the strawberry, red cherry, blueberry fruit flavors and then the semi-tart, sorbet-like lemon citrus. Not really “stony” but something close, you get a general sense of earth but not the specificity of a vineyard site. The plumpness lasts well into the finish as do the main flavors. Pleasing in every respect, no surprises. Unspecified percentages of Mourvèdre, Carignane. (Screwcap: Stelvin) 88

Sandlands

Regional Blend, California, Blush Blend

2014, \$20.00, 12.3%

The liquid is very reflective and limpid, watermelon pink in hue, the lack of intensity creates greater visual consistency core to rims, making the latter appear stronger. The nose features lemon peel, minerally smokiness and a smattering of dried cut grass, it strives for so much purity that it begins to staunch the flow of any strawberry, raspberry, watermelon fruit scents, not lean as much as abbreviated. Medium-bodied, firm mouth feel even with a certain lurking freshly whipped cream element. Clearly going for as much dryness as it can achieve without becoming flavorless, spotlights stone, smoke and parched earth elements. The lemon citrus is sour with momentary nods towards white grapefruit. As in the nose, the cherry, raspberry fruit is there but no more than a single voice in the chorus. The acidity is okay, seems to lose its focus as the wine progresses through the mid-palate. Balanced but not so much fun to drink. 67% Cinsault, 33% Grenache. 87

## FRANCE RED

Lemenicier, Jacques

Rhône, Cornas

Syrah

2012, \$36.99, 13.0%

Smooth surface, hard to imagine a sleeker look, plum purple core, the rims a deep red magenta, handsome wine. The nose gives off violets, beef jerky and burnt grill fat, small if persistent trace of mocha powder, compact thrust in the black currant, black cherry fruit scents, lingers for some time, notable cleanliness overall. Medium-bodied, the tannin has a mildly peppery quality. The acidity coils slowly so as to not interfere with the fluidity of the cherry, blackberry, Italian plum fruit. Floral notes a close second place presence, any white citrus remains in the background. The leather, grill smoke, liquid stone and black olive accents content with a supplementary role. As the wine opens with time the finish gains tanginess while retaining its light touch. Likely to lose weight and intensity and increase transparency over time. 91

Raffault, Olga

Loire, Chinon, Les Picasses

Cabernet Franc

2010

\$18.99, 12.5%

While immaculately clean and transparent the purple core verges on black while the majority of the coloration is fresh blood and rust red, very full all the way to the outer rims. The nose is a double barreled shotgun blast of green pepper and candied cherries, raspberries, slowly admitting of graphite, tar, saddle leather and dried field grasses, has not as of yet developed its broadest array of aromas but what is there is deep and resonant. Medium-bodied, if there is any immediate complaint it is that the tannin comes off as weak, which may impair structure as it ages. Here the rambunctious sweetness of the cherry, currant, plum fruit wins clearly over the yet considerable bell pepper and herbal element. Light minerality adds pep to the tar and damp black earth. Satiny feel, has measured grip and flow. Today it has most of what you want, shows room for upside on a 4-6 year horizon, not sure about beyond that. 91

Puffeney, Jacques

Jura, Arbois

Poulsard

2013, \$32.00, 12.5%

Filmy cranberry red with a mild glow, full and dull ruby red rims, fills the glass well and holds light inside nicely. In the nose herbaceous and saline notes try to fend off the strawberry, rhubarb fruit, lemon pulp and something akin to a piney forest breeze, there's a fluffy

thickness to it feels like velour. Full-bodied in a sneaky way, hovers over the tongue even as it feels like it pushes downward. Well ripened cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit, juicy with sour punctuation. Lemon, meadow grass, stone and poor dirt, fennel and anise too, no one element rises above the rest. Might benefit from a but more pep in the acidity. Overall, smooth and sappy at once, keeps reminding you it is there. Not sure what it could evolve into but it's mighty fine just the way it is. 91

Roches Neuves, Domaine des  
Loire, Saumur-Champigny, Clos de l'Échelier  
Cabernet Franc  
2012, \$44.99, 12.5%

The violet core yields easily to garnet red which then in turn gives way to more bright magenta at the outer rims, immaculately clean and easy to see through. Pungent nose of bell pepper, licorice, citrus peel and, curiously, black olives, although completely ripened the black currant, cherry fruit scents never burst to the fore, while there's a good amount going on it feels like natural evolution has not yet gained the upper hand on winemaking intent. Medium-bodied, velvety mouth feel, quite smooth with complete palate coverage. The plum, cherry, cassis fruit is sweet and one could see it heading into dried fruit concentration one day. Orange and grapefruit citrus likewise more sweet than sour. Its volume, yet lack of heaviness, is impressive. The bell pepper is kept in check, not getting much terroir. Violets and lavender, anise seed. Tannin seems slight, not much acidity. Unevolved, not sure one would be advised to age past medium term. 89

Alexandrins, Domaine Les  
Rhône, Collines Rhodaniennes, Intuition  
Gamay Noir  
2013, \$19.99, 13.0%

Fine clarity, starts out dark purple in the core before shifting to blood red, magenta in the broad rims, fair degree of saturation. Bright and lively nose of cranberry, strawberry, green apple fruit, definitely has an animal fur, merde aspect going on, pleasingly green herbaceous snap, under the funk is more straight up backroad dirt dust and stones. Full-bodied, the thickness of the fruit equalizes the tension between darker black cherry, blackberry and redder cranberry. Here you get a large dose of white grapefruit, this overshadows the grassiness. The acidity cruises at a high level but it is the strength of the tannin which surprises. Much stonier here as well, noticeable drop in the funk. Has strong bones. (Composite Cork) 89

Chatagnier, Aurélien  
Rhône, Côte-Rôtie  
Syrah  
2012, \$65.99, 12.5%

The pure violet core is opaque, the red magenta rims are transparent and freshly glowing, great deal of youthful saturation. The nose shows fine cut, bright white grapefruit citrus, powdery mineral dust and olive pits, the boysenberry, currant fruit is consistently present without flashiness, minor dried beef blood notes, impresses most for its high-toned cut. Light to medium-bodied, assertive acidity sets the tone early, not a wine that you relax and unwind alongside. Huge amount of white grapefruit zest, supplemented by cracked leather, iodine, metallic earth. Feels like it is hung across a broad skeleton, can't quite gain concentration and weight on the palate. The cherry, blackberry, blueberry fruit on the dry side, more tangy than sweet. Has the cleanliness to pair versatily with game and fowl. 88

Guion, Domaine  
Loire, Bourgueil, Cuvée Prestige  
Cabernet Franc  
2012, \$13.99, 12.0%

Average to below average purple in the core, mostly red ruby in the fully hued rims, visually generally unassuming. The nose is not mute but is in large inaccessible, blunt red currant to plum fruit, white grapefruit pith, wet stone, wood to hearth smoke which is close to dominant at times, marked by a lack of bell pepper or grassy accents. In the mouth it is full-bodied, strong tannic skeleton. Still, it pleases via the ripe red currant, cherry fruit, high level of energy. Stone, earth here pairs with cowhide, animal notes, if in no way unclean. The grapefruit recedes until near the finish when it peeks out. Dry, savory ending, plenty of pucker. Sturdy entry level bistro wine. 87

## FRANCE WHITE

Piuze, Patrick  
Burgundy, Chablis, Terroir de Chablis  
Chardonnay  
2014, \$19.99, 12.0%

Highly reflective, vivid green-gold straw color, perfectly transparent, leaps out of the glass. Blunt yet penetrating nose of lemon zest, chalk, seashells and saline, high degree of smokiness, whisper of rose petals, the fruit is on the whole apricot, pear and peach, no guile and more snap than juiciness. Full-bodied, possesses fine acidity, however, due to its weight does lurch some side to side. Obvious strength in the lemon citrus, accents of lime as well. Wet stone, chalk, saline and a light herbal streak. More oomph in the fruit, from green apple, pear to nectarine, peach,

closer to juicy here and at times evokes pineapple. Indistinct spiciness complements the smokiness through the finish. Can't call it "racy" or "linear" but meets the vast criteria for top notch entry level Chablis. 90

## FRANCE ROSE

Thomas-Labaille, Claude et Florence  
Loire, Sancerre  
l'Authentique Rosé  
Pinot Noir

2014, \$19.99, 12.5%

Glowing salmon pink color of solid darkness, clear but not especially shiny, some drop off nearing the rims. The nose is marked mostly by its thickness with the texture of a water balloon, dense strawberry, cherry fruit, lemon pulp, mint and rose water, the minerality inclines towards softer earthiness than sharper smokiness, longlasting nostril presence. Medium-bodied, same basic profile but here the acidity gives it a major jolt. The brings the stone dust, sour lemon to lime citrus, and light herbal qualities to the fore. Wiry ripeness in the cherry, raspberry, watermelon fruit, less "youthful innocence" than in the nose. Gains in the smokiness department too, not enough to interfere with the fruit expression. Complete package, it's "serious" without being a drag about it. (Composite Cork: Diam3) 91

Baudry, Domaine Bernard  
Loire, Chinon, Rosé  
Cabernet Franc  
2014, \$16.99, 13.0%

Shiny salmon pink hue with a deepening orange tint, the rims swiftly turn dilute though, light seems to bounce around inside the glass. Good thickness to the cherry, blackberry scents, fresh yet dense, lends weight to the floral component as well, light lemony touch, needs to warm some before you get steady stone or mineral notes, manages to keep lingering just when you think it is about to peter out. Medium-bodied, firm attack and sets itself strongly in the mouth, has more tannic weave to it than many of its category. Savory lemongrass, thyme and lavender buttress the maraschino cherry to raspberry fruit flavors. Never gets "fruity" yet never feels like "terroir" dominates either. As a result, stays fun while somber enough to acquiesce to the demands of a range of food dishes. Too substantial to chug but the bottle will be steadily drained. (Composite Cork) 90

## ITALY RED

Corsa  
Trentino, Vigneti delle Dolomiti, Sella Ronda Rosso  
Teroldego

2011, \$16.99, 13.0%

So dark the core looks purple one moment, black the next, the rims are garnet red and fully hued to the very edge. The nose is so dense that it comes close to immobility, plum and black currant fruit, peanut shells, bittersweet dark chocolate, witch hazel, savory herbs, stays clean, avoiding earthy or animal like funk, just not a lot happening here past that primary fruit. Full-bodied, very tart and puckering attack, the acidity squeezes the mouth hard. Again, puts a clear spotlight on the plum, cherry, currant fruit, more thickness than liquid juiciness. Buttressed by accents of white grapefruit. Here there is a mineral bite plus a hint of grassiness to go with the herbs. That note of chocolate takes a step back. Finishes long and relentlessly. (Screwcap) 89

Damilano, Azienda Agricola  
Piedmont, Langhe, Marghe  
Nebbiolo

2012, \$16.99, 14.0%

Squeaky clean ruby-red core with a slight orange cast at the rims, fully transparent. Dusty nose of parched brown earth, dirt caked stones and leather to saddle soap, takes some time for the red cherry, plum fruit scents to unwind. Medium-bodied, tangy profile of white grapefruit, cut grass, tar, leather and something akin to pine needle. The acidity and tannin both have strength without restraining the natural juiciness of the cherry, raspberry fruit, even presents some apple to almost banana notes. The finish features potpourri and minor swipes of cocoa. Well-structured and drinkable now, will certainly hold on for the medium term. 88

Principiano, Azienda Vitivinicola Ferdinando  
Piedmont, Dosset Vino Rosso  
Dolcetto

2014, \$16.99, 10.5%

Filmy to cloudy ruby-violet hued core, the magenta rims fall short of turning pink, has more warm glow than shine. Lean and focused nose with an earthy funk, sour orange to lemon citrus, cranberry and cherry scents, dried grasses, overall it is most marked by its volatility. Light-bodied, quite acidic and tart, no problem inducing a pucker. Retains that merde, damp earth, animal fur aspect, takes on an even higher pitch via the grapefruit citrus. The cherry, cranberry, strawberry fruit is succinct but not weak, simply no match for the more savage elements. Dry mouth feel plays up its grassiness, yet it is not green per se. if you

like a funky, coiled puncher of a wine, this could be worth a shot. 86

## ITALY SPARKLING

Lini & Figli, Oreste  
Emilia-Romagna, Emilia IGP Frizzante, Lambrusco  
Rosso Labrusca Lini 910  
Lambrusco  
NV, \$18.99, 11.0%  
Heavy, opaque purple core, equally thick scarlet to dried blood red rims, quite blockish appearance. Penetrating nose of sour plum, black cherry fruit, modicum of indecisive loose stone dust, out of the blue comes sharp green apple notes, dome dried and pulped oranges, funny how it is at once dry and evidently ripe. Medium-bodied, very firm mouthfeel, quite dry and sturdy, has both tannic and acidic thrust. Equally balanced cherry, blackberry, raspberry fruit and lemon peel on one side, on the other stream pebbles and sand. Faint waft of pressed flowers in the background. Square shouldered approach tends to downplay nuance but this thankfully distracts you from the lack of complexity. The pétillance is minor, maybe less than average for the wine category. Moves forward authoritatively through the palate. (Composite Cork) 88

## SPAIN RED

Ilurce, Bodegas y Viñedos  
Rioja, Rio Madre  
Graciano  
2013, \$8.99, 14.0%  
Rich purple core of clean, shiny opacity, dark red magenta rims, the high level of hue saturation is what you'd expect from the grape. The nose highlights baked ham and cloves, fully ripened plums and cherries, splash of white grapefruit, very dewy and moist nostril presence, clings for some time. Full-bodied, has all that clove and ham accompanied by a mouthful of gingerbread. Puts a spotlight on grapefruit citrus. Tart nature to the cherry, plum, black currant fruit. A floral lift near the finish helps open it up. Loses weight and intensity at the end due to increasing dryness. The spiciness is the full punctuation. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 88

## SPAIN WHITE

Amesguren  
Getariako Txakolina, Ameztoi Txakoli  
Hondarribi Zuri  
2014, \$19.99, 11.0%  
Super pale greenish hay color, completely transparent with hueless rims, right after the pour small telltale

trace of bubbles gather inside the glass. Sour nose of apple, pear fruit with a skin to fruit pit character, chalky dustiness and smokiness than a mild creaminess thereafter, a few whipped cream notes, the mixed citrus accents are not distinct but are brisk. Light-bodied, the very active acidity increases its palate presence. Wet stone, chalk and quinine notes predominate, dry yet not parching, more like "not juicy." You get a clearer expression here of white grapefruit and lemon, again super sour. As it warms a floral dimension releases as well as adds apricot, peach to the green apple base. High level of mineral water residue at the finish. Keeps the blade well-honed. (Screwcap) 89