

The Hanes Wine Review, March 2008 Edition

OK, so Houston, we have a problem. After eight years or so of writing some kind of brief introductory article or rant pertaining to wine before the presentation of the main body of tasting notes I have run out of ideas. That's right, I can't think of anything to say about wine that I haven't already said or isn't so technical and specific as to be of minimal interest to the bulk of the readership. Hell, last month I smushed three different concepts into one article for the sake of "being concise" and even that barely worked. I've never worked in a vineyard or winery so don't have firsthand experience to share from that world. I have no interest in writing fluff pieces about some rockstar winemaker or rich folks who just bought a vineyard in order to sell \$250/bottle Cabernet. If I did I might have pursued a career as an "official" wine writer for pay. But that shit's lame.

Here at ye olde *The Hanes Wine Review* it's all for free. No deadlines, no editorial oversight, no nagging wife. I can write whatever I want and you, dear reader, can read whatever you want. Or not. Anyway, the point is, see, what's there to cover about wine that has not already been worked over ad nauseam? Gee, wine is too expensive. Here's the wines of Country X or Region Y. These are some of the basics of winemaking. These are some of the basics of selling wine. Ohmigod, what about global warming? Hanes, how do I pick wines for a wedding? All done. Can't think of a damn new thing. I can always just bitch and moan in general, I'm good at that. But that won't prove especially educational.

I really do feel for the professional writers who have to come up with article ideas when it's all pretty much played out. I mean, this week I read a decent article on chaptalization but, in the grand scheme of things, no one really cares about chaptalization as long as the wine tastes good. And the few folks who *do* care will probably spend more time ripping apart the article's finer points than learning anything new. Most of the time finding a new topic or fresh angle is all but impossible and you end up regurgitating what other people have already written, hoping no one notices the sameness of the articles. And, really, I spend enough time regurgitating after the second bottle to try and beat "the pros" at their own game.

So, any great ideas for poor ole Hanes? For me, drinking is hard enough without the thinking!

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This month's big winners... Hanes is on the fence about 2006 Beaujolais wines, just have to take them on a case-by-case basis. Which is easier to do as the prices are shooting up for these wines too, making them less of a "fill the cart and taste later" category. Anyway, Vissoux's 2006 Moulin-à-Vent called "Les Trois Roches" is the shit. The heralded 2004 vintage for Barbaresco and Barolo begins to hit the store shelves and Hanes had a hard time not snagging a bottle of the basic Barbaresco from the esteemed cooperative Produttori del Barbaresco. Not a wine to make old bones but simply delightful and a relative steal at \$28. Said it before and will say it again, Turley's best Zin these days is the Ueberroth Vineyard bottling. \$48 is a lot to pay but Hanes was born a sucker. Probably not gonna lay out the \$75 for the Hayne Vineyard bottling next time around, though. Hexamer's 2006 QbA Riesling called "Quarzit" from the Nahe region in Germany is nice wine, Hanes assumes this will be the final vintage priced under \$20. "Recommending" is probably a bit too strongly put but the two Oregon Pinot Noirs tasted this month, from Montinore Estate and Benton-Lane, seem like the best you're going to find in the high teens to low twenties pricewise. So, if this is what you like to slurp, check them out. Never before tried a wine from Friulian producer Vigneti Le Monde but their 2005 Refosco had a lot going on for \$18 and can easily be recommended. From the other end of Italy's there Valle dell'Acate's 2006 Frappato from Sicily which is indeed worth the \$19 tariff.

The best \$15 and under picks... If you can find it and if you can figure out the label, Les Vins Contés (aka O. Lemasson) has made a delish Gamay Noir from the Loire, a simple "Vin de Table" called "Le P'Tit Rouquin." The bottle Hanes tried is the "1ère Mise" and you may find the "2ème Mise" instead. If you're not in therapy you won't be able to tell the difference and your \$13 or so will be well spent. It's been good in the past and not too again, Monpertuis's 2005 100% Counoise grape wine from the Vin de Pays du Gard is a slammung value for \$12. You could hurt yourself drinking it too fast. 43% of what Hanes drank this month was in the \$15 to \$25 range so few sub-\$15 values of note. Sorry, sorrow.

And the disappointments... In a fit of desperation Hanes purchased a bottle of the 2006 Thorn-Clarke "Shotfire" Shiraz from the Barossa. Bad choice. Shit was undrinkable and the totally unmentionable came to pass — Hanes poured most of the bottle down the drain. Ouch. Rochioli's 2006 Estate Chardonnay was as blah a Cali Chard as Hanes has had in awhile. Luckily for Rochioli they still have plenty of brand name recognition and selling the wines based on inherent quality is besides the point. Doesn't "suck" but Hanes expects more from Alsatian producer Trimbach's higher end Riesling "Cuvée Frédéric Émile" than delivered in the 2001 version. The \$33 was a splurge and Hanes ended up all wet. Heidi "Schrock the Monkey" usually makes the top Furmint in all of Austria. Sadly, the 2006 is not the best effort. Sniff. Not bad wine but for a \$26 Furmint you want the wine to stand up and be counted.

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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/oldervintages2008.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 March!

CALIFORNIA RED

Turley
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Ueberroth Vineyard
Zinfandel
2005, \$48.00, 16.0%
Very rich purple stays free of blackness and complete opacity, thanks in part to the heavily saturated magenta rims which work inwards like they own the joint. The nose couldn't be any juicier yet does not come across as overripe, an avalanche of raspberry, blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit with a patina of eucalyptus and forest pine, lighter still are the orange zest and milk chocolate, it's just the pure expression of fruit and it makes you not care. In the mouth it's the same except there's a nice solid framework of tannin to focus the fruit, here the blackberry, blueberry, cherry fruit comes with a semi-tart tang. This aided by a broader orange to lemon citrus component as well as mentholated lift. Hints at a stonier, earthier side that remains submerged in the fruit. Tightens nicely through the finish, ends with an exclamation point. The true exuberance of Zinfandel here. 93

Marietta
Sonoma County
Zinfandel
2005, \$18.99, 15.3%
The strong crimson red influence enlivens the dark purple core, the rims stay more red than ruby, well saturated. Smooth, creamy oak inundates the nose, all coconut custard, vanilla ice cream, caramel and honey, behind that you just might find some semi-sweet raspberry, blackberry fruit, eucalyptus and mint, might. Full-bodied, of jammy consistency and heavy as lead, this is the one for lovers of BIG Zinfandel. Not clumsy nor unwieldy, just big, the acidity tries to stand up but gets smacked down by raspberry, blueberry, blackberry fruit and, duh, caramel, molasses, butter, vanilla oak cream. Orange extract, menthol, eucalyptus, ginger in effect too. Again, given what it possesses balance and a sense of what it wants to achieve. It's your thang, do what you want to do. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Rosenblum Cellars
Regional Blend, California, Appellation Series Kathy's
Cuvée
Viognier

2006, \$15.99, 14.2%
Attractive depth in the golden color, holds through the rims, this aided by a translucent layering below the surface. Mild bitter nut touch to the nose at first, then juicy tangerine to lemon citrus notes, the floral dimension seems bottom-heavy and not apt to spread, this improves as it warms, the peach, apricot, pear fruit speaks succinctly and that's that. Full-bodied and dense enough that you sense a dip as it clenches around the mid-palate. White grapefruit the dominant citrus flavor here, this provides the brightness the lilacs and violets can't. It's much drier than sweeter yet can't shake a sensation of powdered sugar. The acidity comes at you from haphazard angles. The pear, peach, apricot, apple fruit more mixed together than distinct, the better for it as gains more staying power. Good wine, just wish it danced more nimbly. Grapes sourced from Fess Parker Vineyard, Ripken Vineyard. (Synthetic cork) 86

Rochioli, J.
Russian River Valley, Estate
Chardonnay
2006, \$44.99, 14.5%
Greenish streaks appear through the white straw color base, not that much shine plus the rims fully lose all hue. Powdered sugar nose, almost confectionary, pear, peach, apple soup, cinnamon spice and lemon drops, flowery as well, while there's breadth it lacks depth and staying power even if there's some heaviness. Full-bodied, round but not especially soft as there's an odd lurch of acidity to stiffen it rather than focus it. Very pear oriented, the peach, apricot, apple flavors a distant second. The omnipresent clove, cinnamon, ginger spice and orange, lemon juice provide a familiar foundation. The florality never "blooms" per se allowing for heightened bitter nuttiness through the finish. There's a good assortment of components yet they are not fully cohering. 86

OREGON RED

Montinore Estate
Willamette Valley
Pinot Noir
2006, \$17.99, 13.8%
Super light red-garnet color with an orange influence, consistent to the rims, even if successively lighter, transparency its hallmark. Sour, earthy nose of wet grass, cough syrup, grapefruit pith, wet fallen leaves, credible stoniness too, the cherry, raspberry, strawberry scents have more edge than flash, no makeup applied here. Light-

bodied with seeming short, just naturally easy and smooth. The cranberry, raspberry, strawberry fruit stays fun even with its tart bite. Displays a spoonful of cocoa powder, this balanced out by a sprinkle of white pepper. The acidity starts to have an effect towards the finish, allowing it to end on an earthier note. [Synthetic cork] 88

Benton-Lane
Willamette Valley
Pinot Noir
2006, \$21.99, 14.1%

Faint cloudiness in the ruby-purple color, has a natural consistency from the core to the rims with minimal hue loss. Spice and orange peel lift the raspberry, red cherry, strawberry scents an inch off the ground, grassiness keeps it hovering, but in the end it doesn't quite go anywhere. Medium-bodied, initial sourness in the raspberry, cherry flavors goes against its general liqueur-like qualities as well as the cocoa powder component. Moments of cola nut and lemon drop too. The herbaceous aspect lesser here, more dried in feel and apt to blow off in the wind. On the whole the tannins are fatter than the acidity and keep things anchored. Even if it could use additional fluidity and smoothness remains plenty serviceable. [Screwcap] 86

FRANCE RED

Vissoux, Domaine du
Beaujolais, Moulin-à-Vent, Les Trois Roches
Gamay Noir
2006, \$23.99, 13.0%

Crystal clear and incredibly consistent ruby-violet color, shimmers in the glass, hard to imagine how it could be prettier. Comes at you in waves in the nose, alternating between clinging and lifting, features a full bushel's of raspberry, strawberry fruit and oranges, the flowers and stoniness seesaw about, a few pinches of baking spices released here and there. Full-bodied, doesn't strike you as that acidic but the tannins frame things quietly right from the start. While not jammy, there's a thicker consistency to the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit here which slows down its progression through the mouth. The orange to lemon citrus flashes through in a second, a murmur of cocoa powder lasts longer. Too plump right now for much stone or earth to reach the surface. No reason to not suck it down with reckless abandon but will probably more complete in 4-6 years or so. 90

Vins Contés (Olivier Lemasson), Les
Loire, Vin de Table Le P'Tit Rouquin 1ère Mise
Gamay Noir
2006, \$12.99, 12.0%

Simple deep purple core, neither light nor extracted in appearance, the rims shade about evenly between scarlet red and ruby. Resonant strawberry, raspberry fruit in the nose while deriving lift from crushed stone and dusty ash elements, more floral than citrusy, very steady presence without standing still, can imagine more separation among the scents with additional bottle time. Medium to full-bodied, has a velvety texture than really grows on you, great viscosity. The raspberry, strawberry, cranberry fruit completely ripe without sugariness, also without tart bite. Here in the mouth the acidity cranks up the lemon citrus to outpoint the flowers. Strong leather and merde influence combine with the stones and ash to give it a solid grounding, little by way of herbaceousness to foul up the guileless pleasure. Remains broad through the finish

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nothing even slightly hesitant about it. What the hell more could you want for the price? [Synthetic cork] 90

Monpertuis, Domaine
Rhône, Vin de Pays du Gard, Vignoble de la Ramière
Cépage Counoise
Counoise
2005, \$11.99, 13.0%

The purple core is dark, more rich from blackness than brighter violet hue, this fakes the flat brick red rims seem more dilute than they really are. The nose effusively drips completely ripe raspberry, blackberry, cherry fruit, only allows for momentary bursts of barnyard mud, tar or orange peel accents, keeps coming back to the abundant fruit. Medium to full-bodied, would certainly be the latter were it not for the aggressiveness of the acidity, a formidable opponent to the raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit which lives up to the advance billing of the nose. Here white grapefruit mixes with the orange citrus to provide more sweet and tangy fun. Freshly tanned leather, tar and field stones remind you it's actually from a specific place, not just a fruit factory. Remarkably clean finish, all the sweetness gone with an echo of palate pressure on the tongue. You could kill a bottle by yourself in five minutes. 90

Esmonin, Domaine Sylvie
Burgundy, Gevrey-Chambertin
Pinot Noir
2005, \$38.99, 13.0%

Light violet to red-ruby in color, glowing magenta rims, with any substantial light turns mostly transparent. Big, rich nose of primary raspberry, blackberry, black cherry fruit, minor notes of leather, matted grasses and orange infused dark chocolate, thick enough to impede lift. Medium-bodied, more dense than heavy, has a velvety grip which slows down the progression immensely. More minerals and ash here, drawing out more vibrant lemon to orange citrus. The blackberry, black cherry fruit is the dominant force in the mouth as well. While comes across as a bit repetitive and lacking in nuance, it's more a testament to its abundant raw material than general lack. 89

Chave Selection, Jean-Louis
Rhône, Saint-Joseph, Offerus
Syrah
2005, \$26.99, 13.5%

Warmth pervades the red-violet core, wide and straightforward red rims. Mildly candied feel to the nose, almost pruneey, big floral musk too, not a lot else going on, becomes somewhat mute after a few secs. Medium-bodied, lots of grip on the attack which adds to the perceptible weight, the tannins not so drying but do add to the grounding sensation. Leather, rawhide, grass also play in the heavier, bass driven range. Conversely, ground stone and minerals plus dried lemons give it some speed yet not enough to truly freshen the semi-sour red cherry, raspberry fruit. Clenches a touch near the finish line. 87

Solitude, Domaine de la
Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône
Blend
2005, \$13.99, 14.0%

Pure red-ruby to violet in color, consistent throughout, losing barely half a shade along the rims. Orange spritz, wildflowers, licorice and sweet herbs activate the nose without ratcheting the energy level too high, the raspberry,

red cherry scents much quieter than the rest, more perfume than body. Light to medium-bodied, too tannic/acidic for the level of strawberry, raspberry fruit possessed. Chocolate, mint, lemon, rosemary, sage combine for a nice array of flavors, too bad your palate is too numb to register them. Has a distinct stony side as well, just never fully blossoms. Short enough that you need to take repeated sips to maintain presence. Unspecified percentages of Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault, Mourvèdre. 85

FRANCE WHITE

Trimbach
Alsace, Cuvée Frédéric Émile
Riesling
2001, \$32.99, 12.5%

The golden base showing a distinct darkening into orange copper sort of shades, deep enough to hold steady through the rims, much more translucent than transparent. The nose presents the expected fresh tire rubber cornerstone, segues into mint, roasted orange peels, violets and flaky pie crust, paucity of apricot, pear, melon fruit scents not especially balanced out by terroir-like notes. Full-bodied, muscular and well-packed, to the point where movement isn't easily achieved. The rubber component pales here before the edginess of the orange to grapefruit citrus, the acidity is not a blunt instrument more like a machete that hasn't been sharpened in many a year. The pie crust kept to a minimum, however, the peach, apricot, apple fruit not giving you much pie. Gets prettied up by the violets and mint. It's competently woven but lacks the extra gear. 88

Villard, François
Rhône, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes, Les Contours de DePoncins
Viognier
2006, \$34.99, 13.5%
Semi-flat white straw color, layers decently at the core but fades towards the rims. Orange marmalade, mint, violets make for a big, blowzy nose, almost achieves a whipped cream texture, nothing shy about the apricot, peach, pear scents. Full-bodied, most of the texture is pushing outwards creating a somewhat false impression of hollowness. Lemon custard trumps vanilla, however, neither favors the mint, floral aspects. There's some streamwater, stone freshness to save the day and enliven the peach, pear, red apple fruit. Not lead-footed but not possessed of that much lift either. Pleasing is about right. 87

ITALY RED

Produttori del Barbaresco
Piedmont, Barbaresco
Nebbiolo
2004, \$27.49, 14.0%
Spotlessly immaculate garnet-violet in color, just starting to hint at orange around the rims, transparent and light easily bounces off the surface. The nose starts out demure and then builds intensely providing rose musk, wet leather, tar and robust cherry, strawberry, raspberry scents, rises up high and then slowly circles downwards again before fading. Medium-bodied, much softer and silkier than you'd expect, has a steady tannic presence without a real drying effect. The tar, lemon peel, licorice, rose elements most obvious at first but after that it's pretty much all raspberry, strawberry, cherry fruit.

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Produces an herbaceous streak past the mid-palate. Delicious, compels you to drink it. It could age, sure, but only mid-term. So, why not drink up? 90

Vigneti Le Monde, Azienda Agricola
Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Grave del Friuli Refosco dal Peduncolo Rosso
Refosco
2005, \$17.49, 12.5%
Ultra-clean perfectly black core which only shows violet on the way to the deeply saturated red-magenta rims, gleams like a gemstone. The nose comes across as somewhat too dense to really let the florality, white citrus and sweet cherry, raspberry fruit dance about, the stony earth, chocolate powder and tree bark scents feel more at place. Medium-bodied, as friendly as the cherry, plum to prune and raspberry fruit is, it's the structure which really catches your attention. Tannins coat the palate during the attack which distracts you from the more powerful acidity, it's the latter that dominates the experience past the mid-palate to the finish. White grapefruit to orange pith clings to your mouth pores, anchoring the floral aspect. More and more tar, stoniness and something like mineral-laden cave water accretes with time. Able to remain fluid in spite of its superlative grip, an achievement in itself. These days has to count as a pretty good value. (Synthetic Cork: Nomacorc) 89

Valle dell'Acate, Cooperativa Agricola
Sicilia, Vittoria Frappato, Il Frappato
Frappato
2006, \$18.99, 13.0%
Bright ruby-red in color with a purple tinge to just darken the core a drop, a slight fade around the rims, perfectly clear throughout. While there's a stony dustiness and pinch of powdered grass in the nose, what most grabs your attention is the candied strawberry, raspberry fruit which is not so juicy as to lose the crispness of the overall feel in your nostrils, the mixed citrus accents lend sparkle. Medium-bodied, lighter during the attack then really in nicely by the mid-palate. The acidity scrubs all the flavors into freshness, starting with the strawberry, raspberry, watermelon fruit on to the grapefruit, lemon citrus. Remains fairly herbaceous, while this adds to the brightness it may bother some imbibers. The dusty stones and earth come out at the end, it remains fairly long for its general weight but turns successively drier towards the end. Delivers lots of personality for the price. 88

Giacosa, Azienda Agricola Carlo
Piedmont, Barbaresco, Montefico
Nebbiolo
2004, \$47.99, 14.0%
Burnt red to crimson strongly influences the purple core, the red brightens quite a bit around the rims, attractive clarity on the whole. Heavy on the flowers on the nose, licorice comes through next, more herbaceous than driven by orange zest or tar, it's curious how the cherry, raspberry scents get lost in the shuffle. Light to medium-bodied, the acidity really brings leanness to it. Tea leaf, grass, orange/lemon peel most prevalent, no real bass notes. There's minor tar, licorice or rose petals, yet to be developed. The tannins take some time to show, another curiosity. Touch of roasted coffee or chocolate notes at the end. Changes a lot after opening and aeration, not sure how to judge its chameleon-like nature. 87

Terre Nere, Tenuta delle
Sicilia, Etna Rosso, Guardiola
Nerello Mascalese
2005, \$36.99, 14.0%

Highly consistent light violet to dark ruby, barely shifts to purer red at the rims, completely spotless. The nose is round and not as hollow as much as focused on pressing outwards, offers ash alongside something akin to rusted metal and meat fat, like when you first pull the grill out in the spring, the cherry to raspberry scents lean and wiry. Light to medium-bodied, strong powdery tannins coat the tongue with ease and deaden the attack. Stays dry and the cherry, strawberry, raspberry fruit never catches hold. Dried lemons, stone pebbles, volcanic ash and a light herbaceousness take up most of the space. Keeps tightening as it nears the finish. Perhaps too young, more perhaps this is it. 86

Altemura, Masseria
Puglia/Apulia, Salento
Aglianico
2005, \$15.99, 13.0%

Some violet in the core but it's mostly blood red to scarlet in hue, the rims fully red, attractive clarity throughout without seeming too light and transparent. Evanescent nose of sour cherry, raspberry, cranberry fruit and dried shoe leather, mutter of flowers and mixed citrus, very active as if trying to distract you from its lack of heft. Light-bodied, big puckering sensation through the attack, full bore onslaught of acidity and tannin with the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit running for the hills without a glance backwards. Given its weight it's hard for the tar, leather and earth to accrete. The lemon and white grapefruit citrus has a better time of it, as does the meadowy or hilly grasses. Comes up short at the end, a product of its lack of body and momentum. What the spank are they doing growing Aglianico in Puglia? Buy Campanian! 85

ITALY WHITE

Bruna, Azienda Agricola
Liguria, Riviera Ligure di Ponente, Le Russeghine
Pigato
2006, \$26.99, 13.0%

Its translucency fully distorts light and concentrates the basic gold color, while it fades some at the rims now, has an appearance which suggests taking on ochre hues with age. The nose has the sort of freshness which could be confused with emptiness, all streamwater, smooth pebbles and light floral breeze, the wedge of lemon outlasts any apple, pear, apricot fruit scents. Medium-bodied, close in presentation to the nose as there's more sheer weight and pressure than actual flavor. Here more lemon water and dried flowers than mineral water or stones although there's surely more of the latter than apricot, peach, yellow apple fruit. The acidity doesn't add bite, just more polish for the sleek surface. With time there's a mildly discernible nuttiness. So demure not sure it would be better with or without food. 88

ITALY DESSERT

Santa Lucia, Azienda Agricola
Puglia/Apulia, Gazza Rubina
Aleatico
2004, \$19.99, 16.5%

Shades of brown and yellow reddish base color, very little purple at the core, very close to full transparency. Orange and lime citrus sorbet with sweet raspberry and strawberry and a thick coating of cinnamon, follows through with a pungent floral perfume which adds to the lift. Medium-bodied, it clings like glue without gaining an ounce of heaviness. There's an ashy sort of smokiness which streamlines the sweetness in the strawberry, raspberry, red cherry fruit, extending it and your enjoyment of it. The sweet baking spices pale before the juiciness of zesty orange, lemon, lime citrus. As in the nose the residue at the finish almost completely flowers. Very pleasing with just the right touch of complexity. 375 ml bottle. 89

GERMANY WHITE

Hexamer, Weingut Helmut
Nahe, Meddersheimer, Rheingrafenberg, Quarzit QbA AP
#1
Riesling
2006, \$18.99, 10.0%

Simple green-gold color, as the surface shines it more so layers deeply into the glass. Generously approachable nose of lemonade, limeade, violets, wet chalk, freshly picked apricot, peach, pear scents, so airy and open it dances in your nostrils. Medium-bodied, the acidity not sharp but gets the mouth watering for the tangy lime, tangerine, lemon citrus as well as the streamwater, washed stones. The only things slightly heavy is the peach, apricot, nectarine fruit, even if this element never becomes too sweet. That said, a light honeyed quality comes and goes. On the whole, it's crisp and lively even while it keeps a soft, jolly tummy to tickle. (Screwcap) 90

AUSTRIA WHITE

Steininger, Weingut
Kamptal, Kabinett
Grüner Veltliner
2006, \$13.99, 12.5%

Golden brown straw in color, borderline filmy like a slightly dirty window, the hue lasts completely through the rims. Reticent nose of grapefruit pith, dried flowers and stream pebbles, it's not a lack of concentration nor ripeness but more so an extra scrubbed cleanliness which shortens the presence of the apricot, peach, melon fruit scents. Medium-bodied with very good traction, full grip from attack through finish. The mineral water element lends it a certain effervescent feel and cleanliness, sets the stage well for the keen edged white grapefruit, tangerine citrus and pepper notes. No lightweight the peach, apricot, nectarine, pineapple fruit, no showoff either, steady backbeat. Expands well as it progresses, delivers a mild grassiness which never distracts. 88

Schrock, Weingut Heidi
Burgenland, Rust
Furmint
2006, \$25.99, 13.0%

Little yellow to white straw hay in color, clear without being perfectly transparent, given the paucity of hue in the core the rims look fine too. Unusually simple nose without a firm handshake, the lemon/lime citrus sweeter than zesty, as floral as stony with a creaminess that at times fakes you into smelling vanilla bean, the pear, peach, red apple fruit completely acceptable. Medium-bodied, the acidity tries to knock you off your feet rather than cut your legs off. Soft

drink sweetness to the lime, lemon flavors, brings the violet to lilac flowers into a sweeter spectrum too. Presents a measure of wet slate, stone and inert minerals, not much bite coming from these elements. It's a pleasure to drink but it nags at you that there's not more nervousity. Damn Klonapins. (Screwcap) 88

SPAIN SPARKLING

Monistrol, Marqués de Penedès, Mas de Monistrol MPX Cava Brut Rosé Blend

NV, \$8.99, 12.0%

Pale pink color, smallish but active bubbles, fades a good deal around the rims. Good mineral dust in the nose, light strawberry, watermelon and lemon peel scents, more pops than lifts, very light presence overall. Medium-bodied, dry with a sustained burst of acidity. The strawberry, raspberry, green apple fruit has some sweetness upfront yet this falls off with alacrity. Solid foaminess without overdoing the effervescence to hide flaws. Clean enough finish, nice for the absence of flaws as much as presence of positive attributes. Not much more to say. 70% Monastrell, 30% Pinot Noir. 84

PORTUGAL RED

Alqueve (Sociedade Agricola Pinhal da Torre), Quinta do Ribatejo, Vinho Regional Ribatejano Tradicional Blend

2005, \$11.99, 13.0%

The effulgent violet core has enough ruby-red mixed in to keep it in harmony with the garnet to bright brick red rims, no blemishes along the surface. Buttered popcorn and caramel pair up in the nose with floral perfume to pave the way for juicy raspberry, red cherry fruit, after that a splash of sweet spices and orange peel and little else. Medium-bodied, that buttered popcorn, vanilla cream and caramel dominate the palate too but this moderates some as the semi-dusty tannins accrue and it aerates sufficiently to allow for grass, dry brown earth, orange peels and cinnamon sticks to show. The raspberry, strawberry, red cherry fruit never a major component but sticks around to the end. Fairly innocuous, saved in large part by its dryness and subsequent erect posture. No problem finishing the glass. Unspecified percentages of Touriga Nacional, Tinta Roriz, Trincadeira, Periquita. 85

SOUTH AFRICA WHITE

Mulderbosch Stellenbosch Sauvignon Blanc 2007, \$19.99, 12.5%

Fully transparent and bleached of color save for a dilute yellow-green hay cast, average reflectivity. Chili pepper, bell pepper and freshly cut grass give the nose cut and very good penetrating power, possesses sufficient mineral dust to elicit a sneeze or two, solid white grapefruit citrus but not much going on by way of pear, pineapple, apple, nectarine fruit scents. Full-bodied, carries its weight well, nimble yet with grip. The rawness of the chili pepper element toned down here by the sweetness of the white to pink grapefruit citrus and rounder peach, pear, yellow apple, apricot fruit. The acidity isn't very keen but comes across as naturally expressed. The sour herbaceousness holds off until the very last, more expressive mineral water

and iron flecks. Keeps after you without tiring you out. (Synthetic cork: Diam) 89

AUSTRALIA RED

Thorn-Clarke South Australia, Barossa Valley, Shotfire Shiraz

2006, \$19.99, 14.3%

Pure jet black core of perfect opacity, deep ruby to red magenta rims, sleek and spotless surface with high reflectivity. Plastic, literally, in the nose before mute currant, blackberry scents, a smidgeon of mint, orange citrus and hay, nothing happening here. Full-bodied, all herky-jerky from obvious over-manipulation, the mad scientist must have gotten bored with Frankenstein and bought a winery instead. No integration with a sandpaper texture, there's juiciness in the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit but zero sense of flow. Creamy milk chocolate, mint and eucalyptus attempt to put some makeup on but too little, too late. Semi-astringent finish. Purchased in a moment of sheer desperation. (Screwcap) 82

AUSTRALIA WHITE

Kilikanoon South Australia, Clare Valley, Watervale Mort's Block Riesling

2007, \$18.99, 12.5%

White to yellow straw in color, has a gauzy translucency to it, helps keep the rims full. The nose comes across as a little overshaved or planed down, like it got bone as well as flesh, violets, lemon custard, chalk, sand and white pebbles, borderline smoky so that any pear, apple, peach scents smothered in the crib. Medium-bodied and uses what body it has to maximal effect, firm mouth entry and no change thereafter. More lemon citrus and mineral water here, favors the stoniness over the florality. The acidity gives you what you need, prefers not to interfere with the overall bass register rumble. More brightness in the peach, apricot, red apple, pear fruit if not length. Solidly built and solid. (Screwcap) 88